



**WEST DEREHAM BRANCH
THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
BR 3689**

Chairman: Peter Starling

**Minutes of the General Meeting of West Dereham Branch held at the Village Hall
Sunday 9 April 2017 at 12.00 midday**

Members present (17):

Peter Starling (PS)	- Chairman
David Bullas (DB)	
Pam Bullas (PB)	
Claire Cann (CC)	
Nick Cann (NC)	- A/Sec & Treas
Mary Darton (MD)	
Pearl Dossett (PDo)	
Dick Elmer (DE)	
Maureen Elmer (ME)	
Tom Foy (TF)	- Std Bearer
Heather Foy (HF)	
Richard French (RF)	
Lorraine Hunt (LH)	
Doug Lawson (DL)	
Fred Lucas (FL)	- D Market & District 0635
Michael McMenemy (MM)	
Jean Starling (JS)	

Also present: Phyllis French, Richard Dossett, Matilda Foy, Judith Lawson

Minutes

The Chairman opened the meeting with the words of the fourth verse of Robert Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen'. Doug Lawson was warmly welcomed as a new member. NC advised that this day was the start of the Vimy Ridge battle, 100 years ago. Vimy is 10 km North of Arras in the Pas de Calais region of France. Hill 145, the highest point on the ridge, was captured on day 2. A Commemoration Service was currently taking place at the Canadian National Memorial at Vimy. The battle lasted from 9-13 April 1917 with the Canadian Forces victorious but suffering 10,600 casualties, 3,600 being killed in action. The memorial site covers 300 acres. The memorial sculpture has twin pylons 27m tall and the central figure is a lady with head bowed mourning and in prayer representing 'Canada Bereft'. 4 Canadian soldiers were awarded the VC in this battle. In the war, Canada suffered 236k casualties. PB told members that George Clark, named on the West Dereham War Memorial, had served with the Canadian forces.

1. **Apologies for absence.** Apologies for absence had been received from: Alexander Cann, Peter Darton, Paula & June Kellingray, Frances McMenemy, Judy Moon (unwell and best wishes passed for a speedy recovery), Pam & Jack Walker, Claire Williams, (9). (No communication received from Danny Adams & Gary Younge.)
2. **Minutes of Last Meeting, 11 September 2016.** The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2016 had been circulated previously. The Secretary said no comments had been received. The Chairman asked that the minutes be accepted as a true record. This was proposed by CC, seconded by MD and approved unanimously. The Chairman signed the minutes. There were no matters arising. No minutes are provided from the meeting on Remembrance Sunday, 13 Nov 16. However, Paula K had provided £50.10 from the sale of football tickets and £36.00 from the VH coffee morning held 5 Nov 16. Fred L had donated £7.50. Sale of raffle tickets raised £160. There were 32 attending the lunch and cash received was £240 @ £7.50 each. Catering expenditure was £173 and hall hire £60. The collection for the Poppy Appeal from St Andrew's Church was £147.27. Many thanks to all those concerned for their splendid efforts.
3. **Secretary's Report.** Membership now stood at 27 (plus Fred L). The annual accounts (EofY 30 Jun 16) had been externally audited and submitted to County HQ by 30 Sep 16. The Branch annual return for 2016-17, Form MS1,

had been submitted to Norfolk County as required before 31 Dec16. The Branch was compliant and would qualify for tickets to the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall in November. NC had been advised that the holding of both Secretary and Treasurer appointments by a single person was no longer permitted by Haig House in London. For 2016-17, Alexander (Cann) had been nominated as Secretary and NC had become Alexander's assistant. This situation must be resolved for 2017-18. At the Annual County Conference held at County Hall, Norwich on 4 Feb 17, West Dereham Branch had been awarded the CW Jex Cup for Progress and Efficiency in 2015-16 by a junior branch. (Applause.) Notes from the Conference and from a County Committee Meeting held 16 Feb 17, attended by NC as an Observer, are attached.

