



"SANDBAG"

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER Volume 8 Issue 2



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NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

Next branch meeting 18th April 7 p.m.

March
2011

67th Anniversary of "Old Faithful" crash

Those who attended the "Old Faithful" commemoration last year will remember that Mr. & Mrs. Ostroumoff the present owners of Snag Farm have invited us to hold a ceremony at the crash site this year and afterwards take tea and biscuits with them at the farm on the anniversary—25th June. We are in the early planning stages but we hope to erect a small bronze plaque at the farm commemorating the crash and sad loss of life. Because of the size of the site we will have to limit those attending to members who have placed a reservation on my list for the event. The Flying Fortress crashed at approximately 3 p.m. on Sunday 25th June 1944 and we intend unveiling the plaque at that time on 25th June this year. I will start the list at the March branch meeting, please advise me at the earliest opportunity if you wish to have an invitation. As details of the event progress I will keep everyone updated.

Visit to Thorney Island

You will all remember I am sure, our excellent visit to the Army Air Dispatch unit at RAF Lyneham a few years ago, arranged by Lucy Giles the then commander of the unit, which culminated with a flight in an RAF Hercules aircraft. Lucy and her husband Nick live in Army quarters at the Royal Artillery unit Thorney Island where Nick is commanding officer. Lucy & Nick have invited the branch to visit them at the base on Thursday 19th May. We will have a tour of the base with its military cemetery and astounding views of the Solent then have lunch in the mess. **Spaces will be limited to those on list.** Cost will be £10 coach plus £5 lunch, we will depart from Memorial Hall at 8.30 a.m. and home around 6 p.m. Reserve a place now !

Note : Branch Coffee Morning is Saturday 2nd April starts at 10 a.m. - please come !

Poppy Party

In line with all Legion branches nationally we will participate in the 90th anniversary year "Poppy Parties". The official day for the launch of the parties is 11th June and on this day we will have an informal members event in the sun lounge of the Memorial Hall at 8 p.m. when we have invited John Gudge the popular Country Music singer who performed for us last winter. The evening will include a fish & chips supper. I will coordinate the June party and Arthur has agreed that he will coordinate another Poppy Party on Saturday 13th August. .
Tony

Visit to a working brewery—Hall & Woodhouse Blandford 25th March

I do still have places on this trip but if you want to go please contact me urgently. We meet at the brewery at 11 a.m. using our own transport. Cost £6 on the door.
Note no coach provided due lack of numbers.

Wincanton does it yet again !!

For the fourth consecutive year Wincanton branch has won the prestigious Colin McKenzie Cup for the "most efficient branch in Somerset with under 500 members". The cup was presented by Brig. D.H. Godsall MBE, County President, at the annual County Conference in January.



L to R - Ron Peet, Tony Goddard, Arthur Pickup, Rita Jee, John Pennington

Victoria Cross Memorials from around the World

Many of us know about Steve Lee's excellent research on the holders of the Victoria Cross, in fact Steve has mounted a number of exhibitions for us a Coffee Mornings. I was very pleased when Steve offered to write an article as I do believe Steve can be described as an "expert" on the Victoria Cross. Here is his story. Tony

Many Legion members will already be aware of my on-going research project to locate record & photograph memorials to recipients of Britain's highest gallantry award the Victoria Cross (VC). Over the past 15 years I have compiled a vast collection of both photographs & documents relating to memorials to these brave men, with the aim of preserving the information & images for future generations. Since the Crimea War 1356 VC's have been awarded, this includes the 3 double awards & the 2 Australian & 1 New Zealand VC's which were awarded in recent conflicts by those respective countries now that they have their own award. Canada also has its own VC but has yet to award one.



My interest started as a young boy watching all those iconic war films & stories told within the family of grandfathers who served during World War Two but as I got older, this interest turned into a passion & although my collection is specifically to the VC I have always had a keen interest in anything to do with British & Commonwealth Forces, particularly through the two World Wars.

Early visits to the many CWGC Cemeteries in France & Belgium had a big impact on my work & although I have continued to concentrate on the VC I truly feel that my work is a tribute not only to them but all that have served their countries in such an honourable way, I for one will never forget.

At the present time I have photo's of nearly 1000 VC graves or 'named on memorials', close to where receipts, whose bodies were never found. As my collection grew I became aware that many of these men were also remembered on a variety of other 'memorials', ranging from stain glassed windows in churches, road names, plaques, statues & a host of others. So, the project grew & as time has passed so many others have helped with my work, in particular, I shall always remember our own Jack Woods & the mountain of material he gave me related to Andrew Mynaski VC. Jack, sadly no longer with us had collected masses of paper clipping following the story of the project to build a statue to Mynaski in the North East of England. I believe Jack was attached to the same squadron as Mynaski so had a particular interest in the story. At meetings Jack would always 'find me out', & check on my progress. His kindness & warmth will stay with me forever. Wincanton has other VC connections; the late Reg Kiddle served alongside Thomas Peck Hunter VC & was present at Hunter's VC action during World War Two.

