



Charity Number 219279

Stowmarket & District Branch – BR0842

JUNE 2025

**THE NEXT BRANCH MEETING
TAKES PLACE ON THURSDAY 5TH JUNE at 1930 HOURS,
RBL CLUB, TAVERN STREET IP14 1PH**

V E Day 80

Thank you to all members, helpers, volunteers and organisations that supported the VE Day 80 events at the United Reformed Church on 5th May and the RBL Club lunch event on 8th May.

The URC event was well attended and the stall holders all raised good funds for their various causes, raising in total £695.63 (we are still waiting a total for refreshments by Jam Pot Community but that did very well – they had to keep going back to ASDA for more bacon!!). The Stowmarket Concert Band put on a great show for us and the short ceremony, led by Reverend Richard Stretch, with the Parade Marshal, Branch and Veteran Standards Bearers in attendance, aptly concluded a day of celebration and reflection. Local World War 2 Veteran Jim Grant, who turned 100 last December, was not able to be with us, as he had invitations to attend the events in London at Buckingham Palace; it was great that Jim was able to attend those 80th anniversary celebrations



(see more pictures at end of newsletter)

During the event Rachel and I were surprised by a presentation by ASDA, who in celebrating their 60th anniversary, have given Diamond Awards to community volunteers. Thank you, Emma and ASDA Stowmarket, we are humbled that you chose us as a recipient of this award, as there are many great volunteer “heroes” in the Stowmarket community (although most people preferred the chocolate variety we shared during the day!)



The lunch at the RBL Club on 8th May was also well attended and enjoyed by all. The event took place in the presence of the new Town Mayor, Cllr David Child together with his consort (on their first Town Mayoral event) and the local MP, Peter Prinsley and his guest. Everyone was entertained by Tyler Kemp.

The club facebook page has photos and videos from this event. Branch President David Matthews and Branch Secretary Fiona Buchele represented us at this event. Thank you, Kelly Griffiths and the Club Committee, for putting on this great event.

We were supported with a £1500.00 grant from the Mid-Suffolk District Councillors James Patchett, Lorraine Baker, Colin Lay, Miles Row, Keith Scarff and Terence Carter (immediate past Town Mayor).and we are grateful to them all for their support.

Elsewhere, on 8th May, Rachel and I attended the VE80 national service at Westminster Abbey. It was a long morning which started with a route march around the perimeter of Westminster Abbey before queueing and gaining entry. We were able to see from a distance the Royals and the politicians. Many of the politicians filed past us out of the Abbey at the end of the service. It was a good service, great to experience the atmosphere and we caught up with a few people we knew within the RBL as we came away. This will be a memorable event and a highlight during my time as Branch Chair.



VJ Day 80 – Friday 15th August 2025

The arrangements are being finalised within the next few weeks, and we will send full details out to members with the next update and invitations to the Veterans organisations. There will be a service of commemoration and wreath laying at the Memorial Gates in the morning (time tbc) followed by a lunch event at the RBL Club.

George Ward Service

On Sunday 11th May, the Branch President, David Matthews, Branch Secretary, Fiona Buchele and Branch Deputy Standard Bearer Gary Quinn attended the annual George Ward Service at Onehouse Church, where Sgt George Ward is buried organised by the 1331 Squadron Air Training Corps. Sgt George Frederick Ward was a member of 1331 Squadron in the early 1940s and unfortunately died when his aircraft, a Halifax bomber, JD105 crashed in North Yorkshire.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE – 16TH – 18TH May at Harrogate

Harrogate is a great spa town with lots of eateries and a couple of great parks/ open spaces and of course RHS Harlow Carr gardens. On the Friday we attended the RBL Women's Section forum which is always a friendly and enjoyable occasion, meeting up with members and friends from all over the country. The Women's Section continue to carry out great fund-raising for the welfare schemes and donated £150,000.00 towards refurbishment of the family room in each of the six RBL Care Homes. During the past year the Women's Section had made other welfare payments and grants (President's Scholarship Award, Welfare Grants and WS Allowance) totalling £220,384.88. This is in addition to their ongoing support to the friends and family of the Invictus Games competitors.

At the RBL Conference on the Saturday, the RBL launched their new 10 years strategy. The "strategy on a page" document, a double-sided colour document summarising the strategy was sent out to all members with a registered email address (and opted into communications) on Saturday 17th May, around lunchtime, so please check your inboxes for this, otherwise, a copy is attached with this email. Of interest to Stowmarket is that as part of the connect and support strategies, the RBL is looking at providing more support to RBL Clubs. In a recent survey of members, 70% identified Clubs as being crucial to the future of the RBL and this has been adopted within the strategy. This is being led by the new Director General of the RBL, who visited Stowmarket Club last August and met members from around Suffolk and took away a

lot of input and constructive comment for consideration; we believe this has helped with developing the strategy, which we look forward to hearing more about over the coming months.



With the visitors from RBL Canada



and their badges of office

There were the usual reports from the Board of Trustees and RBL executive, the awards ceremonies, Motions (nothing controversial, and an interesting idea to introduce gift membership), the Membership forum and the Parade on the Sunday morning with wreath laying at Harrogate War Memorial followed by the closing ceremony, all concluding at 3pm on the Sunday afternoon.

On the Saturday evening, there was an excellent performance in the Royal Hall, adjacent to the Harrogate Conference Centre, by the Humberside Police Concert Band. The band raise a lot of money for the RBL.

We look forward to attending next year in Brighton.

Dates for Diary

Remembrance 2025:

Friday 24th October 2025: Launch of the Stowmarket Poppy Appeal

Friday 31st October 2025: Armistice Dinner

Sunday 9th November: Remembrance Sunday

Tuesday 11th November: Armistice Day

Further update in July.

REGARDS

VIVIAN OAKLEY

BRANCH CHAIR

EMAIL: Stowmarket.Chairman@RBL.Community



Enthusiastic and happy fund-raisers



History Society VE 80 memories



The Stowmarket Concert Band



The Women's Section Stowmarket



The service



Jason Sewell, Parade Marshal



Strategy Meeting for the next event!



