



# The Royal British Legion

## Banwell Branch

### Newsletter – May 2024

Patron: His Majesty The King

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**Chair's Foreword** - Once again, the speed at which time passes never ceases to amaze me! Already we are nearly half-way through the year and it's time for me to write my introduction to the May 2024 edition of our Newsletter.

I have to make an apology to you all as in February's issue I said "we are emerging from the grip of winter and looking forward to Spring and colour once again gracing our land as spring flowers begin to emerge" – well I was right on one count in that Spring has graced us with colour however I am not sure we have fully emerged from the grip of Winter!

This month we say farewell to Meg Slingo our Chaplin, as she will be a Superintendent when she moves onto pastures new in the Bude and Holsworthy Methodist Circuit – on behalf of the Branch thank you for your support and we wish you all the best for your future. Her Farewell Service at Churchill Methodist Chapel will take place on 28 July – Tea at 5pm and the service at 6.30. All are welcome to attend.

As a Branch we look forward to commemorating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings. Jointly with Banwell-Potigny Twinning Association and Friends of Banwell Primary School we will be putting on an Afternoon Cream Tea on Sat 8 Jun 24 at Banwell Castle from 3.00pm. More details will follow and tickets will be on sale soon. I hope to see many of you there.

**Penny Mottram**  
Chair

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## From the Secretary



Just a few photographs from the lunch at the Full Quart on 27 April; a good turnout of 20. Tom acknowledged Clifford Hobbs 99<sup>th</sup> birthday - the first formal opportunity to do so. We also said goodbye to the Rev Meg Slingo, our RBL Chaplain, as this was her last event with the Banwell RBL before moving to her new post in North Cornwall to which Penny has already referred. He too thanked for her work and contributions during her time with us and wished her well in the new post.

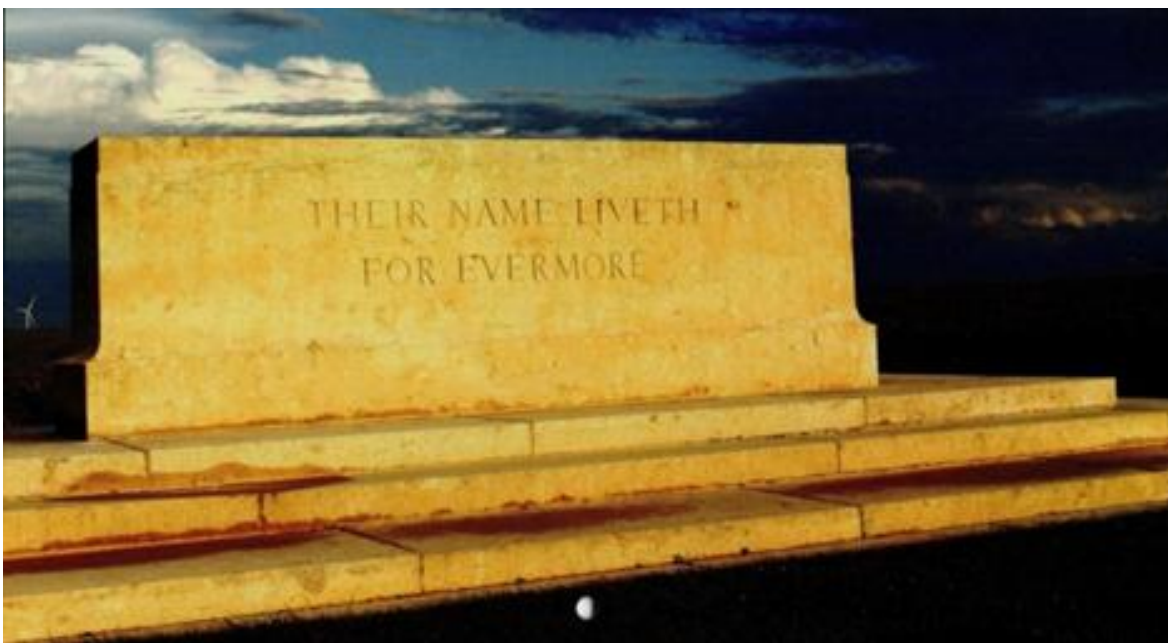
The next event is our branch meeting on 16 May when we welcome Dr Glyn Hayes, who will give a talk on the RNLI. Hopefully you have seen the posters around the village and in the May Parish Magazine, that guests are also welcome to attend. Do bring your friends and neighbours as it will be a very interesting talk, particularly as the RNLI celebrate 200 years.

On 21 March Kate Groves gave a presentation on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which provided a good understanding of the breadth and depth of the work of the Commission as well as giving detail on the grave in Banwell Churchyard.

Kate also told us about the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) Cemetery at Ecoust-St. Mein in France, this was established by the 7th Division in Spring 1917, when casualties of the 2nd HAC were buried in Plot 1, Row A. The inscription chosen was attributed to selection by Rudyard Kipling.

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“Their Name Liveth For Evermore” – *Rudyard Kipling*



Honourable Artillery Company Cemetery, Ecoust-St. Mein

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She also informed us regarding the CWGC responsibility for significant war memorials. One example was the Vimy Memorial, There are 20 symbolic figures on this monument including those that represent Justice, Truth, Knowledge, Gallantry, Sympathy with Peace at the top.



