

**MINUTES OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION KENT COUNTY**  
**NINTIETH ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, HEADCORN, KENT**  
**ON SATURDAY 19TH JANUARY 2013**

1. The Conference opened at 1.20 pm when the County Chairman announced the Entry of the Dignitaries - Cllr Rod Nelson-Gracie, the Mayor of Maidstone and the Guest Speaker, Director General Dr Chris Simpkins- 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 asked that County Vice President Mr Roy Penfold be remembered before delivering the Exhortation. This was followed by the Silent Tribute and the Calls played by the two Buglers.
3. Prayers were led by the County Padre, the Reverend Brian Sharp and this was followed by the fallout of the Standards.
4. **Notice to Convene Conference** - The County Secretary, Mr Tony West BEM, read out the formal notice convening the RBL Kent County Conference on Saturday 19th January 2013.
5. The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Rod Nelson-Gracie gave the Civic Welcome, extending a warm welcome to all members to the Borough of Maidstone. He said he had Googled the RBL in Kent and was surprisingly pleased to see the number of branches, clubs and members in the county. He said the Legion had an enviable reputation of providing essential welfare support to ex-service men and women and their families. He had been present at the Poppy Launch at County Hall, a very important day considering that the Poppy Appeal was a major part of fundraising for the Legion and, in Kent, had raised an impressive £1.3 million. He said he was sure that, despite funds being not so readily available, 2013 would bring in a larger sum due to the high regard of the Legion and its work across the whole country and the willingness of the public to contribute to the cause. He said that it was well known that the volunteers and supporters formed the backbone of the Legion and he was delighted to see that the Legion Standard Bearers included many young people. However, he said he would like to see many more youngsters getting involved. After all, they were the Legion of the future. He ended by wishing everyone a very enjoyable and successful Conference.
6. Mrs Lynn Selby, Chairman of Headcorn Parish Council, spoke on behalf of the Council welcoming everyone who beat the snow to be there. She gave a very informative history of Headcorn, which had been in existence since the Stone Age, outlining its progress through the years up to the use of the airfield by Canadian and American troops during World War 2. She welcomed County Conference back to Headcorn and wished Conference a very successful afternoon.
7. The County President, Mr John Partridge MBE, addressed Conference. He thanked Cllr Nelson-Gracie and Mrs Selby for their words of welcome and for their presence at Conference saying it was good to be back in Headcorn once again. He then thanked everyone, in particular the delegates, for venturing out in the snow.
8. The County Chairman, Mr Austin Walker, welcomed all delegates and visitors to Conference and introduced the top table including County Treasurer Mr Ray Mann; Guest Speaker Dr Chris Simpkins, the Legion's Director General; the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr

Rod Nelson Gracie; County Secretary Mr Tony West BEM, County President Mr John Partridge MBE and Conference Committee Chairman Mrs Robbie Dunger. The Chairman reminded delegates that they should speak through the Chair initially giving their name and branch name clearly.

9. **Apologies** - A number of apologies were received, mainly due to the poor weather conditions:

Mr R Graham	Brabourne & Smeeth Branch Delegate
Mr J Todd	Canterbury Branch Delegate
Miss D McNicholas	Downs Branch Delegate
Mr L Marshall	Elham Valley Branch Delegate
Dr J Spence	Halstead Branch Delegate
Mrs M Clarke	Orpington Branch Delegate
Mrs F Halifax	Orpington Branch Delegate
Mr L Robinson	Shoreham Branch Delegate
Mrs J Shea	Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch Delegate
Mrs P Butcher	County Committee
Mr A Clarke MBE	County Committee
Mr G Haisell	County Committee
Mrs S Foster	County Youth Officer
Mr J Lewis	Birchington Branch Standard Bearer
Mr T Geere	Cheriton & Morehall Branch Standard Bearer
Mrs J Todd	Canterbury Branch
Mr G Taylor	Brabourne & Smeeth Branch
Members of	Shoreham Branch
Members of	Swanley Branch

10. **Agenda Changes** - The Conference Committee Chairman confirmed that there were no amendments or additions to the published Conference Agenda.
11. **Delegates** - There were **26 delegates representing 23 branches**
12. **Appointment of Scrutineers** - Mr P Hill and Mrs A E Hill (Whitstable Branch), Mrs N S Smith (Royal British Legion Village Branch) and Mrs J Best MBE (Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch). Proposed by Ramsgate Branch and seconded by Gillingham Branch.
13. **The Minutes of the County Conference** held on Saturday 21st January 2012 were taken as read and proposed by Birchington Branch, seconded by Ramsgate Branch with no errors noted or addendums required.
14. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising.
15. **Annual Report of the County Committee** - The County Secretary read the report on behalf of the County Committee. It was proposed as adopted by Chartham Branch and seconded by Maidstone Branch.
16. **Election of County Committee Members** Mr Ray Mann (Sutton Valence) was re-elected and a further two members were duly elected to the committee; Mrs Christine Austen (Chartham) and Mr Norman Williams (Sittingbourne & Milton Regis). A show of hands from the Delegates unanimously elected the members to the County Committee.

