

BRANCH MEMBER GILL BENNETT RAISED £1,159.00 FOR THE LEGION POPPY APPEAL RUNNING IN THE LONDON MARATHON 2023

Read Gill's story on pages 2 & 3



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BRANCH MEMBER GILL BENNETT RAISED £1,159.00 FOR THE LEGION POPPY APPEAL RUNNING THE LONDON MARATHON 2023

A tremendous achievement by Gill who tells her own, inspirational marathon story

Here I was again, staying at the Union Jack Club, just as I did before running my first London Marathon 19 years earlier.

Tucking in to my toast and marmalade breakfast in the UJC restaurant, I looked around at a full dining area, where others were also having their breakfasts, and obviously running the marathon for the Royal British Legion, proudly wearing their RBL running tops too, with their names in bold capital letters across their chests. The more I looked around, the more excited I became.... combined with an overwhelming apprehension of "can I do it" and "how much will it hurt" feeling.

Nearly 20 years had passed since my most recent marathon, so knowing that my body had aged accordingly, was an unavoidable reality that was beginning to rear its ugly head. Ok, so I regularly run 10 km events around the country, and 6 miles every Saturday at home, just because I enjoy it (help!); I had banked so many years of running, that I knew I had lots of training behind me in my legs. Even so, this was the "Big One". And the stomach-churning butterflies that were now coming thick and fast, were my body's auto-generated warning system to set me up for the challenge awaiting me, and my fight or flight response firmly taking a hold in readiness for the 26.2 miles around London streets.



A rain-soaked Sunday in April at the Red Start at Black heath was not an ideal way to set off on the 2023 London Marathon. The heavens had opened at 10 am. Typical! And my wave number 14 at the "Red Start" was due to set off at 1115. Great! Plenty of time to get even more soaked, and cold. Wet running shoes and soggy socks; - absolutely not the ideal situation to be in before setting off on a long-distance event in anyone's training manual. Let's hope the copious amount of Vaseline I had lathered on both feet, would be enough to avoid hot spots and the inevitable blisters.

At this stage of my re-telling of events, I am sure will be relieved to hear that the Vaseline did work, and no, I didn't get blisters, nor any joint pain, nor hatch rash (us Navy folk understand that term ☐☐), in fact I pretty much got away with no aches or pains at all Prior Preparation Prevents Pix Poor Performance! The old "6 Ps" really do still deliver!

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BRANCH MEMBER GILL BENNETT RAISED £1,159.00 FOR THE LEGION POPPY APPEAL RUNNING THE LONDON MARATHON 2023 ...continued

The atmosphere was fantastic, as I knew it would be from past experience both as a spectator and competitor, even with the torrential rain that had visited that part of London for the best part of 2 hours. The crowd is without doubt the singular most supportive aspect of anyone's marathon along the whole course, at least for those of us who make up the "masses" rather than those perhaps in the elite group (in my dreams).

The water stations were evenly spread out, every 2 miles, and the Lucozade stations were also placed very well strategically. I have to doff my cap to the Organisers, who, let's face it, seem to get it right every year. But to be fair, they have had since 1981 to finely tune the experience. Of course, the only thing they have absolutely no control over, is the English weather in all its glory.

Iconic landmarks, such as Greenwich, the Cutty Sark, Tower Bridge, the Tower of London, House of Parliament, Canary Wharf, the Embankment and many others came and went as we jogged our way around. Even the sun came out to see us on our way after the 13-mile point.



Fast forward to the end running around the bend at Buckingham Palace and Victoria Statue and underneath the final distance banner "385m to go" is simply one of the best feelings any runner will ever have. If I could bottle that "high" and sell it, the euphoric feeling as it rises in you, and gives you wings as you start the final few yards up The Mall.... well..... I wouldn't need to work another day again in my life! And how fantastic that they even had the bunting out for us all up The Mall, due to the imminent Coronation of King Charles III on Saturday 6 June. They must have known we were coming!

I know I said that I would never run another marathon again (she says, with her fingers crossed behind her back) but I confess to already having the on-set of itchy feet for the next one! Somebody please get these ridiculous ideas out of my head!

I must take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks to you all, for your wonderful generosity and uplifting support,. The amount of £1,153 was raised for the Poppy Appeal.

Here's to the next one; and with absolute certainty I can say, here's to more 10 km runs with my bucket.

..... and hooray for Vaseline! Where can I buy shares?

Gill Bennett

Branch Member Dave Lawrence relates an interesting tale.

“The Cold War Spy Next Door”

I recently attended the funeral of Tony Gibbons who was the son of the family who lived next door when we moved, in 1962, into the house in Coventry where my Mum still lives.

