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THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION ANTWERP BRANCH

Tweemaandelijkse Newsletter November - December 2023

Verantwoordelijke uitgever:

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Talk to The Hand



In this edition

Editorial	2
Branch diary	4
Membership renewal	5
Christmas Lunch	6
Christmas Bazaar	6-7
V-bombs remembrance	7
Kalmthout memorial	8
Wuustwezel memorial	8
Inauguration Black Hand	8-10
Poppy Appeal	10
Did you know	11-12
Every name matters	13
UNESCO World Heritage	13-14
Meet the committee	14
Committee	15

EDITORIAL

There has been some confusion over renewing membership. Renewing your membership via Paypal, an English cheque or by calling the overseas telephone number is still possible. However, if you have been renewing your membership by paying into the Belgian bank account number of The Royal British Legion Antwerp branch, we want to ask you to not do so anymore and pay directly on the English account number:

Payee: Charles Novacraft Direct Ltd re RBL IBAN:
GB91NWBK60720170076359
BIC: NWBKGB2L

Make sure to mention these 3 things: 1) your membership number, (which can be found on your membership card, 2) renewal of membership and 3) the Antwerp branch.

Best wishes

Frison Patricia
Newsletter Editor

Do you have an e-mail address?

You will receive your Newsletter **quicker** by e-mail and will also receive any last-minute notifications. Send your e-mail to the editor to get this newsletter by e-mail in the future and **save TRBL both paper and postage costs.**

Also, please, if you change your e-mail address, notify Sid at sid-wilkins@hotmail.com

RBL ANTWERP OPEN EVENING

WHEN? Every first Thursday of the month

**WHERE? Café Highlander, Stadswaag 21, Antwerp at
19:30 hrs**

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR HOME & HOSPITAL VISITS

We are looking for volunteers who would be happy to visit Branch Members who are not mobile, well, or in hospital, as part of the Branch Community Support Scheme.

No special training is needed just common sense and a sense of humour.

Interested? Please contact Mary Ann:

0486 646 941 (evenings) or

Maryann.marinus@hotmail.com



*Want to
join the team?*

RBL Antwerp Branch HELP LINE: 0486 646 941
(Mary Ann Marinus.)

If someone is ill, or needs a visit, please **DO** call.



RBL BRANCH DIARY

November

	What	Where	Time	Extra details
25/11/2023	MTS Christmas Bazaar. TRBL will man the bar – if you can help please let Sid know.	Antwerp Harbour Hotel, Noorderlaan 100 2030 Antwerp	11:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs	For further information and tombola tickets, contact Dora Jolly, 0475 22 99 65, aljolly@busmail.net or Sharmini Jacobs, 0486 70 98 32, sharminijacobs@yahoo.co.uk

December

	What	Where	Time	Extra details
07/12/2023	RBL Open evening	Café de Highlander, Stadswaag 21, Antwerp	19:30 hrs	
16/12/2023	Christmas dinner RBL	Basiliek, Trooststraat 202-22, 2650 Edegem	12:30 hrs	R.S.V.P. steveandsuzy@skynet.be

January

	What	Where	Time	Extra details
19/01/2023	Centenary of The Royal British Legion Antwerp Branch	City hall Antwerp	17:00 hrs	Details will follow

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

There are a couple of ways to renew your membership of The Royal British Legion, Antwerp Branch: You can either renew online at:

<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/things-to-do/membership/become-a-member>

However, we have seen some issues in the past with overseas bank cards not being accepted for this payment method. If you have a Paypal-account you should not experience problems.

OR

The recommended payment method is directly to London. This is easily done by making a bank transfer ('overschrijving') from your Belgian bank account in Euros using the following details:

Payee: Charles Novacraft Direct Ltd re RBL

IBAN: GB91NWBK60720170076359

BIC: NWBKGB2L

This way there will be no delay in receiving your new membership card.

Current Membership is € 33 per year (this includes the Standard Membership, plus a small Branch Fee).

Please ensure when using this method that the reference contains your [Membership Number](#) and your [full name](#), plus [Antwerp Branch BR3410](#).

Whichever way you choose to renew, please send an email to Antwerp.memsecretary@rbl.community to confirm that you have joined and you will be added to our mailing list which will keep you up to date on Branch matters and upcoming functions.

NEW MEMBERS If you know someone who would like to join the Legion, they can join in the same ways as per above but add [New Member](#) to your reference.

