

THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION

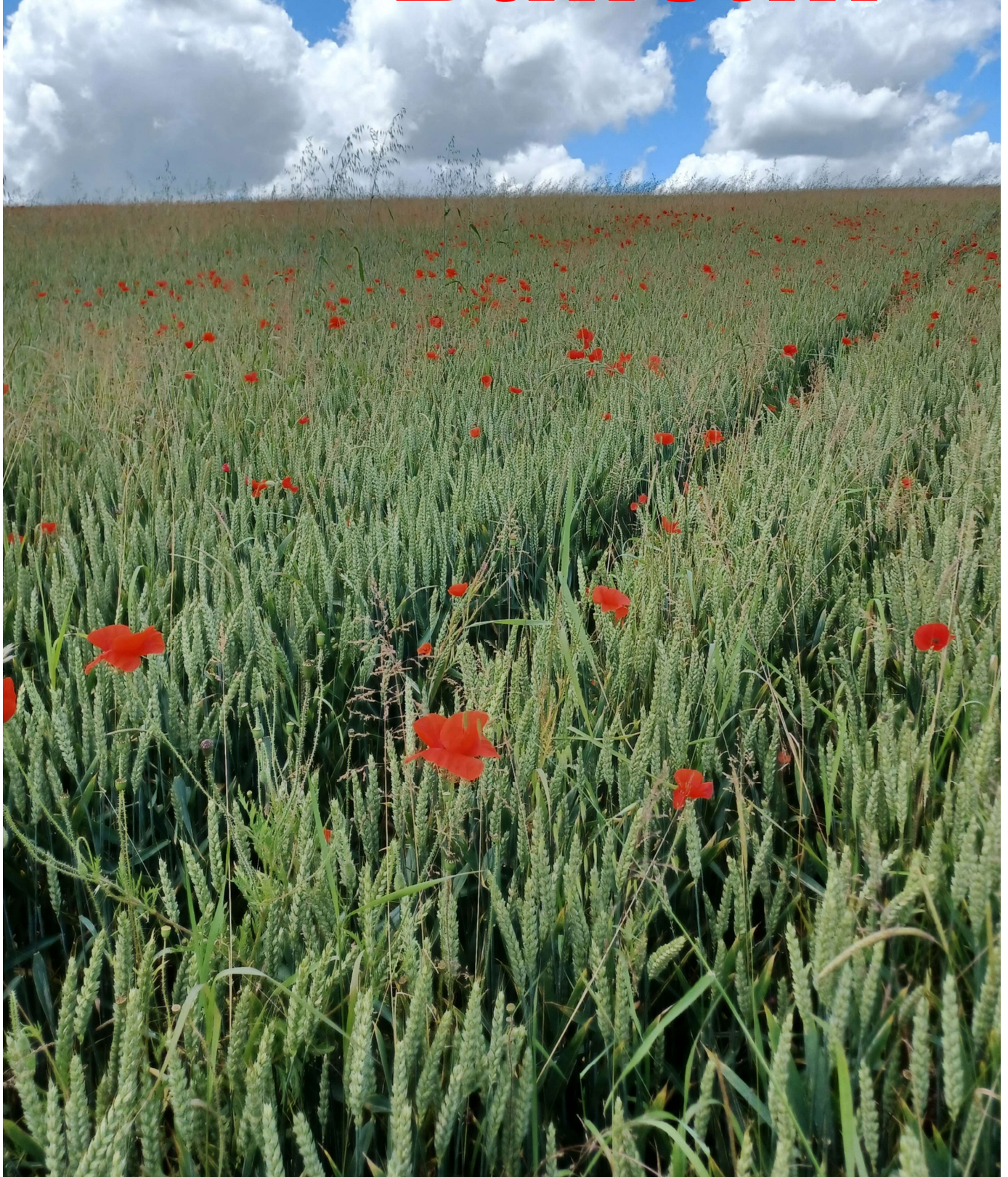
MIDSOMER NORTON
& RADSTOCK BRANCH



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

MIDSOMER NORTON & RADSTOCK BRANCH

Bulletin



AUGUST 2022

2022-08

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Cover picture:

Poppy Field, Charlton

Photograph by Pattie Nicol

Editor:

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Visiting Crete?

If you will be visiting Crete and the various historical sites including the War Cemeteries, here is some useful information.

Our Branch member, Phil Witt, visited Crete to see where his father was taken prisoner. (Read the story on page 7). He used the services of two organisations which he found to be really useful.

You may want to consider contacting the travel firm- **Klados Travel**. The lady, Ana Stikovvic, sorted out a schedule for Phil and took him to the various locations.

Their Central Office is:
16 Sofokle Venizelou str.
74100 Rethymno
Crete.

However, they can also be contacted via:
<https://kladostravel.com>.



The other company is **Cretan Commemoration Committee**. They are an international volunteer group based in Hania.

1. As the last of the veterans pass away, they are here to keep their memory alive.
2. They aim to represent all sides of the battle & occupation period
3. They hope to build on the history by reaching out to individuals & groups who have an interest in this area of WW2 history.
4. They are here to help maintain monuments & memorials in partnerships with others.

They can be contacted via their Facebook page:

[Cretan Commemorations Committee - The Battle of Crete and the Resistance | Facebook](#)

A Message from the Chairman

Welcome to our eighth issue of 2022 of the Branch Newsletter.

This month sees the start of the run up to Remembrance. With the Poppy Appeal only thirteen weeks away, the Branch needs to swing into action with all the arrangements for this coming year.

Page five explains the current situation in detail and gives the opportunity to become involved if you have not had a chance to be a poppy seller before. Shops and organisations can apply as well to have a poppy tin and box.

Last year you raised in the region of £20.000 which helps the Royal British Legion support serving members, veterans and their families. However, this is now a challenge and we would like to equal or, if possible beat last year's figure.

Martin Feeney

**Dissemination of this publication
Message to the media, councils and
other bodies.**

Please feel free to extract articles from this newsletter for insertion into your own publications. However please do not amend the article in such a way that it changes the ethos of the original. Most articles will refer to the Branch, however, if they do not, please include the source and where noted, the photographer.

Thank You

"It is fatal to enter a war without the will to win it"

Douglas MacArthur

If you need help...

Call 0808 802 8080

8am to 8pm, 7 days a week
Royal British Legion

Or Write:

The Royal British Legion
199 Borough High Street
London SE1 1AA



Want to join a progressive team?
Come to our next meeting and see what we have planned for the future.

War Grave—Radstock



Cpl. F. Richardson
4267765

Died 26th December 1943 aged 32

Francis Richardson was born in Durham in 1911 and was one of eight children of Francis and Elizabeth Maud Richardson. In 1939 Francis married Gwendoline May Woodham and had one son, Michael, who was also born in Durham as Gwendoline had moved from their family home at Beech Terrace, West Hill Gardens, Radstock to be near her husband. Gwendoline was one of the daughters of William Thomas Woodham who died in 1916 during the First World War and is also buried in St Nicholas Churchyard at Radstock.

Corporal Francis Richardson was with the 30th Cheshire Regiment, when he was taken to hospital in Warrington with an illness, he passed away two days later.

He was brought back to Radstock and the Rev. G Evans, Rector at Radstock conducted the funeral, with members of the Home Guard as coffin bearers and a volley of shots from the Pioneer Corps.

Corporal Richardson was laid to rest in St Nicholas Churchyard at Radstock.



Notable Historical Dates in August

2nd August 1100 - King William II (Rufus) killed by a crossbow bolt in mysterious circumstances while hunting in the New Forest, his ghost is still said to haunt the woods

4th August 1914 - Britain declared war on Germany in support of Belgium and France, and on Turkey because of her alliance with Germany.

10th August 1675 - King Charles II lays the foundation stone of the Royal Observatory in Greenwich.

14th August 1945 - Japan surrenders to the Allies, ending the Second World War.

19th August 1646 - Birth of John Flamsteed, Britain's first Astronomer Royal. He would go on to publish a catalogue that identified 2,935 stars.

20th August 1940 - Winston Churchill referring to the RAF pilots, says "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few".

24th August 1875 - Matthew Webb (Captain Webb) started his attempt from Dover in Kent, to become the first person to swim the English Channel. He reached Calais, France at 10.40 am the following morning, having been in the water for 22 hours.

25th August 1919 - World's first international daily air service begins between London and Paris.

26th August 1346 - With the help of the longbow the English army of Edward III defeats the French at the Battle of Crecy.

27th August 1900 - Britain's first long distance bus service begins between London and Leeds. The journey time being 2 days!