The Vimy Memorial

From Kate Groves we learnt a little about Arthur Reuben Thomas who is buried in St Andrews Churchyard and a few photocopies of documents relating to him were left with me in case anyone is interested in following up more information. Alternatively, if anyone knows of any of Arthur's family still living in Banwell then please inform me as they may be interested.

Once the format of the June branch meeting has been finalised, I shall send round an email (or by post/hand) to let you know what the Committee has managed to arrange. With so many 80<sup>th</sup> commemorations this summer it has not been the easiest of decisions to reflect them all and the

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Committee is still working on that content. This of course is over and above the D-Day commemorations to which Penny has already referred on 8 June.

Finally - don't forget too to put the date of the October dinner in your diary and please let me know if you have any recommendations about menu for that evening.

**Gill Fawcitt**  
**Secretary**

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### **From the Membership Secretary**

I am pleased to report that all Branch members aged 99 or over have now been being awarded free Centenarian membership by the RBL. Clifford (Hobbs) congratulations on both reaching 99 and now being a member for free!

Our membership currently stands at 49. To help increase our numbers have you thought about inviting a friend or your neighbour to one of our speaker's events. We need to increase our numbers so that we can look at Committee succession planning. Members do not need to have served in the Forces.

**Penny Mottram,**  
**Membership Secretary**

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## 2024 Poppy Appeal

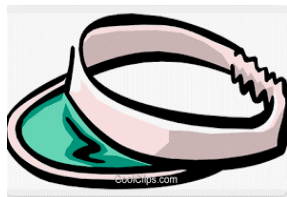
This will be the last year for Martin Hemmings as our Poppy Appeal Co-ordinator, he has served us well through his hard work and devotion to task. Our loyal band of Appeal Supporters will see to it that he is fully supported this year.

I have offered to take over as Appeal Co-ordinator from 2025 onwards and look forward to working with our volunteers in the future. I'll be in touch with them soon to plan for 2025.

**Tony Lyndon**  
Appeal Supporter

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## Editor's News



Not much from me other than to say that I look forward to the RNLI presentation at May's meeting. Can I have any articles, for inclusion in the next newsletter, by 28 Jul 24. Please see the 2024 Branch Meetings and Events Diary noting that our **branch meetings will start at 7 pm/19.00**, thank you.

**Tony Lyndon, Editor**

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## RNLI Presentation – May 24 Meeting



This year the RNLI will be celebrating their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We look forward to welcoming Dr Glyn Hayes from Weston RNLI who will give a short presentation on the work of the Institution. It will be good to get an update on the involvement of the RNLI in re-establishing a boathouse and deep-water launch site on Birnbeck Island. This should have a marked effect on their response times towards "Saving Lives at Sea".

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## Tales from 955 Sqn



955 Squadron (Royal Auxiliary Air Force) were headquartered at Banwell Castle between 1941-44. They flew barrage balloons around the local area to protect the Bristol Aeroplane Company's "shadow" aircraft factories.

Occasionally the Balloon Squadron was called on for support to other operations as an unexpected visitor dropped into Sandford station.

From the Operations Log:

*17 Dec 42 – At 2205 hrs Sgt Stefhmchuck (Navigator) of No 22 (OTU), RAF GAYDON, Warwickshire phoned to say that he had bailed out of a Wellington Mk III and landed safely near Sandford station. According to Sgt Stefhmchuck the Wellington lost height rapidly and appeared to be out of control, he was ordered to bail out by the pilot. The Flying Control Officer RUDLOE advised that the aircraft had returned to its base. Weston-s-Mare and Banwell police were informed of the incident also the Duty Officer at LOCKING CAMP. Sgt Stefhmchuck was taken to LOCKING CAMP for the night by the Banwell police.*



Vickers Wellington

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## Contact Us



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## 2024 Branch Meetings and Events Diary

Please note that guests are welcome at all meetings but if there is to be food the Secretary would appreciate advance notice so that she knows the numbers attending and can order sufficient food.

<u>Dates of Branch meetings for 2024</u> (As at 1 May 2024)	<u>Branch Meeting start time of 1900 unless notified otherwise</u> <b>The Committee have speakers in mind for the respective branch meetings but have yet to confirm some of them. They also plan to look at what speakers for 2025 at the May Committee meeting so that a comprehensive programme can be produced well in advance for 2025.</b>
<b>16 May</b>	Branch Meeting Speaker from the <b>RNLI</b> - Dr Glyn Hayes. The <b>RNLI</b> is <b>200 years old this year</b> . Will include an update on Birnbeck Pier, Weston Super Mare
<b>8 June</b>	<b>D-Day Commemorations at The Banwell Castle in the afternoon – cream tea 3 – 6pm. Details on the poster</b>
<b>20 June</b>	'Bring a Buddy' night with food brought by those attending as in an American Supper. The idea is to bring a friend or neighbour and some food for a social get together. However, if you are reading this please feel free to come and chat to others but bring some item of food.
<b>22 June</b>	Weston Super Mare Armed Forces Day
<b>19 September</b>	Branch Meeting – Speaker still to be approached
<b>17 October</b>	<b>AGM</b> with a speaker yet to be invited but Committee have someone in mind.
<b>26 October</b>	<b>Dinner at The Full Quart – 1830 for 1900</b>
<b>10 November</b>	Remembrance Sunday
<b>11 November</b>	Remembrance Day
<b>21 November</b>	Branch Meeting – Musical Evening of fun?

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