ROYAL BRITISH LEGION FRANCE

SUPPORTING THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

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Newsletter

November 2026

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Chairman's introduction

Welcome to Remembrance Month.

Events since the last newsletter include a film night at the clubhouse and, of course the coffee morning at the Ambassador's residence on the 29th October.

The film night was most enjoyable if somewhat sparsely attended.



The coffee morning was very successful, and we managed to raise just under 2000 euros for the Poppy Appeal. My thanks go to the Ambassador, all the staff at the residence, and not forgetting all those who helped produce the wonderful Poppy display. Also, all those who helped to make the event a success.

A busy month, we have had a very enjoyable poetry reading night at the clubhouse, thanks to Les Clack and his team. We raised 100 euros from the evening for our Poppy Appeal.

On Tuesday the 10th November we greeted the Chelsea Pensioners who have come over for our service of remembrance at Les Invalides on the 11th. More on the Invalides commemoration below.

Janet and I have ensured that all the Poppy boxes have gone out. I have been to the Traveller's club where members took a lot of poppies. Tim Lorkin also spent a very successful morning there. Thank you, Tim.

We now have a device which enables people to make donations by credit card. This has already proved very effective.

We shall be having another film night on the 17th November.

We also hope to have a club lunch on the 26th November. If you wish to attend, please let me know as soon as possible.

Mark is busy revising our website which when ready will be a much-improved version - once a lot of teething troubles have been sorted. We will be discussing this at our committee meeting on the 16th November. I need all committee members to attend in person for this meeting.

That's it from me.

Richard.

November Quiz



1. What day is celebrated on 1st November by the Roman Catholic Church?
2. The Day of the Dead is a holiday celebrated throughout which country on November 2nd each year?
3. In which city was John F. Kennedy assassinated on November 22nd, 1963?
4. On which day in November is Saint Andrew's Day?
5. N in the NATO phonetic alphabet is November; how many other letters are represented by months of the year in this alphabet?
6. What number month was November in the ancient Roman calendar?
7. What name is given to the month-long moustache-growing event launched each year in November to fundraise for charity?
8. Which United States National Holiday is held annually on November 11?
9. What officially opened for the first time on November 17th, 1869?
10. What was the name given to the famous speech made by Abraham Lincoln on November 19, 1863?
11. Which monarch came to the throne on 17 November 1558?
12. Which very original book was published on 24 November 1859?

Answers on the last page

LETTERS

Correspondence



Susan Woodward writes that she went to a local Service at Belmont's War Mémorial on the 11th. The local school, an army youth corps, three vétérans and about forty other people were there and another forty held an Act of Remembrance in the parish hall. She adds this original and very autumnal shot of the poppy display.

Events

29 October — Embassy Coffee Morning

On this date we held our Annual Poppy Appeal Launch at the British Ambassador's Residence. His Excellency, Sir Tom Drew was away so his Deputy Head of Mission, Andrew Dalgleish, stood in for him. There were members of the Defence Staff also present.



We had a good number of guests attending and as usual the ladies who helped to man the Poppy table, raffle tickets and the produce table. Thank you, ladies, and our thanks also go to Peter Terrell, for helping his wife Bridget with the selling of raffle tickets. This year was also a first for us as my suggested project with the BCWA Ladies to knit, crochet or make felt poppies came to fruition. We had thought to put the mounted display on the main staircase of the Residence but it was so heavy that I thought the netting might break if we attached the poppies there, risking damage to the stair bannister, (I did not want a bill to repair that!)



The display was therefore draped over the screens in the main room where we have our tea and coffee behind the raffle table. It looked absolutely wonderful and I was so pleased with the work that had been done. The Chairman thanked all the ladies who had taken part in the knitting, and my own thanks went to my liaison at the BCWA, Karen Martinovitch for agreeing to speak to the BCWA Committee and members and for all her encouragement and support in this project.



We can still put more poppies on the poppy wall if we want to, but we held back a few and offered them for donations at the Poppy table. That proved to be a great success.

Many thanks to all who made the poppies and supported us. We took just over 1900€ for one and half hours' work. For the first time we also had a credit card machine so people could give donations by card.

The Poppy Appeal will come to a close on November 14th – the Poppy Appeal season is between 14th October to 14th November.



Many thanks once again to all who attended, gave raffle prizes and generally said lovely words to us for the organisation. My thanks also must go to Ben Newick and his team for welcoming us and keeping the tea and coffee flowing.

Janet Warby

3rd November — Poetry Reading



Les Clack and his theatre group Dear Conjunction gave a war poetry reading. This has become a most popular annual event and lived up to expectations. A new element in this reading was the inclusion of several recent poems read by their composers. The reading was followed by an interesting discussion.

