



Codford ANZAC Day Centenary Commemorations

The ANZAC Day service held at 6.30am on Saturday 25th April in the Commonwealth war Grave [ANZAC] Cemetery off of Church Lane, Codford St Mary was a very moving experience. In 2014 about 100 people attending – this year, the Centenary Commemorations of the Gallipoli landings, 201 attended. Last year the Gunfire Breakfast fed 70 – this year, Tiggy Thornton and the Pelican Inn at Stapleford with a team of helpers served 133 full English breakfasts and gallons of tea and coffee with a splash of Australian rum ‘gunfire’ if desired.

Despite the wet night and the 5.50 am drizzle the weather cleared up before the Service; only the sound of the birds and the faint sound of the bagpipes could be heard as I walked along Benis path.

The service was conducted by Reverend Adrian Pollard the Chaplain of the Codford & District Branch of the Royal British Legion. Rich Hills Director of Corporate Planning, Commonwealth War Graves Commission read the Origin of ANZAC & laid one of the five wreaths. Prayers were read for: Remembering: Romy Wyeth: Members of the Armed Forces serving abroad: Lt Col. Nick Claypoole; The Commonwealth: Tom Thornton; The Soldier's Prayer: Brigadier David Shaw.

The hymn was ‘Abide with Me’; Scott Dupuy read the ANZAC Requiem – this was followed by the laying of wreaths for New Zealand, Australia, CWGC, The Royal British Legion & Codford Parish Council. RBL branch Chairman Col. Sir William Mahan delivered the Ode. Dian Bartlett played ‘The Last Post’ for the minutes silence, followed by ‘Reveille’ on the cornet. After the Blessing Noel Bowman of the Metropolitan Police Choir sang ‘And the band played Waltzing Matilda’; Piper Mick Stuart formerly RAF Pipe Bands, Leuchars, Lossiemouth, Honington, RAF Germany and Waddington then piped through Codford High Street followed by about 160 people.

There are always Australians and New Zealanders at the service, this year I would estimate they made up about a third of those attending, many of them had relatives who fought at Gallipoli. There were also quite a few British people who had relatives who had taken part, one local man had a father who had survived the conflict, for most of us, including myself, it was a grandfather.

The New Zealand High Commission had paid for the glossy 16 page complimentary Centenary Commemoration Programme compiled by Col. Sir William Mahan, a notable military historian who is Chairman of the Codford & District RBL. It was Sir William, together with Branch Secretary, retired Army Officer Patricia Bettany who were mainly responsible for the organisation and planning for this historical event.

In recent years the Codford Service has been mentioned on the web sites of both the New Zealand & Australian High Commissions, this year it was also mentioned by the Gallipoli Association.

Romy Wyeth