



This year is the 90th anniversary of the Royal British Legion

New Brussels Branch Badge

Badges and wristbands for 2012

RBL Brussels Branch has just commissioned celebratory badges and wristbands to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the branch in 2012.



These are available at a cost of €5.50 for the badges and €2.50 for the wrist bands (inc. postage & packing) from any of our Committee Members or contact newsletter@britishlegion.be

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Brussels' Pubs Support the RBL

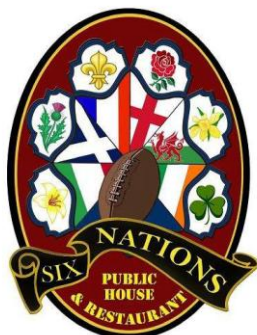
Four Brussels pubs supported this year's Poppy Appeal

Every year we are very grateful for the support that we receive from shops, businesses, offices and community groups when it comes to our Annual Poppy Appeal. This year, we have had even more volunteers than ever and our Poppy boxes appeared in over 50 locations in and around Brussels, Waterloo and Braine l'Alleud, Nivelles and Rhode St Genese.

Four local pubs offered to take poppy boxes this year, the Old Oak near Schuman, the Michael Collins on Avenue Louise, and Churchill's Bar and the Six Nations' Rugby Pub both near the Opera in downtown Brussels, and, from the weight of their collection tins, it looks like they did a pretty good job.

We are now in the process of counting the monies received and organising the boxes and collection tins in good time for next year's appeal! We will report back on the totals received in the next newsletter.

So many thanks to ALL our volunteer locations, those who delivered and collected boxes and, of course, to all those who bought a poppy and wore it with pride. Lest we forget.



4 Brussels' pubs





“Silent Night” - an emotional journey from Wales to Sterrebeek

By Menna Medi, Welsh TV Channel S4C

A Welsh TV Company has just returned to Wales after filming in locations in Austria and Belgium. They were following the footsteps of a group of Welsh soldiers who sang the carol Silent Night on Sterrebeek Square on Christmas Eve, 1944.

The carol began as a poem by a young priest, Joseph Mohr, who wrote the words in 1816. A couple of years later the melody was added by Franz X. Gruber, so it could be sung at Midnight Mass. Both had seen the aftermath of war and the carol soon became a classic.

In a documentary called Dawel Nos (Silent Night) on the Welsh TV Channel S4C, viewers are led on an emotional journey to discover more about a link between the carol and the family of a well known journalist in Wales. Bethan Jones Parry has always been intrigued by this carol, but, she didn't realise that there was a connection between the carol and her father until she read his diaries after he passed away. They mentioned an emotional event which happened during the Second World War in 1944.

“The event happened in Sterrebeek, close to a battlefield, on Christmas Eve, 1944,” explains Bethan, who was a newscaster on BBC news in Wales. “It's ironic that a carol, which has so many of its roots in war, is today seen as a call for peace throughout the world. The soldiers in Dad's battalion were on their way from the beaches of Normandy and they knew the battle facing them in Ardennes was going to be tough.” Bethan added, “My daughter, Catrin, is a good singer, just like her grandfather, and the idea was for her to sing the carol at exactly the same spot as he stood all those years ago.”

Although the story isn't familiar to many people nowadays, it also appeared in a newspaper in North Wales in 1944 which stated that: “... when the 40 soldiers started to sing *Holy night, peaceful night, all is dark save the light...*, villagers hearing the sound of voices and seeing the glow from the torches, drew aside their black out curtains and peeped out of their windows... one by one they came out to join the circle round the carolers, their children standing with them, listening open-mouthed and awed by the majesty of the grand Welsh voices...”

The production team for this documentary had help from many sources in Belgium, from ex-pats to the British Legion Brussels' Branch, and from the British School of Brussels to the Zaventem Library. Through their persistence, they found local contributors who included a local historian and author, Dr. Henri Vannoppen, who has written a book about Sterrebeek. They also had the assistance of Ann Schellmans for the translations from Flemish into Welsh. Ann is originally from Belgium and is a fluent Welsh speaker; she works as a Geography tutor at a local Teacher Training College.

