



HAMPSHIRE LINK

NOVEMBER 2014

CHARITY NO 219279

“Ever ready, with a word of good cheer”



Few Hampshire members will have known of Stephen Elsey and even fewer will have met him but, without doubt, he was a real champion in the eyes of Royal British Legion beneficiaries. Steve passed away at home on October 16. He was just 59 years old.

Steve had a vibrant, outgoing personality and a remarkable sense of humour. He was a happy family man and enjoyed an exemplary and successful military career. On retirement from the Armed Forces he joined the Royal British Legion as a Case Worker and operated out of the Area Office in Southampton.

Basingstoke's tiny crematorium was full to capacity; almost 200 people attended the funeral on October 31; family, friends, Royal British Legion colleagues and numerous representatives of the Armed Forces.

Many stood in the central aisle and at the rear while many more stood outside in the Autumn sunshine listening intently as Victoria Fisher, a Civil Funeral Celebrant, conducted the Thanksgiving Service. Two former comrades paid their own tributes; Lt. Colonel RWG Nicholls MBE read Tom Hall's poem 'Measure of a Man', and Lt. Colonel Christopher Ions MBE spoke of Steve's military career and his incredible qualities as a soldier.

Steve enlisted with the Junior Leaders' Regiment in Bovington at the age of 15 before moving on to the Household Cavalry where he served with the Blues and Royals during 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland. He then served as a Main Battle Tank commander with the British Army of the Rhine. He transferred to the Army Air Corps, promoted to Corps Regimental Sergeant Major at Middle Wallop before being commissioned as an Officer.

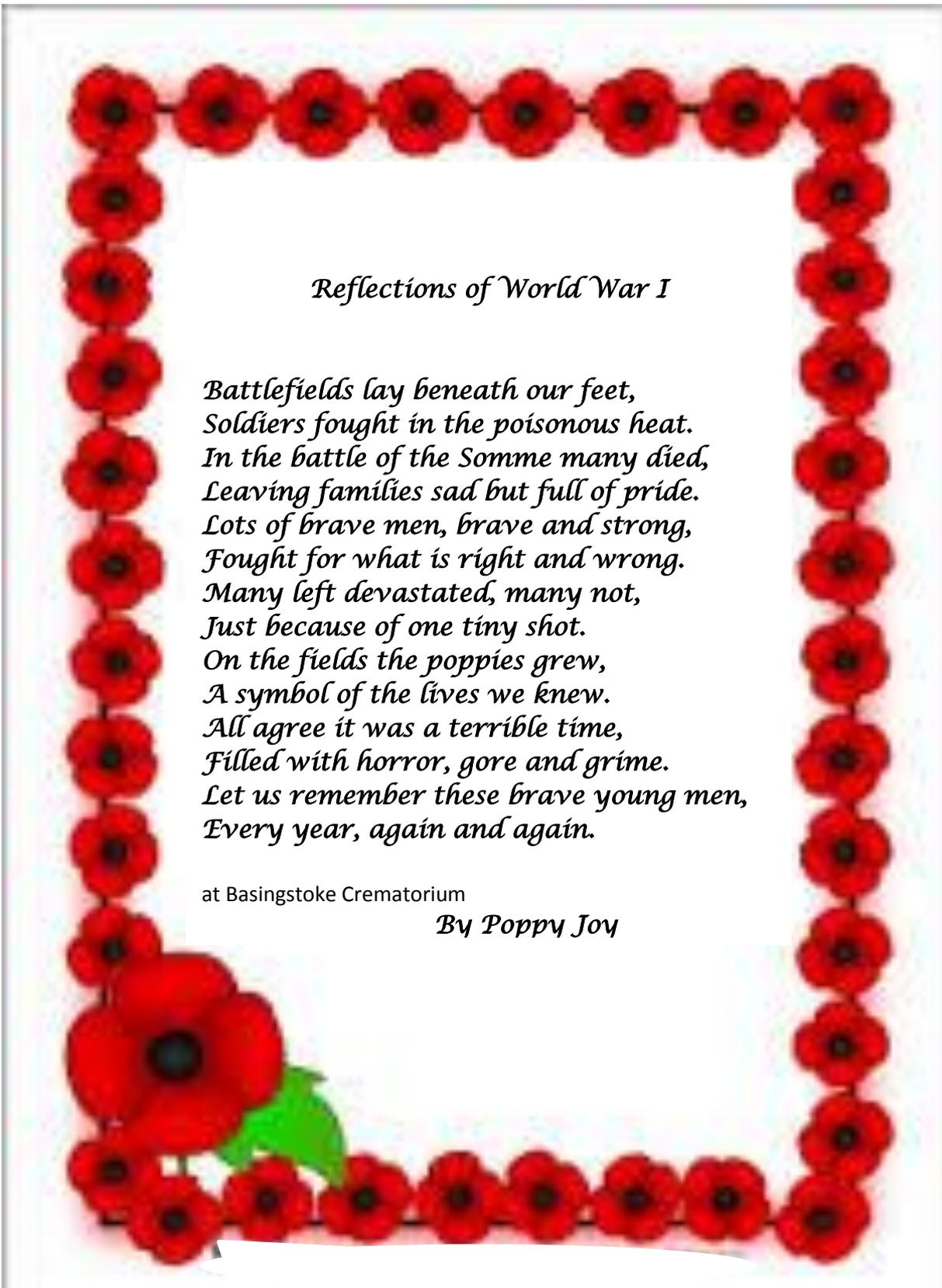
After leaving the Service he became a battlefield historian, was instrumental in overseeing the installation of the Glider Pilot Regiment memorial at the National Arboretum and became a popular chairman of the Glider Pilot Regiment Association.

