

HALE BRANCH ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER – Issue 36

February 2025

Happy New Year everybody!

A bit late, but I hope you all have a happy and healthy 2025! And that the cold weather improves soon!

2024 was quite an eventful year for us – setting aside the upheaval caused in recent weeks in respect of the County Committee problems! As most of you will be aware, members of the County Committee, including our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Chairman, in fact every officer including myself and Marie, decided we had no alternative but to resign because of our perceived lack of support from the National officers and Membership Council when trying to do our duty. The outcome is that we are once again being administered by Membership Council, chaired by an MC representative, until such a time as the County is deemed to have a viable committee able to take over the reins again. One effect of this is that the County Conference scheduled for 25th January has now been postponed to an unspecified future date. I personally can see this process taking a considerable time but meanwhile our Branch will continue to operate unchanged. As progress is made, I will inform our members. It's just a shame that this should be the position just as the County was making headway in our relationship with the City Council and other bodies as witnessed by November's Gala Dinner.

Against that backdrop, we need to concentrate on doing our best to support our serving and veteran military personnel, especially with the Poppy Appeal. Although we still do not have final figures for the 2024 Appeal, I am confident that Hale Branch members and friends will have raised in excess of £60,000. Congratulations to all of you who gave up your time to help!

I would particularly mention one of our newest and oldest members – Eric Fawcett, who joined our branch on his return from Canada where he had been an active Legion member. Eric asked me for poppies to sell where he lives in sheltered accommodation in Fazakerley. He went well beyond that and with permission spent his

time in his local supermarket and raised more than £1550! Well done, Eric!



Eric's table

I mentioned the Gala Dinner above – a major success for our County and Hale Branch was the best represented on the night with us having 25 members and friends attending.



We also played an active part in the event for Blackie, the warhorse commemorated in Higher Road, with one of our members, Heather Charles, having worked so hard to ensure that his memory and that of his owner who was killed in WW1 was preserved when the RSPCA site was redeveloped.

Forthcoming events notable will include the 80th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day this year and hopefully we will be able to support Village celebrations and memories.

Sadly, since our last Newsletter, we have lost Steve Farrell, a longstanding Branch member, who passed away following surgery and whose funeral took place on 29th January in St Mary's, Hale. Steve and his wife, Janice, have played active roles in the village, especially in connection with church services – Janice actually led the service in respect of Blackie mentioned above, while Steve led the service on Remembrance Sunday. He will be missed.

We also heard that one of our most popular members, John Courtney, has suffered a heart attack and was admitted to Whiston Hospital. He is now home and making a good recovery. John hopes to move into a bungalow soon, which will make life easier for him. John and his family are grateful for all the good wishes sent to him. John is a wonderful man! He and his wife, Sylvia, many years ago adopted a young blind lad, James, whom they have raised along with their own family – when they selected James from Barnardo's, he couldn't walk or talk but they resisted attempts to persuade them that he would be too much of an undertaking. Since then, James, with John and occasionally Sylvia, has become a prolific marathon runner and together they have taken part if more that 100 Half Marathons and 50 Marathons, including London each year. James is now in his 40s and John and Sylvia have ensured that he has lived a full life. If anybody deserves to be blessed with a full recovery it is John and we wish him well.

I should also mention one of our newest members, our former County President Lt Colonel Tony Hollingsworth who has just been discharged from hospital after major surgery. Tony was chairman of the committee which raised the funds for the memorial to the Liverpool Pals in Lime Street Station a few years ago. Get well soon, Tony! And best wishes to all of you who are not in the best of health – we all hope you are soon better!

Finally, after several "false alarms" I have taken the first steps towards my retirement from the post of Branch Chairman! I will step down in December and my place will be taken by our current Vice Chair, Marie Fisher! I hope to stay active within the Branch in some capacity and will do my best to support Marie, our new Secretary Lesley Jackson and our Committee in any way I can.

Bill

Talking of the **Poppy Appeal** here are a couple of photos:-



Mike and Ben either side of a new volunteer Julia at Sainsburys, Woolton



2359 Woolton Squadron Cadets at Tesco, Woolton

Once again, thank you to everyone who gave their time to help us with the 2024 Poppy Appeal including **Armadillo, Hunts Cross** for kindly providing us with free storage space for our stock.



Zulu



On November 5th 2024, Maggie and I travelled to Fugitives Drift in Zululand, a beautiful hotel in a game reserve with giraffes and zebras roaming around. Upon settling in we were taken by a local guide to the Rorkes Drift where on 22nd January 1879 140 men, mostly of B Company 24th of Foot, defended the compound against 4,000 Zulu warriors. 351 Zulus were killed plus 17 British troops.

The compound was bigger than I thought but the escarpment where the Zulu warriors fired onto the enclosure was much closer than portrayed in the movie. The buildings are more or less in the same place which Maggie and I thought had an eerie feeling about it but not as much as the next day at Isandlwana where 1,400 24th of Foot defended the camp against 25,000 Zulu impi. They were overwhelmed in two hours and about 1,300 British troops died and 3,000 Zulu warriors. That battlefield was about 2 miles wide and the British dead weren't buried for about 4 months.

There are cairns (piles of white stones) marking the mass graves of where these brave men fell. The Zulu dead were taken to a nearby hill because the Zulu believed that they couldn't lie at the same place as their enemy.

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 Email lesleyj@huntscross.plus.com

Deadlines for inclusion are 15th 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 organised trips so if you would like to come along please contact:-

Marie Fisher marie.fisher@ymail.com or tel 07958 399252;

Bill Sergeant billtanat8@hotmail.co.uk or telephone 0151 724 3171

Both these actions were fought on the same day. We lost heavily in the morning but in the evening 11 VC medals were awarded for the Rorkes Drift defence. We laid wreaths and played the last post at both memorials.



The guide at Isandlwana's great grandfather was with the Zulu impi at that battle. The Zulus' fight as a buffalo head with the horns surrounding the enemy. That morning Right Horn wasn't involved in the battle so they wanted to blood their spears. Their leader Catchawio's brother was told not to cross the buffalo river and not to attack a British defended emplacement. He disobeyed both orders to attack the Drift and lost 351 warriors plus the wounded.

It fascinated Maggie and I and it was a bucket list for me to visit this place and I was lucky enough to make it there. Thanks to Maggie as she drove some horrible potholed roads to get me there.

Chris Everett

Dates for your Diary

This year we commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day - 8th May and VJ Day -15th August

Armed Forces Day -28th June

Look out for further details on our Facebook page.