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**Branch Summer Gathering
2021(SG21)
To go ahead as
Lockdown Restrictions Ease.**

See page 3 for full details

Branch Chairman's Message

Production of the May Newsletter was slightly delayed because the editor, sub editor, picture editor, story generator and proof reader, were at a family wedding. Some regular items have been held over to make space for a report on National Conference 2021. I am pleased that work will begin on refurbishment of the Y Services Memorial plot at the NMA in June and as Covid restrictions begin to relax I hope to see many of you at Summer Gathering (SG21) in Chippenham. If you want to take part on the Cenotaph March Past in November please do see the article on page 5

Stay safe and stay well

Jim McDermott, Branch Chairman

We currently have
c435
Branch Members

Poppy Appeal Fundraising the Easy Way



We continue to raise funds for the Poppy Appeal year round using this really easy system. To register and attract a donation every time you make an online purchase with any of the thousands of participating retailers GO TO:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/rblyservices/?invite=1DZNV&referral-campaign=s2s>

Editorial note:

Contributions to this monthly Branch Newsletter are always welcome on any topics members think will be of general interest. We aim to provide uplifting stories and attempt not to duplicate messages already sent from RBL HQ. Copy should be sent by email. to the editor Jim McDermott at

jim.mcdermott77@ntlworld.com

Preferred format is unformatted MS Word and any photos, cartoons or pictures should be submitted separately as JPEGs.

John Clark Stands Down

Long serving Legion member John Clark ended his extended period of tenure on the Membership Council at Legion National Conference 2021 in May. John has been a Branch member since its inception in 1996 and progressed through the ranks to the Branch



Committee then to Vice Chairman and Chairman. He was National Branches District Chairman and then served on the Membership Council for 10½ years and was variously: Champion for recruiting and retention; Champion for Bands; Member of the County/District Grants Committee; Chairman of the Cups & Shields Committee and member, then Chairman (6 years) on the Legion Complaints Committee (the first member of the Membership Council to chair this committee, previously run by the Board of Trustees). John also Chaired work on the integration of the RBL and RBL Women's Section. Over the years John has been awarded a Branch Certificate of Appreciation; a District Certificate of Appreciation; a Legion Gold Badge and Legion Life membership. A Fantastic record of service to the Legion. Well done John and thank you for your service to the Branch and to the Legion.

Branch Summer Gathering 2021(SG21)

Weekend Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th July 2021.

One of the great benefits of being a member of our branch is to make use of the opportunities to meet and stay in touch with former colleagues. Having cancelled SG20 due to Covid-19, the plan this year is to use last year's arrangements and to meet at Chippenham, a town that is well served by the M4 motorway and Great Western rail service. It is hoped that many members living in the South West and elsewhere will take the opportunity to join us for the weekend.

Accommodation There are not many hotels in Chippenham and the one I have chosen is very convenient being located in the Market Place. It has recently undergone refurbishment and is just a 10 min walk or a short taxi ride from the railway station. A number of rooms have been provisionally reserved at the Best Western Plus Angel Hotel, a 3 Star hotel in Chippenham, Wiltshire, Chippenham SN15 3HD. I have negotiated what the manager assures me are the best rates available. It is also planned to be our venue for our informal dinner on the Saturday evening. Website: <https://www.legacy-hotels.co.uk/hotels/best-western-plus-angel-hotel-chippenham-wiltshire>.

Hotel deal:

The hotel administration is returning to normal so please contact the hotel by email with your booking requirements. They would prefer emails to phone calls.

Booking your requirements for the Hotel email: reservations@angelhotelchippenham.co.uk
Quoting Group reservation **GA 000177** which is the reservation under which I have reserved the rooms. Please include your detailed requirements and you will then be given a new personal reservation Reference Number. Please do this by **18th June 2021** after which my group reservation will cease.

Tariff: Friday 23rd July 2021 for 1 night - £50 per person sharing a double / twin room

Saturday 24th July 2021 for 1 night £68.00 per person sharing a double / twin room which includes the dinner. Single Occupancy Supplement of £20.00 per night (maximum 3 single occupancy rooms)

Those who wish to extend their stay to include Thursday night and Sunday night will also only be charged the Friday night rate.

Costs include **free parking** provided guests book their vehicle into reception.

Once the room reservations are completed, I will come back to you with details of the Saturday evening dinner at the Angel Hotel so please keep me informed so that I know who is attending by emailing me on summergathering2021@gmail.com and I will send you the detail of menu choices etc.

Kay and I are also hosting a BBQ on the Friday evening at a cost of £20 per head, Any surplus to be donated to the Poppy Appeal and open to anyone attending the gathering. Space is limited so places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. We live in a village 3 miles from Chippenham and again, please let me know if you wish to attend.

