

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION CHELTENHAM & DISTRICT
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
1930 hrs WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2011
MINUTES

1. **ACT OF HOMAGE** was duly observed, remembering Tony Ward, Alan Saunders and Ray Cox

2. **CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS** The Chairman began by welcoming everyone and thanking the Albion House Social Club for allowing us to hold our meetings in their committee room, but expressed his disappointment that we had still been unable to attract members to attend them.

3. **APOLOGIES** were received from Bill Spreadbury, Roy Clark, M Wartalski, A Worsley. Those attending R Roberts, D Hughes, P Collins, M Blake, P Fisher, M Brookings, L Surgenor, C Sharrock, D Martel.

4. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** were read and agreed. Proposed D Hughes, seconded M Blake

5. **MATTERS ARISING** None

6. **ADDITIONS TO AGENDA** None

7. **PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS** I would like to start by telling you a little of my recent holiday in the Black Sea, during which, I was able to visit several ports including Yalta and Novorossisk. It was evident that remembrance was very important to these coastal ports, still placing tributes at their memorials. In Galipoli, wreaths were laid at sea. It was therefore particularly upsetting to hear of the damage done to the Prestbury War Memorial. I have seen a number of changes in my first year as President, The proposed sale of Potter House, the new venue for our meetings and a new Chaplain. What has struck me most is that the return of the Rifles from Afghanistan has made the locals more aware of the needs of service personnel, with children also wanting to get involved. I look forward to further changes in the coming year.

8. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** As I have also been covering the Treasurer's post I will combine the two reports because there is a considerable amount of overlapping

in the comments from each. We seem to have expended an awful lot of energy this year to make very little progress. My principle concern with Potter House has been to keep it in a reasonable state of repair etc until such time as it is sold. I wish to thank those of you who helped to clear the back yard of buddleia jungle and the side alley of the debris caused by fly-tipping. The paperwork abandoned by the Club has just about been cleared and we need to start thinning out the Branch records. Historic records need to be preserved. It was most interesting to read the original minutes from 1921. We need to have most rooms clear by March 2012.

The procedure for selling the property is now well under way; surveying has been completed and the initial architects drawings should be almost ready this week or next. The proposal to submit plans for approval for change of use has been questioned by some people. The rationale behind this is that once the proposal is accepted the sale can go ahead without the "subject to planning approval" caveat being utilised by a prospective buyer.

We must now look to the future, decide what precisely we need and actively look for such premises.

The main problem for concern is the steadily diminishing number of members. We gained 3 new members in the year to October 2011, 2 of these two were over 85 years of age. On the other hand we have lost at least a dozen stalwart supporters (not all members of the Branch) to the grim reaper and to ill-health. The burden of running the Branch is falling onto the shoulders of fewer and fewer people. The lack of sufficient active members is the reason why we failed to arrange any special fund-raising activities for the 90th Anniversary. The move of our Branch meetings has not attracted any more members, it has made the meetings a tad more sociable and more comfortable and I would like to extend the thanks of the Branch to the Albion Social Club for allowing us to use this facility. As we are (hopefully) approaching the end of our tenure of Potter House, I see no reason to move our meetings away from the Albion for the foreseeable future.

Thank you to Mike Brookings who has carried the Branch standard in all conditions for the past several years. I am sorry that you now need to lay down the standard. Get well.

Thank you to Roy Clark for having taken on the Treasurer's post last year. I am

sorry that your health deteriorated to the extent that you had to give up the job. Get well.

Thank you to Walter Meigh and Peter Collins for your support over the past few years. At your age you deserve a rest.

Thank you to Carol Sharrock for her continuing support throughout the year despite her health problems. Stay well..

Roy Clark began the year as Treasurer but, after having been admitted to hospital on more than one occasion, he decided that he could no longer continue and at the August Branch meeting I offered to stand in as Treasurer and most surprisingly my offer was accepted unanimously by the Committee.

The Branch finances appear at first glance to be very healthy. There is, however, a warning that the property insurance, some of the utilities and the rates for the ground floor (£2,600) for which we are responsible have all been paid by the RBL Property Department, and this money will all be clawed back from Branch funds when Potter House is sold. If one also takes into account the sizeable donation of £3,000 made by one donor, it becomes clear that the Branch is financially thriving on the equivalent of a life support machine. Much of the money we have in the bank will be needed for clearing expenses when we empty Potter House (skips/removals/storage etc). There will be a time between vacating the property and being relocated when we will need funds to pay our way until we are credited with the proceeds of the sale. As I stated earlier, now is the time for members to decide what form exactly it is that they want the Branch to take in the future. I do not wish to enter into discussion on this now, let us revisit this at item 13 in the Agenda.

