

# HALE BRANCH ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER – Issue 40

June 2026

Hello everyone and welcome to our June Newsletter.

We are now more than halfway through my first year as Chair for the Branch and I am still on a huge learning curve. I am continuing to be an interim member of the County Committee and hope to be able to update you all on any upcoming information.

In April, we attended our annual trip to the Commonwealth War Graves. This trip was once again very well attended, and we had some new faces on board with us. We hope that everyone enjoyed their first trip and that they will join us again for future ventures.

At our visit to Blairville, we were welcomed by the Mayor, Dominique Croppin. This is his last term as Mayor, so it was an absolute pleasure to be able to present him with a small gift from the Branch in gratitude for the friendship bestowed upon us from the town, for allowing us to pay our respects to Alfred Felix Baxter and for welcoming us regularly to their beautiful town. I stepped out of my comfort zone and made a small speech, in French to the Mayor and residents of Blairville. It was quite a scary position for me to be in as I am not accustomed to public speaking but I managed it. Unfortunately, we couldn't stay very long at Blairville as we had a full itinerary. Much of this is mentioned in this newsletter.



At this point I must pass on my huge thanks to Lesley Jackson, who, along with David Moore, provided us with a memorable trip. We visited quite a few venues we have never previously visited, but we also visited ones that we like to visit to pay our respects to the fallen. During our time away, we had the honour of taking part in the Menin Gate Ceremony. This year's event was hosted by New Zealand and Australia in commemoration of Anzac Day. What a huge feat for them to travel so far and to make this a memorable event for everyone who attended, especially with the unexpected entrance of the didgeridoo. Myself, Ben Jackson (Branch President) and Joe McNamara (Vice-Chair of Hale Parish Council) laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch.

We are planning a couple of smaller trips for this year, which will be mentioned in this newsletter.

*Marie*

## **Events Coming Up**

### **Hale Carnival**

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June it will be Hale's annual Carnival event in the village. Do pop along and say hi to those volunteers in the gazebo or better still stay and volunteer yourselves if only for an hour. There will be a funfair, dog agility, welly throwing, tug o' war as well as lots of stalls with something to suit everyone. As always there is an excellent collection of classic cars.

### **Armed Forces Day**

From 9.30am on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June some of our members will be at Morrisons, Speke. If you can spare half an hour so that Ben and Jimmy can take a break then please call by and give them your support or just pop by anyway and say hello!

### **Grassington 1940s Weekend**

*"Step back in time as Grassington transforms into a living snapshot of the 1940s. Wander through the cobbled streets and immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the era, with an impressive collection of vintage vehicles, entertainment and traditional market stalls. At 12 noon the Yorkshire Volunteers Band & Corps of Drums begin their march from the Town Hall."*

We will be visiting Grassington on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September by coach departing The Childe of Hale public house at 9.00am, returning around 6.30pm. Although, at the time of production of this Newsletter, the coach is fully booked. However, should you like to go on this trip please let Marie know as she holds a reserve list.

### **Arthur MADDOCK**

In August last year, I attended the VJ Remembrance service at the village war memorial before moving to the hall for tea, biscuits and light refreshments. There was a presentation about villagers and villagers' family members, who had taken part in the Second World War. Some I knew and some I didn't but missing from these names was Arthur Maddock whom I had known from when I moved into the village some 50 years ago. What I did know about Arthur was that he had been very active in the village. However, not a lot was known about his efforts during the war. There was a story that he had been a Chindit. Also, that he had been a POW and was repatriated from Burma by the Americans and sent to America to recover and recuperate. But of course, this was so difficult to corroborate as Arthur had passed away, so had his lovely wife Nora and their two children Pauline and Michael. Some of you might remember Michael as he came with us on our France and Belgium trips. So of course, my difficulty was sorting out fact from fiction and what he did do during the war. By chance a friend of mine, Sheila Allerston, had kept in touch with Pauline's daughter Lynsey, Arthur's granddaughter. I reached out to see if she had any knowledge about her grandfather's war service and as it happens, she did have some of Arthur's army records so this is what Bill and I have put together to tell Arthur's story.

Born 29<sup>th</sup> October 1919 in Tarbock, eldest (?) child of William Edward Maddock, 36 years, farm bailiff with Samuel Watkin, farmer of Pale Farm, Huyton, and Margaret, 28 years. The 1921 Census shows them living in Whitefield Lane, Tarbock with their two children – Arthur, aged 1 year 8 months and William, aged 3 months. By 1939, the family were living at 11 Greenbridge Road, Halewood, when William Snr was 55 years old and a highways labourer, He was also an Air Raid Prevention (ARP) officer working on the road repairing squad of Whiston Council. Arthur, 20 years old, was employed as a private gardener; his brother, William, worked as a labourer with a fertiliser manufacturer; and their daughter – Nellie, who was at school. Also living with them was Mary Maddock who was 76 years old, incapacitated and presumably Arthur's grandmother. In Lower Road, presumably Halewood then, in a house called "Ormston", lived Henry Todd, a railway goods foreman and ARP Warden, his wife Fanny, and their daughter Frances Nora Todd, born 20<sup>th</sup> July 1921, known to all as Nora. On 15<sup>th</sup> February, Arthur Maddock enlisted in the King's Regiment Liverpool and on 6<sup>th</sup> June that year was rebadged to the York & Lancaster Regiment as Private 3775602. In September and October 1941, Arthur underwent gas training, presumably in the UK because on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1941 in St Nicholas Church, Halewood, he married Frances Nora Todd. Arthur gave his age as 21 years, his address as 11 Greenbridge Road and his occupation as Private 3775602, York and Lancaster Regiment. Nora was 20 years old and lived at 3 Court Avenue, Halewood.