His caring nature, selfless attitude, wisdom and sound guidance was to benefit his family, friends, those within the military community, work colleagues and casual acquaintances. His sincere sense of duty to guard the welfare of former servicemen and women through the Royal British Legion made him ideally suited for the work as a Legion Case Worker.

Throughout the Thanksgiving Service Richard Linthwaite carried the Standard of the Glider Pilots' Regimental Association and, at the committal, as the Standard was dipped in tribute, Lance Corporal Darren Witter, a bugler with the Household Cavalry Band, played the Last Post and Reveille.

Steve Elsey leaves a widow Gill, a son Simon, daughters Lisa and Sarah and daughter-in-law Suzie.

At this Remembrancetide our thoughts focus on those who gave their lives in The Great War. The 10-year-old grand-daughter of Derrick and Merlene France of the Eastleigh, Chandlers Ford and District Branch wrote this poem on that theme.



Reflections of World War I

*Battlefields lay beneath our feet,
Soldiers fought in the poisonous heat.
In the battle of the Somme many died,
Leaving families sad but full of pride.
Lots of brave men, brave and strong,
Fought for what is right and wrong.
Many left devastated, many not,
Just because of one tiny shot.
On the fields the poppies grew,
A symbol of the lives we knew.
All agree it was a terrible time,
Filled with horror, gore and grime.
Let us remember these brave young men,
Every year, again and again.*

at Basingstoke Crematorium

By Poppy Joy

BRANCH NEWS

Convoy veteran honoured

Chief Inspector Beth Pirie of the Hampshire Constabulary will pin the Ushakov Medal on the lapel of veteran Jack Henry Bird at the Bordon and District Branch Service of Remembrance at the town's war memorial on Tuesday, November 11.

The medal, awarded by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, honours Arctic convoy veterans and should have been presented to Jack by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in London in September. Sadly, ill health prevented Jack from attending and he will now receive his medal this month.

In his letter to Jack, the Russian Ambassador wrote: "The Arctic Convoys were a brilliant and one of the toughest operations in the allied effort to bring about the Victory ... your heroism will always be remembered in Russia and Britain. Your deeds will continue to serve as the supreme expression of bravery and the high point of human spirit."

Serving with the Arctic convoys to Russia formed just part of Jack's remarkable war service which included escorting the Queen Mary carrying Prime Minister Winston Churchill to a Summit in Quebec and supporting the D-Day landings on HMS Adventure.

Churchill described the voyages made by Jack Bird and the many other Arctic convoy veterans as '*the worst journey in the world*'. Thousands of Allied seamen lost their lives as the British ships sailed in the unwelcoming, stormy waters of the Arctic Ocean under a constant threat of being attacked by German U-boats and aircraft.

Jack will also receive a special certificate from Hampshire Royal British Legion, presented on behalf of the County Membership to further acknowledge his courage and achievement

Convoy postscript

Numerous Arctic Convoy veterans from across the county have received their Ushakov Medal during the last few months. The medal is named in honour of Russian Admiral Fyodor Ushakov who never lost a battle.

