



# HALE BRANCH ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

## NEWSLETTER – Issue 38

October 2025

**Hello everybody!**

This will be my last message as Branch Chairman as at our next Branch meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October I will be standing down for health reasons and my place will be taken by Marie Fisher. I have held this office for over 20 years and have enjoyed every minute – well, almost! But I'm having difficulty walking these days as well as being on chemotherapy and at 86 years old I feel the responsibility is too much. I feel that I have done my bit and it's time for somebody younger to take up the reins but I hope I'll be able to remain involved as a committee member if you and Marie can risk me acting like the chairman out of habit! But more about that at the October meeting which I remind you will be our Annual General Meeting, beginning at 7.30pm instead of 8.00pm.

Sadly, since our last Newsletter we have lost one or two of our members – Eddie Thompson, probably our last member to have served in WWII and one of our over 90s passed away in August and his funeral took place at St Mary's on 27<sup>th</sup> August. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to other commitments, but I know that the church was full and those attending included many of our members. Evelyn Hudson, widow of our former President, David, and a longstanding member of the branch, passed away peacefully earlier this month. She had never recovered from the loss of David. Her funeral will take place in St Mary's Hale on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September at 12 noon followed by cremation at Widnes Crematorium at 1.30pm. I urge as many of you as possible to attend both the funeral and afterwards in the Wellington Hotel at 2.00pm. Unfortunately, this clashes with the funeral of a Village Freeman, Jim Whittle, and some may feel that they should attend Jim's funeral.

Without wishing to tempt Providence, I ask you all to give some thought to those of our members who are not in the best of health at present – Jim Sheehan, Joyce Hughes, Eric Fawcett and anybody else we don't know about – we wish you all well. Personally, I have had a bit of a bad time recently, caused by a reaction to some new medication I have been prescribed which put me

in hospital for a few days. I am pleased to say that I am now feeling much better since that medication was adjusted.

Recently, for personal reasons, Paul Bostock, our Treasurer for the past 20 years or more, has decided to give up his membership of the Legion while Alan Scott, our Membership Secretary, has moved house to the Blackburn area and has given up his position, although he will remain a member of Hale Branch. Both were presented with Certificates of Appreciation at our September meeting, and we are grateful to them for all they have done for us. Kathy Filkins, former County Chairman, has also decided to leave both the branch and the RBL itself because of her dissatisfaction with the National committee. We wish them all well and welcome Jacquie Ross as our new Treasurer and Alex Smith as Alan Scott's replacement. Thank you both for taking on these essential roles.

As many of you know, I have acted as the Poppy Appeal Organiser for Hale, Woolton, Halewood and lately Netherley. My health etc means that I will be giving up this role after this year's Poppy Appeal. I am looking for a volunteer to replace me but there has been no rush! The Poppy Appeal is the main reason many of us joined the RBL and over the past 25 years we have raised somewhere in the region of £500,000 in this Branch. This is the lifeblood of the Legion without which we would struggle to provide the support for our veterans, serving forces and their families. We can't let it lapse so please consider taking on the (unpaid but satisfying) job for 2026. Hopefully I'll still be around to help whoever does step forward. Similarly, I will be taking a back seat after this year in respect of Remembrance Sunday which this year takes place on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November. We have one of the best supported Remembrance Sunday in our County and I know this will continue under Marie, who will no doubt need to take it on as Chairman.

As usual, I have gone on a bit but will close by thanking everybody who helped with the organisation and support of our two VJ80 events last month – both

were excellent and enjoyed by all who attended. Well done James, Jacquie, Ben, Lesley Jimmy, Marie and others!

Good luck to the new Chairman and her Committee – if I can help, let me know!

*Bill Sergeant  
Branch Chairman.*

*In the last Newsletter Nigel kindly provided a report on the trip to Metz. Rob Jones, a first time traveller with us, provided me with his 'Verdun Trip Log' (apologies for the heavy editing - LJ):-*

This is my first trip with Hale British Legion **and** my first visit to the area generically called "Verdun".

