



NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2024



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HELLO READERS!

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 Newsletter. I have now taken over the role of Chairman and Editor in the light of Anne Evans resignation. I've taken the liberty of a slight redesign to bring the newsletter more in line with the National RBL branding, I hope you don't mind. For those who don't know me please let me introduce myself. I am a Henley born photographer who is passionate about our town's rich history as well as military history with a particular penchant for WW2 North African campaign, where my father served. I am also the Poppy Appeal Organiser for Henley and will be updating on progress regularly in these pages.

Now, moving forward as they say, this 'your newsletter', so if any of you have a story that is RBL or local interest based that might be of interest, please let me know and I'd love to consider it.

TTFN

Richard Pinches.



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- RBL event reports.
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BREAKING NEWS!

Meetings will now be on the 3rd Thursday each month from January 2025.

Venue - Henley Rugby Club, Menza Restaurant.

Lunch - consists of a delicious main course or an alternative vegetarian dish, pudding, and coffee/tea.

Timings - Talk at 11.30am (please be seated by 11.20am) and lunch 12.30pm.

We very much look forward to seeing you and don't forget that you are welcome to gather at the bar for a drink from 10.45 a.m. before moving to the adjoining meeting room for the talk and lunch.

NB Booking & Payment must be made by the Thursday before the lunch.

Book with Karen by email: kcgrieve@btinternet.com or phone her on 07990 833241.

Then pay £18 for the lunch preferably by Bank Transfer to:

RBL Henley	or by Cheque	RBL Henley-on-Thames Branch,
A/c 00027756	made out to:	c/o Kathy Bardwell-Springett Branch Treasurer,
Sort Code - 30-94-13		5 The Maltings,
Ref - Lunch		Hart Street,
		Henley-on-Thames,
		RG9 2FE.

Car parking - If you would like to park at the Rugby Club we will collect 50p from you on your arrival and pay it into the club for you. Please put a note in your car window saying RBL Lunch.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Come and join us at the Rugby Club for a coffee before the meeting.

Tuesday - 15th October 2024 Lunch and AGM - Richard Pinches will give a talk on how the 2nd Battalion Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Regiment secured the breakout from the Normandy Beaches on D-Day.

Sunday - 10th November 2024 Remembrance Sunday Lunch will be at the Masonic Centre.

Monday - 16th December 2024 Christmas Lunch - Henley Rugby Club

Future Events 2025

Thursday 16th January 2025 Councillor Rory Hunt, Henley Town Mayor, on his role as Town Mayor and what his experiences have been so far.

Thursday 20th February 2025 Janine Fitzgerald will talk about her charitable work in Zimbabwe.

Thursday 20th March 2025 Ross Dilnot, Chaplain to Thames Valley Air Ambulance, will talk about his experience as a patient of the TVAA and the work he now does as their Chaplain, together with Angus Ross, ex-RAF Pilot now volunteering with the TVAA talking about the work of this vital emergency service.

Thursday 17th April 2025 Richard Pinches will give a talk entitled "Henley Abridged" on the fascinating history of Henley's river crossings over the centuries.

JOHN GREEN'S VISIT TO OXFORD



On Sunday 24th August our president and Standard Bearer, John Green, carried the Branch Standard at the CWGC cemetery in Botley near Oxford. The special event was to commemorate the fatal crash of a Stirling bomber (EF497) known as LULU from 90 Squadron RAF on a test flight on 20th October 1943. Witnesses in the village of IPSDEN had seen the aircraft collide with some trees as it flew at low level towards the village church. Sustaining severe damage to its wing, it crashed 400 yards from the church. Sadly six of the crew were killed instantly. Sgt Erwin Spencer was pulled from the wreckage by one of the residents but died later in hospital. Before the ceremony volunteers guided family members to each of the grave stones to pay their respects and lay wreaths.



Stirling bombers on a raid

These included relatives of Flight Sgts Harold Spence and Ervine Spencer, also Sgt Kenneth Pollitt, all of the Royal Canadian Airforce, whose descendants had travelled especially from Canada. Later the Rev Helene Grant, part of the chaplaincy team from RAF Brize Norton, led the moving service during which the four RBL Standard Bearers present dipped their Standards during the playing of the Last Post and two minutes silence. Later all retired to the local WI for light refreshments and the chance to mingle and chat.



TRADITIONAL BOAT FESTIVAL

The annual Traditional Boat Festival was held once again on Fawley Meadows this summer. Many vintage boats including the wonderful Dunkirk 'Little Ships' as well as various vintage vehicles and more modern military vehicles were on display. The RBL gazebo was ably-manned by Henley Branch committee members and volunteers who enjoyed chatting with visitors to the stand. Unfortunately, the excessive rain the previous week had flooded the south field so the military vehicles could not be parked alongside the RBL display and were placed in the north field, which did affect footfall. However, the weather was fine over the three days and donations amounted to over £450 which was a good result.



PENTON HOOK YACHT CLUB

On Saturday 14th September John Green was invited to attend the annual veterans' cruise of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships based at the Penton Hook Yacht Club.



John writes, "James Nelson was also in attendance carrying the Dunkirk Veterans Standard, while Ratings from HMS Collingwood were on parade to assist veterans and their carers. A welcome address by the Commander of the PHYC was followed by a brief but moving service led by the Reverend Ian Smails, after which the twenty Little Ships moved off in line along the Thames, applauded by many spectators lining the banks. I was allocated a place aboard Lady of Mann owned by Matthew and Rebecca Cain from the Isle of Man. This vessel had started life as no.8 lifeboat on the much larger vessel Lady of Mann. Because of the shallow sea off Dunkirk, Lady of Mann had to lay offshore and her lifeboats had to run up to the beaches and ferry troops back to the 'mother ship' under heavy fire."

On the flotilla's return to PHYC John reported "Ample refreshments were provided! and a raffle was held in which I won a bottle of whisky! Finally, at 6 p.m. the Sunset Ceremony took place and Ratings lowered the flags on the main mast of the clubhouse during the playing of the Last Post. A fitting end to a memorable day."

Steam Packet ship Little Mann



REMEMBRANCE LUNCH

As previously, this will be held at the Masonic Centre on the Reading Road on Sunday 10th November after the Remembrance Service in the Town Centre. Details to follow.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

This will be at the Menza Cafe at Henley Rugby Club on Monday 16th December. Details to follow.