The UK is soon to host a visit by Russian convoy veterans between December 23 to 27, 2014. They will be visiting the home of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth on the last day of their trip and we hope to bring you news of that visit in our January edition of Hampshire Link.



Oh, what a good idea!

Getting messages, information, news (*even Hampshire Link*) to each and every branch member is often a Branch Secretary's nightmare. The problem would disappear overnight if everyone had a computer and was on the Internet. But that's not realistic, so what can we do?

One Hampshire branch has adopted a 'buddy' scheme. Each member that receives branch messages via their computers adopts two members who are not on 'The Net'. They then ensure that, one way or another, the messages are passed on. It's not fool-proof but it has to be better than the alternative. A 'Buddy' scheme ... worth a try?

Fallen but not forgotten

They have been putting faces to names in Brockenhurst, the Legion branch sponsoring two display boards portraying some of those who feature on their village Roll of Honour.

A1 sized versions now hang in the porch of St Nicholas Church opposite the Roll of Honour. Most of the source material on the boards comes from John Cockram's authoritative book "Brockenhurst and the Two World Wars" and another Branch member, Richard Williams, designed the displays. Branch secretary, Mike Matthews,



has arranged for some A2 versions to be produced which will be used when members take the Branch stall to local events



They have also found that A4 reductions are ideal for emailing around and putting into publications like village and parish magazines and the *Hampshire Link*.

It is believed that they will make a meaningful contribution to remembrance in the village and Mike hopes that other Hampshire branches might be tempted to think along similar lines.

Young Rider with a tale to tell



When Finn Cunningham returned to school in September his teacher asked his class to talk about what they had done during the summer holidays. His story attracted considerable praise from the teacher and justifiably resulted in him being presented with the Principal's Commendation Award.

14-year-old Finn, a student at Hamble Community Sports College, was recognised by Mrs Halley-Gordon for his work with the Royal British Legion.



Like his father Graeme, Finn is a member of the Hampshire Rider's Branch and during early August took part in the Unknown Warrior Memorial Ride. They travelled to Ypres and witnessed the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate on August 4 – the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WW1.

Riding pillion behind Dad, he followed the route taken by the body of the Unknown Warrior on its journey to Westminster Abbey in 1920. This involved stops at a number of Western Front cemeteries including Tyne Cot where Finn spread Poppy seeds in front of the memorial tablet bearing the name of one his ancestors. A moving experience and something to tell his children.

A Poppy by any other name



Poppy Havercroft
(right) with sister Grace
(above).



When Poppy Havercroft was born November 11, 2008 her mother didn't have to search too hard for a suitable name for her daughter. But, it seems, the young lass is now convinced the national Poppy Day is named after her and coincides with her birthday!

One thing that is in no doubt is that Poppy is fascinated by the Poppy. This year, after attending a Michaelmas Fair in Weyhill, near Andover, and buying a kit to make a crocheted poppy, she set about making a number of poppies with her sister Grace and her Aunt Bobby.

"We have put so much effort into this," says 6-year-old Poppy, "because it is the hundred years and to help the people who have fought in the war."

She has been selling them to pupils, staff and parents at her school and is raising money for the Poppy Appeal.

Clare Peppiatt (Community Fundraiser Hampshire South & the Isle of Wight) has arranged for Poppy's school to receive a school pack which contains a whole host of items that have been brought out especially this year for schools, lesson plans and DVD's for teachers.

Home win for Eastleigh FC

In football parlance, it was a six pointer. Firstly, on November 1, Eastleigh Football Club invited veterans from the Eastleigh, Chandlers Ford and District Branch to the Conference League game against Chester at the Silverlake Stadium. Secondly the team ran out with poppies across the front of their shirts.

Their fine hospitality was offered as a thank you for time spent in our Armed Forces and the club nicknamed, "The Spitfires" are also donating money from a special edition shirt with an embroidered poppy to raise money for this year's Poppy Appeal.

They are hoping to give a sizeable donation to the Legion's Poppy Appeal and Mark Jewell, Eastleigh FC Chief Executive said: "As we mark the Centenary of the First World War, it's as important as ever to wear a poppy and remember the sacrifices and commitment made by our Armed Forces both then and now. The message behind this year's Poppy Appeal is Live On – to the memory of the fallen and future of the living, which is why we wanted our Football club to support this year's Poppy Appeal."