4. Treasurer's Report. NC provided copies of the accounts (YTD) for examination. In sum, funds held in the three cost centres were: 'Events' - £721.11, 'Poppy Appeal' - £642.77, 'General' £449.81. Sundry Creditors were two, to be paid from 'Events' - Limetree Marketing (Downham printers) for Standard Dedication orders of service @ £30 and, payable to CC for lunch purchases on Remembrance Sunday, £172.73. The Chairman agreed to sign the cheque for CC with the Vice Chairman. A proposal was made by LH, seconded by TF and agreed unanimously to move £57.23 from the General Fund into the Poppy Appeal Fund, rounding this sum up to £700.00. The cheque would be signed by the Chairman and sent to Norwich.

5. Standard Dedication Postscript. Legion Magazine's lead article in its quarterly publication, January 2017 edition, "The RAF Corporal who carries the Standard for his Branch" - had centered on Tom Foy. HQ Norfolk County was proud of the fact that a Norfolk Branch had held centre stage. Tom had also attended two Norfolk funerals in his role as a Standard Bearer and a message of thanks received from the Funeral Director of Andrew Francis Funeral Services was read out by NC. (Applause) NC drew the attention of all to the photographic display in the Hall of pictures from the 9 Sep 16 Standard Dedication. 7" x 5" copies could be purchased at a cost of £1.00 (£0.60 cost and £0.40 donated to Branch funds).

6. WW1 Centenary Remembrance in 2017. (i) 7 Jun: Messines Ridge, Belgium (underground mine explosion beneath German trenches using 455 tonnes of HE); (ii) 31 Jul (to 6 Nov): 3rd Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele); 31 Oct - 7 Nov: 3rd Battle of Gaza, Palestine (more later); 20 Nov: Battle of Cambrai (first use of tanks in warfare by British forces).

7. Any Other Business. (i) LH drew the attention of members to the 'Poppy Walk' in aid of the RBL in London on Sunday 16 July. Starting at HQ the Honourable Artillery Company and, armed with a map and quiz sheet, participants would walk 10 km between 8.30 am and 6.00 pm. The registration fee of £15 covered 2 people and included a T-shirt each. Prizes and entertainment at HAC were included. The only condition was to try to obtain £50 sponsorship funding. Details were on the RBL web site or available from LH. (ii) CC advised of the Nations Tribute: 'The Battle's Over', on 11 Nov 2018. Beacons of light would be lit across the UK; West Dereham Parish Council had elected to participate. Suggested was the erection of a 'Beacon Brazier' on a tall pole as a permanent tribute to those who had lost their lives. This could also be used to commemorate other special events later. Location of the site for the brazier would need to be considered. The WD RBL Branch might consider taking the lead on the venture. This was discussed and considered a good idea. NC was tasked with obtaining a quotation for the brazier from Bonnetts.

8. Next meeting. The next meeting will be held in the Village Hall on Sunday 11 June 2017 at midday. Lunch afterwards will be the summer lunch held off site in a local hostelry and details will be issued later.

Closure. The Chairman thanked all for attending the meeting which he closed at 12.50 pm. The lunch was attended by 17 @ £3 each, the raffle raised £80.00 and a donation of £5 was received from MD.

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Peter Starling, Chairman

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date

After note:

(i) Paula Kellingray had advised that her voluntary work for the 'Trustees of Music in Country Churches' will, once again, be rewarded by a donation of £400 to the charity of her choice. For 2017, Paula has nominated West Dereham RBL again. Thank you, Paula.

(ii) Richard French advised that members of his family donated a sum annually to charity in memory of Tommy French, who served in the Royal Norfolk Regiment at Gallipoli and Palestine during WW1. West Dereham RBL had been chosen as the recipient in 2017. Thank you, members of the French family.