- 9. MEMBERSHIP REPORT** Membership is dwindling at local level. Information from County indicates that members are joining on line – currently around 250 have joined and are affiliated to County. They appear to be younger members and they do not want to be committed to a specific branch. A newsletter, the County Newsflash, is now issued by County and sent electronically to these members. There is a need to reach these uncommitted members, perhaps to help out on an occasional basis for ‘one-off’ events. *It was suggested that we put a small piece in the County Newsflash to encourage new members.*

10. POPPY APPEAL REPORT

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those

who helped with last year's appeal. We were able to raise £82,763.07 which is up again on the preceding years' total. I hope this year is as good as previous years especially with it being our 90th Anniversary this year. It would be lovely to hit the £90,000 mark this year.

11. WOMEN'S SECTION Cheltenham Branch of the RBL Women's Section are pleased to present the annual report for the year ended 20th September 2011. We end the year with 26 members (24 ordinary and 2 life members). Sadly we lost Betty Taylor during the year. Members attended her funeral. This year was the 90th anniversary of the Royal British Legion and there were many events held in the County. The money raised at these goes to RBL to help build and equip Rehabilitation Centres for Service Personnel. Our main event was a Strawberry Tea in June. This was very successful and raised over £200. Unfortunately our Easter Egg Hunt was badly attended. We held our usual Ploughman's Lunch in August and 2 coffee mornings for Branch expenses and Women's Section Benevolent Schemes. There were 3 other Branch Meetings. The Treasurer will be giving you details.

- **Poppy Appeal** Miss Fry ran the Poppy Stall in the Beechwood Arcade for 10 days and raised nearly £4,000 towards Cheltenham's total of about £80,000. We thank her and those who helped there. Our Chairman and others were present at the War Memorial and at the Festival of Remembrance in Cheltenham Town Hall.
- **Other Events**

Purse Presentation in Kemble	March
County Conference in Gloucester	November
National Conference in Eastbourne	May

Lady Apsley invited us to an 'Area Get Together' in Cirencester Park in July. We enjoyed meeting old friends, watching Polo and eating tea and cakes.
- **Retirements** We are disappointed that Joy Johnston is leaving the Committee and her job as Vice-Chairman. We thank her for all her work and are pleased she will stay as a member of the Branch

12. SERVICE COMMITTEE Report for 1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011. The Service Committee consists of 2 people – Bob Wheatley, who is also a case worker for the Royal Naval Association and Moyne Blake who is also a Welfare Officer for the RAFA Association. On 31 May we attended our annual training course at RBL Hardwicke. During the year we covered 98 applications for assistance. Some of which involved

more than one visit. We understand that the waiting list for Somerset Legion House is now at six months. Our case load this year was as follows:

Applications for RAF Benevolent Fund for grants (10) Applications to Somerset Legion House (10), Rent deposits/bonds ((7), Household goods (8) General visits (6) New home equipment (5) Repairs, adaptions etc (5), funerals (4), debts (4), Care Home fees (4) Advice on Benefits (3) Homelessness, (3) Carpentry (3), re-housing (3) Bills and rent arrears (3), Electric Scooters etc (3) Non SLH Breaks (1), Nursery Care (2) Dental fees (1) Hearing Aids (1) Training fees (1) Stairlift (1) BT Landline (1) War Pensions (1) Logs for fire (1) Gas supply/installation (1) Hoist (1) Grant application for QARANC (1) Boiler (1) Golfing partner (1) TV supplied check-up (1)

13. PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS The accounts have been examined and found to be satisfactory. You have the copy of the accounts before you, may I have a proposer that they be accepted. Members of the committee noted that there were some minor arithmetical errors, it was therefore agreed that although they were happy with the tenure of the report, due to the errors, it was agreed that the report would be accepted with the condition that the errors were corrected within the next 2 weeks. Proposed R Roberts, seconded L Surgenor. All in favour.

14. THE YEAR AHEAD The question was raised about our future requirements in terms of accommodation. The priorities being the Services Committee who need a private room that they can work from, and space for Poppy work (storage of wreaths, poppy tins etc). The Chairman referred back to the last Branch Meeting where it was agreed our requirements for accommodation be raised at the December meeting.

15. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Nomination for Treasurer: Mr W D Kelly

Proposed M Blake, seconded P Collins. All in favour. Duly elected

Standard Bearer: M Brookings is standing down for health reasons. The position will remain vacant. Mike Smith (ex Hardiwcke) has offered to act as Standard Bearer when required.

The Current Committee Members were re-elected en-block, proposed by L Surgenor and seconded by the Chairman.

16. MOTION TO CONFERENCE None

17. NEXT BRANCH MEETING Tuesday 6 December 2011