

*The Wivenhoe Ocean Racing Club*



*The Quay Wivenhoe Essex*

Dear Members,

**THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**  
**Wivenhoe Branch Premises**

Many of you will know of the state of the Royal British Legion (RBL) Branch premises at Wivenhoe. This evocative old building has stood on the Quay for about a hundred and fifty years and has been in RBL hands for eighty five of those years. It is a reminder of a Wivenhoe that has long departed. Old photographs show it to have been an enormously popular venue in the inter- and post-war years but until quite recently it has attracted few new members. This, since 2007, has changed and we now have a growing interest and membership but, sad to say, a building that has suffered from years of neglect.

The building is owned free-hold by the RBL and until probably the 1980's the Trustees were local residents. The Trusteeship was transferred to RBL Headquarters at a time when the conveyancing of Trusteeships was becoming too much for the Branch to bear. The local Branch Committee remain as "Local Managing Trustees" with full local responsibility for the building. The Charities Act and the Governing Regulations under the Royal British Legion's Royal Charter require that the building is used as an asset to the charity i.e. the RBL. The building cannot in its present state be considered to be an asset whilst it is incapable of meeting its full potential.

Wivenhoe has a dearth of public venues and the attractively placed Legion building on the riverside would make a popular location for the Town's lively community links. Since becoming associated with the RBL I have had many requests for the use of the building all, sadly, having to be denied on the grounds of restricted use and liability.

Work has been put in hand by a number of like-minded members to restore the building to its proper place as a popular local venue and a pride to the RBL. That work has progressed to the point where an architect has been engaged *pro bono* to bring the building to the stage where costs can be assessed and planning permission sought. All this, which has required professional surveying, drawing and advice, has been achieved without any call on our funds. It is almost time to advance to the stage of rolling up the sleeves.

I am deeply aware of the previous failed community initiative, the Engine Shed, and the dampening effect that this has had on enthusiasm for any further enterprise. I have been at pains, therefore, to ensure that when we are fund raising any monies collected are secured for this project and this project alone. A "Restricted Account" will be opened solely for the restoration of our building. This account is administered by the Wivenhoe Branch Treasurer only. Thus any funds going into that account can only be used for the building. The principal purpose of the RBL, the welfare of serving and ex-service personnel and their families, will be better achieved when we have a viable premises available at reasonable rates to the community and so generating funds to continue this work.

A word on Legion funds in general. The Poppy Appeal is a national collection for much needed welfare work among serving and ex-service personnel and their families. Not a penny of the funds raised in that national appeal goes towards the administration of any part of the RBL. In these days those funds are far too much needed. Wivenhoe has proudly played its part in the collection of those funds exceeding ourselves year upon year. Each Branch must therefore administer itself and find the funds to do so. This we will do and not impinge upon the restricted building fund. In the normal course of events any money raised in excess of Branch running costs goes to the RBL National or County Welfare fund and is disbursed according to need. As you would expect from a major national charity I have been required to seek permission to raise funds for our own use. This permission has been given.

Whilst all avenues of finding money will be explored through statutory grants and funding bodies it will, nevertheless, fall to us in Wivenhoe to raise the bulk of the funds required to restore our building. Heading up this fund raising effort is Jackie Riley who has considerable experience in this

field. Jackie can be contacted at [jackie.l.riley@btinternet.com](mailto:jackie.l.riley@btinternet.com) (I do not give out ladies' telephone numbers!) Please contact her if you can be of any help or have any thoughts on fund raising.

Here we have a chance to show true Wivenhoe community spirit, to provide a much respected national charity with the profile it should have in a town so close to one of our most important Garrisons and to provide ourselves with a community venue in which we can all take pride.

Laurence Knox,  
Commodore.