

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ST. GEORGE

GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH



NOVEMBER 2019

Patron: Mr. Edward Gillespie, O.B.E., Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire

President: Councillor Pam Tracey, M.B.E.

Vice Presidents: The Rt. Hon. Lord Cope of Berkeley, P.C.; Mr. Mike Smith

Chairman: Mrs. Pat Ayres, M.B.E.

A message from your Chair:

Dear members and friends,

At long last the names on our war memorial and the memorial tablet in the church have been researched and a draft book has been produced. This was first suggested in 2014 when the centenary of 1914-1918 was marked with anniversary events during the period of 2014-18. I was able to contribute to the 'home-spun' stories of the families and provide photos having built up quite a collection of village archives during my fifty or so years in the village. Memories are so important and we must try and keep for future generations a 'hard copy' of our lives; nothing too elaborate, just a scrapbook that can be passed on within the family.

I was just thinking as I write this about Christmases of the past and our memories. My 'Gran', who I loved dearly and who lived just a few houses down the road when I was growing up, was always my first port of call after school. Her sitting room had a window with a deep shelf which housed at Christmas a tree covered in decorations (some I still use) with the whole base of the window covered in cotton wool recreating snow. A cardboard Father Christmas with an open sack stood by the side and on December 25th was filled with little gifts and sweets. My mother had five brothers and one mentally handicapped sister so money was short but Gran always seemed to provide for everyone.

Thinking ahead to 2020 our usual plans have had to change. No-one really likes 'change' but as we discovered at our committee meetings, once you embark on re- thinking and

embracing the obstacles things can sometimes work out for the best. Margaret will have listed the various dates etc. to whet your appetite for the year ahead and I know that you as members will feel that it is worth being a member of this wonderful organisation.

**A child was born to light the way
Shining star to all display
Let his light still shine around
Caring love and peace be found
To his praises we shall sing
Thank you Lord for everything**

I hope to see many of you at the New Year Lunch in January but meanwhile however you spend your festive season I send my warmest wishes that you keep well and comforted.

Seasonal greetings Pat x

From Margaret, your Secretary:

A warm welcome to new members John and Diane Celino of Newent.

I enclose membership renewal forms as subscriptions will be due on 1 January. I would like to take this opportunity to ask those of you who pay by Standing Order (thank you) to ensure that your SO has been amended to reflect the new rates effective from 1 January 2019, i.e. Individual - £27.00; Couple - £38.50

Although HO no longer allows Branches to recruit Branch Only members, we still have a very small number of those who joined the Branch a long time ago (your loyalty is appreciated). If this applies to you then your rates are: Individual - £15.00; Couple - £25.00

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GODSELLS CHEESE VISIT

We spent a lovely October afternoon at Church Farm, owned by the Godsell family. We learnt a lot about making the cheese, the equipment they use and their storage methods from Lorraine, who was welcoming and enthusiastic about their product. The milk comes from their own herd and one other local farm and is processed on Church Farm in their small facility. All the cheeses are made with pasteurized milk and are suitable for vegetarians. Some of their cheeses have lovely names, such as Village Gossip, Holy Smoked and Singing Granny, and new flavours are continually being tried. They are sold at Stroud Farmers Market, the Gloucester Services Farm Shop and some local shops.



The visit finished with light refreshments and a chance to sample some of their cheeses. As you can see from this photo our party (suitably attired!) were avid tasters and some, myself included, left with rather large purchases!

Terry Adams was inspired to send me this editorial from The Telegraph:

Grate Britain

The miserablists might moan that Brexit has damaged the UK's international standing, but

the country continues to punch well above her weight. Evidence for the defence: Britain placed fourth in this year's World Cheese Awards in Bergamo, Italy. Our winning entry was Pitchfork Cheddar made by a dairy in Somerset. The best ranking French cheese, an Epoisses, only placed eighth – and jointly with a Swiss Gruyere.

They said we were done at Dunkirk; then came the Battle of Britain. They said we surrendered at Suez, and then came the Falklands. And they said that Brexit had reduced us to a laughing stock, but now the results are in from Bergamo and no one is laughing any more. With the wind in our sales, and the milk curdling nicely, it is time to make Britain grate again.

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2019

Thank you so much to all those who laid and donated wreaths or crosses on behalf of the Branch this year at Kemble, Cirencester, Newent, Oxenhall, Cheltenham, Lydney, Churchdown, Winchcombe and Ypres. If there are others we don't know about, then thank you too. It is so important to remember those who gave their today for our tomorrow. Thank you also to John Lee for the following report and photographs from the Menin Gate:

“For the 101st anniversary of the Armistice in 1918 the weather in Ypres was cold, wet and windy in contrast to most of the previous times we have been there for this ceremony.

The first item was to attend the Armistice Day service in St George's Memorial Church which was full to capacity, the guest of honour being HM Ambassador to Belgium and the service was conducted by Archdeacon The Venerable Dr Paul Vrolyjk.

The church had been decorated as for last year with poppies draped over the tower and along the railings, however, this year, the words '90th

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Anniversary' in gold coloured poppies were added to those hung over the railings to commemorate this anniversary of the church. Many of the poppies would have been made by RSSG members in Gloucestershire, a talk having been given about them recently to members of the branch.

In contrast to the previous few years the crowds were far less than before, in fact there was only a relatively short 'Poppy Parade' formed up to march to the Menin Gate. It is probable the poor weather put some people off from attending but I understand this year there were several other commemorations locally being held which may have accounted for the fewer people attending.



Poppies laid at the Menin Gate 2019

As we marched to the Menin Gate the rain started and by the time the ceremony commenced one was getting a little damp. Luckily with the reduced numbers of wreath layers I was able to stand under the gate out of the rain, unlike the bands who were out in the open and got wet, very wet!

There were far less wreaths laid this year in contrast to last year and the service was over

in around 45 minutes, everybody being I think grateful to be on the move. Needless to say, when we moved off the rain stopped and many people gathered round to photograph the wreaths laid out.



There have been some concerns in Ypres about the numbers of people attending the ceremony in the future but I personally feel interest is still strong and those who died in the salient will continue to be remembered.

Let us hope that next year when the Society wreath is laid it will be warmer and sunnier!"

John's report doesn't mention that he and Pat were interviewed on Belgian national television about the ceremonies and people's thoughts about them in the UK; he said their Belgian friends were very surprised when they saw them on screen!

This leads nicely into my review of the afternoon with Kemble RBLWS listening to Lady Emma Crofton. Her husband is Chair of the Friends of St. George's Church in Ypres and she was inspired to launch an appeal for knitted poppies for the Church to display during the 2018 commemorations marking the end of World War 1. As John says, some of our members kindly responded to that appeal. The artwork was a mammoth undertaking as, by her own admission, Lady Crofton did not

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fully appreciate the number of poppies needed and the short timescale.

She started with local knitters but then realised she would need thousands more poppies quickly. She made the best use of her husband's regimental contacts, WI, RBL, social media, etc. to produce the finished installation. A firm local to her transported the poppies, AstroTurf and netting to Ypres free of charge and she, local volunteers in Ypres, the Church Wardens and Friends spent 18 hours putting it altogether before the Ypres fire brigade installed the cascades on the tower. She said the reaction was so much better than they'd hoped, which is why the Church put it up again this year. I hope you can see in this photo the new gold poppies added to mark the Church's 90th anniversary:



Unfortunately the Church is unlikely to use the tower cascades again. Although it has thousands of visitors through the year, its local congregation is dwindling and there isn't an incumbent priest at the moment. The fire brigade charge for putting them up (they are very heavy) was higher this year and will likely rise again. However, if they have enough volunteers they will continue to install the netting along the railings in future years. The ticket money from our members attending her talk amounted to £80, which was donated to the RBL Poppy Appeal.

2020 EVENTS

- **Sunday, 12 January** – New Year Lunch at Bowden Hall, Upton St. Leonards at **12 for 12.30pm** – booking form enclosed.
- **Tuesday, 17 March** - A private guided afternoon tour of Chavenage House, near Tetbury, finishing with tea. Details with next newsletter.
Chavenage is an Elizabethan building retaining many of its original features). As a result, there is no wheelchair access and there are steps and uneven floors throughout the house. Part of the tour is upstairs (but those not wishing to tackle the stairs can opt out of that bit) and part includes seeing the gardens. Chavenage became 'Trenwith' in the BBC Poldark series. It also featured in Lark Rise to Candleford and several films.
- **Thursday, 23 April** – St. George's Day Service at Tewkesbury Abbey, **7.15pm for 7.45pm** (*Please note slightly later start time*) As this is the first year at the Abbey we would be more than usually grateful for your support.
- **June** – Branch AGM on a date to be confirmed
- **Summer Lunch** – details to be agreed
... and more being planned!

London Branch have asked me to tell you that all will be welcome at their Annual Banquet at the Mansion House on 18 December, 6.30pm reception; carriages at 10.30pm. The speaker will be General Sir Richard Barrons, KCB, CBE, former Commander Joint Forces Command. Tickets are £135 per person. Closing date for booking is 5 December. Details from me or the national website.

Finally my own good wishes to you all for a peaceful Christmas. Thank you for your support during 2019 and I hope you, especially those who have found 2019 a trial, have a much easier, healthier and happier 2020.

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