17. **The County Vice Presidents** were confirmed as Mr Harry Garrett, Mrs Dot Jackson, and Mr Peter Cooper with Mr Keith Atkinson being added to the roll. It was proposed that Mr John Partridge, the outgoing County President, and Mr Steve Woolford, former County Chairman, be appointed as County Life Vice Presidents. The appointments were proposed by the Ramsgate Branch, seconded by the Birchington Branch and carried unanimously.
18. **Presentation of Accounts** - The County Treasurer, Mr Ray Mann, presented the accounts. He highlighted the £33,168 in the Benevolent Account stating that this high amount was due to very generous donations from branches and other sources. Welfare grants amounted to £21,130. The General Fund was down on the previous year due mainly to the travel expenses of members of the County Committee who were visiting more branches and events across the county. He explained that his accounts were now being processed on LOMAS, the Legion Online Membership Accounting System. This would be rolled out to branches in the summer and, because it was so easy to use, hoped that the majority of branches would use it. The report was proposed as accepted by the Gillingham Branch and seconded by the Ramsgate Branch.
19. **County Reports** - All present had copies of the following reports:

County Poppy Appeal Coordinator's Report

County Benevolence Officer's Report

County Recruiting Officer's Report

County Training Officer's Report

County Youth Officer's Report

County Public Relations Officer's Report

The County Parade Marshal gave a verbal report to Conference in which he stated that he was pleased with those attending both the Standard Bearer Competition and also the training sessions. Kent would be hosting the 2013 Regional Standard Bearer Competition in February.

20. **Farewell address by the County Chaplain** - The Rev. Brian Sharp spoke about his 10 years as County Chaplain. He said that although the role of Chaplain or Padre was an unofficial role at both county and branch level, he felt it was important for members to be aware that there was always someone there to talk to. He said he would encourage every branch to appoint a Padre who need not be a member of the Legion. He said he had made many friends in the Legion and particularly thanked the Chairman for his friendship over the years.

The County Chairman then introduced the new County Chaplain, the Rev. Canon Paul Kerr who, he said, was Padre for the Canterbury Branch.

21. **County Plan** - All present had a copy of the County Plan for the years 2013-2016. The Chairman said that a great deal of thought had gone into its preparation as it would not only act as a guide for all but also affect the allocation of a grant from Head Office in this year's budget. He said that it would be constantly reviewed throughout the year and it was hoped that branches would also provide some input. The County Plan was unanimously accepted by the delegates.
22. Conference then adjourned for a 15 minute break. On reassembling the number of delegates remained unchanged.

23. **County Chairman's Address** - The Chairman reported that 2012 had been a year to remember particularly with Pathway for Growth taking shape. It had brought about changes in staffing and the way we do Welfare etc. These had already started with the CWOs visiting Gateways across the County taking welfare work to the beneficiaries. There will be further changes taking place over the coming year. However he did not think it would affect the way Branches were run but branches would be kept informed of developments. One of the staff changes was the loss of the County Manager who had been replaced by an Area Manager covering Kent, Surrey and Sussex and he was pleased to see her there at Conference.

During the year he and his wife had been very pleased with the welcome they had received on visits to Branches. County Parade went off very well and he thanked Faversham Branch for hosting the event.

He said that membership was of concern. Branches had again lost many hard working Members who, as always, were difficult to replace. He said we must recruit more but must also make sure we look at retaining our members. There is also a need to enrol more youth members. During the 90th anniversary year he gave all Branches a challenge that was very successful. He said his challenge during 2013 was to sign up more youth who will go on to be the Legion members of tomorrow. There is to be a trophy for the Branch signing the most Youth members. He reported that the new President was fully behind this and would be providing the trophy. Branches should watch County News for details of how this is to be awarded.

He expressed his thanks to the members of the County Committee for their work over the year, with special thanks to Richard Cast, the County Vice Chairman and County Training Officer, who as well as supporting him had been very busy with arranging training within the County. Thanks also went to County Secretary Tony West for his assistance to everyone. He finished by thanking everyone for their continued support and promised to continue to do his best for the County of Kent.

