Redditch Branch
Winter Newsletter

Greetings to you one and all. This past year has shown tremendous interest in the Royal British Legion and what we do both in Redditch and the UK. I would like to pay particular thanks to all the members of the committee that have made this year so successful for the branch. 12 months ago, we faced closure. I stepped in as Branch Chairman and formed a committee. We have moved from strength to strength during this year. As a branch we organised and supported the local Poppy Appeal and with a combined district of Redditch & Alvechurch we collected over **£55,000.** This year we held a successful coffee morning, organised the Remembrance Parde and Services and celebrated with our Awards & Christmas Party. We purchase a new RBL gazebo that was only made possible through the fundraising efforts of Simon Hobson at HS2 site. Look out for our new gazebo at events in 2025.On behalf of the committee, we wish you a peaceful Christmas and prosperous New Year

Gerry Marsden Chairman

September Mayor Juma Begum Civic Ceremony Forge Mill Museum

Lovely event organised by the Mayor where we were able to support the charitable and community work that Mayor Juma Begum is passionate about.

Celebrating Diversity and finding out more about Bangladeshi heritage. A wonderful venue for a civic ceremony for the community.

Chairman Gerry Marsden and Mayor Juma Begum, in the centre

Proudly displaying the Standards, Mark Evans and Simon Hobson with Nick Walker centre rear from the Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club.

The branch had the sad duty of attending the funeral of one of our own, Rex Hamilton supported by members of 37th Signal Regiment. He will be missed but never forgotten.

Saturday 5th October Coffee Morning Ecumenical Centre

Huge thanks to the Ecumenical Centre for hosting this well attended event. Look out for future events in 2025.

An opportunity to get together and enjoy a cuppa and a slice of cake.

Raffle fundraised **£80**.

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Lovely to get together with the community and extend our warmest welcome to Astwood Bank Chairman Mark Banwell as we provide mutual support to each other.

We took the opportunity to undertake some Standard Bearer training. If you would like to be a Standard Bearer, then please contact redditch.secretary@rbl.community for more details.

Poppy Power: Local Care Home Resident, June, Knits Her Way into the Hearts of Veterans!

Veterans Visit Care Home to Honor June's Efforts and Celebrate with Oktoberfest Fun. The residents of Bowood Court Care Home in Redditch were buzzing with excitement as one of their own, June Cooke, aged 93, pledged to knit 90 hand-crafted poppies for her local Royal British Legion (RBL) branch. June's poppies will be part of a special window display at the Kingfisher Centre in November, commemorating Remembrance Day. Moved by her heartfelt contribution, representatives from the RBL Redditch paid a personal visit to Bowood Court to express their gratitude in style.

When the Activities and Wellbeing Team at Bowood Court shared news of June's project with the RBL, the veterans were so touched by her dedication that they decided to visit June in person. Dressed in their formal suits and medals, they arrived with a beautiful bouquet of flowers as a token of appreciation. They spent time with June, discussing her contribution and their own plans for the Remembrance display.

"We were absolutely thrilled when June took on this amazing project to support our Remembrance Day efforts," said a representative from RBL Redditch. "Her commitment to crafting these poppies by hand is deeply appreciated, and we couldn't wait to thank her in person. "June's visit from the veterans turned into a special day for the entire care home. The RBL members, who had come to pay tribute to June, ended up visiting with other veteran residents at Bowood Court, sharing stories from their time in the armed forces and reminiscing about their experiences. The event took an unexpected festive turn as the veterans joined in on Bowood's Oktoberfest

celebrations, sampling traditional German food and beer alongside residents. Frankfurters, beer tastings, and music filled the home with warmth and joy.

To top it all off, the RBL even brought along their Remembrance Moped, adorned with poppies and symbols of remembrance. Much to everyone's delight, June couldn't resist taking a seat on the bike, sparking laughter and smiles all around.

June's poppy-making mission is part of her commitment to honour and remember the sacrifices of those who served. The Royal British Legion's special visit made the project even more meaningful, highlighting the community spirit and shared sense of remembrance that lives on in Redditch.

Words kindly provided by Maree Leadbeater from Adept Homes.

Poppy Appeal 2024

The Redditch branch and volunteers were out in force to raise funds to provide financial, social and emotional support to serving and ex-servicemen and women and their families. This year's appeal was launched at the Kingfisher Centre by members of the

branch, poppy appeal co-ordinators Gerry Marsden and Nicki Farnes. The event was attended by the Mayor Councillor Juma Begum, Chris Bloore Member of Parliament, and Armed Forces Champion Councillor Sharon Harvey.

Mr Marsden who has held the role of poppy appeal co-ordinator in Redditch for eight years, said: “Our honorary guest, 93 years young June Cooke from Bowood Court Care Home, was one of our amazing volunteers who knitted and crochet poppies for the window display in the Kingfisher Centre and also for donations.”

Remembrance Dinner Dance Saturday 9th November

A fantastic event organised by James Shotbolt and the team at Redditch Cricket, Hockey, Rugby & Squash Club. There was plenty of entertainment including Shirley Pipe Band, vintage singer Helen Pearson, violinist, a roast dinner a silent auction and raffle that raised a total of **£650** for the Poppy Appeal.

Remembrance Parade & Service Sunday 10th November

The community came together over the weekend to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Hundreds of residents, veterans, community groups and dignitaries lined the streets to mark Remembrance Sunday with services and parades held across Redditch to honour the fallen.

In Redditch town centre, the local branch of the Royal British Legion hosted the Remembrance Parade on Sunday (November 10). Residents gathered at the St Stephen's War Memorial at Church Green West at around 10.45am for a moving and poignant service to remember those who served and lost their lives. In a post, Mayor of Redditch Councillor Juma Begum said: "It was one of the greatest honours of my life to deliver a speech today in remembrance of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.