The RBL Norfolk County Conference held County Hall Saturday 4 February 2017

1. **Veterans' Gateway**. This is a 'One-stop Service for Veterans' provided by the RBL working in collaboration and partnership with other organisations. It is **going live publically on 25 May 2017**. This would provide a single phone number for veterans and/ or their families to use for information, advice and support – those requiring help in some way or other. Some 2000+ charities offered different levels of support and who to approach initially was complicated and confusing. In Nov 2016, MoD had announced provision of £2m in funding to provide this service. The 26 partners consortium was made up of the Legion, SSAFA, PoppyScotland, Combat Stress, Help for Heroes, BLESMA, etc. Referral partners such as 'Shelter', 'Relate' and 'Mind' and other specialist organisations were also involved. 'Connect Assist', located in South Wales and staffed by skilled advisers will run the help line. It is hoped that staff will include veterans or family members with knowledge of service life.
(<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/community/news/poppy-support/veterans-gateway/>)
2. **Women's Section**. The Women's Section was continuing as before but now following trustees good practice and guidance as provided from Haig House. Regrettably some branches had already closed. HQ RBL had admitted its bad management of the situation and had apologised unreservedly. A letter from Mrs Marion Humphreys, National Chairman Women's Section, was read out. "The Women's Section was secure and members had nothing to fear. Its National status and National Standard had been retained. Autonomy over all its funds was retained (as previously) and it was still able to contribute grants to widows and children as before." Six branches were still open in Norfolk.
3. **Poppy Appeal**. The 2016 Appeal had raised nationally £43,515,260 compared with £41,741,071 in 2015. This was an increase of 4.25% and was considered a fantastic effort.
4. **2020-21 Census**. The next UK Census in 2020-21 would include information relating to former servicemen and servicewomen.
5. **90th Anniversary of Western Front Pilgrimage of 1928**. On 8 August 1928, a pilgrimage was made from GB to the Western Front, involving veterans and units involved in the Great War. On 8 August 2018, on the 90th Anniversary of this event, the pilgrimage will be replicated. Every RBL branch will be invited to attend, represented by its Chairman (or his/ her representative) and Standard Bearer. The anticipated cost will be £1k per branch. Further details are anticipated in May 2017.
6. **Novacroft**. The cost of running RBL membership subscriptions by Novacroft was £403,128 in 2016. The value for money of this, considering the chaos caused, was challenged.
7. **Membership**. Of members renewing their memberships in Oct 2016, 188,000 members had renewed (subs paid) and 26,800 were still outstanding. An amnesty had been approved, until 1 Mar 2017. (Any West Dereham members experiencing problems please speak to NC.)
8. **Annual RBL Conference**. The RBL's Annual Conference would be held in Southport, 20-21 May 2017.

County Committee Meeting 16 February 2017 at Reserve Forces Centre, Aylsham Road, Norwich

9. **11 Nov 2018 – Beacons of Light Initiative**. Recognising the ending of WW1, beacons would be lit across the country. RBL information on this has yet to be issued. (West Dereham Parish Council is one jump ahead on this.)
10. **Financial Support required by County HQ**. County HQ holds insufficient funds in its General Account to manage its own administrative affairs. It will be relying heavily on assistance from Branches in 2017 and 2018.
11. **Passchendaele August 2017 – 3rd Battle of Ypres**. The 100th Anniversary of this battle, which came to reflect all the horrors of WW1, will be recognised in the County. Details to be issued later.
12. **West Dereham Branch**. WD Branch RBL was congratulated for taking pole position in January's edition of the Legion Magazine.
13. **Standard Bearers**. Branch Standard Bearers are often requested at funerals in the County. Last year, in Great Yarmouth when a WW2 veteran died without family, 18 Standards turned out for his funeral plus 200 Legion members.
14. **RAF Langham Dome Heritage Day Saturday 3 June 2017**. Heritage Day at RAF Langham, near Holt, is on Saturday 3 June 2017, from 11 am until 4 pm. This is Norfolk's newest military attraction and has been open now for 3 years. It tells the story of RAF Langham as a WW2 Coastal Command unit with radar and ground to air weaponry from WW2 and the Cold War. **The Post code is NR25 7BP**. See flypast by a Dakota and a Tiger Moth aerobatics display. 1940s songs by Tara and the Blighty Belles. exhibits from the RBL, a 1940s NAAFI wagon and a Grand Draw with a flight in a Boeing 737 Flight Simulator as first prize. Parking and entry are free. But a donation of £5 (or more) gains access to the Dome Visitors Centre with its interactive displays, etc. Suitable for adults and children so treat your self to a day out.
15. **Armed Forces Day, Saturday 24 Jun 2017**. County Rededication Service – details to be issued later.