24. **Resolution (1)** - The County Vice Chairman presented a Charter Motion on behalf of the County Committee proposing "Page 7, Article 15, line 1 delete "Fundraising is to take place in the name of the Legion and only for purposes defined in the objects" and insert "Fundraising carried out in the Legion's name must be solely on behalf of the Legion and only for the furtherance of the Legion's objects." This would clarify the anomaly of Branches fundraising on behalf of other charities, in particular other Service charities, and would help to ensure that all donations collected by Legion members, wearing Legion clothing under a Legion banner actually go to the Legion. The motion was seconded by Chartham Branch. There were no speakers for or against the motion although Mr White of Birchington commented on joint fundraising carried out by his branch. The motion was carried by 21 to 5 votes.
25. **Resolution (2)** - The County Treasurer presented the following motion on behalf of the County Committee proposing "This conference requests the Board of Trustees amend Governing Regulation 16 line 2 after "every year," to delete "at least 17 weeks before the Annual Conference" and insert "no later than the weekend which is 17 weeks before the Annual Conference." This will ensure that dates for County Conferences are correct and within the time frame and that all business at the County Conferences will be valid such as motions and nominations. The motion was seconded by the Maidstone Branch. There were no speakers for or against the motion which was carried unanimously.
26. **Resolution (3)** - The Tenterden Branch delegate presented the following motion on behalf of his Branch, "This Conference requests that the trustees issue a statement assuring members that in the research into blast injuries no defence contractor will benefit from the Legion's charitable funds". This would ease the worry of members over use of Poppy

Appeal monies and provide clarity of purpose of money donated to the Poppy Appeal not being used as a money saving exercise for MOD. The motion was seconded by the Birchington Branch. There were no speakers for or against the motion which was carried unanimously.

27. **Annual Conference Delegate** - A show of hands from the Delegates unanimously agreed that, as the only nominee, County Chairman Mr Austin Walker should represent Kent at the 2013 Annual Conference at Llandudno.
28. **Address by the Women's Section County Chairman** - Mrs Bunyan reported that the Women's Section had had another very successful year. She said the Annual Rally in May had been well attended and thanked the County Chairman and Mrs Walker for attending. She was very pleased with the success of Poppy Walk at Whitstable and other fund raising events. She commented that the Carol Service was always a special event. The Women's Section held a very good Conference in November and Mrs Bunyan gave thanks to her County Secretary and to the Women's Section Branches in the County who all worked so very well. She concluded by thanking the County Chairman and wishing him a successful 2013.
29. **Address by Guest Speaker** - The Chairman introduced Dr Chris Simpkins, the Legion's Director General, who gave a brief update on the Legion's welfare activity, reported on progress being made by the Membership Council, reported on recommended changes to the Royal Charter and gave an update on Pathway for Growth.

On Welfare he said that 25% of beneficiaries were now under the age of 45 and, because £1.7m is spent every week we need to raise around £90m each year just to stand still. Last year there were 165,000 casework interventions in which practical help was given to members of the armed forces community.

In 2010 the National Chairman stated that his aim was to "give membership back to the members". As a result, the Membership Council has been involved with a number of changes including improving communication with Head Office, improving communication and engagement with the armed forces which will include serving personnel being given access to the Legion, changing the complaints system and introducing LOMAS which is an on-line accounting system for County and Branch Treasurers.

The Royal Charter is seen as too bureaucratic and some of the rules need to be changed. The whole document is therefore under review. Part of this process includes obtaining the views of the membership and will therefore be discussed at Annual Conference at Llandudno in May. The DG urged branches to send delegates to Conference so they would understand the necessity for changes and support them.

He outlined the changes that had already taken place under Pathway for Growth and those yet to come. He emphasised that changes were necessary to place welfare at the heart of everything the Legion does by improving our services and making us more visible to the public and more accessible to our beneficiaries.

*(The complete speech was to be sent to all Branches after Conference)*

30. **Questions to the Guest Speaker** - There were no verbal questions. However, three written questions had been submitted to the DG prior to Conference.

**Question 1** - This concerned the proposed Membership Digital Newsletter. The DG said all the Legion magazine currently covered everything and would continue to do so. However, a pilot study of the proposed digital newsletter template would be with County Secretaries shortly.

**Question 2** - This suggested that branch officers be involved in planned changes to procedures or operational matters as the majority of Head Office staff have little practical knowledge of how branches operate. The DG responded that Head Office does liaise with field staff and selected branch officers on certain matters. An example of this was the reintroduction of the MS4 after it had been replaced by the MS20. However, some changes have to be implemented due to legal reasons and are not for discussion.

**Question 3** - This concerned the problems affecting many branches when arranging Remembrance Sunday parades and services. The DG responded that arrangements varied around the country but that local authorities have arranged the parades with a major input from the Legion in terms of the ceremonial elements. Budget cuts have, of course, affected the assistance from councils, the police and others. He said he appreciated that it is a problem but that the Legion would be talking to the appropriate authorities in an attempt to resolve this before November.