Verdun is a French town close to the German border and has been a place of fierce fighting since the 1870s and changed hands many times, as follows :-

- Up to 1869 French
- 1870 Germany took it
- 1919 French given it back
- 1939 Germany took it back
- 1945 French given it back

It is a town which has given its name to a much larger area around it, noted for massive casualties between the French and the Germans and is the French equivalent of the British "Somme" or "Passchendaele".

#### **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>**

I didn't know anyone on the trip apart from Ben, who saw I had British Legion tie, at a tram do, and asked what my connection with the RBL was.

We caught the 1255 hrs ferry from Dover and arrived at Calias at 1525hrs.

I had been told that the trips were special as "I would find out". This consisted of a frequent supply of whisky, sweets, sandwiches, baileys etc. All complementary. It was a hoot. All you could hear from the back of the coach was clinking of bottles.

It was quite a long drive to Metz which is one of those cities that has had a to and fro existence being on the German border but in France, as I explained above.

We were staying at the Metz Centre Gare Hotel, a travel lodge type hotel where the check in staff also have to cook meals, serve drinks, change door cards that don't work etc etc. The staff, small in number were overworked at times. Consequently, the drink I had and put on my room bill just never appeared.



*Rob Jones*

#### **Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April**

We went to the **Museum of War 1870 & Annexation**. They don't call it the "Franco Prussian war" like we were taught at school! It was very interesting indeed. Wonderful uniforms. And a huge painting of Louis Napoleon (whom we studied at school), I remember that he lived in Cheltenham but even more amusing he died on a Golf Course in Kent. You see, he was exiled to England and held responsible for losing the F P War.

It was a cruel and bloody war.

The museum is located opposite a German cemetery from that war. Of course when German had to give the area back to France in 1919 there wasn't a love between the Germans and the French and the German speaking French citizens. Then in 1939/40 the Germans re occupied the area again, taking prisoners etc., and after the second WW the land reverted back to France. So what a tragic history the area has had.



American Cemetery at Romagne sous Meuse. Have you noticed the word Meuse is similar to the word Mersey? Any connections?

The American cemetery was quite mind blowing. Thousands of gravestones, most of them marked – because they all died in the last two months of the war.

There's a gravestone to a soldier of the "Sanitary Train", what was one of those? I've looked on the internet and here is the answer:- "Each division had one sanitary train which was composed of 4 mobile field hospitals, one for wounded patients, one for gas patients, one for the ordinary sick patients and one to be held in reserve to meet any emergencies. It also had, I think, four ambulance companies of four ambulances and a supply section, all under the command of the division surgeon, usually a major or colonel".

Then onto Montfaucon d'Argonne – US memorial and German Cemetery This was a remarkable place and I wasn't prepared for it. It was massive.

### Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April

Today we left for the Fort de Queuleu – guided tour. It was a fort built by the Germans from the 1870's!



Our guide told us about the fort in his best English! His father had been captured by the Germans in the Second World War as they had thought that he was a collaborator. The punishments were horrible. But he was a barber and every six weeks all inmates had to be shaved and that was his job. So he survived. All inmates were permanently blindfolded. While he was shaving them he just lifted up the inmate's blindfold, a tiny bit (as a lot of light would have been painful) and he spoke to them very quietly, and gave them comfort

Onwards to a **French Cemetery. called Cemetery du Faubourg Pave;**

This was quite remarkable too. Hundreds of French gravestones. We found some British Gravestones so we said the act of remembrance and then played the last post.

In this next picture you can see one of our group standing to attention. You can always tell the ex servicemen!



### Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April

We left for Douaumont, a very famous fort in French history. The tragic fort changed hands 11 times I think. With terrible loss of life. The fort was pounded to smithereens so excuse the rather battered state that it's in.



This was a very sobering and sad cemetery. Thousands upon thousands of graves. And a huge ossuary (a pile of bones) within the large building in the distance. It has the bones of about 130,000 soldiers.

On the way back we went to Verdun and had a relaxing drink. L to R : Simone Adlen, Jeff Keig, Lynn Keig and Jayne Copeland.