Memorials in our area are plentiful & can be found as near as Sherborne, Yeovilton & Corton Denham. John Chard VC of Rorke's Drift fame during the Zulu War of 1879 is buried not far from Taunton & if anyone would like to know more please don't hesitate to contact me.

I now find myself at a point where I am working more & more with others to help me continue to grow the collection as, having covered most of the UK & northern Europe the location of memorials are much further afield. In the past twelve months alone I have received material from Tasmania, Singapore, Belize, Australia & Canada. If any members or family of members are travelling abroad & would be willing to help then please let me know & I will gladly provide the relevant information. I am particularly keen to start work on India, North Africa & the USA & also to expand my work in Australia, Canada & New Zealand. Memorials are to

be found pretty much all over the world so if you are off somewhere please do let me know as you will be surprised where memorials turn up. There are still hundreds of memorials in this country so please, if you are interested, let me know.

Below are a selection of photos, just a few of many thousands which illustrate my work.

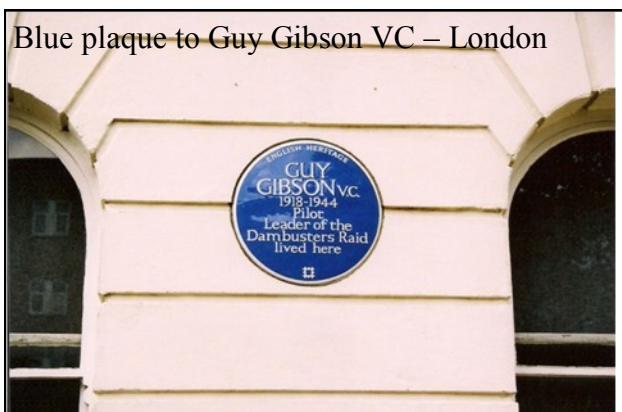


Memorial window recognising David Lord VC DFC

- All Saints Church Down Ampney in Gloucestershire



The grave of H Jones VC – Falklands



Blue plaque to Guy Gibson VC – London



The grave of double VC Noel Chavasse – Belgium



Statue to Henry Murray VC – Tasmania

Trip to Poole 16th April

Our next branch trip is to Poole on Saturday 16th April. Cost as usual is £10. We had hoped to incorporate a visit to the RNLI Training Centre but unfortunately they do not conduct these tours on Saturdays. The coach will leave Memorial Hall at 9a.m. and we will be home around 5 p.m. Please let me know as soon as possible as the coach is filling up on this very popular trip.

Bruton trips

As I mentioned late last year Derek Cooke has retired from arranging Bruton branch monthly trips and handed over to a new organiser, Lynne Hawkridge. I have spoken with Lynne and we have agreed to coordinate dates of both branches trips to ensure there are no clashes of destinations or dates. As I have not yet set our dates firmly I will try to arrange our trips this with a mind to this.

Next Bruton trip is to **Gloucester Quays on 21st April**.

Lynne is trying to keep the costs the same this year and will be £10 each. If you are interested in either of these trips or a future one please contact Lynne direct on 01749-812916.

Lunch at Otter Garden Centre Wincanton 6th April

This event has proved so popular that it is now totally full and some members are on standby for cancellations. Those on the list already are guaranteed and I will advise those on standby if there are cancellations. We will meet at the Garden Centre at 12 noon, as the majority of members do not need transport. If you have a problem getting there let me know as the CAT Bus will be made available. The cost of the meal is £7 for two courses plus tea/coffee and I have been advised that if you wish to bring your own bottle of wine for the table this is in order (no corkage) and glasses will be provided by the restaurant. As it all sounds to have makings of a good event I will judge whether we can make this a regular event.

RBL County of Somerset Secretary Dave Brixey will be joining us for the meeting on 18th April to give us an update from County.

Knocker White receives his medal

Knocker White was presented with his Pingat Jasa—The Malaya Emergency medal recently. The medal, issued by the Government of Malaysia is to those from Commonwealth Countries who served in Malaya during the Emergency between 1957 —

1966. Knocker served there in the Royal Navy and the medal was presented to him by the Malaysia Military attache just before Christmas. The government recently approved the wearing of the medal by qualifying veterans.



Welcome new members

We would like to welcome Maggie Giles, John Cuss & Clive Reid who recently joined the branch.

Dave Hill sent me the note below, I must say I use the computer a lot—but don't know how to fix it economically if it goes wrong. Thanks Dave, it is very nice to know this. Tony

Are you keen to use a computer but too afraid or unsure where to start?
Do you have a computer (PC or Mac) but are not getting the most from it?
Do you have software, update, virus or security concerns and don't know who to turn to?
Do you want advice on upgrading your current computer, want a cheap refurbished machine, or can even donate an older one for other branch members.
With over 20 years computer experience (including the last 10 years managing over 350 computers at a local school), friendly, clearly understood help is not far away, most evenings and weekends.
Call Dave on 01963 34429/07595 202188 or email dave@hiltern.co.uk Very reasonable “mates rates” available for fellow RBL members.