



MARCH UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL

New Beginnings, New Aspirations & 105 Reasons to Celebrate

The month of March heralds not just the start of our new Financial Year (*New Beginnings*) but also the next chapter in the rich history of our community's Memorial Hall (*New Aspirations*). 2025 promises to be a landmark year in both respects as some **significant anniversaries** are taking place between now and December.

For a start, this year marks the **105th** year since the Hall first opened its doors. It's come a long way since those early days, benefitting from 2 extensions over the years. The first just a decade or so after opening saw the addition of a 'catering room' (which for several years was hired by the local Education Authority for the supply of school meals in the district). Then, **31** years ago in 1994, the Large Hall complex was completed.

Next, **53 years ago**, **1st Leigh Scouts** was formed and this April our local Rainbows, Brownies and Guides are planning a day of anniversary celebrations at the Hall. **Rainbows** started in 2005 – **20 years ago**; **Guides** started in 1990 – **35 years ago** but **Brownies** have been around the longest since 1964 – **61 years ago**!

This is also a significant year for our local branch of the **Women's Institute** (which meets monthly at the Hall). They are holding a Garden Party in June to celebrate **90 years** as a branch of the National Federation.



Sunday 9th November 2025 another important date for the Hall. **Remembrance Sunday** this year marks the **80th** year since the end of World

War 2. Last year, those who gathered around the small **Memorial Garden Planter** on Remembrance Sunday to lay the wreath, commented on how disappointed they were to see how unkempt and overgrown the area was looking. So ever-mindful of our responsibilities here, the trustees unanimously agreed to commission the reimagining and replanting of the whole area (either side of the original porch - see the banner photo above) in order to restore it as a fitting memorial 'garden' to honour the memory of all those brave men and women from the parish who had and have served in all conflicts since the Great War.



One of our residents, **Barrie Thornley**, has volunteered to redesign the planters. Since he was 10 years old, Barrie has spent most of his lifetime working in one way or another with plants and has subsequently built up a truly amazing set of skills and knowledge. In addition, **David Chilvers**, Sales and Marketing Director for **Bransford Webbs Plant Company** has generously agreed to sponsor the project by donating the plants.

While Barrie may only have moved back into the parish in 2022, he is no stranger to the area. 20 years ago, he designed a courtyard garden in the form of a Union Jack in the grounds of the newly renovated Norton Barracks. Unbeknown to Barrie his neighbours subsequently entered the garden into a special category competition. Not only did it win but ex-veterans from the Worcestershire

Regiment then started to visit, admire the garden and share tales of their service. 20 years on and the Union Jack Courtyard Garden still remains.

Needless to say, we are all very excited about this new project which, when completed, will bear testimony to everything that is positive about our local community – where such selfless acts as volunteering your time, influence, expertise and skills really do make an important and lasting difference. In remembering and honouring our past we also build our hope in the future.

The trustees thank them both sincerely for their unconditional help and support. The work is due to be completed over the next few months and will comprise an attractive mix of plants and small shrubs to provide year-round texture, colour and interest in a fitting '*Memorial Garden Planter*' dedicated to all those who served our parish.

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees