In this Edition

Pathway for Growth Chairman's Update
***
SW Region Standard Bearers' Competition
***
Legion Plans for WW1 Centenary
***
N.Mendip Group Honours its President
***
Nether Stowey Celebrates
***
Annual Conference Review
***

An Important Message From HQ
Concerns raised over administration of Branch Property Trusts
Read more on page 3

There are 6 Newsletter issues every year:
January : March : May : July : September : November

The deadline for articles for the July issue is 20th June - see back page for details
PATHWAY FOR GROWTH
A REPORT FROM OUR COUNTY CHAIRMAN

During 2012, Somerset and Bristol Counties, along with the rest of the country, have had a very trying time with the Pathway for Growth programme. County Managers and Welfare Staff have been made redundant and three new national areas have been created, of which Somerset is in the Southern Area together with Wiltshire. The area office for our welfare work is in Swindon from where the Area Manager, Alistair Maxwell, will work, assisted by Kate. The membership of Somerset and Bristol remains part of Somerset and will be looked after by Somerset County Office. It will probably be late 2014 before all the new offices and welfare staff are fully operational although temporary offices are already in place.

I have just returned from Haig House where all the County Chairmen were briefed on Phase 2 of the plan, which has now been put into operation. Staff are being offered the opportunity to apply for posts within the new welfare set-up, which when it is established will mean that there will be no welfare staff working in Crypton House, Bridgwater. This does mean that Somerset County office will need to move to a new venue and we have been told that there will be no budget for rent, or any other expenses, coming from Haig House. The County Secretary and I have therefore established new premises within the County for which there will be no charge, thus meeting the criteria we have been set. I have been told that we shall have a decision on those premises by the end of March and also that Somerset will remain its own County and will not be amalgamated with another county.

Phase 2 will bring about a number of changes within all Counties and meetings are being held with all the staff and volunteers that will be affected. These meetings will take until the end of March when I will be allowed to write to you all again with a further up-date on this phase.

I do urge you all to support your County and the Welfare Team because without your help welfare will suffer meaning that the ex-service personnel who need help will suffer in turn. I have been privy to a lot more of the plan and if we all support it then we shall all benefit.

Roger Duddridge

Chairman, Somerset & Bristol County
AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM HQ

As part of an internal review, we have found a number of long standing compliance failings in the way we administer and manage our Branch Property Trusts. These trusts direct the governance of many of the Branch connected properties that the charity has acquired since 1921, and how revenues from these properties may be spent.

Legal advice is very clear that the Legion must address these issues immediately in order to comply with charity and trust law.

We want to brief affected Branches as soon as possible to explain the issues we have identified, and we are arranging a programme of visits throughout April to do so. We need to work together to resolve this issue and we will be able to provide further detail about how we aim to do this once these initial visits have been completed.

Kay Callaghan MCIPR
Head of Internal Communication and Engagement

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL STANDARD BEARERS' COMPETITION 2013

On Saturday 23rd February 2013, the SW Regional Standard Bearers' Competition was held at the Cotswold Services Centre, Neston, Wiltshire.

In the Women’s Section, Somerset, represented by Kath Sidwell of Long Ashton Branch, came second to Wiltshire. Next year, when the competition should be held in Somerset, Kath will once again try to win.

In the Men’s competition the first three places were within 8 points of each other. Cornwall, whose representative came third in the National Competition in 2012, took first place, followed by Dorset. Somerset’s John Gallop of Wrington Branch achieved third place.

Both Somerset Standard Bearers would like to thank their trainers and supporters who travelled, on a very cold day, to Wiltshire.

John Gallop
PRESENTATION TO MRS DOREEN SMITH
RETIRED CHAIR OF THE NORTH MENDEP GROUP
ON TUESDAY EVENING, 12TH MARCH, despite the unseasonal weather, the members of the North Mendip Group made their way between the flurries of snow to the RBL Club at Long Ashton for the bi-monthly meeting of the Group. Unknown to the Group President, Mrs Doreen Smith, the meeting was to be quickly followed by a presentation to her, to commemorate her retirement from the office of Group Chair at the previous AGM in September 2012, after holding that position for over 24 years!

The Group had invited past County Officers David Lowe, now Manager, South West Midlands Area and Lynn Marie Power, both of whom had enjoyed a long association with Doreen at Bridgwater, to make the presentation on the Group’s behalf and, after a few words of introduction from the new Chairman the meeting was handed over to David.

The Group had been active in raising funds for this purpose and David was able to present Doreen with a range of Gift Tokens from her local garden centre, so that she could make her own choice of a memento for either her garden or her home, which would serve as a reminder of her long years of service and the esteem in which she is held by both her past colleagues and her associates.

After the Presentation, Doreen received a bouquet of flowers and the meeting ended with a light buffet supper.

David L Milner, Group Chairman

Quote of the month - nothing changes it seems: -

"Blessed are the young, for they will inherit the national debt."

~ Herbert Hoover ~
NETHER STOWEY BRANCH CELEBRATES ITS 90\textsuperscript{th} BIRTHDAY

2013 sees Nether Stowey Branch celebrates its 90\textsuperscript{th} birthday, having been formed as one of the earliest British Legion branches.

The Legion was formed in 1921 to care for those who were suffering as a result of service in the armed forces during the 1914-18 War. Suffering came in many forms: as the effect of a war wound on a man’s ability to earn a wage and support his family; a war widow’s struggle to provide for her children; unemployment due to a failing economy following the war. There was no government welfare policy and little or no financial aid available.

On 13\textsuperscript{th} November 1923 an open meeting was held in the old Nether Stowey Schoolrooms to discuss the formation of a local Legion branch. Thirty-eight ex-servicemen attended and unanimously agreed to support the proposal. In fact, such was the enthusiasm than an inaugural meeting was held just a month later, on 14\textsuperscript{th} December, when branch officers and a committee were elected and the branch model bylaws were adopted. Lord St Audries was invited to become the first President of the Branch with Col. C.H.C Weston elected as Chairman and Mr Redmond as Vice-Chairman. The Committee Members were W. Ware; J. Cavill; A. Davis; A. Vickery; L. Humphreys; T. Williams; G. Wyatt; A.E. Lyddon; G. Moore; C.H. Campbell; W. Grandfield & G. Nicholls.

During the intervening years the Branch has fostered the original spirit of comradeship through many social events and has provided a source of voluntary support and advice to many local families. In 2012 the villages of Nether Stowey and Over Stowey subscribed to a Memorial dedicated to their men who had died in both World Wars. We should also pay tribute to those who survived but returned physically or mentally scarred and resolve to ensure that others will not share their experiences in the future.

\textbf{Happy 90\textsuperscript{th} Birthday!}

To celebrate this significant anniversary, the Branch will be holding a Birthday Party on Saturday, 1\textsuperscript{st} June at Over Stowey Village Hall. There will be food, music and a bar.

The event will be free to Branch Members; non-members are asked to contribute £5. Please contact Mrs McWillaim, Marsh Mill House, Over Stowey (01278 732234) for more details and to advise numbers attending etc.
WWI CENTENARY COMMEMORATION - THE LEGION'S PLANS

Many of you are being asked about the RBL’s activities linked to the WWI Centenary Commemorations from 2014 – 2018. I therefore felt it appropriate to set out in broad terms what we will be doing at national level and to give you background information on our overall strategy.

Within the organisation, I will hold overall responsibility for the WWI Centenary activities, supported by Robert Lee, Assistant Director of Marketing. The Government is taking the lead on national activities and the Prime Minister has announced a £50m commitment to support the Centenary, including special focus on local activities and delivering a cultural and educational legacy for young people.

The Legion is determined that the tone will be one of commemoration, not celebration; and that Centenary activities will be available to all and kept free of partisan or sectarian bias. The Legion is therefore working closely with the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on the Centenary, Dr Andrew Murrison; various other Ministers and Government Departments; and stakeholders such as The Imperial War Museum, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the National Archives. We are linking closely to activities being co-ordinated in Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

In terms of national initiatives, I have created a Legion WWI Centenary Working Group including the parent charity, the National Memorial Arboretum and Poppyscotland. This group will meet regularly to evaluate external project and partnership proposals and its priority will be to select projects that support our own beneficiaries, Members, and our charitable pillars, in particular Comradeship & Remembrance.

We have a range of national projects already committed, and the Board of Trustees will shortly be considering the development of the new Visitor’s Centre at the National Memorial Arboretum (our own centre of Remembrance), exciting plans for Remembrance Travel and special WWI resources for schools produced as part of the Legion’s learning programme. I will be looking to the regions and local branches to support our national initiatives and to develop their own ideas for involvement in the WWI Centenary commemorations.
The Heritage Lottery Fund has committed substantial funding to support Centenary projects at national, regional and local levels & we encourage you to access these. On the next page you will find a listing of the key dates identified by the Government during the Centenary period, reflecting timings of planned national and international events and activities. Please note these dates do not reflect official Legion activity but are ones you should be aware of as particular milestones in the Centenary journey. Also listed are links to the HLF website where you will find comprehensive guidance and support for applying for funds for your projects. Please use your own judgement as to whether a project or activity is relevant and appropriate and let us know if you think it could have national impact, so that we can support and promote accordingly.

Chris Simpkins, Director General

Key dates forming the basis of Government-led commemorations
4th August 2014 : National services to mark 100th Anniversary of Britain declaring war on Germany.
25th April 2015 : Events to mark commencement of Battle of Gallipoli.
1st July 2016 : Events to mark the first day of the Battle of the Somme.
31st May - 1st June 2016 : Events to mark the naval Battle of Jutland.
June - November 2017 : Events to mark the Battle of Passchendaele (The Third Battle of Ypres).
8th August - 11th November 2018 : The last 100 days from the commencement of the Battle of Amiens to the Armistice on 11th November will be a period of national commemoration.

