

## GREAT PILGRIMAGE 90

In the biggest membership event in its history, The Royal British Legion nationally, is recreating its 1928 pilgrimage to World War One battlefields.

A decade after the end of WW1, veterans and war widows visited the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres before marching to the Menin Gate in Ypres on 8 August 1928.

Exactly 90 years later, thousands of Legion members will recreate The 1928 Great Pilgrimage as it was called, to visit the same battlefields and then, on 8 August 2018, carry their standards along the same route to the Menin Gate, to commemorate the last 100 days of WW1 and represent an entire generation that served while defending their country. The Menin Gate is significant in that it was where many service personnel marched through to the battlefields, many never to return.

As I mentioned earlier Swaffham Branch is mostly made up of older members and we don't have our own Standard Bearer. Never the less our Standard will go out to Ypres to represent Swaffham. We have been offered the services of a trained Standard Bearer Mr Gavin McFarlane of Dickleburgh Branch. We are also sending a wreath which will be laid on our behalf by Ms Jan Logan also of Dickleburgh Branch. The wreath will carry a special message of Remembrance composed by pupils of one of the schools in Swaffham.

Cllr Anne Thorp

President and Poppy Appeal Organiser

Swaffham RBL

## Swaffham Branch Royal British Legion

### Presentation for

### Town Assembly 2018

In 2014, one hundred years since the outbreak of WW1, Swaffham Royal British Legion held a candlelit vigil around the war memorial & read out the name of every soldier commemorated there who had made the ultimate sacrifice. Last year the Legion was trying to come up with a really special event to mark the ending of WW1 and the late Major George Harris, our Chairman at the time, said we should have a Beating of the Retreat on the Market Place followed by a ticket only Band Concert, proceeds of which could go to the Poppy Appeal. George wasn't talking about a local band but a top notch London based Guards Band so I duly went home and googled London bands and phoned somebody who quoted me £10,000! With that sum ringing in my ears I decided to speak to our RBL County Chairman Mr John Boissen who is himself a serving soldier to see if he had contacts. He did and now we can proudly announce that The Grenadier Guards will indeed Beat Retreat on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June on Swaffham Market Place. That date has been chosen for two reasons. It falls in the middle of Armed Forces Week so seems quite apt. Secondly, it is in the Summer so hopefully good weather, but more importantly, it leaves Remembrance time in November to be exactly that – Remembrance.

Not being from a military background myself, when I first heard the term Beat the Retreat it sounded to me like a rallying call to run away from the enemy but apparently it's a tradition that goes way back in history. Beating Retreat has its origins in the early years of organised warfare when beating or sounding retreat called a halt to the days fighting, a return to camp and the mounting of the guard for the night. The original call of Retreat, to mark the end of the days fighting was beaten on drums as were most battle orders.

The Legion have to thank Swaffham Town Council for their financial support of this event and the expertise of it's staff. As a relatively small Branch of mostly older members we would not have been in a position to make this happen and it's so important that in this special year Swaffham is taking one of the major roles in Norfolk.