The shirts worn showed the support for the Armed Forces family today and for the future. Every donation received will make a real difference to the lives of Service men and women, veterans and their loved ones.

Anyone wishing to purchase the special edition shirt with the embroidered Poppy please contact Eastleigh FC on 02380 613 361.

Whitchurch tie the knot



The Royal British Legion's Youth Affiliation Scheme has taken another step forward, the Whitchurch Branch recently joining forces with the Overton Army Cadet Force.

The scheme is designed to encourage Branches and Youth organisations to work more closely together and the exchange of affiliation certificates and badges cements the union.

Whitchurch treasurer and Standard Bearer, Steve Slack, has had a foot in the ACF camp for some time, working as an instructor with the Overton group as well as being a loyal member of the Legion branch. At the last month's presentation night he wore his ACF hat, helping to host the event on the evening.

Following the initial parade, Roy Dykes, President of the Whitchurch Branch, inspected the Cadets and chatted with each of them. Commandant Quinn then presented the Royal British Legion with their affiliation certificate. The Branch President responded by presenting a certificate to the ACF Commandant Lance Corporal Vickers.

After the all-important photo-call representatives of both groups gave short presentations on a number of subjects and the evening ended with the final parade where each Cadet was presented with an affiliation badge to wear on their uniform. There are many similar affiliations running successfully across the County and we wish Whitchurch well in their new venture.



COUNTY NEWS

Hampshire County Welfare Fund

The fund is used to provide assistance to those ex-Service and Serving members of the Armed Forces and their dependants in need in our County of Hampshire. The fund has been in existence since 2002 and has provided help for 1020 cases to the tune of £336,249. Branches have donated £380,252 with another £48,868 coming from donations and through funeral directors where friends and relatives give money to the Legion in memory of loved ones. With the "Pathway for Growth" and the "New Ways of Working" initiatives changes have been made to the method of supporting welfare cases in Hampshire. From February of this year, ALL cases requiring support from the County Welfare Fund have been channelled through Head Office in London. Due to administrative problems, NO transactions have taken place since January and our fund has increased due to welcome support from Branches and others. However, the new system of almonising cases through Head Office has been restored and we are pleased to announce that the sum of £30,000 helping 132 cases has now gone through the system. In future these requests should come to us monthly and we shall be able to assist on a more regular basis. We are extremely thankful for the help given by Branches. Some large amounts and some fairly small - some on a regular basis and some a once off. Please do your best to support the Welfare Fund and help those in need. They deserve it.

Educational engagement

For the second year running the Lordshill Oasis Academy in Southampton asked the County Vice Chairman John Smith into year group assemblies to deliver illustrated talks about the significance of Remembrance. It was also a golden opportunity to further promote the new 'Live On' brand and include aspects of the 'Every Man Remembered' programme.

Monday's assembly commenced with reference to Harry Styles (who, as all Legion members know, is lead singer with *One Direction!*), Tom Jones and Alex Ferguson. Having talked at length about their namesakes who served and fell during The Great War the session ended with an invitation to all the students to view war memorials to seek out a WWI serviceman who shared their own family name.

Six Year 8 students held framed photographs aloft on Tuesday while being told about how the lives of those pictured were blighted by the First World War and how the Legion supported them.

On Wednesday Year 9 heard about the horrific desecration of whole areas of France and Belgium and the destruction of towns like Ypres. Images of flooded trenches, bomb craters and blast-swept landscapes, along with battlefield graves, field hospitals and blind soldiers returning home led to an explanation of how the British Legion was born of need.

Year 10 heard about the Tomb of Britain's Unknown Warrior and followed a pictorial account of the Hampshire Riders' Branch 'Unknown Warrior Memorial Ride' which started at the Menin Gate on (August 4), the one hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War One.

Friday's final assembly, to Year 11 (the 15-year-olds) outlined the dreadful statistics that we now associate with the First World War, the welfare response of the Royal British Legion during this and all subsequent conflicts, the cost, fundraising, the Poppy Appeal and how students could help to secure the £1.6m needed each week to support the Legion's welfare work. At each 'tailor-made' assembly the students listened intently and participated fully and hopefully have a better understanding of what the Legion is, what it does and why it does it. Time well spent.

