

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION (KILMINGTON BRANCH) AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2017

Here we are again nearing the end of what has been a very changeable year. I cannot remember so many highs and lows in just one year! The lows have come mainly in the loss of eight of our long standing members, seven who sadly passed away and one who moved away to be closer to her family, on the up side, we have again smashed all previous fund raising records as well as being able to recruit a number of new personnel, which leaves the branch currently at 125 members. Since my last update we have received considerable correspondence from County, notably updates on the 'Grand Pilgrimage 90 (GP 90) and the Greatest Thank You, about which I will do my best to enlighten you. The Grand Pilgrimage 90 is a National event aimed at having every RBL branch represented in France, culminating in a Parade at the Menin Gate on 8 August 2018. The role of the two representatives will be to ensure the RBL standard and wreath are carried to the Menin Gate as part of a March Past; in the run up to the tour the two attendees will be encouraged to prepare for and train for the event. The cost for each person to attend is £1000. Although I appreciate Remembrance is one of the core values of the Legion, to date I have stated that we will not be sending a delegation as I feel £2000 can be better spent supporting veterans and their families, in addition we intend to visit France in March to conduct our own remembrance. I have been asked to consider this and involve the local community in deciding who/if anyone will attend. I understand that I am only your representative and therefore would be grateful for your thoughts on the matter.

'The Greatest Thank You' is another initiative which will mark an end to the 5 years of remembrance of WW1. The campaign which will run from 8th August to Remembrance Sunday 2018 is aimed to symbolise hope and celebration. It is regarded as an opportunity for the community to come together and find ways to say 'thank you' in schools, clubs, churches and all organisations as well as the RBL (Please let us know if you have any ideas/thoughts on how we might achieve this).

Now!! The latest from our branch and since the summer edition we have had several celebrations and social events. In September we held our 91st AGM in the New Inn Kilmington; several members joined those of the committee to hear an overview of the year and elect Officers and committee members for another year. All those proposed were unanimously elected and we were also pleased to welcome Tony Thompkins from Dalwood to the committee.

On Sat, 16th September we held our WWI Commemoration dinner with a talk given by Angus Falconer '1917 'A year of dramatic events'. I would like to thank everyone for their support and especially Angus for his interesting and extremely well researched talk, Claire and all her helpers for an excellent meal and all those who helped set up and pack away, it all made for a very enjoyable evening. On Friday 20th October we had our Annual Lecture, this year given by Mr Martin Pelling, who provided an excellent overview of the actions pertaining to the battle of Passchendaele. The evening was well attended by over 50 members and friends.

Remembrance in Kilmington was extremely well supported this year; on a less than a glorious Saturday 11th November over 50 members attended the cricket pavilion to observe the two minute silence signalled by the firing of maroons. On Remembrance Sunday a fantastic display of knitted poppies in the shape of a wave marked the entrance to the Baptist 'Beacon' Chapel, where over 160 people gathered for this year's service led by the Branch Chaplain, Pastor Darrell Holmes. In a very moving service, the Rev'd Barry Brewer supporting, gave a powerful and thought provoking address which held the attention of all those present. Despite the squalls of 'liquid' sunshine, at 1045 the congregation moved to the War Memorial to join other members of the community who had gathered to mark the two minute silence. In a short service led by the Branch Chaplain, the names of 11 members from Kilmington who lost their lives in the Great War and three who died in the Second World War were read out. This was followed by the Exhortation and then the laying of wreaths by the Branch



President, Mr Roger Lovegrove on behalf of the RBL, Commander Stafford Seward OBE RN Rtd on behalf of the Royal Navy, Lance Corporal Alex Hill for the British Army, Group Captain Brian Lavender OBE Rtd for the Royal Air Force, PC Janette Bassett for the Police and Dylan Payne for the Scouts; a number of children also laid their own tributes. Afterwards the majority retired to the Beacon for refreshments, before over 60 Branch members went to Haselbury Mill for a Remembrance lunch. In the evening residents and



members packed the New Inn for a Quiz conducted by Clive Garner on behalf of the Poppy Appeal. On what was truly a memorable weekend, it would be remiss of me not to thank all those who worked in the background to make things happen, but especially committee members and the tea ladies on Saturday; the congregation and helpers in the Beacon for providing refreshments and a brilliant display of poppies; our branch President for arranging the meal at Haselbury Mill and of course the New Inn and Clive Garner for a fantastic evening. I am informed that the Poppy Appeal in Kilmington, along with the proceeds of the Quiz amounted to over £4000, which is incredible. My thanks to Peter & Louise Wood, all the collectors and everyone who helped to raise such a fantastic amount.



What's on next? On Saturday, 25th November we have our annual Autumn Coffee Morning at Kilmington Village Hall and after the success of last year we will continue our Christmas Theme; so please join us for coffee, tea or mulled wine and take this opportunity to buy some of your Christmas gifts as well as take part in our special Christmas Draw or our 'Silent Auction' for a pair of special 'Poppy' Cufflinks, a painting of remembrance in particular commemorating those killed by friendly fire and a 'Dumpy Bag' of the finest logs. Our last event of the year will be on Friday 1st

December, where we will be at the Old Inn, Kilmington to celebrate our last monthly get together this year! So again please join us in an evening of 'good cheer'. Finally I would like to inform you that our pilgrimage to France to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War has now been confirmed. This will take place 23rd-26th March 2018 based in Arras. The cost will be £225 per person (couple sharing), which includes all transport, accommodation and tours; this is likely to be a very popular event and I encourage all those interested to let Jean Falconer (our secretary), shepherd's or committee member know as soon as possible.

Hopefully I have now brought you all up to date but before I close this episode it would be remiss of me if I did not personally thank our committee for their outstanding support and efforts, which have ensured that we have all enjoyed another fantastic year. Finally, my thanks to you all for supporting us in what has been yet again an excellent and outstanding year for the Kilmington Branch. In case I don't see you before I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy, prosperous New Year!

Cdr Stafford Seward OBE RN Rtd
(Chairman RBL Kilmington Branch)