Tony was roughly the same age as Mum and as a 7 year-old he was to my eyes quite old and seemed very aloof. He was sworn as a ‘Freeman’ of Coventry having completed his apprenticeship in accounting in 1954. What follows was only made known to me following his passing in April this year.

He was conscripted into the RAF for his National Service on 15th April 1954. After Basic Training at RAF Hednesford, Staffs, he initially opted for Russian language training but due to that course being full, he was directed to do Polish. This led, in June that year, to him being posted to the Joint Service School for Linguists (JSSL) in Bodmin, Cornwall, where he attained a final exam result of 79% and qualified as a Polish Interpreter in April 1955. Subsequently he was trained on radio operating skills in Birmingham before being posted to 755 Signals Unit (SU) RAF in Hambühren in the then-West Germany. Here he was deployed on a combination of radio intercept and reporting roles against the Polish Air force air and ground operations. He reached the rank of A/Sergeant.

Tony applied for and was granted an early discharge after 3 years service on 14th April 1957. His conduct was ‘Exemplary’ and his ability as a tradesman and supervisor, his leadership and co-operation qualities were all marked as ‘very good’ and his bearing was described as ‘very smart.’

I wish that I had known all of this while Tony was still alive. ‘A Cold-War Spy’ was the phrase he always used to describe the service that he gave to Queen and Country. This may resonate with most, if not all, of those reading this article. It would have been an honour to have seen him as a member of our RBL “Y” Services Branch – he was certainly admirably qualified.

Historical Note:

755 SU and RAF Hambühren, one of the smallest stations in the RAF, existed in Germany for just five years from 1952 to 1957. It was close to the picturesque village of Hambühren and four miles from the beautiful baroque town of Celle. There were no facilities for aircraft - it was far too small. The station closed in November 1957. The site was then taken over by a German Airforce signals unit and was used operationally until August 1993. The station closed in March



LEGION NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023

As reported last month, Branch members Dave Lawrence and Karen Brutnell attended the RBL National Conference, in Torquay during the weekend 19-21 May 2023, as voting delegates. Dave also participated in the ceremonial aspects of the conference with our Branch Standard – the opening and closing ceremonies as well as the parade from the conference centre to the Torquay War Memorial on the sea front where a short service of remembrance was held.

The opening speeches outlined the priorities for the year which are:

One Legion - Membership - Governance - Culture

The 'how' will be to focus on things which have the biggest impact, joining up the many parts of the Legion and working with others as part of a wider network.

A few of the achievements for the year are the work towards the introduction of the all paper Poppy, a donation of £500,000 to the Invictus Games by the Women's section and getting questions re Veterans and serving personnel included in the Census. There was an apology for the poor admin during the run-up to Conference.



It was an eventful three days in which we said goodbye to the retiring National President, Lieutenant General James Bashall and welcomed his successor, Vice Admiral Sir Clive Johnstone. Each day saw a guest speaker.

James Heapey, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, gave a very interesting – almost Churchillian - presentation on Saturday about serving today compared to previous years. He highlighted some current deployments involving all three Services and gave a great insight into the technologies being developed and used nowadays.

On Sunday, Professor Gavin Oxburgh spoke about his extensive research supporting our veterans that end up in prison and who are suffering with PTSD.

There were a number of motions placed before Conference which were detailed in the April 2023 Newsletter and three Motions of Urgency were put forward on the day:

Motion of Urgency 1:- This Conference requires the Board of Trustees to reassess the competence of the Director General under Rule 22.1 of the Royal Charter.

Motion of Urgency 2:- This Conference requires the Board of Trustees to reassess the competence of the National Chairman under Rule 9.5(e) of the Royal Charter

Motion of Urgency 3:- This Conference requests that this year's election process for members to the Board of Trustees be declared Null and Void and that an election is held in accordance with the provisions contained within the Royal Charter

Our delegates voted based on recommendations of our Branch Committee and the balance of the (mostly robust) arguments put forward by those for and against each motion – shown below as well as the overall results of each vote (For xx / Against xx / Carried or Failed).

(n.b. Motion 3 was technically carried as the Ceremonial Working Group ratified the principle prior to Conference. No vote was taken. Motion 4 failed without a vote due to no proposer or seconder being available)