Arthur had 10 days privilege leave between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November 1942 – this is usually granted for special reasons, e.g. for soldier to get married, but I am not aware of anything special in Arthur’s life at this period. Their son Michael was born in 1947 and daughter Pauline in 1953.

On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1942, Arthur was appointed Lance Corporal. His record shows that from April 1940 onwards he had numerous vaccinations for cholera, malaria etc although it seems from his papers that he actually left the UK to serve in India on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1942. He was definitely in Burma in 1943-44 and was awarded the Burma Star for “operational service” in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arakan Campaign, when the British inflicted the first major defeats on the Japanese. He was promoted to Acting Corporal on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1944 and to substantive corporal on 16<sup>th</sup> November that year. From 21<sup>st</sup> May 1945 he is shown as serving with “B & W1 (or I) Cadre” in the Intelligence Section. “Cadre” is a term usually used to refer to training sections. On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1945 he was granted 30 days Disembarkation Leave – this was leave granted to a soldier who was returning to the UK from overseas to enable him to re-establish contact with his family and take a break or holiday before returning to duty in the UK or abroad. In February, March, April, and June 1946 he was granted 4 periods of leave each for 48 hours, so presumably he was now back in the UK. In fact, his son, Michael, was born in early 1947. As mentioned earlier, Arthur was awarded the Burma Star as well as the Defence Medal, this latter for “non-operational service in India – 12 months”. It has been suggested that Arthur was in fact repatriated to the United States but there is nothing in his papers to corroborate this. In fact, there is a copy of a declaration signed by Arthur in 1946 in which he declares “I fully understand that as I am being granted a passage to the United Kingdom, I will not be entitled to repatriation elsewhere”. Arthur returned to live in Hale Village and died on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2003 aged 83 years. Interestingly, George Main also served in Burma as a Chindit and was also serving with the York and Lancaster Regiment at that time.

*Peter Kelly*

*Postscript:*

Arthur played a very active part in community life in Hale – serving as Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, contact for the Widnes Weekly News reporting on events in the village, bellringer in St Mary’s Church, a Freeman of Hale and a Parish Councillor. During my research I came across an article in the Widnes Weekly News dated 30<sup>th</sup> July 1992 when it was reported that Arthur, with the support of the then Lord Mayor, John Robinson, objected to the use of the Village Memorial Green to raise funds for charity by erecting a set of stocks on the green and allowing villagers to throw wet sponges at Councillor John Egan. Arthur was of the opinion that this was “inappropriate and disrespectful”, a view which was apparently endorsed by the Parish Council and the event was abandoned. The article included a photograph showing Cllr Egan being drenched by Larry Morgan, Don Allerston and Tony Collins, all of whom were later to be members of the Hale Branch and have now passed away.

*Bill Sergeant*

### 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 2<sup>nd</sup> Iraq War

On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 11am a short service was held at the village war memorial attended by a number of our branch to mark this anniversary. As part of that service this prayer was said:-



*O God, Source of all life and Prince of Peace, we come before you with hearts full of gratitude and relief. We thank you that the years of darkness and danger in Iraq have drawn to a close.*

*We give thanks for the cessation of hostilities, for the safe return of many, and for the hope of a lasting peace in a long-suffering land.*

*We remember with reverence those who gave their lives in the pursuit of peace, their bravery and their sacrifice. We honour the veterans who bear the scars of conflict, both in body and in spirit. Console the families who mourn and bring comfort to the broken hearted, that their loved ones' sacrifices may not be forgotten.*

*We pray for the people of Iraq, that they may live under elected governments, with justice, safety and liberty shining upon them. Let the rods of oppression be broken, and a new foundation of trust be laid in that*

ancient land. Guide the reconstruction of homes, schools, and communities, and bring harmony among all who dwell there.

We ask for continued wisdom for leaders and for all people that we may choose the path of reconciliation over revenge. Turn the hearts of those who fuel conflict and strengthen those who labour for peace. Now, Lord, grant us the peace which the world cannot give. Let your light shine in the dark places of our work, and turn our swords into ploughshares, that all nations may live in stability and accord. We ask this in your Holy Name.

**Amen**



Following that service a short act of remembrance took place at the grave of Benjamin Nowak at All Saints Church in Speke. Benjamin died in 2006 whilst on duty in Iraq.

