

MINUTES OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION KENT COUNTY
EIGHTY EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, MAIDSTONE, KENT
ON SATURDAY 15TH JANUARY 2011

1. The Conference opened at 1.30 pm when the County Chairman announced the Entry of the Dignitaries - Cllr Eric Hotson, the Mayor of Maidstone; Cllr Bill Hayton, the Chairman of Kent County Council; Guest Speaker Mr Edwin Boorman, President of the Kent Messenger Group and Ms Jenny Rowe, National Trustee - escorted by the County President, Mr John Partridge MBE.
2. The Entry of the Standards took place. All present had a copy of The Roll of Honour and the County President delivered the Exhortation which was followed by the Silent Tribute and the Calls played by the Bugler.
3. The Prayers were led by the County Padre, the Reverend Brian Sharpe, after which the Standard Bearers were stood down.
4. The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Eric Hotson gave the Civic Welcome, extending a warm welcome to all members to the Borough of Maidstone, particularly in this, the Legion's 90th Anniversary year. He apologised to Conference saying that he would have to leave early as he was attending another function that afternoon. He said that Maidstone was a Garrison town and he was proud that so many members of the community turned out for the parades to honour their Service men and women. He said he was looking forward to next year when 2nd Royal Tank Regiment came to Maidstone and to the sight of tanks rumbling down the High Street. There is a strong cadet contingent in Maidstone and he felt that these youngsters gave hope for the future, for learning and for friendship. In asking if there was a future for our Royal Navy, for our Army or for our Royal Air Force he stated that he honestly didn't know but he did know that the Royal British Legion would continue. He indicated that he had recently attended the Women's Section Kent County Conference and had been greatly impressed. In closing, he said that there was always a welfare need for many ex-Service men and women and thanked the Legion for providing that service as well as all other aspects of their role. He hoped that County Conference would return to County Hall soon.
5. Mr Ivor Owen, Chairman of the Maidstone Branch, welcomed County Conference back to Maidstone and wished Conference a very successful afternoon.
6. The County President, Mr John Partridge, MBE, addressed Conference. He thanked the Mayor for the civic welcome and for his presence at Conference and said he was pleased to be back in the County Town. He expressed his gratitude for the support of the Mayor and Mayoress towards the Legion, in particular at the Two Minute's Silence in the Mall, during the Poppy Appeal and their attendance at the Maidstone Winds Concert. He gave thanks to the Standard Bearers, under the guidance of Parade Marshal Doug Pursglove, and commended their turnout. Thanks also went to the good work carried out by the Women's Section and gave special mention to their Christmas Circular. Finally, the President thanked the Committees and Officers who worked tirelessly for the benefit of the County.
7. After the fallout of the Standards the County Chairman welcomed members to Conference and introduced the top table including the Conference Committee Chairman - Mr Ray Mann; the Mayor of Maidstone - Cllr Eric Hotson; County Secretary - Mr Tony West; County President - Mr John Partridge MBE; Guest Speaker - Mr Edwin Boorman; Board of Trustee Member - Ms Jenny Rowe and Padre - Rev Brian Sharpe. He also welcomed two members of the Riders Branch to Conference. He apologised for the late issue of

Conference papers explaining that this was due to the passing of the Conference Committee Secretary at the end of last year and thanked the members of the Conference Committee and the County Secretary for their work in pulling everything together in time. The Chairman reminded delegates of the rules, namely that they speak through the Chair initially giving their name and branch name clearly.

