

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION (KILMINGTON BRANCH) SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

A very Happy New Year to you all, I hope you all had an enjoyable festive season and are looking forward to another year with relatives, friends and of course all your RBL comrades.

Although it has not been quite as busy as the end of last year, there has been plenty to do and hopefully this will bring you all up to date. Unfortunately due to a lack of ticket sales our planned New Year's Eve Ball was cancelled and although disappointing, it did highlight how difficult it can be to introduce new ideas! Moving quickly on, in January our Vice Chairman, Roger Lovegrove and I attended the Devon Annual County Conference in Plymouth; topics ranging from individual reports to a presentation of awards were all covered, with the issue of membership payments being the most contentious. Whilst on the subject if any of you have any queries regarding membership or payment, please do not hesitate to contact John Watts, myself or indeed your individual shepherds, all will be willing to help.

The presentation of awards was one of the more interesting issues, particularly when the winner of the Devon County Crediton Cup for 'Initiative' was awarded to Kilmington!! Roger accepted the award on behalf of the branch, which was a wonderful achievement, especially for a village and is recognition both for the fantastic commitment of the committee, but also the village and surrounding area; therefore my sincere thanks to you all for your outstanding support. As we go to press, I can inform you that the County Organisation is currently seeking both a New President & Chairman and elections will be held in the near future.



On the 18th March eleven members of the Kilmington RBL joined other members from Devon on a visit to the Somme as part of the ongoing commemoration of the Great War. Leaving Kilmington as day broke on the 18th we enjoyed a jovial trip by coach arriving in Arras in Northern France in the late afternoon. Of course that evening, in time honoured tradition we enjoyed a celebratory dinner in honour of a successful end to phase one to our manoeuvres! (thank you Jean). Excellently delivered by Mike Cartwright, our guide for the visit, day 2 provided a much more sobering overview of what many had endured on the 1st July 1916.



As someone with operational experience in numerous conflicts, I found the whole experience both sad but also intriguing; the sheer sacrifice and determination of those who went over the top with a blind belief that they would be victorious was incredible, but to be utterly destroyed and forced back to the same starting point, in complete disarray alongside other survivors whom they had never seen before, is hard to comprehend; yet they held their line!!

Day 3 involved a visit to where the Devonshire's had fought so hard and achieved their objective, however, on the way we were lucky enough to meet a 'Tommy' who provided everyone with a detailed overview of exactly what the British Soldiers wore and the weapons they carried. After our update we proceeded to the Devonshire memorial where we were given an excellent overview of what the Regiment had achieved; on completion a short service of remembrance was conducted and wreaths were laid on behalf of the County, the Women's section and Kilmington RBL. (Below are just a small selection of the photographs that were taken. I would also like to thank Roger Lovegrove for conducting the service of Remembrance)



Of course the evenings of days two and three were appropriately celebrated!!!



Day 4 saw us all return safely to the shores of Blighty although we nearly lost a couple of comrades!! Moral of the story, always check your passport and despite how much you may love your wife it may not be a good idea to use hers!!! If you have not had the opportunity to partake in any of the memorial visits, I highly recommend them; they are informative, memorable and on this occasion, very entertaining.

Anyway, enough of our visit to France; as I alluded too earlier, the committee are working hard to provide another interesting year and below are a list of events which you may wish to enter into your diaries:

Saturday 9th April, 'Spring Watch' coffee morning (Village hall) 10.30 am.

Wed 8th June Annual Outing to Portsmouth

Sat 25th & Sun 26th June – Axe Valley Festival

Friday 1st July Annual BBQ (Fernwood Farm) 6pm

Saturday 30th July BBQ at Village Fayre 1pm

Saturday 17th September WW 1 Commemoration Dinner (village hall) 7pm

Friday 7 October Annual presentation – (More details to follow)

Saturday 26th November Christmas Coffee Morning (village hall) 10.30am

So please look out for the posters in all the usual places and come and join us, we look forward to seeing you all as we attempt to help those who have looked after us and can no longer look after themselves.

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