Also, while not a part of the official Government agenda, we are likely to see significant activity surrounding the 24th-25th December 2014 Christmas truce football matches in Flanders.

Links to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to apply for funding for local WWI Centenary Projects
If you have projects and proposals linked to the WWI Centenary and need to apply for funding, the best route is to talk to the HLF. Click on the links below for guidance.
http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/whatwefund/FirstWorldWar/Pages/FirstWorldWar.aspx
http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/whatwefund/FirstWorldWar/Pages/FAQs.aspx
http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/whatwefund/FirstWorldWar/Documents/Remembering_FWW_leaflet.pdf

Robert Lee MCIPR, Assistant Director
Marketing and Communications
ANNUAL COUNTY CONFERENCE - 2013 : A NEW VENUE
REVIEWED BY THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

The Annual Conference took place at Queens College, Taunton on 12th January 2013. This was a new venue, with a new committee. Having been given our remit we set about our task to ensure that when delegates attended they would have an enjoyable day. Fortunately, this year, we did not have to contend with the snow and ice - just the rain!

The new venue offered us all the things that had been missing from our previous venue. There were comfortable seats in a warm environment and you could see and hear all that was going on on the main stage. The format was the same with the exception of an open mic session when delegates were able to put questions to the Chairman, or other members of the committee should they wish to. This promoted discussion from the floor and I think most people enjoyed the experience. Delegates were able to order and enjoy a hot meal at lunchtime and there was the usual tea and coffee throughout the day.

We are not saying that all was perfect, and we have since had a meeting to discuss where improvements can be made. We have taken on board comments and suggestions on what we can do to make it even better next year. What we definitely need to improve it is for more of you to attend on what is an important date in our calendar. It gives us all the chance to meet and exchange ideas. We have already put together a list of potential guest speakers and there will be more on the way forward in future issues of this Newsletter. Please come along and see for yourself on 18th January 2014; put it in your diaries now!

If you do have any reasonable ideas that we may be able to include at Conference, then please let us know through the County Secretary.

Robert McDonald - Chairman, Conference Committee

A Good Winter Season for Williton Royal British Legion Rifle Club

Williton RBL Rifle Club continues to do well in the Somerset County competitions. The Club defeated Cheddar Valley Rifle Club in the final of the Davey Cup knockout competition, competed for by all 20 clubs in the county, and the Club’s A-Team also won the 1st Division Winter League Trophy, with the B and C-Teams coming 3rd and 2nd in their respective divisions.

E.W.Jones - Rifle Club Chairman
Ilminster Branch Presents

An Armed Forces Day
Band Concert
In the Minster, Ilminster
On Saturday 29th June
at 7.30pm
Featuring the
HMS Heron Volunteer Band

Tickets price £15

Proceeds to RBL Battle Back Centre, Lilleshall, Shropshire.
For details call 01460 57564 or go to http://tinyurl.com/ilminster-afd or http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/ilminster/news-events/armed-forces-day

A ‘DUKES’ TALE
Ena Elwell

Did you serve in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment
or grace the sports fields with Ena Elwell?
Maybe you just knew him as a friend or acquaintance.
If you did, you may be part of

A 'DUKES' TALE
Ena Elwell's story
To obtain your copy contact Ena on:
Home: 01904 668 233
Mobile: 07787703070
or
Email: philipelwell@yahoo.co.uk
CLIFTON CATHEDRAL

SYDNEY MALE CHOIR

with

BRISTOL

MALE

VOICE

CHOIR

7.30 pm

Friday

10th May

Tickets

£10

Ticket hotline 0117 979 3208 or on the door
Polo Shirts, Fleeces and Shower-proof Jackets

Somerset County RBL now has its own range of polo shirts, fleeces and shower-proof jackets. They are good quality but slightly on the small size so if you would like to order something I would suggest you go up a size from the normal one you would wear.

Cheques should be made out to “Somerset Royal British Legion” and sent to David Brixey, County Secretary at RBL County Office, Suite A, Crypton House, Bristol Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4SY.

Text under the Legion Logo is “Somerset County”. That is the default lettering but if you would like different words, please let me know. There may be extra costs for other wording.

Any orders will be amalgamated to lower costs … and you can have any colour you’d like as long as it’s Blue!

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May
Saturday 18th - Sunday 19th
2013 Annual National Conference
At Venue Cymru, Llandudno, Wales
(Standard Bearers' Competition - Friday 17th May)

June
Saturday 1st
Nether Stowey Branch 90th Birthday Party
At Over Stowey Village Hall from 3pm onwards
Food, music, bar etc. See page 5 for story and more details.

Saturday 29th
Ilminster Branch Armed Forces Day Band Concert
At 7.30pm in the Minster, Ilminster featuring the
HMS Heron Volunteer Band. See details on page 9

October
Saturday 5th
County Standard Bearers' Competition
At 10:00 hrs in Highbridge Community Hall