29th August 1842 - Great Britain and China sign the Treaty of Nanking, ending the First Opium War. As part of the treaty China gave the territory of Hong Kong to the British.

Branch Monthly Meetings

Your Branch holds a monthly meeting on the fourth Monday of the month at 19:30hrs.

If you are a Branch member, you are welcome to attend. Due to the relaxation in the Covid guidelines, meetings are currently in Midsomer Norton Social Club. Other people can be invited to attend. Should you wish to attend, please advise Geoff Wilson via email on geoffwilson.msnttbl@gmail.com and he will ensure you are sent an invitation.

Military Quotes

"It is a long-cherished tradition among a certain type of military thinker that huge casualties are the main thing. If they are on the other side then this is a valuable bonus."

Terry Pratchett

Commonwealth War Graves on the island of Jersey

Will and Pattie Nicol, our treasurer and fundraising officer report on some interesting visits during a visit to the channel Island of Jersey.

On a recent visit to Jersey in the Channel Islands, to visit our daughter and family, it was mentioned to us, that there was a cemetery of War Graves in one of the main parks in the Islands capital, St Helier.

In a stunning rose garden in Howard Davis Park were a group of wooden crosses, mostly of unknown Royal Naval sailors who all died on the same day. With a little computer work, I found they were crew members of HMS Charybdis, a Dido Class Light Cruiser.



Charybdis underway, February 1943 IWM.

The Cruiser was part of a flotilla of Royal Naval ships taking part in "Operation Tunnel", an attempt to intercept a German convoy hugging the coast of France.

Unfortunately, HMS Charybdis ran into a group of German Torpedo Boats (possibly E Boats) and was struck twice by torpedo's and sank within 30 minutes with the loss of over 400 souls (she was carrying a number of marines).

Bodies were washed ashore in a great number of places, but the main burial sites were St Helier, Jersey, Guernsey and Dinan in Brittany.



The author, Will Nicol visiting the graves of some of the crew

Two more graves piqued my interest, two RAF Sergeants, who both died on the same day. Again, my friend Google came into play and provided a bit of a mystery. The two Sergeants were part of the crew of a Mark V, Handley Page Halifax, (DG408).



Handley Page Halifax

The Halifax was on a training flight from the Heavy Conversion Unit, a Unit that converted crews of twin engine aircraft to four engine aircraft. The Cross-Country flight was to be over the North of England, however poor navigation (possibly) brought them over the English Channel and close to the French coast. One can only assume it ran out of fuel and ditched into the sea. There were no survivors and just two bodies were found.

The flight does present questions, how could they be over 300 miles from where they were supposed to be? We will never know!

Our family live in the North of the Island, in the parish of St John. So, another day we took a stroll around the Cemetery.

Here we found a Commonwealth War Grave that had been lifted from the ground and propped against a wall, in memory of a Private from the Royal Hampshire Regiment, who died in a roadside bomb explosion in Belleek, a border road between North and Southern Ireland in 1982. We did notice a family grave was being built, so assumed that the Commonwealth War Grave stone will be replaced, we will check on our next visit later this year.



Another Commonwealth War grave caught our eye, as it was the first CWG we have seen in black stone as opposed to the usual white! This was a First World War grave of a Private from the Devonshire Regiment who died of pneumonia just before the Armistice.



Pictures show Pattie with both of the CWG's at St John



Care / Welfare

The Branch have two fully trained and qualified welfare officers who can deal with any welfare needs you may have. One is also a fully qualified and registered care worker who runs a care company called Cameo Care, so you can be sure you are in safe hands.

So if you need help from an RBL welfare Officer, or are looking for a one-to-one carer, please contact :

Andrea Feeney

Email: andreafeeney.cameo@gmail.com

Email: andreafeeney.msnrbl@gmail.com

(M) 07793 656084

(B) 01761 432282

Midsomer Norton & Radstock Branch, Royal British Legion

Wreath Orders

WEF mid-July 2022

It seems the orders for wreaths are going well. We have almost reached the halfway point at the time of writing already for the number of wreaths generally known to be wanted. Annually, we receive orders for approximately 52 wreaths.

We have also had confirmation for 17 sponsors out of a total of 58 for the Poppy Sprays.

We are already committed to distributing 143 Poppy collection tins to local business and volunteers.

Dates for August

There are no events arranged for August.