Afterwards we returned to the hotel where most of us sat in the bar and watched the Liverpool Football match. All quite thrilling.

### **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April**

A.M. very early we left the hotel and Metz when hardly anyone was about.

And so to home.

*Robert Jones*

### **VJ80 Anniversary Commemorations**

On 15<sup>th</sup> August we commemorated VJ80 by laying wreaths and holding a two minute silence at the war memorial which was followed by refreshments in the Village Hall. Entertainment was provided by the Irish Guards Singers.

Also on that day Kathy Filkins laid a wreath at the National Memorial Arboretum on behalf of our branch. Her father was a Chindit.



*Kathy Filkins at the VJ80 Wreath Laying at the NMA*

On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August we held a commemoration and social event in the Wellington where we enjoyed singing from Dominique & Marrietta. They put on a superb show singing 1940s songs and also dressing the part. With a supper of scouse or curry everyone had a wonderful time.



*Bill Sergeant, Deputy Mayor of Halton Borough Council, Pamela Wallace, Roy Gladden*



*Kathy Filkins, Ben Jackson, Pamela Wallace, Lesley Jackson*

### **Unknown and Previously Unsung**

VJ80 has made me aware that we often have amongst us people whom we think we know well only to suddenly learn surprising facts about them. I did some research in preparation for our VJ80 Social Evening on 22<sup>nd</sup> August

during which I spoke about several local men who had been involved in WW2 in Burma – one of them, George Main, I knew really well but others of whom I knew little or nothing. Jim Bailey, for instance, I knew vaguely as a WW2 veteran who had been active in 2003/4 when the Village War Memorial was refurbished.

I didn't know that he had been awarded a Military Medal in July 1944 while serving in the Burma jungle. Aged only 20, Jim took part in an ambush of a Japanese patrol all of whom were believed to have died. When he and colleagues went to check whether this was the case, a wounded Japanese soldier shot Jim's senior officer dead and wounded another of his colleagues who fell to the ground and was exposed to further enemy fire. Jim immediately disregarded his own safety and leaped to assist his wounded comrade, carrying him to safety but was himself shot while doing so. Jim survived and returned to live in Hale Village where he was regarded not as a hero but just another resident.

Linda Hallett's father, Tom Patullo, also served in the Far East and was taken prisoner by the Japanese when Singapore fell in 1942. Tom spent the rest of the war as a Japanese prisoner, suffering tremendous hardship, cruel mistreatment; regular bouts of malaria, beri-beri and dysentery and still forced to work on the Malay railway project. When Tom was eventually liberated, he returned home and lived in Pepper Street in the village. His experiences as a prisoner no doubt took their toll of his health and he died in 1958. Another man whose story, like that of Jim Bailey deserves to be told.

I have no doubt that there are others about whom we ought to know more – I have, for instance, learned that the late **Arthur Maddock**, whom I think I only met once or twice through his wife, and who I know was in the 1990s very active in Village affairs, serving on the Parish Council and for many years being the Chairman of the Village Club, also served in Burma. I would be interested to know more about Arthur's military service though I believe that he too was taken prisoner in Singapore and despite all that involved survived the war. I have heard that when he was released he weighed only 5 or 6 stone and was fortunate to survive. I understand that Peter Kelly is hoping to write an article about Arthur if any of you can help.

Then, quite out of the blue, I heard about **Anton Immink and his wife Jannetje**. They were Dutch nationals so where do they fit into the Hale picture? Well, they were the grandparents of Lydia Parker, Mike's wife and a member of Hale RBL. Lydia's father, Jan Immink, was a seaman with the Dutch Merchant Navy who in 1945 at St. Mary's Hale married Alma Jean Allen who lived in Vine Cottage, Hale Village. They left to live in Holland after