Benjamin joined the Royal Marines at age 16 as it had been his long held desire.

**We Will Remember Them**



### **Poppy Appeal 2025**

Recently our President, Ben Jackson along with Alan Sergeant presented certificates to a number of supermarkets who supported us in the appeal last year. Our thanks go especially to their staff that kindly counted and banked the money collected. A certificate was also presented to the staff at Armadillo who provide, free of charge, storage space for our stock.



### **Somme 100 1916-2026 – Our Branch Trip to France & Belgium**

Dear reader,

It is with great pleasure I share the events of the annual Hale RBL excursion to France, visiting the area around the Somme including a trip to the Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium. The journey to Dover was, as always, event filled comprising of plenty storytelling and bountiful treats, we were all very well catered for.

The ferry sailing was pleasant, as was the weather! Our base for the vacation was situated in Péronne, at Hotel Saint Claude where we had previously stayed so we knew the area quite well.

We enjoyed a packed itinerary, below are a few highlights:

- Ceremony at Blairville War Memorial and memorial to Felix Baxter VC, King's Liverpool 8<sup>th</sup> (Irish). Attended by the Mayor and locals; service and wreath-laying
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Visitor Centre, Beaurains – a highlight of the tour!! To see the craftsmanship, resource and equipment and background that goes into maintaining the cemeteries across the Commonwealth is simply staggering....
- The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme and have no known grave
- Visit to Ulster Tower - a lasting tribute to the men of Ulster who gave their lives during the First World War, a monument replica of 'Helen's Tower' County Down
- Somme Museum, Albert – an underground museum situated in a tunnel depicting the events of the Battle of the Somme 1916
- Talbot House, Poperinge - The famous soldiers' rest and recreation centre (nicknamed the "Every Man's Club") founded in 1915 and named in honour of Lieutenant Gilbert Talbot who was KIA at the age of 23 during the WW1
- Brandhoek New Military Cemetery - Captain Noel Chavasse, VC and Bar, MC, one of only three men who was awarded the Victoria Cross twice, commemorated with a wreath laying
- Menin Gate, Ypres – visited on ANZAC day for the last post witnessing a variety of commemorations, from the Irish pipe band street march to the Menin Gate to a moving didgeridoo prelude to the last post, honoring the indigenous fallen servicewomen and men
- Assevillers, Bois De Wallieux British Cemeteries
- Gueudcourt Memorial – commemorating the Canadian Newfoundland regiment



A truly insightful tour, provoking many emotions and utmost appreciation of the sacrifices made for us to enjoy the freedom we do today.

A special mention must go to:

Lesley, for arranging her very first visit and itinerary; simply staggering the effort it must have taken, executed with military precision!! Marie and Alan for the endless refreshments (alcohol and chocolates), activities, Chris for the quizzes and music.

David Moore – A passionate Historian who really brings the visits to life. In particular, some personal research carried out on behalf of a couple of travellers relating to family members; a Great Uncle and Grandfather who contributed to the war, re-telling their stories....



Thanks to David, I learnt of Nellie Spindler, a nurse, who was the only active serving female to be sadly lost in action was from my hometown of Wakefield West Yorkshire... research showed that Nellie lived a mile away from my upbringing, discovering a 'Blue Plaque' in commemoration of her family home, a new road named, Nellie Spindler Drive and that her parents are buried in a local cemetery along with a head stone for



Nellie (Nellie is actually buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery Belgium; the only women buried amongst 10,000 men). There is also a remembrance in St Andrew's church where I was married..... It shows just how poignant and personal these trips are for everyone....

Dave – our resident driver who always puts himself forward for this tour, I can see why he does.....  
.....so here's looking forward to the next one already....

Warmest regards, *Nigel Vine*

Visit our Branch website for a selection of photographs from our visit to France & Belgium this year:  
<https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/hale>

#### **Presentation to the Branch**



Terry Courtney presented to the branch a framed print of a Tornado in appreciation of our fellowship to his father, John Courtney and family.  
The inscription on the rear reads:-

*To the Royal British Legion Hale Liverpool Branch Members,*

*Thank you for the kind and warm reception I receive when attending your branch meetings. Dad (John Courtney) always enjoyed good company and I can see why.*

*Kind regards,  
Terry Courtney, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026.*

If anyone would like to write a short report, an article about yourself, any ex-servicemen/women, book review for inclusion in a Newsletter, please email it to Lesley Jackson – [jacksonlesley66@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonlesley66@gmail.com)

**Deadlines for inclusion are 15<sup>th</sup> January, May and September**

**The RBL Hale Branch meet on the first Wednesday of every month at 8.00pm at The Childe of Hale public house.  
Please do come along.**

You don't have to be a member to join us on our trips so if you would like to come along please contact:-  
Lesley Jackson [jacksonlesley66@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonlesley66@gmail.com) or telephone 07891 553810;  
Marie Fisher [marie.fisher@ymail.com](mailto:marie.fisher@ymail.com) or telephone 07958 399252