31. **Address by the Area Manager** - The Chairman introduced Ms Sandra Fruish, the Area Manager for the South East. Ms Fruish began by giving her personal background summary followed by an outline of her role and responsibilities. She explained the methods and the team needed to achieve her goals. She also explained that there would be changes to the way that welfare would work in the future and how it would affect the welfare staff. She went on to reassure those present that the role of the County Secretary would remain unchanged. She finished by saying that the current County Office would close in due course and would probably return to the RBL Village in late 2014.

32. **Donations** - The Chairman invited branches to present donations to the County President who expressed sincere thanks to those branches on behalf of the County. Donations were:

£1,000	Gillingham Branch
£1,718.05	Leeds, Hollingbourne & District Branch
£500	Ramsgate Branch
£330	Sevenoaks Branch

33. **Farewell address by the County President** - John Partridge spoke about his association with the Royal British Legion in Kent which covered 31 years including the last five as President. He said that he had been a member of many committees and was pleased to have organised many events over the years. One of his moments was leading the County on the Belgian National Parade at Whitehall in July 1987 with the honour of laying a wreath at the Cenotaph. He said this was the only time that Legion Standards have paraded at the Cenotaph. He finished by saying it had been a privilege to work with so many dedicated Legion and Women's Section Officers and to visit so many branches. He wished everyone every good wish for the future.

34. **Address by the New County President** - Cllr Leyland Ridings MBE JP spoke briefly about his role as a Councillor for Sandwich following a career serving with the Royal Australian Air Force. He said he was extremely honoured to be taking over the presidency and expressed his thanks to John Partridge for his service saying he was well recognised throughout the County as the face of the Legion. He recognised that necessary changes were taking place within the Legion and finished with the comment "onwards and upwards".

35. **County Conference 2014** - It was announced that the next County Conference would be held on Saturday 18th January 2014 at Headcorn Village Hall and the guest speaker would be confirmed later. (*Guest Speaker confirmed after Conference as National Trustee Terry Whittles*)

36. **Presentation of County Awards** - The County Chairman invited the County President and the Director General to present the awards.

<b>NEWPORT CUP</b> (Branch showing largest increase in membership)	<b>Halstead Branch</b>
<b>MOORE TROPHY</b> (Branch Efficiency)	<b>Swanley, Crockenhill &amp; Hextable Branch</b>
<b>PENFOLD SALVER TROPHY</b> (Group showing largest increase in membership)	<b>Not awarded</b>
<b>CONNIE WILLIAMS CUP</b> (Group Efficiency)	<b>Not awarded</b>
<b>THE SKINNER ROSE BOWL</b> (Person doing most in interest of Welfare)	<b>Mr Jim &amp; Mrs Rosemary Butcher</b>
<b>BRIAN LYONS SHIELD</b> (Caseworker of the year)	<b>Mrs Christine Arnold</b>
<b>MUNGEAM CUP</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Winner)	<b>Mr Geoff Lees</b> Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch
<b>1945-1995 ANNIVERSARY SHIELD</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Runner Up)	<b>Mr Mike Goodwin</b> Gillingham Branch
<b>BANGER CUP</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Novice Winner)	<b>Mr Mike Goodwin</b> Gillingham Branch
<b>JOHN PARTRIDGE SHIELD</b> (Standard Bearer showing most progress in the year)	<b>Mr Julian De Zille</b> Downs Branch
<b>CHARLES STEVENS TROPHY</b> (Person raising most on the Poppy Walk)	<b>Mr Michael Golding</b> Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch
<b>TOM ASPREY CUP</b> (Branch raising most on the Poppy Walk)	<b>Shoreham Branch</b>
<b>TOM STYLES SHIELD</b> (Branch with a Club raising most on the Poppy Walk)	<b>Whitstable Branch</b>

37. **Charge of County Standard Bearer** - The Parade Marshal mustered the Standard Bearers and the County President thanked Mr Richard Bunyan for his nine years of service as County Standard Bearer. He then welcomed and charged Mr Geoff Lees, the incoming County Standard Bearer.

38. **Handover of the President's Jewel** - Mr Partridge then handed over the President's Jewel to Cllr Ridings wishing him very best wishes in his new role

39. **Destroy Ballot Papers** - The Chairman sought and received permission from the delegates to destroy the ballot papers.

40. **Vote of Thanks** - The County Vice Chairman 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 those at Headcorn Village Hall. Following Mr Cast's address presentations were made to The Mayor Maidstone, the Director General and Mrs Partridge.

41. **The National Anthem** was followed by the March Off of the Standards.
42. **The Raffle Results** were then given to Conference - the raffle raised £231.
43. **Close of Conference** at 4.10 pm - the County Chairman thanked all for their attendance.

**SIGNED AS A TRUE RECORD.....**

**DATE.....**