8. The County Secretary, Mr Tony West, read out the formal notice convening the RBL Kent County Conference on Saturday 15th January 2011.
9. **Apologies** were received from Mr P Cass (Rochester & Strood Branch), Mr E Ralph (Whitstable Branch), Mr E Glasspole (Downs Branch) and Mrs A Bunyan (Chairman Kent Women's Section).
10. **Appointment of Scrutineers** - Mrs F E Owen, Mrs HM Collingwood, Mr L Owen and Mr C Bushell, all othe Maidstone Branch. Proposed by Southborough & High Brooms Branch and seconded by Chartham Branch. The Conference Committee Chairman confirmed that there were no amendments or additions to the published Conference Agenda.
11. There were **27 Delegates from 23 Branches**
12. **The Minutes of the County Conference** held on Saturday 6th February 2010 were taken as read and proposed by Birchington Branch, seconded by Faversham Branch with no errors noted or addendums required
13. There were **no Matters Arising**
14. **The Election of County Officers** then took place. Due to the resignation of the County Chairman, Mr Michael Goodwin, the Chairman confirmed there was one nomination for County Vice-Chairman, Mr Damion Coleman of Paddock Wood & District Branch, who was elected unopposed. One new member was elected to the County Committee - Mrs Ann Austen from Chartham Branch, A show of hands from delegates unanimously elected these individuals to the County Committee.

A further nomination for County Committee, Mrs Rae Bark from New Romney Branch, was not accepted as Mrs Bark was not present and no apology for absence had been received. However, this ruling was examined immediately after Conference and was found to be without foundation. The Chairman wrote to Mrs Bark informing her of the error and welcomed her to the Committee.
15. **The Election of Members from the floor for Conference Committee** - One member was elected from the floor to the County Conference Committee, namely Mr Peter Cooper from Smarden Branch. A show of hands from delegates unanimously elected Mr Cooper to Conference Committee.
16. **The County Vice Presidents** were confirmed as Mr H Garrett, Mrs D Jackson, Mr F R Penfold and Mr S Woolford. In addition Mr P Cooper was nominated by the Chairman to be a Vice President. A show of hands from delegates unanimously confirmed the five Vice Presidents.
17. **Report of the County Committee** - All present had a copy of the Annual County Report (attached). The report was proposed as adopted by Margate Branch and seconded by Southborough & High Brooms Branch.

18. **Presentation of Accounts** - The acting County Treasurer, Mr Ray Mann, presented the accounts firstly thanking his predecessor Mr Ron Lamb. He highlighted the much reduced Administration Grant from Head Office - down from £11,311 to £5,933. The County had increased its General Fund but had a deficit in its Benevolent Fund ending the year with an overall loss of £1,610. He said he was very grateful to those Branches and others who continued to send their donations to County as they provided a much needed safety net for benevolence. The report was proposed as accepted by the Southborough & High Brooms Branch and seconded by the Ashford Branch.

A question was raised by Ashford Branch about the payment of Welfare expenses and received the reply that those volunteers that were tasked by County would be reimbursed by County and those tasked by the Branch should be reimbursed by the Branch.

Shoreham Branch expressed thanks to Mr Mann for stepping in at short notice

19. **Report by the Poppy Appeal Organiser** - All present had a copy of the Poppy Appeal Report (attached). Mrs Hill commented that receipts as at that day stood at £1,086,184.80. The Chairman gave thanks to Mrs Hill and all the PAOs for their work in achieving this remarkable sum.
20. **Report by the County Benevolent Coordinator** - All present had a copy of the Benevolence Report (attached).
21. **Report by the County Recruiting Officer** - All present had a copy of the Recruiting Report (attached).
22. **County Chairman's Address** - The Chairman confirmed that 2010 had been another difficult year with the sad passing of John Walker, Chairman of Paddock Wood Branch and Secretary of the Conference Committee; the resignation of the County Vice Chairman, the County Youth Officer and the County Training Officer. He said he was in urgent need of replacements for the latter two posts. He commented that last year's plea for Group Reps to get involved in County affairs and now has Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 9 represented. The Chairman spoke briefly about the changes involved in *The Way Forward*, saying that Jenny Rowe would shortly be answering questions, and said he assumed that the changes had been discussed within Branches as each had received a briefing pack including a DVD. He said he hoped that as many Branches as possible would be sending delegates to Annual Conference in May as there is going to be a lot discussed there and voted on. The 90th Anniversary of the Legion had introduced a few challenges to the County and two commemorative Cathedral Concerts would be held at Canterbury in May and Rochester in October, both with the Central Band of the Royal British Legion. The Chairman mentioned that training would be taking place in the County in the forthcoming year and commented that quite a few Branch Officers needed to attend. Details would go out later. He gave thanks to his Committee and sub-Committees for their work and gave thanks also to the County Secretary who had been a great help to him over the year. The Chairman concluded by referring to the great number of members who appear in this year's Roll of Honour saying that those members need to be replaced and wished the Branches well with their recruiting efforts, congratulating at the same time the Riders Branch who were increasing their numbers daily. He wished everyone a good 2011 saying "let's make it a good one for Kent".
23. **County Plan** - All present had a copy of the County Recruiting Plan for the years 2011-2014 (attached). The Chairman said that the County Plan would appear in a new format next year. The County Plan was accepted by the delegates.

