



The Royal British Legion Update **Shotley Erwarnton and District Branch**

Hello to all,

Firstly may I say sorry for not having written a winter update but I've been quite busy. Also the Branch name "DISTRICT" is a bit of a misnomer it really means Chelmondiston, as a few years ago Shotley & Erwarnton Branch absorbed Chelmondiston Branch when the membership dropped off. So we also cover Chelmondiston and to those members in Chelmondiston, who get to read this update, a "Big Hello" from us.

These past 12 months have been very busy both at Branch and at RBL County level. Much has happened and with more to come it's going to be a busy year for the RBL.

To tell what has already happened we return to June. Last year's Suffolk Show was an important event as it is our County Showcase for what we are about. Standard Bearers and Affiliated Cadets took part in the Parade of Standards and in a following collection the Affiliated Cadets collected over £300 for our County Benevolent fund (this tops up the Poppy Support Welfare money collected each Poppy Appeal). Following this was our County Church service and Parade (Rally) which took place in Felixstowe and the County Of Suffolk received its new Colours (Standard). The parade went off well with support from the Cadet Forces in Suffolk the Salute was taken by a Squadron Leader from the RAF Regt at Honington. In September the Branch Chairman helped to organise the Parade of Standards for the Felixstowe Landguard Fort Poppy event. This went well and was supported again, by the Cadets. For the first time in Suffolk the RBL Youth Lance Guard in RBL Dress, this went down well and we hope they will move from strength to strength. This month also saw the Branch Annual Dinner at the Shipwreck, many thanks to the Branch Secretary Sarah for sorting this out with Sarah at the Shipwreck.

October Brought the Poppy Appeal and Shotley Collected approx £1840. This was not quite as much as the Year before but the economic climate made a small change. We hope to do a bit better this year.

November brought in the Church service which went well with many wreaths being laid for or on behalf of various organisations within Shotley, the Ex-service community, Afghanistan conflict and the School. The Branch attended the Shotley School Service at St Mary's Church on the 11th and then moved to Ipswich cemetery for the Ipswich one.

December was a quiet month but before the storm there is always quiet.

Sadly the Storm was the Funerals of our Fallen Servicemen of Suffolk as well as some of the R.B.L's more senior (In age) figures. I had the Sad Honour of carrying our Branch Standard at the Funerals in the Cathedral Town of Bury St. Edmunds and in the Wool Town of Lavenham. All the occasions were both light and solemn as the Service men had requested. At the last funeral we march out to the tunes of a Heavy Metal Band different but entirely better for it. In Bury St Edmunds for the Funeral of RAF Regt Gunner L. Southgate there were over 60 Standards in his honour and over 40 at Lavenham the House Hold Cavalry funeral there. Standard Bearers take their job seriously as it is the only service they can do to give the families support and a degree of closure. Unhappily the troops in Afghanistan are seeing more frontline combat than has been seen since the 1914-18 Great War. The RBL will do all it can to help them!

April saw the Branch chairman organising the A.N.Z.A.C. Parade in Stowmarket for the Britain – Australia Society, this was well attended and Phillip Hope-Cobbold took the Salute for H.M.'s representative, the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk. Attending were The Mayors, Council heads and councillors from all over Suffolk including the Commonwealth Representatives from Australia and New Zealand, The Turkish Consul represented his country at the service. Also attending were the Cadet Forces (who's 150 Anniversary it is this year), Scouts, Guides, Suffolk Old Comrades Association as well as many others. It was a busy day for all involved especially making the Australian and New Zealand National flags at the last moment as they had been forgotten. The Chairman has received a letter of thanks from the B.A.S. for his help. A wreath was laid by a Sea Cadet for the Royal Naval Division, sailors who fought as soldiers, which was at Gallipoli.

Moving on, our adult numbers are stable but we could do with some new blood. Our Youth members are increasing in numbers and we hope they will continue to grow. The Youth Members take part in the ceremonial side and we are able as an organisation to sign off their service section of

the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Scheme. They also form the core of the Ceremonial Lance Guard who act as Markers on our Parades.

Our Affiliation with the T.S. Orwell Sea Cadets in Ipswich is going well and will soon lead to D of E Awards being signed off for the cadets. They have also supported us at Parade events as well.

The Branch Chairman, who is a County Trustee and Branch Standard Bearer, organised the County Youth Standard Bearer Competition for 2009. Jamie Spall of the Army Air Corps Detachment, Suffolk Army Cadet Force won the event. He went on to win the Regional Final and then came 3rd to a former Air Cadet who was older and a Sea Cadet with a bit more experience. Jamie lost because he was marked down for using an old worn out Standard from the Branch of which he is a member, but hopefully for our next competitor we will have a new one.

The branch has submitted a motion to our National Conference to reinstate the County Youth Standard as an aspiration for Youth members to aim for as Standard Bearers.

The Youth is part of the full membership now and will serve to feed the flames of future membership (Youth Membership £3.00) (Adult Membership £14.00 open to all who are or have served this country and those who loyally support our aims).

To the future you will see us at:-

The Suffolk Show

Flower Festival

The County Rally Woodbridge (Launch of Wings Appeal at Felixstowe)

Some of the Cadet 150 Events

And

Remembrance

Next Year is the 90th Anniversary of the Royal British Legion and the 70th of the Women's Section of the Royal British Legion watch for events and notices about this. County Rally Next Year is in Bury St. Edmunds