



WEST DEREHAM BRANCH
BR 3689
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION



12 April 2017

West Dereham Annual Parish Meeting

West Dereham Branch's first official year was from 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015 with a membership of 16. In April 2016 I reported that the membership of the Branch had increased to 23. I can now report another increase, to 28. We are now in our third year.

Four meetings are held annually in the Village Hall, on the 2nd Sundays in March, June and September (AGM), all minuted. The March and September meetings conclude with a sandwich lunch while the June meeting is followed by a lunch in a local hostelry. The fourth meeting is held on Remembrance Sunday, the 2nd Sunday in November, without minutes. A Service of Remembrance starts at the War Memorial at 11.00 am and then continues in St Andrew's Church. Afterwards, there is a seated lunch held in the Village Hall. Anyone from the village or St Andrew's congregation attending the Service of Remembrance is most welcome to join in and attend the lunch. 32 attended the lunch on 13 November.

Peter Starling has continued in his role as the Branch Chairman following in the footsteps of his father, who was the former Branch's Secretary in 1955. Jack Walker is the Vice Chairman. Nick Cann acts as Branch Secretary and Treasurer but the role of Treasurer will soon pass to another, at the end of the current Legion financial year. Tom Foy is the Standard Bearer, Richard French and Lorraine Hunt act as the Branch Welfare Officers and Paula Kellingray is the Poppy Appeal Co-ordinator. £700 collected will now be paid into the Earl Haig Poppy Appeal Fund.

Initially, West Dereham was able to use its Standard from the 1950s and 60s when the village was a sub-Branch of Downham Market and District. This Standard was not 'laid up' after the sub-Branch closed. A new Standard was purchased in May 2016 and a Service of Dedication held in St Andrew's Church on 9 September with Rev Ken Waters presiding. Attending this service was the Chairman of Norfolk County and representatives from other Norfolk Branches including four Standards. A celebratory lunch followed in the Village Hall attended by 40. Photographs are now displayed in St Andrew's Church and the Village Hall.

Our Standard Dedication service was reported locally in several newspapers and periodicals. Nationally, West Dereham made front page news in the Royal British Legion's quarterly magazine 'Legion' which featured a 2-page article on our Standard Bearer, Tom, entitled "The RAF Corporal who carries the Standard for his Branch". Two months after the 'Dedication', Tom was on parade again with the Standard in front of HM The Queen for the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall. At the Norfolk County Annual Conference on 4 February, West Dereham received the CW Lex Cup for Progress and Efficiency by a Junior Branch in 2015-16.

Our last meeting co-incided with the 100th Anniversary of the capture of Vimy Ridge, 10 km North of Arras, in Northern France. Our June meeting will coincide with the capture of the Messines Ridge, South East of Ypres when 19 mines containing 600 tons of HE were exploded beneath the German trenches at the start of the battle. 10,000 were estimated killed in the explosion, heard by Lloyd George in Downing Street.

Any person over 17 years of age who accepts the aims and objectives of the Royal British Legion may become a member and the annual membership subscription is currently £17.00.