The crew also filmed at the Stille Nacht Museum in Oberndorf near Salzburg, the Battle of the Bulge in La Roche, at the Hotton Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery around Erps-Kwerps and in the Ardennes.

The programme was first broadcast on the Welsh TV channel S4C in December (Original version and with English subtitles) and is now available

“... one by one they came out to join the circle round the carollers”



TV Crew at the Silent Night Museum, in Obendorf

The “Red Coats” Society, 145 Bld de Smet Naeyer, 1090 Brussels:

Conference on a British Military theme 1st Tuesday of each month (ex. July & August) - 19:45



Kate's hand-crocheted poppy

Kate's Poppies – A Big Hit at SHAPE

Kate Hutchinson describes what inspired her to crochet poppies for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Community, Mons

It all started with me messing about with a design for a crocheted poppy for myself way back in September. It ended with me crocheting about 270 poppies (I lost count eventually) and selling them for the Royal British Legion at SHAPE. Don't ask me why I decided to do it, but crocheting the poppies became addictive and, combined with it being the 90th Anniversary of the Legion this year, it seemed to make sense. Although, I am definitely not making another one for a very long time! Each poppy took me about 25 minutes to do - yes a lot of knitting!

I sold the poppies wherever I could, including a stint at the SHAPE Headquarters where I positioned myself right next to the entrance of the dining facility for 4 days and made sure that the British poppy was this year's must have item. I was competing with the Canadian poppy and French cornflower but my crocheted poppies were a definite draw. I was asked many times for the metal badges, particularly by US personnel, so we must ensure we have them for next year. I had to pin the majority of the poppies on the menfolk because they could not work out how to use the pins themselves!

I also raised extra money by hosting 2 film nights which were very generously supported. I even had my 5 year old twins making the world's largest poppy for the front door and, bunting to decorate the house. My thanks for all the support I received with this venture.

I was pleased to see my poppy adorning many a coat and hat all over SHAPE and indeed back home in Scotland where my sister sold 30 of them to friends and family. I met many kind and generous people from a wide variety of countries whilst selling the poppies and it was great fun. One man even gave me a bag of Euros in change amounting to €57 and another happy soul wore a British poppy, my crochet poppy, a Canadian poppy and a French cornflower altogether on his coat!

Kate raised more than €1500. A very big thank you on behalf of the RBL Brussels branch.

Remembrance Service 2011

Held on Sunday 13th November at Pro-Cathedral Holt Trinity

Canon Dr Robert Innes conducted a very moving service on Sunday 13th November for Remembrance Sunday to a full house. In fact, it was standing room only in the church! It was good to see Branch members, friends, members of all the youth organisations, military representatives and dignitaries all coming together to remember the fallen.

Wreaths were laid RBL Brussels Branch President, Brigadier Andrew Fisher; the British Ambassador to Belgium, Jonathan Brenton; Rear Admiral Bruce Williams representing the UK Military Ambassador to NATO; several Commonwealth representatives; Mrs Andrée Dumont, President of the Comète Line; Cdr Gavin Short RNA and Mr Dick Whittingham Chairman RAFA Belgian Branch. Were we all moved by the song from Yvonne Stausboll "Which way for the heroes?" which was a very poignant reminder of what service personnel have gone through, which continues to this very day.

We all enjoyed lunch together afterwards in the church hall, where the reflective mood was lifted with a fine lunch and good company.



Standard bearers, Freddy Roiseux, RNA, J-P Blanckaert, RAF & Mark Thomas, RBL

Condolences from RBL Brussels Branch

The Brussels branch would like to extend its condolences to the family of Mr André Mayne, a long time RBL member who died on 13th December 2011. He was born in 1926 and leaves his wife, Louise, daughter Kathleen, 4 grandchildren and little Antonin his great grandson. He will be sadly missed.

Defence of the River Dyle earns VC

Alan Puplett describes the actions of Richard Wallace Annand VC

In walks in three adjacent woods called Bois de Limal, Bois de Bièrges and Bois de Rixensart, I noticed blockhouses in a line; the remains of the K-W Line. This 1940 defensive system ran from Antwerp to Wavre following the river Dyle. But in my personal visits here, I came across a memorial to the 1st Army VC of WWII. Second Lieutenant Richard (Dick or Jake) Wallace Annand VC 2nd Durham Light Infantry who was awarded the VC for most conspicuous gallantry on 15th - 16th May 1940. The memorial can be found along Dreve des Anglais, Gastuche 1390.