It is not planned at this time to hold a Branch meeting in August as this traditionally is a holiday period. This will be confirmed at the July meeting.

Farmer's Market

Saturday, 2nd July saw the Branch once again at the Farmer's Market in Midsomer Norton.

Chris and Kate manned the stall for the Branch; however, the weather was not kind and Kate had to hang up the top and side of the gazebo in her garage to dry it out. The tablecloths and stock also had to be dried out, so all in all a very wet day. This of course kept the public away so any profit we made once we had paid the fee was to say the least minimal. But once again, we were able to show a presence in the town and this has generated new members so it has to be worthwhile.



Picture: Geoff Wilson

Just for fun— General Knowledge Quiz

1. In August 2017, French football club Paris St-Germain broke the world record fee for which player signed from Barcelona?
2. In food, which 'C' are toasted pieces of bread fried in butter, often eaten with soup?
3. In 1800, the capital of the USA was transferred to Washington DC from which city?
4. The Officer Training School for which branch of the British military is located at Sandhurst?
5. Which country has the world's longest coastline?
6. In which year did Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia?
7. Which London maze was constructed for William and Mary in 1690?
8. Michael Fallon, Gavin Williamson and Penny Mordaunt all held which position within the British Government between 2014 and 2019?
9. Both Sir Edward Elgar and Adam Smith have featured on which British banknote?
10. Which ranks higher in the Royal Navy a) Captain or b) Commander

Corporate Clothing

From a health and safety aspect, the Branch has purchased some Hi Vis waistcoats to highlight the members when out in the public eye.

They follow the Branding style of the Legion and will be available from early August.



Please also remember that the Branch can supply polo shirts etc. at a reasonable cost. Contact the secretary for details.

Answers from July's edition

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Mont-Saint-Michel | 6. 118 |
| 2. Twinings | 7. Cappadocia (Turkey) |
| 3. Q*bert | 8. Robert Catesby |
| 4. Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor | 9. Ben Watson |
| 5. Neil Diamond | 10. Dad's Army |

Remembrance Arrangements for 2022

A BIT EARLY ISN'T IT?

Well, not really, Although the Poppy Appeal doesn't start until October, in order to ensure we have the stock and can fulfil the requirements of all those of you who order a wreath, sponsor a grave or have a collection tin and poppy tray, we have to start now. The poppy factory supplies not only the whole of the UK, but also many overseas branches so the closer we get to October, the busier they will get. As a Branch, we are committed to giving the local people and organisations the best service they deserve and that means starting now.

Wreath for Remembrance

Order now if you require a wreath

Wreaths are now being ordered for this year's Remembrance Parades. If you have ordered a wreath in 2021, you will receive an invitation to order again this year. However, if you have never ordered a wreath from the Branch and you, or someone you know wishes to order a wreath, please contact the **Branch Poppy Appeal Organiser**, Alison Wilson either on 07743 646066 or by email: alisonwilson.msnttbl@gmail.com for details and suggested donations.

What we need to know:



Example of a typical wreath with badge.

1. Either your name if it is to be a personal wreath or the name of your organisation.
2. If you require a badge or logo in the middle.
3. The wording for the Remembrance Card.
4. The location where it is to be laid.
5. If you require a "Lest we forget", "In Remembrance" or "In loving memory" Ribbon.

Poppy Appeal

We will be distributing poppy collection tins and poppy trays to all of our regular friends across the Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Peasedown St John area. However, if you do not currently receive a collection tin and poppy tray and you wish to do so, please contact the **Branch Poppy Appeal Organiser**, Alison Wilson either on 07743 646066 or by email: alisonwilson.msnttbl@gmail.com



Dressing of Graves Sponsorship

Sponsorship Scheme

We will again be implementing the sponsorship scheme for a grave of a local veteran and we will initially be contacting those kind people who sponsored a grave last year. They will once again have the opportunity to sponsor their chosen grave. If, for any reason, there are any graves which have lost their sponsor, these will be promulgated and a new sponsor will be sought. Each sponsor will receive a card with the history of the veteran, A bespoke 'thank you' card and their personal message can be added to the Remembrance Card attached to the poppy spray. The suggested donation this year is £11 which covers the cost of the spray. The Branch bears the cost of the printing and postage.

236 SQUADRON ROYAL AIR FORCE

Pit Off C.H. Robbins 169472

Died 8th November 1943 - aged 22

P/O Robbins RAFVR was the son of Albert George and Kathleen Robbins of Clarendon.