11th November — Service of Remembrance

Janet's account of the day for which she was the principal organiser:



November 11, 2026, I was up early and getting ready for the first ceremony of the day at my local War Memorial in Verneuil Sur Seine.

The Mayor was running late so he finished late. Apart from that what I like about the French Ceremonies of Remembrance is that the towns all encourage the children to take part thereby keeping the memories of the fallen alive.



At 12h15 I dashed back to my car and headed for Paris. Surprisingly enough it only took me an hour to get to the Invalides. I was there in time to see the Defence Staff arrive and help set up the seating plan. I managed to get all the Standard Bearers together and passed them on to our Parade Marshal for the event, Julien Sabouret, who instructed the Cubs and Scouts as to what to do and when to do it. Five Poppy Ladies distributed poppies for donations. We now have a SumUp machine which enables us to take credit card donations.

Ian McDonald, our Treasurer, and Tim Lorkin, Committee Member were there to help. It was a great success.

The Titular Organist of Saint Louis des Invalides, M. Philippe Brandeis, played the main organ before the Service started and at the end to march us out.

Dr. Murdoch Macleod and his wife Helen came over once again from Scotland to be part of the Service of Remembrance. Mac piped us in at exactly 15h00. Mgr. Antoine de Romanet de Beaune, Evêque aux Armées, welcomed all to the Cathedral Saint Louis des Invalides which he said was the Soldiers church. Rev Father Mark Osborne, Chaplain of Saint George's Church, Paris and Chaplain to The Royal British Legion, Paris Branch welcomed all present. The Voces Musicae Choir under the direction of John Crothers, ARSCM, were in fine voice and led the congregation in singing the hymns. We had two senior pupils from The British School of Paris who read the poems "A Million Men" by Sarah Halligan and "We Shall Keep the Faith" by Moina Michael. His Excellency, Sir Tom Drew KCMG, read Psalm 91 which was then followed by our Hon. President Col Oliver Stead, OBE, Military Attaché, British defence Staff, France, who gave his thoughts on what Remembrance means to him – and to us all.



The Commitment to Peace was led by the Revd Canon Charlotte Sullivan, Chaplain of Holy Trinity, Maisons Laffitte. This year we had the Chaplain-in-Chief FAF, The Venerable Dr (Air Vice-Marshal) Giles Legood to give the Address.



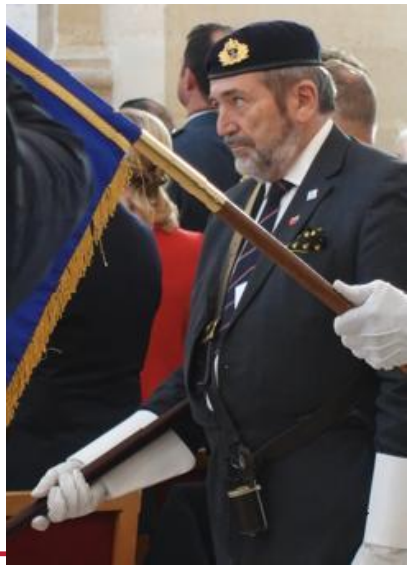
After the Prayers led by The Rev. Jay Colwill, Chaplain of St. Michael's Paris and the last hymn there was the Laying of Poppy Wreaths by the British Ambassador and the Ambassador of Australia on behalf of the Commonwealth and the Act of Remembrance. The Last Post and Reveille were played by a soldier from the Garde Republicain. God Save The King was played and sung by us all before the final Blessing and finally we heard the Lament played by the Piper, always an emotional moment. The Standards then left the Cathedral accompanied by the organ playing Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance.

I have received numerous positive appreciations about this Service of Remembrance for which I am profoundly grateful.

Thank you, all the Defence Staff and especially Emmanuelle Bardet and Col. Stead for their support in putting this Service together. I would like to thank the Clergy and the Choir who so kindly support us on this special day. Thanks too, of course, to our Chairman, Richard Neave for his constant support and encouragement.

Here's to next year when we hope you will all attend the Service of Remembrance 2027.

Janet Warby



Coming Events

Don't forget to book in for this month's lunch.



Thursday 26 November

12.15 for 12.30

Only €20 — pay on the day (in cash please)

Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com

Reserve early to be sure of a place.



LUNCH MENU

Our thanks to Adrian Parr – chef of the day.

Today is Thanksgiving Day. Adrian's menu will thus be loosely American-themed.



Thursday 10th December, 18h30 — Christmas Cocktail

Place: 28 rue des Acacias, Paris.

Only €10; first drink and nibbles free. Pay on the day.

Book through Richard Neave at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com.



A Home Guard Win

Back in the mists of time, in the pub where we used to play and, horribly, attempt to sing folksongs, there was a regular with whom I would chat when the noise allowed. He had been a bit too old to join the forces during the war but, he told me, had been a very active member of the Darlington Home Guards.



