

MINUTES OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION KENT COUNTY
EIGHTY SEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
HELD AT THE HEADCORN VILLAGE HALL, HEADCORN, KENT
ON SATURDAY 6TH FEBRUARY 2010

1. The Conference opened at 12.30pm when the County Chairman announced the Entry of the Dignitaries - the Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Peter Parvin and the Mayoress, Cllr Daphne Parvin escorted by the County President, Mr John Partridge MBE.
2. The Entry of the Standards took place. Then the Roll of Honour was read by the County President followed by the Exhortation and Silent Tribute and the Calls were 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 Peter Parvin gave the Civic Welcome, extending a warm welcome to all members to the Borough of Maidstone of which Headcorn was part. He indicated that he had recently attended the Women's Section Kent County Conference in the same venue. He is a member of the Royal British Legion and he and his wife, Daphne, collect for the Poppy Appeal in their home area. The Mayor commended the Standard Bearers and the Parade Marshall for their bearing and for the duties that they carry out.
5. The Chairman of Headcorn Parish Council was unable to attend and his message of welcome to Conference was read out by the County Vice-Chairman, Mrs R Dunger. In his message, the Parish Council Chairman extended his best wishes to all for a good Conference and confirmed that bringing the Conference to Headcorn was extremely good for the Village and he hoped that Conference will make a return visit in future years.
6. The County President, Mr John Partridge, MBE, addressed Conference. He thanked the Mayor for the civic welcome and for the presence at Conference today, and also extended thanks to Mrs Dunger for giving the welcome on behalf of the Chairman of Headcorn Parish Council. Mr Partridge said that the County were pleased to be back in the busy village of Headcorn which attracts people from many areas. It was pleasing to see the Padre at Conference. The President thanked the Parade Marshall, his Deputy and all Standard Bearers for their bearing at all times and also thanked the Women's Section for their continued support. Mr Partridge concluded by wishing those seeking election to the County Committee success for the coming year; it was hoped that the Group system could be revitalised and that more branches can be encouraged to send delegates to County Conference so that the motions can be debated by a larger cross-section of the membership.
7. The County Chairman welcomed members to Conference and introduced the top table including acting County Vice-Chairman - Mrs Robbie Dunger; County Treasurer - Mr Ron Lamb; Padre - Rev Brian Sharpe; Guest Speaker - Miss Ann Widdecombe MP; County President - Mr John Partridge MBE; the new County Secretary - Mr Tony West; Board of Trustee Member - Mr Keith Prichard; the Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone - Cllrs Peter and Daphne Parvin; and acting Conference Committee Chairman - Mr Ray Mann. 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 6th February 2010.
9. **Appointment of Scrutineers** - Mrs Ann Butcher (Invicta Branch - Chief Scrutineer), Mr Clutterbuck of Headcorn Branch, Mr A Port of Headcorn Branch, Mr D Sage of Tunbridge Wells

Branch and Mr S Woolford of Whitstable Branch. Proposed by Margate Branch and Seconded by Southborough & High Brooms Branch.

10. **Apologies** were received from Mr T Maize (Cheriton & Morehall Branch) and Mrs Goodwin (Hollingbourne Branch)
11. The County Secretary confirmed that there were no amendments or additions to the published Conference Agenda
12. Delegates - **there were 23 Delegates from 20 Branches**
13. **The Minutes of the County Conference** held on Saturday 17th January 2009 were taken as read and proposed by Birchington Branch, seconded by Southborough & High Brooms Branch with no errors noted or addendums required
14. There were **no Matters Arising**
15. **Report of the County Committee** - The County Secretary, Mr Tony West, gave the Annual County Report (attached)
16. **The Election of County Officers** then took place. The President, Mr John Partridge, MBE, confirmed the election, unopposed, of Mr Austin Walker of Margate Branch to the post of County Chairman. The Chairman then confirmed the one nomination for County Vice-Chairman, Mr Michael Goodwin, of Gillingham Branch, elected unopposed. Three new members were elected to the County Committee - Mr Keith Atkinson from Downs Branch, Mr Ray Mann from Staplehurst Branch and Mr Vivian Oakley from Tonbridge Branch. A show of hands from delegates unanimously elected these individuals to the County Committee
17. **The Election of Members from the floor for Conference Committee** - Two members were elected from the floor to the County Conference Committee, namely Mr Steve Woolford from Whitstable Branch and Mr Trevor Mays from Cheriton & Morehall Branch. Again a show of hands from delegates unanimously elected these individuals to Conference Committee.
18. **The County Vice-Presidents** were confirmed as Mr H Garrett, Mrs D Jackson, Mr F R Penfold and Mr S Woolford - proposed by Margate Branch and seconded by Sevenoaks Branch with all in favour
19. **Presentation of Accounts** - The County Treasurer Mr Ron Lamb presented the audited accounts. Mr Lamb firstly commended Mr Ray Mann for being able to get the books audited free of charge. The Treasurer also highlighted that the branches had given £22,722 to the County Benevolent Fund during the year by way of donations. This was very good and much appreciated but of course is a fraction of what is spent on Welfare cases. The report was proposed as adopted by Birchington Branch and seconded by Paddock Wood & District Branch.
20. **Presentation of Report by County Manager** - Mr Geoff Simpson gave the County Manager's report, beginning by saying that 2009 had been an extremely turbulent year with the loss of several stalwart members, and County is now entering a period of change which will require steady hands. There has been success in welfare funding with the CWO completing over 1000 cases and thus has achieved an objective which the County Manager set for himself when he first came to post 5 years previously. The cost of these cases was £750,000; 36% of the funding was achieved through almonising and thus the actual cost to the County remained below £500,000. That said, Head Office were reducing the Welfare Budget to Counties by 25% but still more is expected for considerably less. The nature of the cases being dealt with was changing with increasing debt advice cases, cases of PTSD etc. The Small Business Loans were being stopped