Alternatively, you can contact our Membership Secretary Zoe for guidance, her details are shown at the end of this newsletter.

16 DECEMBER: CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Please join us for a lovely dinner at the restaurant the Basiliek on Saturday 16 December. There will be a reception including cava, fruit juice and some nibbles which will start at 12:30 hrs. The dinner will start at 13:00 hrs. Cauliflower soup (bloemkoolsoep) will be served as an appetiser, followed by Archiduc turkey breast (kalkoenfilet Archiduc), accompanied by grilled tomatoes (gegratineerde tomaten) Brussels sprouts (spruitjes) and croquettes. The dessert will be ice-cream and there will be coffee and candy. **Drinks are not included and should be paid separately.**

If you are very good, Santa might make a visit!

Price: € 38 p.p. Please pay before the 9th of December at the latest. Pay to our RBL bank account BE53 9730 0871 2553

Details: Name + Number of participants + Christmas lunch

Address: Restaurant De Basiliek Trooststraat 20-22 B-2650 Edegem For more information call Steve Cook: 0496 99 56 29

MTS CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Dear RBL member

Greetings from Mission to Seafarers Antwerp.

As the Christmas season unfolds, we find ourselves reflecting on the incredible journey we've embarked upon and are grateful for the support of individuals like you who have been a beacon of hope for our cause.

This Christmas we are excited to share some of the remarkable strides we've taken towards the seafarers who pass through the Port of Antwerp:

- Fr June, our Chaplain, regularly visit six (6) to eight (8) ships per week on both left and right banks of river Scheldt of the port of Antwerp reaching out to the needs of seafarers.
- Some of our committee members help, weekly, in the Welfare shop for seafarers
- This year we were able to conduct a programme called 'Safe Talk' which was course instrumental in promoting the welfare of seafarers and training Port Chaplains and volunteers as Suicide Alert Helpers empowering them to take action using the TALK steps – Tell, Ask, Listen, and Keep Safe.
- Fr June also took part in the VRT Max programme called Mijn God – De Haven.
- Further we continue to help in the packing of over 300 Christmas gifts for Seafarers who pass through the port of Antwerp at Christmas time.

These are some of the projects we have been able to achieve with your support, and we invite you to join us once again in making a profound difference in the lives we touch.

Tombola tickets are also available – purchase of these will also help raise funds for the MtS.

Alternately you can also consider making a Christmas donation to the MTS Antwerp bank account: IBAN BE70 7310 2819 3225 BIC KREDBEBB with the note 'donation'. Your gift, no matter the size, will help us continue our work to the Seafarers.

Your belief in our mission is the foundation upon which we build a brighter future. Together, we can create lasting change that resonates far beyond Christmas.

Thank you for your support and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to making the world a better place. Wishing you and your loved ones a meaningful Christmas season

Father June Mark Yañez, Port Chaplain/MtS Antwerp

MTS Christmas Bazaar 25 November, 11:00-16:00 hrs

Stalls with traditional British Christmas food, Christmas cards, books, Trash & Treasure, bottle draw and much more...

Tombola (tickets 1 Euro)

The cafeteria and bar are open from 11.00 to 16.00 hrs, serving hot food, cakes and drinks.

For further information and tombola tickets, please contact Dora Jolly: 0475/22 99 65 - aljolly@busmail.net or Sharmini Jacobs: 0486 70 98 32 sharminijacobs@yahoo.co.uk

13 OCTOBER: REMEMBRANCE V-BOMBS CAMPAIGN

There was a memorial service in Antwerp to remember the V-bombs campaign on the city. In 1944 the first V-bomb was dropped in Antwerp in the Schildersstraat which caused significant devastation. German forces launched V-1 and V-2 rockets, with the latter being more advanced. These attacks aimed to disrupt Allied supply lines through the port of Antwerp. Despite efforts to defend against them, the V-bombs inflicted damage and casualties, impacting the city and its strategic importance during the conflict.



15 OCTOBER: REMBRANCE OF THE LIBERATION OF KALMTHOUT

The liberation of Kalmthout occurred during World War II when Allied forces, particularly Canadian and British troops, liberated the town from German occupation. This event took place in the later stages of 1944 as part of a broader effort to push the Germans out of Belgium and the Netherlands. The liberation brought an end to the hardships faced by the local population and marked a significant step towards the Allies' victory in the region. A memorial service was held in Kalmthout to remember this day.