Not far from Darlington was the Middleton St. George Aerodrome, now, after many years neglect, optimistically reborn as the Teesside International Airport. From here, even in the post war period, some remarkable planes flew over the town much appreciated by most kids of my generation. The earliest was the Gloster Meteor, designed to bring down V1s towards the end of the war.



The next to appear was the unusual DH 110 with its twin boom tail.

Later there were early versions of the Avro Vulcan with its delta wing - a surprising silhouette in those days.

The aerodrome had, of course, been very active during the war – it was the most northerly bomber station – and was apparently well guarded.



The oldish fellow I used to talk to in the pub recalled that the base commander once decided to put their defensive force to the test. Unable to find a more fitting “enemy” they somewhat disdainfully suggested that the Darlington Home Guard “attack” the airbase.

This was seen as rather a tall order by the Home Guard. After all, they had little training in weapons (even imitation ones) and their average age left them somewhat at a disadvantage faced with an active – and forewarned – platoon of army personnel. “I don’t see how we can even get past the outer perimeter.” said the officer in charge. A long silence fell as they contemplated a ridiculous defeat with them all “killed” before they could even set foot on the place. Then one of the group spoke up. “I have an idea.” he said.

Now, as many know, the Darlington to Stockton railway was the very first passenger railway to run (in 1825) and a part of that route was still in service at the time we are speaking of and indeed is still used today.

The chap with the idea continued. "You know, the railway to Stockton goes right through the Middleton St. George aerodrome." He went on to explain his plan.

They had been given a three-day period in which to mount their "surprise attack" on the base, so in the evening of the second day they all gathered at the railway station, bought tickets and got on the train. Twenty minutes later the train crossed the aerodrome boundary which, for the occasion was well guarded.

Then, before the train had left the military zone, someone pulled the communication cord. The train quickly drew to a halt. Out poured the entire contingent of the Home Guard – but quietly. They split into groups and cautiously approached the defending soldiers whose attention was fully occupied on waiting for the invaders on the other side of the fence. They "shot" most of them from behind. Eventually, if grudgingly, the Darlington Home Guard were declared the winners. Obviously, there were a few of the "defenders" who moaned that they had been cheated but were quickly put in their place and told "All's fair in love and war."

A Word in Your Ear

Portmanteau words

Know what this is? I only recently found out. It's a "spork". Once you've seen it the word's origin is so obvious that I'm not going to explain it. Other modern examples of portmanteau words are obvious: brunch, podcast, smog…



Lewis Carroll in his "Jabberwocky", produced a whole bunch of them – making it one of my favourite poems. I'm sure you know it but just for pleasure, here it is:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, while in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One two! One two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack! He left it
dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Here are four explanations. I'll leave the rest to you.

Chortle = Chuckle + snort

Galumph = Gallop + triumph

Slithy = Slimy + lithe

Mimsy = Miserable + flimsy

The Last Laugh

Making a Resolution



Peter: Today is the day. I'm changing my life. No more wasting time. No more excuses. I'm going to concentrate on something worthwhile!

Harry: Huh! And how are you going to do that?

Peter: Well, there are two possibilities. The first, the easiest, is to invest.

Harry: Really! I didn't know you had any money. How much are you investing?

Peter: I've only got €50 so I have to find something with a very good return. I think I'll get some lottery tickets.

Harry: That's not investing. That's gambling!

Peter: Yes, you have to take risks in life.

Harry: I think you'd do better to start with your other plan. Whatever it is, it can't be worse than buying a lottery ticket. So, what is it then, your second plan?

Peter: I'm going to write and publish a book. Maybe several.

Harry: I didn't know you wrote! In fact, I wasn't sure you could write! Do you want me to read it?

Peter: Not yet. I haven't started it yet, but it shouldn't take long and you can see it when it's done.

Harry: Oh. What's it going to be about? A novel?

Peter: No. I want to write useful books. Books advising people how to face life.

Harry: So, with all your vast experience, what exactly do you think you can teach people?

Peter: Well, my first book will be about how to communicate, how to speak and how to keep people's attention.

Harry: And why do you think you're the right person to elaborate on that particular subject.

Peter: Because you've been listening to me for 20 minutes and you're still here!

Quiz Answers

1. All Saints' Day (also known as All Hallows' Day, Hallowmas, Halloween or the Feast of All Saints)
2. Mexico
3. Dallas
4. 30th November
5. None (just November)
6. Ninth (November retains its name from the Latin "novem", meaning "nine")
7. November
8. Veterans Day
9. The Suez Canal
10. The Gettysburg Address
11. Elizabeth 1
12. Darwin's "On the Origin of Species"



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