Defence of the river Dyle

Shortly after dawn on 15th May, the enemy attacked again and at 11am, in the thick of the battle, they pushed forward a bridging party. Once again Dick's platoon counter attacked, but soon ran out of ammunition. Dick then went forward himself over open ground with utter disregard for the fierce mortar and machinegun fire. Reaching the top of the ridge, he drove out the German bridging party with hand grenades, inflicting more than 20 casualties. Although wounded, he managed to rejoin his platoon.

The following evening the Germans launched another assault and Dick, armed with grenades went forward again and forced the enemy to retreat, taking heavy casualties. His platoon sergeant, Terry O'Neil, who lost his right arm in the battle, later explained "Mr Annand came to me at platoon headquarters and asked for a box of grenades as they could hear Jerry trying to repair the bridge. Off he went and he sure must have given them a lovely time because it wasn't a great while before he was back for more. Just like giving an elephant strawberries".

O'Neil added, "The previous night while both sides were sending over the heavy stuff, Second Lieutenant Annand realised he had not received word from our right forward section which held a pillbox (a K-W Line blockhouse) about 250 yards to our right front, so he decided to get out to them and see how they were fixed. He had been gone over two hours and we had come to the conclusion that they had got him, when something unrecognisable came crawling in. It was just Jake – that is the name by which we knew him. His clothes were torn to shreds and he must have been cut and bruised all over. How he got there and back, God only knows, because he had the fire of our own troops to contend with as well as Jerry. I don't suppose he knows the meaning of the word fear. He never asked a man to do anything he could do himself. I can quite understand he wouldn't talk much about it. He isn't that kind. It was just another job of work to him."



Second Lieutenant Richard Wallace Annand VC

As Dick led the survivors of his platoon away from the bridge in the early hours of 16th May he discovered that his batman, Private Joseph Hunter, had been wounded in the head and legs and unable to walk had been left behind as there was no transport. Despite his own wounds sustained in the previous days' fighting, Annand returned again, found a wheelbarrow, lifted Hunter into it and wheeled him to the rear until their way was barred by a fallen tree. Now without the strength to lift he left Hunter in an empty trench and set out to find help. He collapsed unconscious from exhaustion and loss of blood shortly after finding his company HQ position abandoned. Hunter was captured by the advancing Germans and sent to a Dutch hospital, but died of his wounds a month later aged 26.

During an air raid on 3rd September 1940, in the Grand Hall of Buckingham Palace, King George VI presented Second Lieutenant Richard Wallace Annand with the Victoria Cross "for most conspicuous gallantry" [Citation] - the first awarded to the Army during the Second World War.

Annand survived the war and went on to be Deputy Lieutenant of Country Durham, He lived to be 90, dying in Durham in December 2004.

Cercle Georges Lecointe (Belgian Navy):

Conference on a Naval theme 2nd Wednesday of each month (ex. July & August) - 20:00 at BRYC

Which way for the Heroes?

By Yvonne Stausboll

Yvonne Stausboll wrote this beautiful song about the heroes of war for her Polish father, who fought in the Warsaw Uprising. She sung this for us at the Remembrance Service on 13th November at the Pro-Cathedral Holy Trinity.

Which way for the heroes?
Which way for the heroes of war?
They gave all that they could give
They couldn't fight for more
Which way for the heroes
Whose war still goes on?
Memories
Linger so long

The tears of war
Are tears that shouldn't be cried
There's no answer
To the question "why?"
Why this children's playground
Has such fatal games?
Friend or foe
Neither can explain

There are no winners here
No losers too
The rest of us keep probing
Who is who?
Wounded flesh
always hurts the same
Experience of loss
is nobody's gain

The nightmare is over
Or have they just begun?

In his luggage
Nothing but courage
There's no sign to show
Which way to go

The war may be over
But he just soldiers on....
They say the memories
Have now all passed...
Deep into history
They have been cast
But the poppies are still blowing in the wind
The poppies are still blowing in the wind



Victory Services Club

A place to share together in Central London

The Victory Services Club has been supporting the Armed Forces and their families with affordable accommodation in the heart of London for more than 100 years.