and the Vocational Assessments suspended. The Poppy Appeal in Kent made in excess of one million pounds last year, and this year has already passed the one million mark and the County Manager thanked Clare Saunders and Anne Hill for their organisation and work with the County and Branch PAO's around the County. Both the Poppy Launch and the Poppy Lunch continue to be successful occasions and will be continued - the Poppy Lunch raising in excess of £10,000. The Lord Lieutenant's Poppy Appeal Awards are also attracting greater participation from the Cadet forces within the County, and this year the awards will be combined with the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet 150 launch within the County. The County Manager concluded by saying he hoped the three year search for more suitable premises for the County Office was coming to fruition - hopefully a site quite close to the RBL Village will be approved shortly. The Chairman invited questions on the County Manager's report. Mr Walker, delegate for Southborough & High Brooms Branch asked about the County Website which is out of date and the County Manager confirmed that a staff member was taking this in hand with a view to making improvements over the coming months.

21. **Presentation of Report by Poppy Appeal Organiser** - See Attached
22. **Presentation of Report by County Benevolent Co-Ordinator** - See Attached
23. **Presentation of Report by County Youth Officer** - See Attached
24. **Presentation of Report on Recruitment** - The Recruitment Report attached was read to Conference by the County Secretary, Mr Tony West.

The reports at Items 21-24 were proposed by Margate Branch and seconded by Gillingham Branch

25. **County Plan** - see attached - proposed by Paddock Wood & District Branch and seconded by Southborough & High Brooms Branch.

At this point the Chairman read a notice from Mrs Sceal thanking all those who attended the funeral of her Husband Gordon Sceal, particularly the Parade Marshall and the Standard Bearers

26. **County Chairman's Report** - The Chairman confirmed that 2009 had been a difficult year with the sad passing of Tom Styles and Gordon Sceal who are both greatly missed; also with the retirement of Pat Cox as County Secretary although she is remaining on the Clubs Advisory Group and as Training Officer in a voluntary capacity. The Chairman welcomed Tony West as County Secretary and thanked the Committee for all their help since he took the reigns as County Chairman; also to Keith Prichard, Board of Trustee member for his help and support. 2010 is a good opportunity to put the house in order before the 90th Anniversary in 2011 - matters for attention include looking at the Group System, possibly bringing the Group Leaders onto the County Committee; also visiting branches and clubs; if branches have a problem please bring it to the attention of the County so that help can be provided; in-house training for Branch Officers will be developed and branches interested can contact the County Office to arrange this to take place within their own branches; the County needs to do more to sell the RBL to the public - it is still the best ex-service organisation; branches should be encouraged to use the press; some branches still do not know that Kent has it's own Festival of Remembrance at Margate each year. The Chairman concluded by indicating that there will be changes at National level but hoped that we can all work together to take the RBL forward in Kent.

27. **Conference** now adjourned for a short break - following the interval the Chairman confirmed that there were now **25 Delegates from 22 Branches**.

The County Chairman confirmed that a County Publicity Officer was urgently required and anyone interested should contact the County Secretary.

