

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION CHELTENHAM & DISTRICT BRANCH

Minutes of Branch Meeting held 19.30, Tuesday 2 February 2010

1. **Act of Homage** was duly observed
2. **Apologies** were received from Dave Martel and Roy Roberts
3. **Those attending:** John Hawthornthwaite, Moyne Blake, Mike Brookings, Phil Fisher, Peter Collins, Andy Worsley, Walter Meigh, Carol Sharrock.
4. **The Minutes of the last meeting** were read and agreed. Proposed by Mr John Hawthornthwaite and seconded by Mr Mike Brookings.
5. **Matters Arising**
 - a. A letter was sent to Counsellor Surgenor inviting him to become our President. The invitation was accepted.
 - b. Cadets Liaison: Mr Andy Worsley to speak to a colleague, Richard Angove, to see if he would be interested. He will also send out an email to other colleagues seeking support.
6. **Reports**
 - a. **Chairman**
 - i. Sam Edmonds of the RBL Property Dept visited Potter House on 10 December 2009 and carried out a survey of the building. This was to determine what the property consists of. His comments off the record were quite promising from our point of view.
 - ii. The surveyor from VOA carried out a full survey of Potter House on 17 December 2009 in order that the rateable value could be re-assessed. Her finding will be made known to us in the New Year. Again, her comments, albeit off the record, were very promising. We should certainly be able to strike out references to the bars and skittle alley.
 - iii. The Plumber came to Potter House on 14 December 2009 to discuss what would need to be done to make the ground floor functional. The cost for heating would be approx £1,600 + VAT (no consideration made for scrappage)
 - iv. I also spoke to the electrician. No costing was given and he referred to the closing report that he had submitted in August.
 - v. John Hawthornthwaite has taken over, from Walter Meigh, as Hon. Treasurer. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman, offered his thanks to Walter for all his hard work over the past 2 years.
 - vi. Carol Sharrock has braved the icy temperatures in the office and straightened it out. In order that this state may continue, please ensure that all mail is routed through her desk (using the grey in-tray) so that everything gets booked in and disseminated as required so that invitations to ceremonies (St Paul's), cheques, bills etc do not get lost.
 - b. **Vice Chairman**
 - i. The County Conference, scheduled for 23 January was postponedⁱ, however, the Branch would have no voting ability due to the discovery that Branch accounts are not ready.

ii.**President.** Mayor of Cheltenham, Councillor Lloyd Surgenor formally accepted invitation of Branch to become President. He met with Chairman, Treasurer and other members on Friday 17 January. He will attend a future meeting by invitation, but is currently on holiday.

iii.**Former President Roy Clark.** Roy Clark has received all appropriate awards from the RBL so the Chairman and I believed most appropriate gesture would be for the Mayor to present Roy with a letter of appreciation from the Town; Mayor has agreed; Roy Roberts drafting it.

iv.**RBL Chaplain** - Canon Andrew Dow. Keen supporter of Remembrance Festival. Has agreed to meet with David and Roy R to discuss how he can support Branch during rest of the year. Aim to invite him to a future Branch meeting.

v.**Future use of Potter House.** No formal response yet to our formal letter to regional Manager of 15 Dec 09. Informal response is that RBL is in no hurry to sell.

vi.**Telephone** John Hawthornthwaite has been dealing with the issue of our telephone disconnection, which will hopefully be restored wef 2 February.

1. John Hawthornthwaite updated the Committee on the cause of the telephone disconnection. The number was sequestered by BT when an unknown person indicated the possibility of returning to BT as our provider. Opal had no control over it and we are unable to keep our old number. We have now been reconnected, the number being 01242 254428. To date we are still unable to connect to the internet. There was a discussion about returning to BT in order to get our number back. However John pointed out that we get free calls from Opal. The question of compensation for loss of connection was discussed and John replied that he has already raised the issue with Opal.