"The people of Redditch came together as a community to reflect, remember, and show our deep appreciation for the servicemen and women who have served and continue to serve our nation.

The public WW1 and WW2 War Memorial for Headless Cross is situated within the grounds of The Bridge Church (formerly known as St Luke’s Church), Evesham Road.

A Remembrance Sunday service, starting at 1015 hrs, was held the main church building for about 30 minutes. This included an address to the congregation by the

Service Leader, Roger Ling, the Licensed Lay Minister. His talk was centred around the guiding values/principles of the Royal British Legion including, selflessness, accountability, and integrity. He had 5 prepared large, printed cards with each of these qualities on and invited junior members of Cubs, Brownies and Boys' and Girls' Brigades to stand at the front and hold them so everyone could see them. There were over 260 people in church, of whom 130 or so were uniformed Scouts, Guides and Boys' and Girls' Brigades, ranging in ages from about 7 to early twenties. Most of the remainder were their parents and local people. It was pleasing to see men aged only in their forties or fifties wearing medals such as the 1962 GSM and some UN variants. It was refreshing for all present to be reminded of personal values and characteristics that we should all hold dear and the emphasis on what TRBL continues to do the for AF community, including its dependants. At about 1050 the participants filed outside to the war memorial, to be greeted by sunshine. The uniformed youth groups formed up with parents and others behind. One of the church members had provided a good public/address sound system. This included fine recordings of a bugler playing the Last Post and Reveille. Julian Grubb Armed Forces Veteran had the privilege of reciting Binyon's exhortation prior to the 2 minutes silence. The service concluded with a hearty rendition of the National Anthem. The latter part of the service was necessarily sombre, but it was heartening to see the melding of sorrow and sacrifice with hope for the future that Roger's sermon had emphasised.

On Monday Armistice Day at 1100 hrs, a few gathered at the same War Memorial to observe the 2 minutes silence.

Courtesy of Julian Grubb Redditch Royal British Legion Member, Armed Forces Veteran and Warden of the Bridge Church, Headless Cross.

Armistice Service Monday 11th November

ARMISTICE Day (Monday, November 11) was marked in Redditch with a short but poignant service at the war memorial in Plymouth Road.

The service was led by Revd Canon Paul Lawlor and attended by members of the Redditch Royal British Legion, additional veterans, councillors, including mayor Coun Juma Begum, representatives from the emergency services and members of the public.

The commemoration was also attended by young people and children from Birchensale Middle School who attended for the first time since Covid-19 pandemic with their headteacher Emma James.

Pupils laid their wreaths and watched teaching assistant Amy Gray play the Last Post and Reveille on cornet.

She said: “They hear about Remembrance Day and actually coming and visiting makes them more aware as it contextualises it for them.

“We did a big assembly in school and participating in the service helps us to remember how important it is and that it commemorates the people of Redditch who lost their lives fighting for us.”

Mrs James emphasised how important it was for the pupils to attend and pledged they would be back next year.

Redditch United Football Club Remembrance Game

Monday 11th November - Remembrance Football Game at Redditch United F.C. Thank you to all that attended and donated to the Poppy Appeal, **£369.53**.

Annual General Meeting

The branch AGM was held on Tuesday 19th November where the new RBL gazebo was proudly displayed along with the stand to display the Standard and Union Flag.

Elected Officers:
Gerry Marsden – Chairman
Juliet Brunner – Vice – Chairman
Secretary – Mark Evans
Treasurer – Paul Stringfellow

President Philip Jarvis Remarks:
At the last AGM 12 months ago, it was a sinking ship, but the new Captain Gerry Marsden manned the lifeboats and has steered us from the collision course and into calmer waters. Thank to Gerry and the whole committee and we look forward to 2025. Thanks to Mark Evans who appears to get the minutes of meetings out within hours of a meeting. Thanks to Gerry for everything and to Juliet for her calm and flowing control during Remembrance Sunday and the wreath laying. I am reminded of my Father who was a founding member in 1921 and how proud he would be at this branch and everything it has achieved.

Awards & Christmas Party

The branch hosted this event on Saturday 7th December at Pitcheroak Golf Club. This was a sold-out event which truly shows the wonderful support and continued success of the branch during 2024.

Award Winners

Rex Hamilton Award – Gerry Marsden
Pete Styler Award – Simon Hobson
Kenneth Jarvis Award – Jason Phillimore
Chairmans Shield – Mark Evans
Community Shield – Redditch Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club
Special Recognition Awards – Juliet Brunner, Gethin Farnes, Mount Carmel Church

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2025 Dates for the Diary

Standard Bearer Training – County (Feb/Mar 2025)
VE Day 80 (08 May 2025)
Armed Forces Day (29 June 2025)
Redditch Pride (June 2025)
100th Anniversary Garden of Remembrance (26 July 2025)
VJ Day 80 (15 Aug 2025)
Poppy Appeal (Oct-Nov 2025)
County Standard Bearer Competition – Oct 2025
Remembrance Sunday & Armistice Day
Awards & Christmas Party (Dec 2025)

Poppy Appeal 2024
£55,000

Branch Committee Details	
Chairman: Gerald Marsden	**Vice Chairman: Juliet Brunner**
Treasurer: Paul Stringfellow	**email: Redditch.Treasurer@RBL.Community**
Secretary: Mark Evans	**email: Redditch.Secretary@RBL.Community**
BCC Rep: Tina Ashcroft	**email: Redditch.BCS@RBL.Community**

REDDITCH BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
WE WISH YOU A
MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR