

BOROUGHBIDGE MAYOR'S DIARY

Councillor Craggs's Weekly Diary

18 November 2011

The week commencing Monday 7th. November was an extremely busy one, largely because of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, which culminated of course on Remembrance Sunday. I make no apology for using the Diary for reporting on events with which Betty and I were involved as Poppy Appeal organisers- as a nation we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Service men and women, both past and present, and it is fitting that we should give them due recognition for the sacrifices they and their families have made in defence of Sovereign and Nation - that this recognition, in homage, support for the families of bereaved and physically or mentally traumatised Service personnel should have to be provided by organisations such as the Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes and the other Service Charities is a sad reflection on every British Government in history. Due to public pressure, matters have improved greatly in past years, but I cannot see a day when the Royal British Legion and the other Service charities will be redundant- would to God that they were, now!

Whilst the dedicated house to house collectors had been active since the 28th October and boxes of poppies had been available in pubs and shops throughout the area, the 7th. of November saw our enthusiastic collectors active in the foyer of the Boroughbridge Morrisons' store for at least ten hours a day up to and including Saturday the 12th- judging by the number of very heavy boxes which have been sent for counting by our incredible two "counting ladies", we should be looking at a very good result both at Morrisons and from our other outlets and sellers.

One of the most fulfilling tasks in the week running up to Remembrance Sunday is the daily Assembly at the High School. Some years ago the Headteacher Ms. Elaine Dixon very kindly invited the Boroughbridge Branch of the RBL to send a member to talk to Year Assemblies about the Poppy Appeal. We have been only too happy to talk to the young folk, and- particularly since the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts started the interest shown by them has increased noticeably; no longer are we dealing with the distant past, important and engrossing as it is - we are dealing with the present and what is happening to their peers- and in some cases their parents. This awareness is apparent from the number of people who now observe a Two Minute Silence at the War memorial and in most shops, and by the enormous turnout for the Remembrance Day Service at St. James' Church and at the War memorial for the Act of Remembrance and laying of wreaths... truly They ARE remembered.

On Thursday we took time out to attend the Birthday Ball of the United States Marine Corps' Company G, stationed at RAF Menwith Hill. This was held at the Crown Hotel in Harrogate and was both a very formal but happy family evening; I use the word "family" advisedly- the Marine Corps, like most successful military organisations whether American or British, looks after its own as a family should. A wonderful evening, as was Friday's Harrogate Mayor's Charity Ball at the Majestic Hotel, where I hope a lot of money was raised for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance, Scout movement and the Mayor's other charities.

I have touched on the Remembrance Day Service and Parade at Boroughbridge on Sunday, but I must remark that the people taking part must have ranged from babies to folk well into their eighties, all taking part with great dedication and empathy. Generation gap? what generation gap, when it really matters.

One note of mild complaint and I hope that next year, Editor, you will co-operate. Despite asking every year, and emphasising that we DO observe Remembrance Sunday in large numbers here in Boroughbridge- one of the four towns and one city within the Harrogate District- not once have we had an official Ackrill photographer here for the big day.

Yet again, we have had to rely on the services of a local professional Mr Keith Trott, who attended and took pictures despite being ill. He had excellent backup from a High School pupil Sophie Dawson and I understand that they are jointly sending in their pictures. Incidentally, the High School Band must be thanked for playing so well at the War Memorial, despite the miserable weather- well done. Well done too to all the other organisations which attended, both military and civilian, and thanks.