vii.RBL twin focus on Remembrance and Welfare

1. **Remembrance** – covered by Poppy Appeal, This year the Remembrance Festival is on 14 November – Roy Roberts organising again. Mike Brookings acting as standard bearer as required. Attendance by Chairman/Branch rep at funerals as required.
2. **Welfare** - Significant case-work effort by Moyne and colleague who need a base to work from and funds! Their work is reactive but the Branch should ideally focus some effort on pro-active welfare work e.g. Liaison with welfare agencies – identify where/how we could help homeless ex-service people in the local area.

viii.Fundraising

1. There is a clear need to raise funds for the future – for welfare and to support continued requirements of the Branch. The Riders are very keen to help raise money for the branch but ideas are required. Examples of previous activities include a sponsored 24 hour bike ride covering 1,000 miles. Moyne Blake suggested the Race Course as a possible venue, stating that the last Meeting was scheduled for the end of May. John Hawthornthwaite asked the Committee to give thought to ways of raising money for discussion at the next meetingⁱⁱ .

ix. Future programme.

1. Expansion of Welfare activity – David, Roy, John and Moyne to discuss ex-Committee. Any other takers? Perhaps exchange ideas by email and meet – to consolidate ideas – say 30-45 minutes in advance of next Committee meeting in March.
2. To identify some events for Branch to do to involve more existing members plus potential new members.
3. GCHQ liaison?
4. Cadets – local activities for the 100th anniversary (May)? Roy has contact ref that event and with cadets who support Remembrance Festival
5. Any other contacts?
6. Visit to National Arboretum Memorial in summer?
7. Schools liaison – successful visits to couple of local schools last Nov (Mike B)
8. Draw up a programme for autumn in advance of Remembrance day?

b. Hon Treasurer

i. I took over the accounts from Walter at the end of November. He was having difficulty preparing them for the auditor. He had three main problem areas.

1. Membership – He had trouble reconciling what the HQ said they had taken and what I, as membership secretary said we had as members. I boiled it down to a difference of one member, who paid by direct debit and whose payment had failed. They did not tell us this until I queried it. She had cancelled her membership without telling me or anyone else in the branch. HQ assumed we would know and didn't tell us until I asked. There are other amounts on their statement which don't make sense and I have asked for 'a words of one syllable' explanation. As HQ was closed all through Christmas and the New Year, I shall not get that until mid-January.
2. All the building repairs and improvements had become so complicated with bits of paper here and there that he was quite lost. So am I. I, therefore, decided to stop wasting time trying to sort them out and to leave it to the auditor to make comments.
3. He was unable to calculate what our assets are. So am I! I asked HQ for the figures and got a totally incomprehensible reply. I have gone back to them for clarification, but of course, Christmas intervened.

ii. I will keep the Chairman posted. It does mean that we shall not be able to send a voting delegate to Conference. I feel, however, that it would be to our advantage to send our elected delegate to Conference as a visitor. There is much networking that can be done for the Branch's benefit. To that end I also feel that, should he wish to go, then our Chairman should.

iii. **This year's accounts.** We have £2,000, which should last for about 10 months. Fundraising is a separate item on the agenda and will not be raised here. If you have any questions, then please do not hesitate to ask.

1. Peter Collins proposed a vote of thanks to John and Walter for all the hard work they had done to sort out the finances. This was seconded by all present.

c. Service Committee

i. Moyne Blake stated that the service committee had been very busy, but that no money had been used from funds. There had been several cases where they needed to make sure that clients were receiving all their entitlements etc. and that other support was in place.

ii. Moyne will inform all relevant agencies of our new telephone number.

d. Poppy Appeal

i. At the beginning of January, the Poppy Committee had banked £70,556.36.

7. **The Royal Society of St George** is holding its annual service at Gloucestershire Cathedral on 23 April 2010 starting at 7.30pm. Anyone wishing to attend please contact the Branch Secretary, so that she can apply for the relevant tickets.

8. The meeting ended at 2040

iAfter note;

The Vice Chairman was unable to attend the County Annual Meeting, which, contrary to the information given by the Treasurer, did take place.

ii Please send your ideas to the Treasurer, via email, for discussion prior to the next meeting.