This family friendly club is open to all ranks and all Services. If you are currently serving, or your father or mother served, then you are entitled to family membership at just £25. For full details go to www.vsc.co.uk, call 00 44 (0)207 616 8337 or email mem@vsc.co.uk



John and Marleen Rummery

*Heartfelt thanks from
John Rummery*

Au Revoir from John Rummey

Vice-Chairman of the Royal Naval Association, Belgium Branch

After 21 very happy years of living in La Hulpe, my wife and I are departing for the sunny climes of Venice - Florida that is, not Italy. I am very sorry to have to leave Belgium and our departure is sadly not only prompted by the totally inadequate pension the Belgians have decided I am entitled to, but also because I have been dragging my wife, a citizen of the USA, around with me for over 25 years, and I think it's about time she went home to her country of birth.

I have been a member of the RNA for 19 years and of the RBL for a few less years than that, but have met a lot of very interesting and kind people over that time and made many good friends, and there are no better friends than ex-British Service Personnel, now termed veterans. When I was a lad the word 'veterans' was really only associated with those survivors of the Great War. However, now the term is applied to any member of the Army, Navy or RAF, serving or retired, and rightly so.

So, this short letter is one of farewell and thank you. Thank you for your support for both the RNA and RBL and for the kindness and friendliness you have shown to me and my wife during our stay in Belgium. I have lived in La Hulpe (and refused to live anywhere else in Belgium) since our arrival in August 1990. Although I do not speak French (I have a mental block when it comes to Romantic languages), I was determined to become an active member of the community and not be just another ex-pat. I have now lived in La Hulpe longer than I lived anywhere else, and will miss the town, and the people, very much and will be writing them a similar thank you letter (cc the King of the Belgians - thanking him for his wisdom in not having a government for many years, which worked rather well; maybe the UK should try this formula).

Surprisingly, the La Hulpois, and their own Belgian veterans, also seemed to have enjoyed my stay, and on Friday 16th September 2011, at a reception given for the members of "HMS Lostoppos" (an RN Cyber Frigate of which I am the Commanding Officer) at the Chateau de La Hulpe, I was awarded "La Médaille de Reconnaissance de la Fédération Nationale des Combattants de Belgique" by the Honorary Mayor of La Hulpe, Philippe Leblanc. This was a total surprise to me. The Town Council of La Hulpe also presented me with a very nice picture, and the Lostoppos gave me a gold chromometer.

Our departure will be for me, a very sad day indeed (especially as American beer is considered as gnats p***). Again, thank you all, and Au Revoir.

I wish you all good health and happiness, now and in the future.

RBL Welfare Committee Request

The Welfare Committee is seeking volunteers to help with social visits. They are looking for members who have their own transport who can occasionally visit one of our elderly members. Those visited are bright and cheerful but have some mobility difficulties. They wish to avoid becoming isolated and are very happy to be visited by a friendly member. Some have expressed their wish to practise their English and to enjoy an English sense of humour, others are French speakers.

Visiting provides a very rewarding opportunity to meet and get to know some very interesting people. Introductions are made easy by being accompanied by somebody of the Branch who knows the person. Visits are by mutual agreement as to regularity and timing and are without commitment.

If you are interested to help, then please contact Colin or Brenda Puplett colin.puplett@pandora.be or brenda.puplett@pandora.be

Calendar of Events 2011/2012

Mon 9 th Jan	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques, Ave du Cimetière de Bruxelles 155, 1140 Brussels. Tel: 02 736 1648
Mon 13 th Feb	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Mon 12 th Mar	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Sat 17 th Mar	RNA/RBL Spring Lunch 12:30 - Bruxelles Royal Yacht Club (BRYC) TBC Chaussée de Vilvorde (Pont Van Praet), 1020 Brussels
Mon 9 th Apr	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Sun 22 nd Apr	HMS Vindictive Commemoration 10:00 - Zeebrugge TBC
Sun 6 th May	Hotton & Highland Memorial
Mon 14 th May	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques.
Mon 11 th Jun	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Sat 16 th Jun	RNA/RBL Summer Dinner Dance 19:00 - Bruxelles Royal Yacht Club (BRYC)
Sat 23 rd Jun	RBL Wreath Laying Memorial Service & Lunch, Evere
Sun 1 st Jul	Battle of the Somme Commemoration
Sat 7 th Jul	Joint Service of Commemoration, Ieper/Ypres TBC
Mon 9 th Jul	RBL Branch Lunch 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Sun 26 th Aug	Tigelot Remembrance 10:00 - Jalhay/Verviers
Tue 4 th Sep	Brigade Piron 10:00 - Parc des Muses, Ave Brigade Piron, Molenbeek
Mon 10 th Sep	RBL Branch Lunch



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British Legion Brussels



Ambassador Jonathan Brenton

Ambassador's Reception

Wednesday 9th November 2011

Her Majesty's Ambassador to Belgium's Reception was held on Wednesday 9th November 2011 at the Ambassador's Residence in Brussels. We enjoyed good company with friends in the magnificent rooms of the Residence. The Residence is due to be renovated, so it is the last time for a while that we will be received in such regal surroundings.

Ambassador Jonathan Brenton was very appreciative of the work of all the Associations and Charities who assist UK residents, and he thanked all the people involved in the Poppy Appeal as well as all the Associations who strive to "keep the memory alive".



Musée Royal de l'Armée, Brussels:

Conference on a military theme 3rd Wednesday of each month (ex. July & August) at 20:00
www.klm-mra.be

2011-2012 RBL Brussels Branch Membership subs now due

Membership subscriptions of €20 for the year 2011/2012 are now due

Please pay €20 stating "Membership 2012" and your name:

To Bank Account: 210-0155524-85 / BIC code: GEBABEBB / IBAN: BE89-2100-1555-2485 RBL Brussels Branch, Ave Tervuren, 262 box 6, 1150 Brussels.

If, for any reason, you do not wish to renew your membership, then please contact Paulina Robbins van Rijn, the Membership Secretary on 02 375 2320 (+answering machine) or email:

robbinsvanrijn@gmail.com

Also, if you are unable to pay because of illness or mobility, then please contact the Welfare Officers Colin & Brenda Puplett, on 02 767 4726 or e-mail: colin.puplett@pandora.be. Remember, your branch is here to help you!

Please renew your subs as soon as possible to reduce admin problems.

New Year Message from our President and Chairman

From Brigadier Andrew Fisher, RBL Brussels Branch President and Ed Read Cutting, Branch Chairman

2011 saw a celebratory year for the Royal British Legion with the 90th Anniversary of its formation and now we look forward to our own Brussels Branch's 90th anniversary in 2012. We will be celebrating our long association with Brussels and Belgium with an event in the magnificent Maison Communal in town later in 2012. More details will follow in future newsletters and on our web and facebook pages. It promises to be an excellent event.

Work in Brussels is primarily and rightly focused on those who need our support at local level. But, across the Channel, the resources of the Legion are being stretched as the numbers of injured, primarily returning from Helmand, shows no sign of reducing. As such, our contributions to the Poppy Appeal are ever more important. All the charities supporting our wounded and their families along with those who are bereaved or struggling financially, require

significant recognition and a huge vote of thanks. They not only take much of the burden away from the State but treat forces personnel and their families like the people they are and not just as the statistics we are often given.

We would like to express our profound thanks to the Committee for the success of this year's events and Poppy Appeal. Your commitment never ceases to amaze us. As others struggle, we not only increase membership but also increase our donations and the contributions to our Welfare Budget. With wristbands and our wonderful new branch badges now for sale. adding to our fund raising efforts, the Branch is in a healthy state. We are very proud indeed of these achievements.

A New Year lies ahead of us - how time flies - we will continue with the same events programme as last year and hope that our members and supporters will be able to attend the various functions and events. It is a shame that so few members attend our Annual General Meetings. Your views and ideas are very important to us, so please come next year!

All that remains for us to say is that we wish all members and their families a happy and a healthy 2012.

www.britishlegion.be



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Newsletter contributions or requests to receive future copies by email to Dr Helen Haywood at newsletter@britishlegion.be