28. **Resolutions** - The Branch Delegate for Gillingham presented the Motion requesting the RBL to approach HM Government and use its influence to persuade the Government to abandon the proposal to discontinue the British Forces Post Office in Mainland Europe; Seconded by Smarden Branch; no Branch spoke against the Motion; all delegates voted in favour of the Motion
29. **Address by the Women's Section County Chairman, Ann Bunyan** - Mrs Bunyan started by saying that W/S have held their Conference at Headcorn for two years and the County will be coming back for a third year in November and that it was a most pleasant and convenient place to hold a Conference. Mrs Bunyan reported that she had attended a couple of seminars during the year to keep updated and that there were always things going on and to continue learning. She wished the competitors well for the forthcoming Regional Standard Bearer's Competition; the Rally will go back to its old format with stalls. Both the W/S and the RBL have suffered a difficult year, however we are determined to keep up the key objective of supporting the ex-service community - we are strong and will continue to be strong;
30. **Address by Guest Speaker, Ann Widdecombe MP** - The Chairman introduced Ann Widdecombe MP confirming that she was also the County President of the Women's Section in Kent. Miss Widdecombe gave a rousing, interesting and humorous talk about her 23 years as an MP from which she was to retire at the next General Election. Miss Widdecombe confirmed that for one year after her retirement she was going to remain as President for the Women's Section along with her involvement in one other organisation. She hoped to write more books and have a relaxing retirement in the country. Miss Widdecombe took questions from the audience and the County Chairman then thanked her for the stirring speech which was received with acclaim.

The Chairman invited **Mr Keith Prichard, Board of Trustee Member** to address Conference. Mr Prichard confirmed the Membership Review which was ongoing at Head Office and which will be discussed with the Membership Council shortly and with all County Chairman at a meeting in April. There continues to be confusion as to the standing between Help for Heroes and the RBL and Mr Prichard read out a statement prepared by Russell Thompson on this issue. It was suggested that this statement be printed in the Kent County News and also that more should be done to educate the public on the difference between the two organisations.

Mr Haisell from Orpington raised a point about raffle tickets being sold purportedly on behalf of a charity called "Wounded Warriors" and that this was in fact being done by a commercial organisation. It was confirmed that there is a warning out about this group and the Police are aware.

31. **Time and Place of next Conference** - Saturday 15th January 2011 at a venue to be announced in County News

The County Chairman now invited branches to present donations to the County President. Sevenoaks Branch presented two cheques to the value of £200.00 and £280.00 and Orpington presented a cheque to the value of £300.00. The County President expressed sincere thanks to those branches on behalf of the County.

32. **Presentation of County Honours and Awards** The County Chairman invited the County President and Miss Ann Widdecombe MP to present the awards

Cup	Purpose	Recipient Branch/Individual
Newport Cup	Increased Membership	Staplehurst
Moore Trophy	Increased Efficiency	Birchington
Connie Williams Cup	Group Efficiency	Not Awarded
The Skinner Rose Bowl	Persons doing most in interest of Welfare	Mr B Hatch and Ms V Groves Maidstone Branch
CWO Cup	Welfare	Mr D Potter
John Partridge Shield	Standard Bearer showing most progress during year	Mr N Williams, Sittingbourne Branch
Brian Lyons Shield	Caseworker of the Year	Mr and Mrs Nastaly
Mungeam Cup	Standard Bearer's Competition winner	Mr Richard Bunyan, Sevenoaks Branch
1945 - 1995 Anniversary Shield	Runner-Up SB's Competition	Mr John Walker, Paddock Wood Branch
Banger Cup	SB Competition novice winner	David McQuarrie - Seal (Cadet)
Charles Stevens Trophy	Person raising most on Poppy Walk	Mrs Charteris - Swanley Branch
Penfold Salver Trophy	Group showing the largest increase in membership	Group 2
Tom Asprey Cup	Branch raising most on Poppy Walk	Swanley
Tom Styles Shield	Branch with Club collecting most on Poppy Walk	Tonbridge RBL Club

33. **Charge of County Standard Bearer** The Parade Marshall mustered the Standard Bearers and the County President charged the Standard Bearer

34. **Destroy Ballot Papers**

35. **The Raffle Results** were given after the close of Conference - the raffle raised £261.00

36. **Vote Of Thanks By The County Vice-Chairman** - Mrs Dunger thanked all persons involved with Conference on behalf of the Conference Committee and the County Committee together with the dignitaries, guests and the Headcorn Village Hall.

Following Mrs Dunger's address presentations were made to Pat Cox to mark her official retirement as County Secretary and then presentations were made to Ann Widdecombe and the Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone.

37. **The National Anthem** was followed by

38. **Close of Conference** at 3.30pm - the County Chairman thanked all for their attendance today

SIGNED AS A TRUE RECORD.....

DATE.....