

KING HONOURS BRANCH MEMBER DAVID WHIMPENNY

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A reminder that the current newsletter editor is stepping down at the November 2024 AGM leaving the post vacant. Anyone interested in taking on the role and for further information, please contact the editor direct:

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KING HONOURS BRANCH MEMBER DAVID WHIMPENNY

Branch member, Lt Colonel (ret'd) David Whimpenny, was awarded the OBE in the King's New Year Honours List for 2024. The honour, made to recognise the achievements and service of extraordinary people across the UK, is for David's voluntary services to the Royal British Legion.

David has been a member of the Legion for 25 years having joined our Branch at the dedication of the Y Services Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) on 17 Sep 1998 and has held a variety of appointments at Branch, County, District and National level becoming a RBL board trustee in 2013, a post he held for 9 years.

He was appointed chairman of the NMA in 2014, a position he held for eight years. During this period he oversaw two award-winning construction projects: the remodelling of the Remembrance Centre and the development of the Aspects events and conferencing facility.

Warm congratulations to David on this well deserved award



THE OBE

The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) is a British order of chivalry, rewarding contributions to the arts and sciences, work with charitable and welfare organizations, and public service outside the civil service. It was established on 4 June 1917 by King George V and comprises five classes across both civil and military divisions, the most senior two of which make the recipient either a knight if male or dame if female. There is also the related British Empire Medal, whose recipients are affiliated with, but not members of, the order.

THE DAVE STREET AWARD

Long serving Branch member Dave Street who sadly died in July 2023 was for several years Chairman of National Branches District and at the time of his death a member of the Legion Membership Council. In Dave's memory, National Branches District has created 'The David Street Award' which is to be awarded annually to an individual for services to the District. In line with NBD practice in this first year of the award, it was made to Dave Street (RIP) himself and presented to his widow Jackie and daughters Poppy and Hettie. The award was presented by Legion Chairman Jason Coward during the NBD Annual Conference at the NMA on 20 January 2024. Jackie thanked the district for remembering and honouring David in this way and said how proud and pleased he would be.



Legion Chairman Jason Coward presented the award

DAVE STREET REMEMBERED

Branch Standard Bearer Dave Lawrence paraded the Standard at the Y Services memorial in a moment of quiet remembrance with Jackie Street, her daughters Poppy and Hettie along with Branch Treasurer John Swann and Chairman Jim McDermott.



STANDARD ON PARADE

Our Branch Standard was on parade at the dedication of a new Standard for the NBD which was spoiled in the rain at funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The dedication ceremony took place in the NMA Chapel and the Branch was represented by chairman Jim McDermott and John Swann Branch Treasurer with Dave Lawrence doing a fine job parading the Standard. The NMA padre led the ceremony; he also darted off frequently to switch music on and off and half way through the service asked if anyone had a match so he could light the candles on the altar. The formality of the occasion was enhanced by the playing of Last Post and Reveille by a Royal Marines bugler.

NATIONAL BRANCHES DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

The NBD Annual Meeting was held at the NMA on Saturday 20 January 2024 - the meeting is the equivalent of a County Conference. The Branch was represented by delegates Dave Lawrence and John Swann. John delivered our Branch report for 2023 which was well received. Legion Chairman Jason Coward gave a corporate address and reiterated the need for Legion members to carefully consider the proposals for changes to Legion governance which will be tabled again at the National Legion Conference in 2025.

Jane Britton, Head of Community Development gave a talk on a Legion project in which comedy is used as a form of therapy.



Make your donations go further with Gift Aid

Gift Aid is given by the government on donations to charities at a rate of 25p in the pound, so for every £1 you donate the government will give the charity a further 25p if you are a UK tax payer. This means that a £20 donation will be worth £25.

Most importantly your annual Legion membership subscription counts as a donation. Currently we have just under 50% of our membership signed up to Gift Aid, it would be great if we could increase this percentage. This is yet another easy and painless way of contributing to the Poppy appeal. For full details of how to sign up for Gift Aid go to the link below.

[Gift Aid | Royal British Legion](#)

UK NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTS

Over 20,000 military personnel were present at the UK nuclear weapon tests between 1952 and 1967 in Australia and the South Pacific. The tests were the largest tri-service event since the D-Day landings. Nuclear Test Veterans, who believe they have suffered ill health due to service can apply for no-fault compensation under the War Pensions Scheme which has no time limits and a low standard of proof. War Pensions are payable in respect of illness or injury due to Service in HM Armed Forces before 6 April 2005, with the benefit of reasonable doubt always given to the claimant. Decisions are medically certified and follow consideration of available service and medical evidence, where evidence supports a causal link to service, entitlement will be given. Veterans UK have worked with The British Nuclear Test Veterans Association (BNTVA) to develop enhanced guidance to support claimants belonging to the Veterans Nuclear Test community.

Following a lengthy campaign a medal has now been struck for those involved in the nuclear tests. The medal's design features an atom surrounded by olive branches, with the words "Nuclear Test Medal" and bears an image of His Majesty King Charles III on the reverse. The medal's ribbon colours are white, yellow, black and red, including a lighter blue for the sky and ocean to represent the Pacific. The medal is a commemorative medal and not a campaign medal. Veterans, civilian staff and next of kin can apply for a medal free of charge; it will also be awarded posthumously.

Eligibility Criteria for the Nuclear Test Medal:

The Nuclear Test Medal is awarded to UK Service and civilian personnel, and individuals from other nations, who served at the locations where the UK atmospheric nuclear tests were conducted, including the preparatory and clear-up phases, between 1952 and 1967 inclusive.

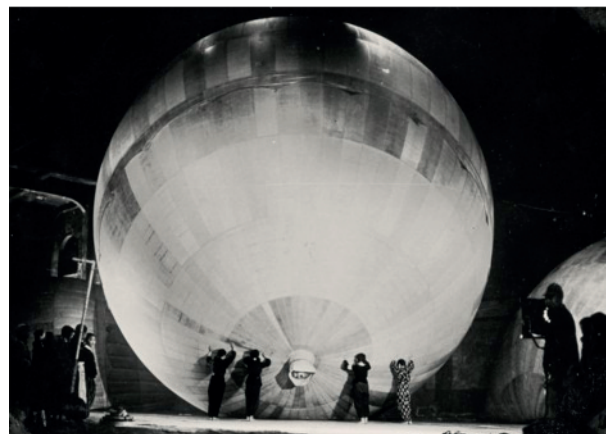
This includes the following named tests:

- (1) Operation HURRICANE
- (2) Operation TOTEM
- (3) Operation MOSAIC
- (4) Operation BUFFALO
- (5) Operation GRAPPLE
- (6) Operation ANTLER

The Medal is also awarded to UK personnel who served at locations where American atmospheric nuclear tests took place in 1962 under Operation DOMINIC.



Nuclear bomb test



Balloon launched bomb

UK NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTS

Here's a veteran's first-hand account of the testing, sent to us courtesy of North Weald RBL Branch member Jon Schlanker, who has strong links to the Y Services.

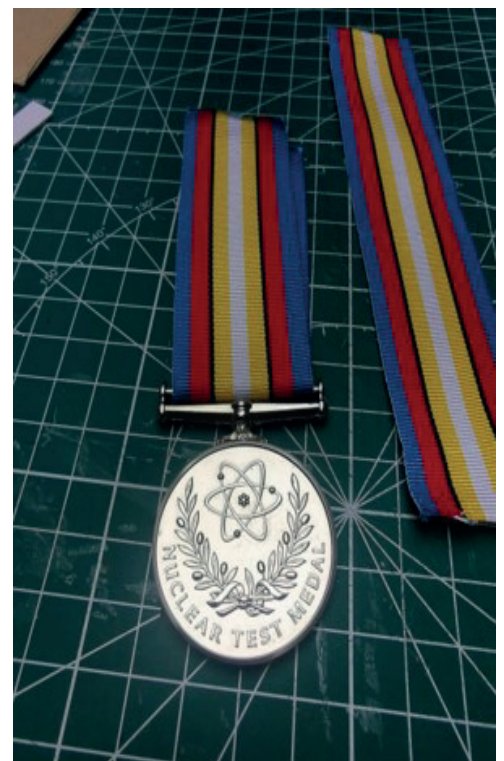
In 1956 I was called up to do National service in the RAF. I was drafted in to the balloon unit at Cardington. In 1957 I was sent with our unit to Maralinga in Australia for atomic tests using our barrage balloons. I was the driver of the winch that had the balloon on it and underneath the balloon was a basket which we put the atomic bomb in. The bomb was the size of a football but packed a horrible punch.

