

BRANCH WINS MAJOR LEGION AWARD

**The RBL Y Services Branch
wins the Churchill Shield**

See citation on pages 2 & 3

Each year the Legion runs a number of competitions to recognize and reward excellence. We are delighted to announce that our Branch has been awarded the Churchill Shield which will be presented to Branch Chairman, Jim McDermott, at the Legion Annual Conference in May. The Churchill Shield is awarded to a national branch that can demonstrate compliancy and which, during the past year, has not only supported its membership and beneficiaries, but also positively promoted the RBL within its district or the wider community. This award is not just about what the committee does, although that is important; we have to be compliant, meaning our accounts have to be in order, are audited and submitted on time. It is also about the unseen generosity of our members who, for example, support our various fundraising schemes and attend our remembrance and memorial events. Well done everyone.

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Branch Memorial event at the NMA 20 July 2024

Our annual service of commemoration (part of our Summer Gathering) will take place at the Y Services Memorial and Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) on 20 July 2024 commencing at 1030. Please let our Branch Secretary know if you will be attending contact Chris Lowish on: yservices.secretary@rbl.community

As a Branch we have steered away from the Legion's Awards but decided to enter this year. Below is the submitted citation (very slightly edited for space and to remove reference to supporting documents which accompanied the bid.

OUR BRANCH CITATION WHICH LED TO THE AWARD OF THE CHURCHILL SHIELD

The Y Services Branch is a national branch mainly representing those from all three branches of the armed forces who have an association with the ongoing vital contribution that the Y Services make to national security. It has members quite literally the length and breadth of the United Kingdom and many who have chosen to settle abroad, some as far afield as The Philippines and Australia. Quite unusually, the Branch also has a healthy number of members that are still serving.

The Branch is always well represented at National and District events and has representation on the National Branches District (NBD) committee being particularly active in scrutinizing Legion documents for clarity and correctness. It sent two delegates to National conference in 2023 and to the NBD Annual meeting. One of our members, until recently, Chairman of the NMA and another served on the Legion Membership Council until his untimely death.

The Branch has several tangible links to organisations and communities despite not having a single, enduring, physical, geographic presence. It has a long-standing, close relationship with the Joint Service Signal Unit (Reserves) based at RAF Digby in Lincolnshire – the Unit provides uniformed representation at the branch's events and is a constant source of fundraising. This link ensures that the RBL has a voice and a presence in the largest of the modern-day Y Service establishments reaching hundreds of personnel and their families. Another close link to those in uniform is with the SIGINT wing of the Joint Intelligence Training Group at Chicksands in Bedfordshire. Their trainees have paraded with us every year at Remembrance since the Branch was formed over 30 years ago and thus have sight of the work that the RBL does very early in their service careers. Individual members report back annually to our secretary on their individual efforts supporting local Legion branches during the Poppy appeal. In this way, as a National Branch we actively promote the Legion without otherwise treading on the toes of locally based branches.

On the subject of Remembrance and with the branch's spiritual home being Woodhouse Eaves in Leicestershire (the site of a former WWII Signals Intelligence listening station) the Branch maintains close ties with both St Mary's in the Elms Church and the Parish Council in staging a very well attended service of Remembrance. This is further enhanced by our ongoing links with MOD Garats Hay, a stone's throw away from the church. These ties ensure that the RBL remains a constant in the local community, as it has for many years. MOD Garats Hay is currently being used as a short-term transit hub for former Afghani interpreters and their families and the Branch actively supported a scheme to collect toys and books for their children shortly before Christmas 2023.

The Branch also puts itself and the RBL in the spotlight by maintaining the Y Services Memorial and garden at the NMA. A 'Q' code at the entrance to the garden links to the Branch website and ultimately the RBL. The Y Service Memorial and garden was one of the first memorials established at the NMA and the branch has established a strong and fruitful working relationship with NMA staff. For several years now, the Y Services plot has been the starting point of the 'NMA Illuminated' event in December, generating a great deal of traffic to the branch website, which in turn promotes the work of the Legion.

In order to communicate effectively with a membership of over 400 and keep them apprised of the support available from the RBL, the Branch has fully embraced modern technology with a lively Facebook page, an informative website and a monthly e-newsletter which keeps the members up to date with all things RBL .

...../Continued overleaf

THE CHURCHILL SHIELD, BRANCH CITATION CONTINUED

All members of the branch committee exclusively use the Legion's O365 facility to communicate branch business. The Branch holds its AGM in Loughborough on the Saturday of Remembrance weekend and an informal dinner which is always well attended. In addition, the Branch holds an annual Commemoration in the garden at the NMA. This takes place in July and along with the AGM is a great meeting opportunity for members. The remembrance event is part of our annual Summer gathering which apart from the NMA memorial service is held in a village near the NMA. Here we set up our Poppy Appeal stall in the village pub garden, collect donations and promote the Legion with leaflets and face to face conversations with the locals. This branch annual visit is always greatly appreciated.

The Branch's up-to-date trained BCS representative sends a Branch condolence card to bereaved families along with an offer of help and support when needed. This help has included: for one family, organising a coffin drape and provision of artwork for a collection container whilst contacting various friends and service colleagues for input to the funeral and obituary. Responding to notification of a veteran who was feeling suicidal. Providing RBL emergency contact details to assist where a veteran had fallen ill in Spain. With other branches, noted that there was an RBL member who was trying to access crisis funds and passed on contact information. The Branch also sent two birthday cards in the last 12 months to members reaching their 100th and 103rd birthdays.

The Branch standard bearer flies the flag (literally) for the RBL at many events throughout the country every year. Six funerals were attended during the year. Coordination also took place with members of Derbyshire and Cheshire Counties to provide SB and bugler representation at two funerals of 'Y' Service veterans where the Branch's SB was unable to attend. In addition, the standard was paraded at the Birmingham International Military Tattoo, Legion National Conference as well as the 'Y' Services Branch annual commemoration service at the NMA. For the first time in the history of the Branch, the standard was also paraded at a commemoration service for Colin Grazier - one of two naval personnel who lost their lives, in an action in 1943, that secured vital ENIGMA codebooks contributing to the breaking of German naval codes. It is anticipated that this event will become a regular engagement in the Branch ceremonial calendar going forward.

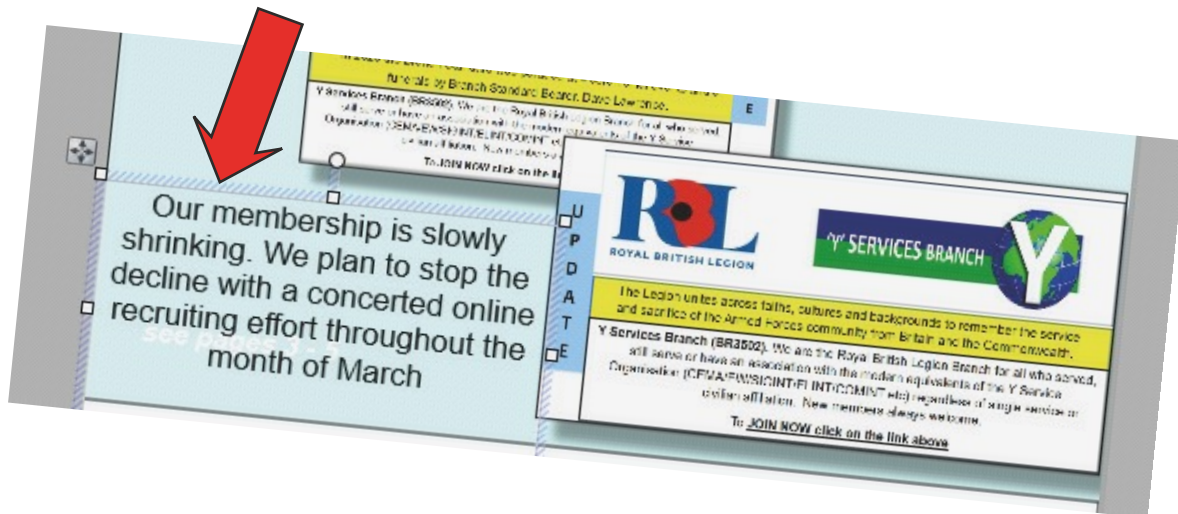
The Branch raised £3000 for the Poppy appeal in 2023, including contributions from the easy fundraising scheme, our Summer Gathering, anonymous donations, Branch badge sales, the remembrance service collection and surplus Branch admin funds. Also, funds raised by JSSU(R), in the Branch's name, go straight to the central Poppy Appeal. As an aside to RBL funds, the Branch pays the NMA to maintain the Y Services Memorial and Garden through the Friends of the Y Services Memorial Fund to which several Branch members and some non-members make a small annual or monthly contribution (See Fig. 3). This fund is ring-fenced solely for plot maintenance and is boosted by an annual grant from the Intelligence Corps Association with whom we maintain strong links.

Not able to benefit from the charitable giving opportunities afforded local branches with face-to-face contact, the Branch regularly encourages its UK based members to sign up to the government's 'Gift Aid' scheme and to date has registered just short of 50% of the membership. This policy of encouragement continues. Evidence of Branch compliance was supplied].

The Branch has continued to perform admirably over the past 12 months, reaching not only internally to help its members and beneficiaries but also externally to highlight the work of the RBL to the general public, regular and reserve armed forces personnel and local communities.

OP NEWBIES 2024 RECRUITING CAMPAIGN - RESULTS

In the February issue of this Newsletter we said that:



This recruiting campaign was a concerted effort to persuade the several hundred fine people who appear on Y Service related Facebook pages/groups to sign up to the Legion and to join our common interest Legion National Branch. A graphic with a daily changing text promoting different aspects of the Legion was prepared for every day of the month of March. The promotional messages were posted every day of the month except for the Easter weekend when several appeared together. The postings attracted an immediate response, a few early sign ups and a small number of folk with various axes to grind. Overall the Facebook postings attracted considerable interest and our membership was increased as a result by 15 new signings. Thanks go to everyone on the Branch committee who contributed to the design and wording of the postings, to Dave Lawrence who rose early each morning to upload the messages on the different Facebook sites and to our Facebook 'admins' who masterfully handled the small amount of vitriol experienced as well as answering numerous questions posed by potential members about the Legion.

This was a useful exercise and an increase of 15 to our membership made it all worth while.

Also during the March, Branch Secretary Chris Lowish and committee member Stephen Palfreyman, visited MOD Chicksands and gave a presentation on the Legion and the Branch to those still serving.

As a result of all these efforts we have, during the months of March and April recruited 19 new members, the biggest leap in numbers for many a day. Our new members are welcomed on page 7. Well done to all concerend.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024 - CONFERENCE MOTIONS

Legion Annual Conference (11/12 May 2024) takes place this year in Newport Wales. We are sending two delegates who will be involved in debating the following motions. Your committee has discussed these on your behalf and advised our delegates who are, however, free to vote in the light of discussions at conference.

1. This Conference requests that the BoT works with Novacroft to improve the level of its performance with regards to the collection of membership fees and the handling of new membership applications.
2. This Conference requests that the BoT review the way that the tickets for the Festival of Remembrance (FoR) are allocated.
3. Chingford Branch and Plympton & District Branches request that national conferences have a County Youth Officers forum included as part of the national conference membership forum.
4. This Conference requests that the BoT consider supporting the creation of a National Veteran's Week for the UK..
5. This branch calls on delegates to express their dissatisfaction with the current BoT continued lack of transparency and attention to the views of the wider membership by approving a Vote of Censure on the Board for its handling of their proposed Governance changes.
6. That the MS1 / MS1A be amended to include the f statement within the declarations: "I have never worn medals I am not entitled to, nor falsely claimed to have been a member of Armed Forces nor lied about my Service."
7. Membership Council calls upon the members to support an increase in the annual • From 1 Oct 2024 - £20 per year • From 1 Oct 2025 - £22 per year • From 1 Oct 2026 - £24 per year • From 1 Oct 2027 - £26 per year • From 1 Oct 2028 - £28 per year.
8. Membership Council calls upon the members to support a £5 increase in the annual membership fee for the next financial year – 2024/2025. This would mean members paying an annual membership fee of £23 per year from 1 October 2024.
9. This Branch calls upon the BoT to develop model multi-faith and ecumenical Services for events such as Remembrance Day, and that these be added to the the Ceremonial Handbook.
- 10 This conference requires that the Legion embrace the concept of family membership as part of membership development strategy. As overwhelmingly agreed by Conference in 2019.
11. This conference urges the BoT to amend the standard bearers' dress to read: "May wear head dress & cap badge appertaining to the branch of the Armed Forces they served."
12. This Conference requests that RBL approach advises and recommends to His Majesty's Government that the retrospective award of a General Service Medal 1962-2007 Clasp BELIZE to all who served in Belize from 1972 to 1994 to recognise their operational service.
13. That the RBL looks to implement a modern theme into school assemblies that has relevance today to complement existing RBL school teaching material.

[Abbreviation 'Board of Trustees'– BoT]

COMRADESHIP

Comradeship is important to the Legion but as a National Branch, with members living throughout the UK, as well as overseas it is impractical for us, as a Branch, to hold regular face to face 'get-togethers'. However, Y Service types do, in any event get together, at various locations to enjoy a modest pint and to relive their tales of daring-do. Committee members Ellis Page suggested we could help promote these events in the Branch newsletter. So here are places times and dates that Ellis has collected together. If you do attend any (probably not all) of these reunions/get-togethers then do enjoy and also, please, take the opportunity to fly the Legion flag.

Business sized Branch promotional cards available on request from Branch Chairman Jim McDermott - email: yserVICES.chairman@rbl.community.

REUNIONS

Annual Spec Op reunion – May 11th 2024 (Second Saturday in May every year).

Location: The Hunting Lodge, South Street, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire.

Timings: 1200 hrs onwards

Information: Advertised on the Spec Ops Home & Ex Spec Ops Home Facebook Group. Everybody welcome.

MONTHLY GET TOGETHERS

Gloucester area get together – Last Thursday of every month.

Location: Wetherspoons (The Regal), Kings Square, Gloucester.

Timings: 1200 hrs onwards

Information: Advertised on the Spec Ops Home & Ex Spec Ops Home Facebook Group. Everybody welcome.

Lincoln area get together – Third Thursday of every month.

Location: Lion & Snake, 79 Bailgate, Lincoln. LN1 3AR

Timings: 1430 hrs onwards

Information: Advertised on the Spec Ops Home & Ex Spec Ops Home Facebook Group. Everybody welcome.

Portsmouth area get together – Second Thursday of every month.

Location: The Isambard Kingdon Brunel (JD Wetherspoon pub), 2 Guildhall Walk, Portsmouth.

Timings: 1200 hrs onwards.

Information: Advertised on the Spec Ops Home & Ex Spec Ops Home Facebook Group. Everybody welcome.

York area get together – Second Thursday of every month.

Location: The Punch Bowl (JD Wetherspoons), 5-9 Blossom Street, York. YO24 1AU

Timings: 1130 hrs onwards.

Information: Advertised on the Spec Ops Home & Ex Spec Ops Home Facebook Group. Everybody welcome.

Source: Branch Committee Member – Ellis Page

Chairman's message

it might seem that nothing much is happening Legion-wise but our very important charitable endeavours simmer away in the background. Members signed up to 'easyfundraising' contribute micro and sometimes not so micro donations when they make purchases online; member donations to our Friends of the Y Services Memorial continue to ensure that by September each year we can pay the bill for the upkeep of the Y Services Memorial and Garden. So, our members do a lot, mostly unseen. Your committee variously represent the Branch at different levels within the Legion and, when required, at ceremonial occasions. They assist with welfare cases and generally ensure that our Branch is run efficiently. A welcome increase to our Branch numbers with 19 new sign ups has been a real boost. However, we are not complacent and continually strive to increase our membership and to tell the world about the good works of the Legion. I am delighted then to be travelling to Newport in early May to collect the Churchill Shield on behalf of the Branch. Sincere thanks to each and every member for helping us achieve this accolade.

Regards to all

Jim McDermott, Branch Chairman

Branch Committee – Vacancies

By the time of our Branch AGM in November 2024 we will have vacancies on the Branch committee for two committee members. The Branch committee ensures that the Branch is run in accordance with the Legion's rules and promotes its aims and purposes, primarily, as a charity, to help in providing financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants. The roles are not arduous but we welcome new ideas for our fundraising efforts and to keep our members interested and engaged. We meet four times a year twice, face to face and twice online via TEAMS. However, you do not have to wait until November to express an interest; you can even sit in on one of our committee meetings as an observer. Contact Branch Secretary Chris Lowish for full details: email yservices.secretary@rbl.community

A warm Y Services Branch welcome to 19 new members

Roger Brookes
Hayley Brown
Leslie Bugby
John Cairns
Heike Claxton
Neil Crane
Ian Curtis
Anthony Dodds
Darren Edge
Mike Ellis
Martin Goodson
Terry Ireland
Steve Kent
Carole McFarlane
James McFarlane
David Nicol
Jonathan Seaton
Ian Shrubbs
William Wardrope

BRANCH STANDARD ON PARADE



Our ever-busy Branch Standard Bearer, Dave Lawrence, has been out and about. On 3 March Dave paraded our Branch Standard as part of the Guard of Honour at the laying up of the old and dedication of the new Branch Standard for the Rugby No.1 Branch. Rugby is part of the RBL Warwickshire and Birmingham County.

Dave continues to attend the County Standard Bearer Training School, held monthly by the County Parade Marshall.

St Mary in the Elms War Memorial Destroyed



The war memorial outside St Mary in the Elms church in Old Woodhouse, which has been in-situ since 1920, has been totally destroyed. During the evening of 24 March 24 the driver of a van lost control and smashed into the wall which surrounds the church. Thankfully, the site's insurers have accepted the claim.

One occupant, possibly the driver, ran away and was caught in the village. Another, aged 15, was injured and taken to A&E. It is understood that the driver was also quite young.



Photo: Steve Hicks

Story: Ann Irving

easyfundraising

In March we raised an amazing **£13.80** all through members buying items online via easy fundraising - . All funds collected in this way go to the Poppy Appeal.

We have **124** members participating and since we joined the scheme, in 2016, a total of **£2926.14** has been raised and all for free!



View our cause page online and sign up at:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/rblyservices/>

Or scan this QR code with your phone's camera

Thank you one and all for your kind contributions



Editor's Note: Contributions to the Branch Newsletter are always welcome on topics members think will be of general interest. We aim to provide uplifting stories as well as Branch news and attempt not to duplicate material sent from RBL HQ. Copy should be sent by email to the editor at: jim.mcdermott77@ntlworld.com Text to be unformatted in MS Word. Photos, cartoons or pictures should be submitted separately please, as JPEGs.

New Newsletter editor Needed - Apply Here!

A reminder, again, that the current newsletter editor is stepping down at the November 2024 AGM leaving the post vacant.

The Branch newsletter is read by a large percentage of our membership with many opening the document within seconds of it being transmitted. So, we need a member, please, to take on the role to produce 'a newsletter'.

The current format is published monthly but it could be less frequent and set out in a design or format and distributed in a way which suits the new editor.

The current newsletter is distributed using Mailchimp software which is free, easy to install and easy to use.

Anyone interested in taking on the role or for further information, please contact the editor direct by email: jim.mcdermott77@ntlworld.com



GIFT AID



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](#)