He was the navigator/aircrew operator on a Bristol Blenheim PR Mk IV Coastal Reconnaissance of 236 Sqn based at RAF North Coates, Lincolnshire.

While returning from an operational reconnaissance at 9:00pm, the aircraft was destroyed when the pilot, Flight Lt G Hall flew into high ground while descending through cloud over the north-east of Lincolnshire near Southwell. The aircraft caught fire on the ground. Flight Lt and P/O Robbins were killed in the crash.

No 236 Squadron RAF was a Royal Air Force squadron, which served from August 1938 until May 1943 in the anti-submarine role and for most of the Second World War was equipped on anti-submarine operations.

P/O Robbins was laid to rest in Clarendon (Holy Trinity) Church near Bath, His plot, P/O Robbins, was laid to rest in Clarendon City Cemetery.

War Grave Sponsor

THANK YOU

YOUR SPONSORSHIP RECOGNISES THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES SO WE MIGHT LIVE

Dressing of Graves

Pit Off C. H. Robbins

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

sponsored by
The **Family**

Alison Wilson
Midsomer Norton & Radstock Branch (BR2512)

Your contribution helps us to support our Armed Forces community, past and present.

Incorporated in Royal Warrant
The Royal British Legion Charity



In Remembrance

Pit Off C. H. Robbins

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

The **Family**

Royal British Legion

Midsomer Norton & Radstock Branch (BR2512)



Play the Poppy Lottery for just £1 per entry per week and you could win up to £2,000 every Friday!

TOP PRIZE £2,000

Win one of 400 prizes every Friday!

2nd prize £200

3rd prizes 2 x £100

4th prizes 6 x £50

5th prizes 10 x £20

6th prizes 200 x £10

7th prizes 180 x £5

Go to <https://poppylottery.org.uk/> to enter.

Midsomer Norton Summer Fayre

Saturday 9th July saw the Branch stall at Midsomer Norton Summer Fayre in some really hot weather.

Our stalwart stallholder and Branch member, Chris Copeland once again stepped up to the mark and manned the stall at the event in the town park.

This was again a chance for the local members of the public to see us in action and to have the opportunity to have a chat, buy some birthday and early Christmas presents.



Picture: a Branch Member

Missed Opportunity



Centenary Celebrations.

April saw the Branch celebrate the centenary of the Radstock side of the Branch. We were unaware at the time of the date of the formation of the Midsomer Norton side, so we could not carry out a similar celebration.

However, it has now come to light that both Radstock and Midsomer Norton did in fact share the same formation date of 3rd April 1922. So, an opportunity missed unfortunately.

The two Branches were merged on 9th May 1992 which makes the combined Branch 40 years old. Perhaps in 2032, the Branch will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the merger and the 110th anniversary of both Branches.

Dressing of Graves Events

Last year, the Branch endeavoured to have a small ceremony at each cemetery.

In an effort to commemorate the service given by the veterans in the local area, the Branch endeavoured to organise a small ceremony which included a representative of the Branch with the addition of a Standard or Union Flag, a member of the clergy, Local dignitaries and a bugler to play the Last Post and Reveille. This proved to be a "Bridge Too Far" and although we carried the whole project off, we were well aware of our shortfalls.

This year, we will be trying to persuade the local parish, councils or churches to take on the running of the event. This does not mean that we will just expect those local organisations to step up to the line. We will provide the Poppy Sprays, Order of Service, Operational Plan, Risk Assessment and as much back up as we possibly can.

So, what does this mean for the organisations at each cemetery? We hope that the local parish councils and clergy can liaise with each other so that local dignitaries and clergy are in attendance, where possible, a bugler or sound system is available and some young people to actually lay the poppy sprays on each grave.

The Branch will be contacting parish councils and clergy in an effort to set up the event, however, where this is not possible, the Branch will still ensure that the sprays are laid, but without the ceremony.

Poppy Appeal Area

Currently, Somerset County are mapping the areas controlled by each Branch.

However, even without the final agreement on those areas, it would seem that possibly these are villages within the Branch's area where we have no arrangements to sell poppies for the Appeal.

The most obvious areas for discussion are: Clapton, Chewton Mendip, Coleford, Faulkland, Leigh on Mendip, Hemington, Holcombe and Ston Easton.