I hoisted the balloon to 800 feet, got into my jeep with other crew members and drove to the top of a hill 6 miles away. We saw the bomb go off but after a few moments panic set in. The wind had changed and forced the radioactive dust to blow our way. Though we had some protective clothing on it was not enough to stop us getting covered in it. We were all radioactive. We went in to a large shower room where we were scrubbed down and then into hospital for a month before getting the all clear. We then had 6 weeks R and R in Adelaide to get over it. All these tests were done for the good of this country and I agree it had to be done and I had no say in it but all the necessary precautions were not taken. There were 22000 of us out in Maralinga and Christmas Island and today there are just 2000 of us left.

My badge and medal and some tatty bit of paper arrived 2 days ago. The box was pushed through my letter box and dropped on the floor. I was disgusted with the government and Ministry of Defence for the way they presented it to us. The medal has no inscription on it, it should have my name & service number at least. This is an insult to us survivors but more importantly to all our friends who have lost their lives due to the radiation. Most of them got cancer, leukaemia or other killing illnesses.



The Nuclear Test Medal



COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

Bigbury Mint, one of the UK's largest commemorative medal producers, say that they are often asked if serving armed forces personnel and ex service personnel are allowed to wear commemorative medals. In the United Kingdom the policy for serving personnel is quite clear; Armed forces personnel must not wear commemorative medals whilst serving. Ex service personnel can wear commemorative medals in a row underneath any official military medals. There is no official policy as such; however, conversation with the MoD has confirmed this approach. Commemorative Medals have usually been manufactured to commemorate some form of service, usually where no recognition has been previously given. They have grown in popularity over the last twenty five years or so. Many veterans proudly wear commemorative medals underneath their official military medals or as stand-alone medals. The following extract from the Legion Ceremonial Handbook states:

'The official rules for wearing medals allow only official awards to be worn. Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed. Standard Bearers, Parade Marshals and other officials on Legion duty are bound by this ruling and unofficial medals must not be worn when on Legion duty.'

Editor's Note: Thanks for Branch Secretary Chris Lowish for words on the Nuclear tests and medals.

Chairman's message

Dear All, There is always a decision to be made as to which news item should be on the front page of our Branch Newsletter. This month there was no contest with David Whimpenny's appointment as OBE a clear winner. Warm congratulations to David from the Branch on this well deserved honour. As a Branch we do have a history of providing the Legion with members to serve in high places, with, just a few years ago member Terry Whittles (also OBE) serving as Legion Chairman.

Meanwhile back at the coalface we continue to keep members informed as best we can and to promote our various fundraising efforts. A big thank you to everyone who regularly supports these efforts via easyfundraising, Friends of the Y Services memorial and also simply by being a Legion member.

Jim McDermott,
Branch Chairman

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

20 July 2024. Branch commemoration event at the Y Service Memorial at the NMA. 1030 (TBC)

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP

Our Branch membership currently stands at around 429. Exact total awaiting some outstanding renewals

We hope to climb to the dizzy heights of 450 members and anything existing members can do to attract new recruits to our specialist Branch will be greatly appreciated.

This month we raised **£24.33** all through members buying items online via easy fundraising - not one mountain was climbed nor a marathon completed - simply members buying online - from the comfort of their own home (members enjoying comfortable homes is an assumption). All funds collected in this way go to the Poppy Appeal.

We have **120** members participating and since we joined the scheme, in 2016, a total of **£2724.42** has been raised and all for free!



View our cause page online and sign up at:
<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/rblvservices/>

Or scan the QR code below with your phone's camera



“Are there many ex-Paras in the British Legion then?”

Thank you one and all for your kind contributions

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 please, as JPEGs.