See table of voting results on next page

LEGION NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023... continued

| Motion No | Wording of Motion (Abbreviated for space) | Votes For | Votes Against | Result |
|----------------------------|---|------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Charter Motion 1 | <i>Change to Legion Leadership: a National President appointed by the BOT. A Chair of the Board appointed by the BOT. A National Chair of Membership</i> | 66 | 289 | Failed |
| Motion 1 | <i>Free membership on attaining 85 years of age.</i> | 113 | 240 | Failed |
| Motion 2 | <i>Local authorities to organise and fund Remembrance Events</i> | 202 | 149 | Carried |
| Motion 3 | <i>Women's Section Standard Bearer be permitted to wear the Women's Section Membership Badge when in uniform</i> | no vote | no vote | Carried |
| Motion 4 | <i>Permit a Branch to hold more than one designated Branch standard.</i> | no vote | no vote | Failed |
| Motion 5 | <i>BOT to make representation to the MOD that school children's visits (SCVs) of divorced service personnel be equal to that of married service personnel</i> | 345 | 5 | Carried |
| Motion 6 | <i>BOT undertake a review of Poppy Appeal memorabilia available to PAO's</i> | 315 | 8 | Carried |
| Motion 7 | <i>A more timely and rigorous tracking and reporting, to Membership, of conference motions and actions taken</i> | 346 | 0 | Carried |
| Motion 8 | <i>Legion to promote "best practice" initiatives for encouraging membership recruitment.</i> | 288 | 53 | Carried |
| Motion 9 | <i>BOT to ensure that the on-line Membership application process supports new Members joining Branches more effectively</i> | 270 | 76 | Carried |
| Motion 10 | <i>BOT to mandate use of Office 365 for all RBL business at County and Branch Officer levels.</i> | 209 | 138 | Carried |
| Motion 11 | <i>BOT to ensure a clear and defined training policy is created and implemented.</i> | 334 | 11 | Carried |
| Motion of Urgency 1 | <i>Challenge to the competency of the Director General.</i> | 53 | 287 | Failed |
| Motion of Urgency 2 | <i>Challenge to the competency of the National Chairman</i> | 26 | 315 | Failed |
| Motion of Urgency 3 | <i>Challenge to the 2023 BOT election process</i> | 145 | 188 | Failed |

Note: BOT = Board of Trustees

LEGION NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023... continued

As mentioned earlier, our standard was on parade – with Dave of course – for the ceremonial events during the weekend. The highlight being the parade along the sea front to the Torquay War Memorial, as shown below:



Date and place of the 2024 National Conference was confirmed at conference as 10-12 May at the ICC Wales (Newport).

Details for National Conference

2025

have yet to be determined



easyfundraising.org.uk

Two more members signed up to the easyfundraising scheme during April 2023, taking our supporters total to **105**. Purchases large and small all attract a donation from the vendor. This month we raised **£25.94** taking our overall total since we joined the scheme to: **£2543.48** which has been donated to the Poppy Appeal.

You can view our cause page and sign up at: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/rblyservices/>



Thank you one and all for your kind contributions

Chairman's Message

Dear Members,

As a matter of policy we try not to repeat news or information already published elsewhere by the Legion. We also try not to repeat stories in this newsletter. However, Branch member Gill Bennett's tremendous achievement in completing the 2023 London Marathon AND in raising the grand sum of £1159.00, for the Legions Poppy Appeal, earns her the honour of appearing twice this year as our front page story. Well done Gill, an example to us all.

What we do repeat every issue is our progress in raising micro amounts via the easyfundraising scheme - the totally pain free way to raise funds for the RBL Poppy appeal. Thank you to everyone who participates - see page 6 for details of how to join and raise donations from your online purchases.

Membership recruiting opportunities pop up in the most unexpected places. On a recent cruise from Japan to Alaska and on into Canada I met up with a former Cold War Spec Op who is right now (I hope) contemplating joining the Legion and, of course, our Branch. I will be following up in hot pursuit!

Regards to one and all.

*Jim McDermott
Branch Chairman*

CENOTAPH MARCH PAST

One of the perks of membership is being able to apply to march past the cenotaph in London with the RBL contingent on Remembrance Sunday in November.

To apply for a place you will need to complete an application form which can be obtained by emailing Branch Secretary Chris Lowish on yservices.secretary@rbl.community

Completed forms should be returned to Chris at the email address above by no later than 18 August 2023.

Tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Please see below eligibility criteria and important dates.

ELIGIBILITY

Ex-service military and civilian men and women from the UK and the Commonwealth who served the Crown.

Wives, husbands or civil partners of those who died as a result of their service in His Majesty's Armed Forces.

A carer of a veteran requiring wheelchair assistance.

The carer accompanying the veteran must also apply for a place and should also ideally meet the eligibility criteria.

This is an ex-service personnel march, therefore family representatives and civilians will not be eligible to participate unless they meet the criteria above. Serving personnel cannot march in this parade.

IMPORTANT DATES

The key dates for 2023 are as follows:

25 August

Deadline for MEOs to complete individual participant information.

30-31 October

E-tickets and joining instructions sent to participants.

Editor's Note:

Contributions to the monthly Branch Newsletter are always welcome on any topics members think will be of general interest. We aim to provide uplifting stories as well as Branch news 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 for text is unformatted MS Word and any photos, cartoons or pictures should be submitted separately as JPEGs.