

# BRANCH NEWSLETTER

## Chairman's Message

The Legion was built on strong foundations, both nationally and locally, and our charitable objectives remain the same: to provide welfare support to the Armed Forces community and recognise and remember the unique contribution of all who serve and sacrifice. We, the members, are the beating heart of the Legion and locally we can make a difference. Our recent fundraising events at the Field of Remembrance, VE80 and the Windlesham Fete, our well supported regular monthly meetings and local Remembrance events not only raise money but also build our presence in the local community.

It is that presence that helps attract new members

## Danuta Wins Secretary Award - Again!

At the Surrey County Poppy Appeal Organisers Thank You event held at Lingfield Racecourse on Saturday 31st May, Richard Allen, accompanied by his granddaughter, accepted the County Best Branch Secretary Award on behalf of his late wife, Danuta.

In an emotional presentation speech, County Chair, Counsellor Shannon Saise-Marshall, read out Danuta's citation. Representatives from branches across the county were left speechless by the extent of Danuta's contribution to the Branch in Windlesham. No surprise then that this is the third time Danuta has been presented with this magnificent trophy, more than any other recipient. Well done Danuta - a lovely legacy.



## Wonderful Weather for Windlesham Fete



Yet another year of beautiful sunshine blessed the Windlesham fete on 14<sup>th</sup> June and as always the Branch was out in force with its bottle and books stalls. Stalwarts Richard Allen, Nigel Payne, Roy Booth and Charles Garraway were there early to set up and to stick labels on the bottles, cans, and jars that festooned our stall. Once the fete was open, business was brisk and there only a few minutes when we didn't have a queue of eager customers. Even the Mayor was keen to try her fortune.

Thanks as always to all those who kindly donated items for one or other of the stands and to those

who supported on the day, either by setting up or tidying away. A particular mention must go to Liz King who wandered the field all afternoon with a tray of poppy goodies and who singlehandedly raised almost £300 for the Poppy Appeal.



## Paul Makes It Ten

Committee member and Branch trumpeter, Paul Bailey, was presented with his Long Service medal for ten years of accumulated regular and reserve service by Captain Bede, Director of Music of the Army Medical Services Band at Pirbright Barracks recently.



Paul started his career in the band of the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards but after a break from Army music, he rejoined as a reservist and now 'blows his own trumpet' in the band of the Royal Army Medical Service as well as various other ensembles including the CentrePoint Big Band who played at the Branch's annual Poppy Appeal last October.

Congratulations Paul, here to another ten years of undetected crime!

## Branch Community Support

Our Branch Community Support network is now up and running. We are a small team and could do with some additional volunteers. It is not an onerous duty and indeed should be the task of everyone in the Branch. Many are already doing this (though they may not recognise it as "Branch Support") by visiting friends and neighbours and lending a helping hand. If anyone knows of someone who may need assistance - or even just a friendly phone call - please do not hesitate to contact Charles Garraway who leads our BCS team. Each of us has a role to play in both identifying needs and, in simple cases, meeting that need! Charles can be contacted on [charlesgarraway@hotmail.com](mailto:charlesgarraway@hotmail.com) or 01276 24176.

## Annual Dinner



In another successful 'Linda Booth Production', the Branch enjoyed its Annual Dinner at the Brickmakers Arms in early June. Once again we were made to feel extremely welcome in The Brickies' lovely conservatory and were treated to some delicious food efficiently and cheerily served by the attentive staff.

As a thank you to all those who donate prizes and participate our monthly raffle, Kathy Smith put together a free raffle draw for three beautifully presented baskets of goodies. Thanks to Linda for organising and for all who attended for making it such an enjoyable and fun evening.

## Jacqui Wyles - 1940-2025

Long serving Branch member Jacqui Wyles sadly passed away on 5th April and her funeral took place at St John's Church on 3rd June. Jacqui, and her late husband Brian, had played a pivotal role in the Branch. For many years they were highly efficient organisers of the Branch's Poppy Appeal and after her husband's death, Jacqui remained on the Committee, consistently making valuable contributions to the planning of events. Jacqui will be remembered and sadly missed.