Some of these villages will probably come under the control of adjacent Branches and certainly MSN & R Branch has more than enough to do! But for the future, it would be good to know exactly where the boundaries lay, so if other Branches can advise us, this will greatly help County HQ and us.

Furthermore, if anyone in those areas needs Poppy Tins and Boxes, please contact the editor who will endeavour to find which Branch is responsible and to arrange for tins to be delivered for this year's appeal.

A Promise Made and A Promise Kept

One man's promise to his father

Back in the 1980's, my father was planning to return to Crete where he was taken prisoner by the Germans on 2nd June 1941 in the 'Battle of Crete'.

Well, he saved what money he could for the trip, however, weeks turned into months, months turned into years until he succumbed to illness. I said to him that I would go and lay a wreath over there for him. Unfortunately, dad passed away in 1985 so he never got the chance to go back. As we all know, lives move on too quickly and the time passed, then we were hit with Covid. So, I reminded myself of the promise I had made to him and it was a 'Now or Never' situation.



7361544 - Private Edward George Witt RAMC

So, without knowing where to go in Crete, I started my homework and with me also remembering stories he had told me, I found some people in the Cretan Commemorations Committee who helped when I offered my dad's POW information and the photo's he had from the POW camp. He ended up in Germany at Gepruft 24, stalag IV-A.

I found Klados Travel in Crete who went out of their way to help me to find my father's path. When I was there, I met up with a representative to fine tune my day out with them as she did not know a great deal about the 'Battle of Crete'. When Ana heard my story, it touched her heart and she arranged to meet me on the Saturday. Saturday came and Ana drove me to the mountains where there were villages that were never



Allied War Cemetery, Souda Bay, Crete

repaired after the war. I needed to bring forward our trip scheduled for the Monday to the Sunday as she found out there was an air show on the Sunday.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Bourne Avenue Hayes Middlesex UB8 3PH

Telephone 01-873 3831 ext

Your reference	
No R G Witt	Our reference
100 Redfont Close	95/36399/0518/20/T
Bedfont	Date
Middlesex	7 August 1986
TW14 2LP	

Dear Mr Witt

In reply to your recent letter, the following are the particulars of the military service of 7361544 Private Edward George WITT - Royal Army Medical Corps.

Deemed to have been enlisted into the Royal Army Medical Corps
attached Territorial Army
Released to Class 'Z' (T) Reserve 13. 7.46
Discharged from Reserve Liability 30. 6.59

Cause of Discharge: Auth: Navy, Army and Air Forces Reserve Act 1959

Service with the Colours: 1.11.39 to 12. 7.46
Overseas Service: North Western Expeditionary Force 13. 4.40 to 6. 5.40
Middle East, Crete 25. 6.40 to 1. 6.41
POW (Germany) 2. 6.41 to 13. 5.45

Military Conduct: Exemplary

Medals etc: 1939/45 Star, Africa Star, War Medal 1939/45

Yours sincerely

[Signature]
P. G. SHANN (Miss)
156th Despatch/Signal Section
Officer (Archives)

MoD Army Record

On the Sunday, I had a Poppy Wreath in hand and waited for Ana to pick me up. I didn't know where we should be going but she took me to the Allied War Cemetery Souda Bay. What a shock for me on walking around after laying my father's wreath to see a man's grave with the same RAMC badge and the same age. There were so many from there.

We drove to Chania town square to visit the 'Battle of Crete' exhibition. We arrived there at 1.30pm only to find it had closed. I could see through the glass door two people talking so I banged on the door to get their attention. One of the men came over and pointed at a notice, but I shrugged my shoulders, eventually he opened the door and said they were closed.

I said that I had come all the way from the UK to see this and to meet Stelios Jackson the treasurer of the CCC. He replied that he was Stelios and asked if I was Phil. We then did the only thing we could and went for a pint! We then travelled to Glaros Beaches, the first POW camp my dad was in. We then went onto Maleme Airport for the air display, not knowing what was going on as I had originally scheduled this for the Monday.

However, Maleme Airport was the official start of the commemorative 'Battle of Crete' wreath laying ceremony for the ANZAC UK and politicians from around the allied countries.



Allied War Cemetery, Souda Bay, Crete

I was so overwhelmed to see a Spitfire carry out a flypast, which just broke me as my Mum worked at the factory in Feltham, Middlesex which was building them.



Phil Witt