Further details of the Gathering will follow once the Hotel bookings are finalised and will be published monthly in this newsletter.

Continued on next page

Branch Summer Gathering 2021(SG21) - continued

Saturday options:

Visit City of Bath travelling by train from Chippenham station every 30 mins and the journey time is 10 mins. Bath is a famous Georgian town with many attractions including the Roman Baths <https://www.romanbaths.co.uk/> Other options include: Visit MoD Lyneham REME Museum. Travel by car (10 miles) <http://www.rememuseum.org.uk/> or visit local National Trust Cotswold villages of Lacock and Castle Coombe. Both used as film sets for costume dramas.



REME Museum

I will be including more information in the next newsletter including details of directions to the BBQ on the Friday evening. Menu choices for the Saturday dinner will follow nearer the event. I will also forward bus and train timetables to Bath and Bristol and I hope to visit and give more details of the REME museum. My email contact for this event is summergathering2021@gmail.com. **Please contact me on this address to let me know whether you are planning to attend or have any questions.**

Looking forward to seeing you in July

Eric Sambell
President

Help

We frequently receive requests from individuals and organisations doing research or seeking material for talks and the month of May was no exception. Branch Secretary John Swann received the following email from former teacher Mark Temple. Anyone who can assist Mark please contact him direct by email: mark.temple@rural-web.me.uk

Subject: The Beaumanor & Garats Hay Y station during WW2

I am a member of the Woodhouse & Woodhouse Eaves Local History Group and since retiring from teaching at Maplewell Hall. I have become a volunteer speaker for the National Trust as well as for the Mountsorrel Heritage Museum (Quarry & Railway). In recent months we have organised talks via Zoom to local history groups, W.I. U3A etc. We don't charge for talks but accept donations to a range of local charities. Although aware of Beaumanor Hall's history, as a local history group we have precious little in our archives regarding the work of the Y station during WW2 (all we have is a copy of Eric Millhouse's BSM). I know your Garats Hay Y Services members are largely from the post war era but I wondered if any have pictures from the wartime era of the Beaumanor and Garats Hay site they would be willing to share with us? We are especially looking for any picture of the Brand Hill Camp. We have a copy of Joan Nichols' Book but precious little exists even in the local studies section at Loughborough library: not surprising perhaps given the secretive nature of all the work of the Y Service. Kind Regards, stay safe.
Mark

RBL FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE 2021

Membership Ticketing

The Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance will be held in the Royal Albert Hall, London on Saturday 13 November 2021 with performances at 2.00pm and 7.00pm. On 14 September, tickets will go on sale for the evening performance. Members will be able to purchase tickets for the afternoon performance on 21 September, which will be at least one week prior to them becoming available to the public.



CENOTAPH CEREMONY 2021

On Sunday 14 November 2021, the National Service of Remembrance will be held at the Cenotaph on Whitehall in London.

Members who meet the eligibility criteria and wish to march as part of the Royal British Legion contingent, should express their interest to Branch Secretary John Swann by **10 June 2021** by email: yservices.secretary@rbl.community

Eligibility

Members expressing interest to take part must meet at least one of the following eligibility criteria:

- Ex-service Military and Civilian men and women from the UK and the Commonwealth that served the Crown.
- Wives, husbands or civil partners of those who died in service in Her Majesty's Armed Forces.
- A carer of a veteran requiring wheelchair assistance. Regrettably, the carer accompanying the veteran must be included within the capacity. Therefore, where appropriate, the option of one veteran assisting another for the duration of the event should be considered.

Covid-19

Please be advised that we are working towards achieving a fully realised Festival of Remembrance & Cenotaph event on Remembrance Sunday.

The Legion may need to reduce the number of spaces in the Parade at late notice. Please ensure when applying of this possibility Any updates will be communicated via this newsletter or by email.

Legion National Conference – 15 May 2021

The Legion National Conference is an important annual event and this year our Branch delegates were Dave Lawrence and Karen Brutnell. Highlights of their report are included here, the full conference can be seen on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/gMeypguyB1g>

Conference began at 10:00 with the march on of Union and National standards, the Exhortation & Last Post/Reveille (staged at the NMA). Music was provided by the band of the Welsh Guards in London. The National President then gave his address. This included the reading of a message of congratulations from HM Queen on the 100th birthday of the RBL. A video message from HRH Prince Charles followed.

The National Chairman requested a vote to accept the minutes of National Conference 2020 which was carried with 233 votes for, 1 against and 8 withheld.