24. **Conference** now adjourned for a short break. On returning a birthday cake was presented to Mrs Jenny Shea, delegate for Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch who had celebrated her 90th Birthday a few days before.
25. **The Way Forward** - The Chairman introduced Ms Jenny Rowe, National Trustee, saying that Branches had been invited to submit written questions concerning *The Way Forward* and those received had been forwarded to Ms Rowe.

Ms Rowe said the main concern was that of the increase to the affiliation fee. The trustees were constantly looking at the costs involved in providing the services that members expected and all non-welfare costs had to be met from the General Fund, which was largely made up from the affiliation fee. Costs had reduced the fund to a point where there was no alternative to raise the affiliation fee. Without the increase the fund will reduce to zero in just a few years and if membership is to continue then it is essential that there be an increase. The Benevolence Fund is very healthy but Charity Law prevents money being transferred. The increase is to be discussed at Annual Conference in May which is why all branches were sent a copy of the changes affected by *The Way Forward* and all members should now be aware of them. It is very obvious that there will be a loss of members if the fee goes up but we are losing too many members even at the current rate. Recruiting new members is an obvious way to keep the affiliation fee down but although the Legion is good at recruiting it is retention that is proving to be difficult. Overhead and staffing costs are being looked at as a way to reduce costs - it is recognised that the Legion is very bureaucratic and needs slimming down.

There followed a number of questions and comments from the floor. Mr P Cooper spoke about the affiliation fee and both Ashford and Birchington Branches mentioned the affect of Help for Heroes and compared their work and marketing with that of the Legion. Hythe & Saltwood Branch had a number of points including querying whether it was necessary to have Head Office in London to which Ms Rowe replied that no, it was not necessary but as they had only recently moved to Borough High Street it would be in no one's interest - both for the staff and for financial reasons - to move again in the near future.

There was a query asking if it was feasible for the Legion to merge with other charities. Ms Rowe said that there are far too many charities who are involved with Service and ex-Service personnel and the Legion tried to instigate a programme which would bring many of them together under one umbrella but there was a reluctance from others who assumed that the Legion wanted to take over. The Legion maintains a very close liaison with most but amalgamating with any as a way to keep down costs is out of the question.

Mr J Enock, the South East Representative of the Riders Branch, spoke about the lack of PR from Head Office concerning Legion events and compared Legion PR with that of Help for Heroes. He said that members of his Branch had attended 21 events in the south east in 2010 and he was not aware of any of them being publicised by the Legion, either before or after the event. He commented that the Legion had been invited to enter a float into the Lord Mayor's Parade on New Years Day and basically, it was rubbish. We need to up our game if we want the support of the public.

The President concluded this session by thanking the Riders Branch for their comments saying that the public still assumed we were there for just for the veterans of the two world wars and Help for Heroes was for the post war conflicts. Certainly serving personnel were not being properly briefed nor encouraged to get involved with the Legion and there was evidently a need to carry this out.