EVENTS DIARY

What's On

07 November 2014

Hampshire Festival of Remembrance,
Southampton Guildhall

Adults £15 Concessions £12.50
7.15pm

Further details: CPeppiatt@britishlegion.org.uk

09 November 2014

Hampshire Riders Branch Remembrance Service
Royal Navy Memorial, Southsea Common

11.00pm

Further details: 07771 738752

11 November 2014

The Miller's Collection Veteran's Lunches
The Peat Spade (Long Stock), The Anchor
(Lower Foyle), The Partridge (Alresford) and The
Queens (Newbury).

Invited guests (only) arrive at 12 noon for 12.30.

Further details: 01794 323487

14 November 2014

1930s/1940s Evening
Empire Hall, Totton Conservative Club

7.30pm Tickets £20

Further details: 02380 863618

Yateley Choral Society

Musical Director: Richard Bannan

WW1: *In Memoriam*

Saturday 8th November, 2014

St Swithun's Church, Yateley

7.45pm

Timothy Nelson Baritone

Ben Giddens Organ

and chamber ensemble

Jenkins – The Armed Man

Durufié – Requiem

**Plus a specially commissioned
work by Graham Ross**

Director of Music, Clare College Cambridge

Tickets: £12

Students £5, Under 16 free

Collection for The Royal British Legion

Tickets available on the door or from:

01252 870469 or

Yateley Town Council (Council Offices)

www.yateley-choral.org.uk

Registered Charity: 295665

EVERY MAN REMEMBERED

Sat 15th Nov

Join us at **Milford on Sea Club** for a fun
filled night of REMEMBRANCE &
fundraising in honour of our HEROES
past and present

6pm: Early- bird start

Nostalgic Sing-A-Long with

THE DIAMONDS

Children's WW1 Fancy Dress Competition

Raffle | Comedy | WW1 Stories

9pm: GRAND AUCTION

All proceeds going to RBL

Every Man Remembered Campaign

Live music and celebration till close

**FREE ENTRY
Non- Members
Welcomed**

**Supporting Military Charities
Presented by Milford on Sea Club**



**EVERY MAN
REMEMBERED** THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION

www.everymanremembered.org



POPPY APPEAL

All aboard for the Hampshire Poppy Appeal

The Watercress Line joined forces with the Alton Branch to celebrate the launch of the 2014 Hampshire Poppy Appeal. Colin Fuller, a life member of the steam railway, invited members of the Royal British Legion to travel on the return trip between Alresford to Alton as a young accordionist played wartime favourites and the passengers sang along with gusto.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Alton and the Town Crier were joined by County President David Harrison, County Chairman Bill Bates, Winston Churchill and Field Marshal Montgomery ... yes, Churchill and Monty ... the World War II leaders represented by two very convincing impersonators.

Winston Churchill delivered his 'this was their finest hour' speech and Brigadier Harrison thanked the people of Hampshire for their incredible generosity. "The Royal British Legion is needed as much today as ever it was," he emphasised at the end of the rail journey. "Every village was touched by World War I, it was not the war to end all wars and the Poppy Appeal remains very relevant today."

The Poppy Launch provided a golden opportunity to introduce the Royal British Legion's new 'Live On' initiative and the speeches over, the travellers adjourned to the Waiting Room where their Watercress Line hosts provided a first class buffet and warming cup of tea.



REME drop in to help the Poppy Appeal



Hundreds of shoppers craned their necks as three members of REME abseiled, amid a hail of Poppy petals, from the 80-foot high ceiling above the West Quay Centre in Southampton. The trio, wearing their 'Live On' T-shirts, received warm and generous applause from the crowd and posed for numerous photographs.

The event was the high-point of Southampton's City Poppy Day held during the October school half-term holiday. The Armed Forces were well represented with members of the Royal Navy, REME, Royal Logistics Corps, 17 Port & Maritime and the local Army Cadet Force manning information stalls and assisting with displays.

Senior Service chefs took time to speak with onlookers about catering in the modern Royal Navy, colleagues enlightened the interested about Communications and Reconnaissance and a Trauma Surgeon explained about his work which involved him in a recent deployment to Afghanistan.

An Army diver from 17 Port & Maritime in Marchwood demonstrated scuba and deep sea equipment while Royal Marine Commandos talked about their multi-faceted frontline combat and security roles on this their 350th anniversary.

The Southampton Branch were there in force, chatting to passers-by, recruiting new members, providing important information about the Royal British Legion and raising, through Poppy collecting, a staggering £4,600 in just six hours.