their marriage and Lydia was born there. Jan's parents, Anton and Jannetje, lived there throughout WW2. In 1980, to mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Holland, the Dutch government decided to award a medal to former members of the Dutch Resistance and some 15,300 received this medal – the *Verzetsherdenkingskruis* (Resistance Commemoration Cross). Amongst these were Anton and Jannetje Immink, both of whom had been awarded posthumous medals – Jannetje died in 1962 and Anton in 1963. On Anton's death, a letter had been published in the local newspaper in Leiden, Holland, said to have been written by "A Grateful Rescued Person", drawing attention to how Anton had "distinguished himself during the war. From 1941 to 1945 he saved persecuted Jews from the enemy's hands, not only by hiding them in his own home risking his own life but also by taking them elsewhere and providing shelter for them. This way he saved the lives of more than 80 Jews. With his customary modesty, he has never boasted about these achievements". The anonymous letter writer ended by urging that feats such as this should never be forgotten.



*Anton & Jannetje Immink*

As I mentioned earlier, Anton's wife deservedly also was awarded the medal but neither of them (nor possibly the letter writer) lived to see the award.

Jan and Alma returned to live in Hale Village when Lydia was 3 years old and led active lives within the village community, living initially in the old Post Office which was then just a shop before having the Spar "supermarket" in Hale Road. The family then settled in Church End and Jan eventually served as Chairman of the Parish Council. He died in 1998.

This short article goes a little way towards fulfilling the wish of that anonymous writer – we should not and will not forget the bravery of those I've named and their comrades who gave so much in the cause of freedom.

*Bill Sergeant*

## **Poppy Appeal 2025**

We will very soon be embarking on the most important part of our year so if you would like to help us by volunteering in the many supermarkets that we cover in the area, please get in touch with Bill Sergeant with your availability. Even a couple of half days a week would be appreciated. You do not need to be a member of the Royal British Legion to volunteer during the Poppy Appeal.

## **Alan Scott, Outgoing Membership Secretary**

I joined the Hale Branch on the 15th April 2016 but due to other commitments and later, family health issues, I did not attend any meetings or functions until mid-2022. I only wish I had attended earlier as I found the branch was well run and full of functions.

I took on the role of Membership Secretary in 2023, a role that I found both interesting and rewarding. When I took up the position, we had a membership of 77, this ended up with over 100 members due to other local branches closing and member transferring to us.

Unfortunately, we lost our President David Hudson and only this month his lovely wife Evelyn Hudson, both who served the branch faithfully over the years, and will be missed by all.

Bill Sergeant has been Chairman of the branch for several years and has organised most functions and trips, which are all well attended and enjoyed by all. He is very thorough with all his organising, and it shows as to how well and successful they all are. Bill is standing down this AGM and Marie Fisher is taking the roll on and I wish her all the best, I'm sure she will be as successful as Bill, she also has been a fantastic member of the branch for several years. The best memory I have of Marie was during one of our Burns night functions she took on the role of speaker and did a wonderful job with presenting the haggis, her Jock accent was very good.

I also wish Bill all the best for the future and am sure, God willing he will be attending the functions again but this time enjoying them without having to worry about who or what

needs doing next. I am handing the roll of Membership Secretary to a very interesting young man, Alexander Smith, he is in fact a very good piper, he has performed on a lot of our functions but I think his best achievement was last year when he was picked, out of all the candidates in the country, to lead with his pipes from the Normandy landing area to Pegasus Bridge, during the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings. Following the path of the "Mad Piper" Bill Millin. The Germans said they never fired on him, because they thought he was mad, hence the name "Mad Piper".



*Alan Scott*

It is with a heavy heart that I say farewell, I will stay a member of the branch but am also joining Blackburn and Darwen branches as well.

*Alan M Scott*

## **RBL Branch Website**

To see more photos of trips and events held this year please head to our Branch website:-

<https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/hale>

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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 [lesleyj@huntscross.plus.com](mailto:lesleyj@huntscross.plus.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 [lesleyj@huntscross.plus.com](mailto:lesleyj@huntscross.plus.com) or telephone 07891 553810;

Marie Fisher [marie.fisher@ymail.com](mailto:marie.fisher@ymail.com) or telephone 07958 399252

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