21 OCTOBER: REMEMBRANCE LIBERATION OF WUUSTWEZEL

This year it was 79 years ago that Wuustwezel was liberated. This has been commemorated at the monument that carries the emblems of the divisions that helped, more specifically those of the Polar Bears (UK) and the Timberwolves (US).



22 OCTOBER: INAUGURATION OF THE BLACK HAND

There was an inauguration of a statuette called the 'Zwarte Hand' in the town hall of Niel, in remembrance of the Belgian WWII resistance members. Gerry Gallagher, one of our members, recited a poem he had written himself in honour of that occasion, accompanied by Danny Moortgat on the harmonica.



This is one of the poems he recited.

THE BLACK HAND.

The Resistance movement was started, to carry on the fight
 The Verger of Tisselt Marcel De Mol, and Auguste Vivijns
 For the love of their Country, it fortified their stand
 To make a list of the Collaborators, all traitors to their Land
 The lists of names buried in bottles, would stay hidden in the ground
 So after the war, the names of the Collaborators would be found
 The traitors' names they would be known, and pay dearly for their crimes
 Some would get the death sentence, and some would just do time
 The Resistance from Klein Brabant, Rupelstreek to Brussels
 Distributing all the leaflets, it was dangerous and a struggle
 They painted the V for Victory, on the gable end of walls
 When people saw the V for Victory, they stood up proud and tall
 At the German Airfield in Hingene, where sabotage it was staged
 A large fuel tank it was ruptured, and it's contents it was drained
 Then on the 21st of July, it's is Belgium's National day
 The National Anthem from their radio sender, it was boldly played
 The call to resist the Nazi's, their message it was clear
 Our Nation had to stand up proud, and we would show no fear
 Petrus Demul and Josef Thijs, distributing leaflets during curfew
 Got caught by the Military Police, and into prison they flew

Nine days after they were arrested, a selective round-up it proceeded
 From the tortured men the Nazi's got the information that they needed
 It was at the Church in Tisselt, that's where the Gestapo pounced
 A list of Resistance members , of the Black Hand it was found
 The one hundred and eleven names, that they found on that list
 All the members were arrested, not one member had they missed
 Now in the hands of the Gestapo, and every one was quizzed
 Then sent to prison in Mechelen, where their torture would persist
 Many were sent to Fort Breendonk, where death was the daily ritual
 Where the Nazi's killing resistance and political prisoners was habitual
 Some were sent to Sint Gilles, Antwerp and various prisons
 To Concentration camps where for the Nazi's, murder was their mission
 From Bergen Belsen there were survivors, and all thanks to the Allies
 Due to British liberating the camp, some of the Black hand they survived

From the hundred and eleven resistance members,
 who were caught way back then
 There were only thirty-seven survivors, who returned back home again.
 Their suffering has not been forgotten, and the Incarceration it took its toll
 For the Black Hand stood up for their Country,
 the heroes who gave their all

Gerry Gallagher - 25 05 2023

28th OF OCTOBER POPPY APPEAL

On Saturday 28 October, the RBL Antwerp Branch was out in force on the Antwerp Meir for the annual Poppy Appeal, as usual with the help of the fantastic Red Hackle Pipe Band and Highland Dancers. A big heartfelt thank you to everyone who came out, helped, or stopped by to collect their poppy.

By donating to the Poppy Appeal, you are helping us provide ongoing vital support to the Armed Forces community, ensuring their unique contribution is never forgotten. Your poppy shows you care.



DID YOU KNOW

THE EVOLUTION OF THE POPPY

You might have already noticed during this year's Poppy Appeal that the new Poppy is entirely plastic-free. Made entirely from paper, the plastic-free poppy is available alongside stock of the existing poppy design to reduce waste, and can be recycled in ordinary paper recycling collections.

The new poppy is made from renewable wood fibers and paper offcuts created during the production of coffee cups, and its introduction will cut the carbon emissions of poppy production by 40%.

Since emerging as a symbol of Remembrance after the First World War, poppies worn during the Poppy Appeal have come in a range of shapes and sizes.



The first poppies

The first poppies used silk for the petals, wire for the stem, and bitumen – a semi-hard petroleum - for the centre.

There were four different poppies designed to suit different budgets, from a large poppy made from silk, a smaller one, one made from lawn or cotton and a cardboard poppy for children.



Silk and lawn cloth design evolves

In the 1930s poppies made from two layers of different fabric were introduced. The under layer was made from lawn cloth, with an upper layer of silk. There was also a green fabric leaf, faux stamens, and a metal centre.



Wartime poppies

During the Second World War, shortages in materials meant the number of designs dropped from four to two. Silk poppies were made in much smaller numbers, and a second poppy made entirely from card was introduced.



Wire stem returns

Wire stems were reintroduced in the 1950s to replace the cardboard used because of wartime shortages, with red felt used to create the poppy petals.



A new look

A new look design emerged in 1967 with bitumen centre and wire stem replaced by plastic, along with the introduction of a one-piece petal.



EVERY NAME MATTERS

During World War II, 25,843 people were interned in Kazerne Dossin. They were stripped of their names and assigned numbers before their deportation. Remember them and help Kazerne Dossin record their names to commemorate each of these deportees. #everynamematters
More information on how to participate: <https://kazernedossin.eu/en/everynamematters/>

27 WWI MEMORIAL SITES IN FLANDERS FIELDS NOW UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

Flanders Fields, a poignant symbol of sacrifice refers to the World War I battlefields in the Flanders Region of Belgium. In these serene landscapes, countless soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice. The famous poem 'In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae immortalises this site, where poppies bloom amidst the graves. Remembering Flanders Fields is not only an homage to the fallen but a reminder of the enduring cost of war. It calls upon us to strive for peace, cherishing the memory of those who rest in these hallowed grounds.

In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, UNESCO has decided to recognise 139 sites related to the First World War as World Heritage sites. There are 27 cemeteries and memorials from the Westhoek, in addition to sites in Wallonia and France. Flanders has campaigned for UNESCO recognition for many years. This is symbolically very important, but it has no concrete consequences.

'Always someone's father, always someone's child', Willem Vermandere sang about the 'thousand and thousand soldiers' who did not return after the First World War. More than 100 years later, the Westhoek is still marked by the many cemeteries and memorials for the missing. Places where visitors from all over the world come to reflect, just think of the daily Last Post under the Menin Gate in Ypres.

Flanders had been trying for a long time to have these memorial sites recognised as UNESCO world heritage sites and this has now been achieved. During the session in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, UNESCO decided to include 139 cemeteries and memorials of the First World War on the list.

27 of these are in Flanders, more specifically in the Westhoek. This includes famous places such as the Menin Gate in Ypres. In addition, there are 16 sites in Wallonia and 96 in France, for example on the Somme or near Verdun.

The recognition took a lot of effort. Flanders has campaigned for this for more than 15 years. A first attempt failed in 2018, and again there was advice from experts to limit the number of recognized sites. Something that the World Heritage Committee did not respond to: the entire file of 139 sites has been registered on the UNESCO list.

There are no concrete consequences of the UNESCO decision. World Heritage is a major symbolic recognition with great prestige; there is no monetary prize attached.

The cemeteries of the First World War brought something new with them: for the first time, the dead were given a grave with their own name on it. There was no such individual commemoration before that. Now they are places of meeting and can help to achieve peace and reconciliation.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the British body responsible for the management of Commonwealth cemeteries, is pleased to respond to the UNESCO news: 'World Heritage status underlines the global importance of these 'Silent Cities' and the need to permanently honour the victims of war. to commemorate.'

MEET THE COMMITTEE – ZOE MURDOCH

When did you join the Legion?

July 2022

How did you get in contact with the Legion?

I came in contact with the Legion through Steve and Suzy, who were my neighbours at the time. 5 years ago, I moved from Scotland to Belgium since I started a job to work for the British Embassy in Brussels. When I joined the Royal British Legion, they were looking for a new membership secretary and I took it upon myself to fill that post.

Why did you pick the Antwerp branch?

Because I live in Antwerp, and it is also the branch where Steve and Suzy are members.

Have you ever served yourself?

No never, but I do have the uttermost respect for those who did. Remembering and supporting veterans is crucial as it honours their sacrifice, service, and dedication to safeguarding freedom and peace. Veterans have faced the challenges of war, often enduring physical and emotional scars. Reflecting on their contributions fosters gratitude, acknowledges the price of freedom, and encourages a collective commitment to peace. Additionally, remembering veterans promotes awareness of the human cost of conflict, fostering a society that values diplomacy and strives to prevent future wars.