## VE80



Congratulations to Mike Sheard for almost single handedly arranging the village's VE80 celebration event at the Field of Remembrance on 10th May.

It was a fitting commemoration of this key date, celebrated with a concert of appropriate music skilfully played by the Bagshot Concert Band.

Not only did the village enjoy the music and lovely weather, they participated generously in our raffle which raised c£630 for the Poppy Appeal. Thanks to Eve and June who were non stop selling tickets and to Kathy for sourcing many of the prizes.



## Visit to Brookwood Cemetery- 8 June 2025

A Sunday afternoon walk in a cemetery is not for everyone, but if you factor in the magic of Brookwood Military Cemetery (BMC), lovely weather and a renowned guide such as Paul McCue, from the Secret War Learning Network, the notion is not so strange.

Brookwood is filled with historic characters in both the military and civilian cemeteries. There are financiers, merchants, gentry, architects, artists, writers, industrialists, sportspeople, engineers - even Haratia Nelson Johnson, Granddaughter of Emma, Lady Hamilton and Haratio Nelson, Julia Lennon (John's Mum) and Cilla Black!

Paul started his Tour at the Memorial to the Missing (MttM), a white circular building inaugurated in 1958 which incorporates carved columns and name plaques of over 3,400 individuals who have no known grave.

Every name has a story, but some stories are better known, Violette Szabo, GC (codename 'Lise'), SOE Operative for example. Her story is full of daring do, intrigue and sadness. Many books have been written and a film made about her.



Paul gave us a detailed insight into the lesser known facts. For example the story behind the death of 23 Palestinian Jewish volunteers who perished in Operation Boatswain to destroy oil refineries in Tripoli. Their names were added to the Monument to the Missing in May 2017 with full military honours. Or the reason why there were actually 24 names listed, including that of Fortunato Picchi, an Italian born British citizen who was really involved with the SAS in Operation Colossus against the Apulian viaduct near Naples. Despite being 44 years old and very out of shape, Picchi had volunteered as a linguist. He was captured and killed by the Italians for being a traitor to his country despite being a British citizen. His name ended up on the memorial as the result of an administrative error that will take years to correct.

Paul took our group to the Czech and Free French areas of the cemetery telling a myriad of moving and personal stories before ending with refreshments at Eddie Jones' 'Trench Experience'.

It was an insightful and thought provoking afternoon and an excellent way of spending a Sunday afternoon. Hopefully, it has promoted members to go back to Brookwood or research some of the stories for themselves. - Nigel Payne



## Branch Trip to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

Following his talk earlier this year about famous Sandhurst alumni, Vaughan Kent-Payne, Director of the Sandhurst Trust is hosting a Branch visit to the Royal Military Academy at 19:00 on the evening of Monday 11<sup>th</sup> August.

The trip is now full but if there is sufficient interest from members and friends, we will arrange another visit in 2026. If you can't wait until then, there is an opportunity to attend the Commandant's Rehearsal Parade in December. Please speak to Tim or Linda if interested.

**Please note as a consequence of the Sandhurst trip on 11th August, there is no Branch meeting that evening.**

## Programme of Events 2025

### July

Monday 14th - Branch Meeting - Richard and Dennis Wood - "Running the Marathon Des Sables"

### August

Monday 11th - 19:00 Visit to RMA Sandhurst - NO BRANCH MEETING

### September

Monday 8th. Branch Meeting. Sebastian Philips - "The Christmas Truces"

### October

Monday 13th October Branch Meeting - Speaker tbc

### November

Sunday 9th. Remembrance Sunday Service and Lunch, St John's Church

Monday 10<sup>th</sup>. Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 11th - Remembrance Day - Field of Remembrance

### December

Monday 8th. Branch Carol Evening