The Director General gave a presentation covering:

- Care Homes
- Provision of support to those who have the need
- Campaigning undertaken by the RBL
- Finance – he outlined that the Legion had taken a large hit due in the main to the Covid-19 situation. Specifically, the Poppy Appeal had seen a reduction of £10m over previous years.
- A review of the Governance of the RBL is due to report soon which will incorporate some lessons learned during a recent situation involving the RNIB.
- Strategy is constantly under review with the Legion remaining committed to the purpose that it was created for.

The motions submitted to Conference were then voted on, results were:

Motion 1. (Workshop Branch) This conference requests that the Royal British Legion urgently reviews its membership policy and structure to make provision for family membership.

- For-210, Against-32, Withheld-2 -- Carried

Motion 2. (Ashton Under Lyne Branch) This Conference requests the Royal British Legion looks to implements a minimum period of 3 years served on County Committee for any member wishing to take on the role as Membership Council Representative.

- For-187, Against-52, Withheld-4 -- Carried

Motion 3. (Derbyshire County) This conference requests that, as a matter of priority, the Board of Trustees authorise a feasibility study to assess the cost effectiveness of decentralising the administrative and operations activities currently located in Haig House, 199 Borough High St. London SA1 1AA and similarly the establishment of those services in central England.

- For-132, Against-111, Withheld-1 -- Carried

Motion 4. (Appleby & District Branch, Women's Section) This Conference recommends that the ability to abstain when placing a vote at National Conference to be removed from the ballot.

- For-142, Against-98, Withheld-3 -- Carried

Motion 5. (Devizes Branch) The Royal British Legion adopts a policy where welfare grants for goods and services already purchased, can be made retrospectively.

- For-148, Against-93, Withheld-4 -- Carried

Legion National Conference – 15 May 2021 - Continued

It was noted that only 255 out of 334 registered delegates participated in the voting. Our Branch delegates voted in accordance with instructions from the Committee

Conference was then opened to a Members Forum where questions were posted online were answered by members of the Membership Council. The questions flew thick and fast and a selection is included below.

- Lack of membership support during the virtual world of the pandemic.
- Huge loss of members over the past year, explained as being due to the pandemic and "low branch engagement". 47% of new members have been recruited locally by branches.
- Standard Bearers MUST wear correct RBL uniform. Parade Marshals and Branch Chairmen need to step in should standards be seen to slip. Options for a summer dress uniform are still under review and a decision is due soon.
- Emphasis again placed on requirement for Remembrance Parades to be organised by local authorities with RBL participation.
- A report on the impact of the introduction of the new logo is awaited.
- Many complaints are being raised about just about anything on various social media outlets, there is a formal complaints process which should be adhered to.
- Should the chairman at all levels be more properly titled "Chair?" The current National Chairman said that she is more than happy to be known as 'Chairman.' For now; those appointed may choose for themselves but a review is underway.
- A number of questions on membership reporting and retention/rejoining prompts for members who have lapsed for any reason.
- The low attendance rate to conference was noted. Physical attendance is obviously the preferred option and this is anticipated for 2022 along with virtual attendance.
- There was no facility for conference motions to be discussed on the day and this will be reviewed
- More Membership Council involvement in projects is desired – this is improving.
- A new Youth Policy is still a work in progress
- Branch website updates are due to be rolled out soon, this will include branch input.
- A new strategy for Armed Forces personnel to be recruited to the Legion is a work in progress.
- Digital banking permission is a work in progress, although Lloyds bank does offer an account that can be used by branches.
- Information on the RBL is contained in the current Armed Forces Transition pack for those who are leaving service.

Legion National Conference – 15 May 2021 - Continued

Actor Ross Kemp gave a huge 'thank you' to the Legion (by video) for all that we do. He went on to describe a strong family history with the Armed Forces over many generations.



David Whimpenny, Chairman of the National Memorial Arboretum, and 'Y' Services Branch member presented a 100th Year birthday cake to the RBL from the NMA.

A Centenary Review was then shown, comprising 5,759 artefacts and memories of aspects of the RBL. The video is available to view on MAP. (Of note is the appearance of a photo of the NDB standard bearers who participated in GP90 in 2018. This appears at the top of the screen in the video at these time stamps: 2:54:00 & 2:58:30, yours truly included!)

A number of awards were then presented:

- The Haig Cup to the Alicante Branch.
- The Maurice Cup to Essex County. This being the 6th consecutive year that Essex have won.
- The McRae Shield to Alicante Branch
- National Chairman's Award to Emma Cox

Conference ended with a formal handover of RBL National Parade Marshalls

- Outgoing – John Grimes
- Incoming – John Thornhill

ENDS