26. **Resolutions** - The Branch Delegate for Gillingham presented the motion proposing “That any affiliation fee increase proposed at National Conference be restricted to either the Retail Price Increase (RPI) or £1.00 whichever is the greater.” The motion was seconded by Birchington Branch. Faversham Branch spoke for the motion and Margate Branch and Hythe & Saltwood Branch spoke against. The delegates voted 11 for the motion and 11 against. There were 5 abstentions. The motion was therefore not carried.
27. **Address by the Women’s Section County Vice Chairman, Mrs Ann Hill** - Mrs Hill first apologised for the absence of the Chairman, Mrs A Bunyan. She went on to report that the Women’s Section had had a very successful year. The Rt Hon Miss Ann Widdecombe, the County President, had attended the Rally, held at Sandwich Town Hall, before having to rush off to be with Anton Du Beke, her partner in *Strictly Come Dancing*. This year’s rally will be held at Aldington Village Hall on 21st May and, to celebrate the 90th Anniversary, will include a three course dinner. The Women’s Section held a very good Conference at Headcorn Village Hall in November and it is anticipated that they will return there this year. Mrs Hill wished Shirley Froud and Richard Bunyan all the best for the Regional Standard Bearer Competition and concluded by thanking the County Chairman and wishing him a successful 2011.
28. **Address by Guest Speaker, Mr Edwin Boorman** - The Chairman introduced Edwin Boorman who gave a Powerpoint presentation on RBLI. The presentation started with a history of RBLI and the site at the Royal British Legion Village. He outlined the current core facilities which included employment, manufacturing and accommodation and went on to give an overview of the future. The presentation was very well received by all.
29. The County Chairman invited branches to present donations to the County President. Sutton Valence Branch presented a cheque for £50 and Orpington Branch presented a cheque for £400.00. The County President expressed sincere thanks to those branches on behalf of the County.
30. **Presentation of County Honours and Awards** The County Chairman invited the County President and Mr Edwin Boorman to present the awards.

Mr Ron Lamb, President of the Gillingham Branch and former County Treasurer, was presented with his National Life Membership certificate and badge. Mrs Marguerite Finch, Chairman of the Hythe & Saltwood Branch, was presented with her County Certificate.

NEWPORT CUP **Isle of Oxney Branch**
(Branch showing largest increase in membership)

MOORE TROPHY **Faversham Branch**
(Branch Efficiency)

PENFOLD SALVER TROPHY **Group 8**
(Group showing largest increase in membership)

CONNIE WILLIAMS CUP **Group 7**
(Group Efficiency)

THE SKINNER ROSE BOWL **Mr Brian Howard**
(Person doing most in interest of Welfare) Margate Branch

BRIAN LYONS SHIELD **Mr Jim & Mrs Rosemary Butcher**
(Caseworker of the year) Ashford Branch

MUNGEAM CUP
(Standard Bearers Competition Winner)

Mr Richard Bunyan
Sevenoaks Branch

1945-1995 ANNIVERSARY SHIELD
(Standard Bearers Competition Runner Up)

Mr Geoff Lees
Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch

BANGER CUP
(Standard Bearers Competition Novice Winner)

Mr David McQuarrie
Seal Branch

JOHN PARTRIDGE SHIELD
(Standard Bearer showing most progress in the year)

Mr Geoff Lees
Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch

CHARLES STEVENS TROPHY
(Person raising most on the Poppy Walk)

Mr John Golding
Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch

TOM ASPREY CUP
(Branch raising most on the Poppy Walk)

Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch

TOM STYLES SHIELD
(Branch with a Club raising most on the Poppy Walk)

Whitstable Branch

31. **Time and Place of next Conference** - The date and location of next year's Conference would be announced at a later date in County News
32. **Charge of County Standard Bearer** The Parade Marshall mustered the Standard Bearers and the County President charged the Standard Bearer
33. **Destroy Ballot Papers** There were no ballot papers.
34. **Vote of Thanks** - County Committee Member Mr K Atkinson thanked all persons involved with Conference on behalf of the Conference Committee and the County Committee. He gave special thanks to the dignitaries, the guests and to County Hall.

Following Mr Atkinson's address presentations were made to Mr Boorman, Ms Rowe and Mrs Partridge.

35. **The Raffle Results** were then given to Conference- the raffle raised £278.
36. **The National Anthem** was followed by the March Off of the Standards.
37. **Close of Conference** at 4.27pm - the County Chairman thanked all for their attendance today

SIGNED AS A TRUE RECORD.....

DATE.....