REMEMBRANCE

Our raison d'être



A local Act of Remembrance ... 'no more or less important than the big events staged nationally'

As the nation's Custodian of Remembrance our thoughts in these early days of November are focused on Festivals and Services of Remembrance and wreath laying ceremonies - locally and nationally.

Among the first events of this kind was the annual Festival of Remembrance staged by the Eastleigh, Chandlers Ford & District Branch on November 2. It was held at *The Point* in Eastleigh and featured The Otterbourne Brass and the Crestwood Community College Steel Band. The evening closed with an Act of Worship conducted by the Rt. Reverend Dr Richard Palmer, the Branch Padre.

This is to be followed by the Hampshire Festival of Remembrance in the Southampton Guildhall. Former footballer Matthew Le Tissier will host the evening and the music will be provided by bands from the Queen's Division, the Adjutant General's Corps and The Rifles, the Yorkshire Regiment Corps of Drums, the Southampton Philharmonic Choir and the University of Southampton Philharmonic Choir. The Hampshire County Chaplain, The Reverend Canon Group Captain Ray Hubble will conduct the Service of Remembrance.

The following evening Hampshire will be well represented at the Legion's Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall. Among the audience for this annual event will be the County Chairman Bill Bates and county officers along with representatives from a number of Hampshire Branches. County Standard bearer David Graham will be carrying the County Standard at the Festival along with Karen Pearson of the Women's Section who is participating in the event for the first time. Women's Section secretary Elaine Micklewright and Hampshire Recruitment Officer Pat Prior will be marching with the Poppy Collectors during the televised Festival.

The following day hundreds of motorcycles and scooters will converge on Southsea Common for the annual Remembrance Service of the Hampshire Riders Branch. Last year over five hundred machines and almost 1,000 people gathered around the Royal Navy War Memorial. This is slowly becoming a major south coast spectacle during Remembrancetide.

Later that day there will be a significant County presence at the live transmission of BBC's *Songs of Praise* from the Garrison Church in Aldershot. County and Branch Standards will play a key part in the service and Hampshire Branch representatives will be among the congregation.

Needless to say, staff, officers and members of the Royal British Legion will also be participating in the Remembrance Sunday Service at The Cenotaph. There will obviously be many other Services of Remembrance and wreath laying ceremonies taking place across the county of Hampshire and these are no more or less important than the big events staged nationally and at County level. We thank all those involved in the organisation of these events, those that participate and those that will stand at war memorials over the next few days to remember those that made the ultimate sacrifice.

STANDARD BEARERS

A sincere vote of thanks

Throughout the year County and Branch standard bearers have carried out their duties across Hampshire conscientiously, with panache, pride and precision at parades, services, events, festivals and funerals. They have never been busier than they are at the moment. Our thanks go out to County Parade Marshal Steve Forward for the professional way in which he has organised and carried out his ceremonial duties over the last year, to County Standard Bearer David Graham and his deputy Steve Slack and to all those who have carried the Standard so proudly in, what is a very public shop window - an act of service and duty that is very much appreciated by the public, the Armed Forces and everyone linked with the Royal British Legion. Well done boys and girls.

AND FINALLY

Just for fun (and a bottle of wine)

You may remember that, in the October edition of *Hampshire Link*, the secretary of Bishops Waltham & District, Ruth Harrison, challenged members to complete a wordsearch. If you completed and retained that little brain teaser and would like to win a bottle of wine Ruth has asked that you send your entry to her and she will present her prize to the winner of the wordsearch draw.

Mrs Ruth Harrison, 29 Trussell Crescent, Weeke, Winchester, SO22 6DY

LEST WE FORGET

Our sincere condolences to the family and friends of these members.

Mrs P Barker - Bordon

Mr P Cox - Lymington

Mrs E Johnson - Headley & District

Mr D Marvier - Bishop's Waltham

Mr W E Mussett - Netley & Hamble

Mrs K Parry - Farnborough

Mr P Purkiss - Copythorne & District

Mr W Raine - Netley & Hamble

Mr F L C Tucker - Netley & Hamble

SEND US YOUR NEWS

We would like to thank all those that have contributed to the November *Hampshire Link*. If you have anything particularly interesting, creative or different for our December edition, please let us know. Please forward this material to: johnas@hotmail.co.uk

ALL OTHER ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE CONTACT CENTRE ON 0808 8028080