

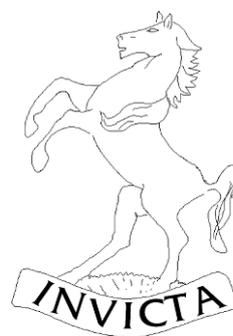


KENT COUNTY NEWS

TRBL South East Area Office (Kent)
Royal British Legion Village
Aylesford, Kent ME20 7NL

Membership Support Officer

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Registered Charity 219279

Welfare & Fundraising

via Contact Centre - 0808 802 8080

County website: www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/kent

March 2017

BRANCH SECRETARIES: PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ITEMS IN THIS MONTHLY CIRCULAR SHOULD FORM PART OF THE REPORT TO YOUR BRANCH COMMITTEE

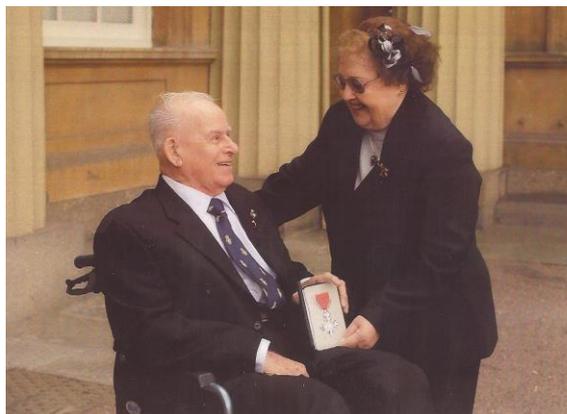
COUNTY CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

I was very pleased to have been invited to attend a reception at County Hall on 7th February to honour eleven gentlemen who had received the Legion d'Honneur from the French government. Following a brief outline of their individual roles during the invasion of Normandy each was presented with a scroll from the Chairman of KCC. It was humbling to see how fit and mobile most of these gents were, especially as the majority were in their late nineties, and I was proud to have been part of this event.

Richard Cast
County Chairman

AUSSIE WALKER MBE

23rd February 2017 was a proud day for Aussie and June Walker when they went to Buckingham Palace so Her Majesty the Queen could pin Aussie's MBE to his jacket. Very well done Aussie; well deserved.



DONATIONS TO COUNTY FUNDS

The following donations have been gratefully received:

£110.00 In memory of Mrs Ena White-Winchester
£741.89 Church of St Peter & St Paul, Saltwood (2 cheques)

BRANCH MS1 RETURNS

Out of the branches required to submit their MS1 Branch Information Form by 31st December, unfortunately three have still not been received and this is now a cause for concern. The three branches still outstanding are:

Knockholt
Leigh
Sandwich

POLITICAL COMMENTS BY MEMBERS

Recently the Public Affairs and Campaigns Team, as part of their routine political monitoring, saw that an MP had tweeted a link to a video in which a Branch Chairman expresses his opposition to proposed constituency boundary changes on behalf of the Legion. There is no reason whatsoever for the Legion to be concerned with boundary changes. The Branch Chairman should not, therefore, have purported to be speaking on behalf of the Legion, particularly as this was a political matter, and a party political one at that. This is a very serious matter and one that it is not to be repeated.

Charity law is clear that no charity can have political purposes, or pursue their charitable objectives by politically partisan means and the Royal Charter states that the Legion has no connection, either directly or indirectly, with any political party or organisation. Therefore, can I please ask you to remind your members as a matter of priority that they cannot speak on behalf of the Legion on political matters.

STANDARD BEARER TRAINING

The next standard bearer training session will be on 12th March at the Capel Morris community hall, Aylesford, 10.00am to 2.00pm.

Please wear casual clothing (uniform not required) but please wear shoes and not trainers. Don't forget your sling, gauntlets and standard.

Refreshments will be supplied. If you want to confirm attendance or have any questions, please contact me on annjaneausten@yahoo.co.uk or 01227 731385. I look forward to seeing you there.

Ann Austen
County Ceremonial Coordinator

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

A dedicated external web area has been produced to host a digital copy of the handbook, to ensure Branches can reach this information securely. The digital format will ensure that all Branches have access to an up-to-date version at all times.

On 17th December the Membership Council approved a number of changes to the Membership Handbook. An updated version of the handbook has now been uploaded to the Membership Documents Area and a list of tracked changes is available separately.

Visit the external web area at www.britishlegion.org.uk/membershiphandbook Available on the same page is the Royal Charter, the Ceremonial Handbook, Complaints Procedure and other useful information for branches.

I recommend that all committee members at branch and county level acquaint, or re-acquaint, themselves with the contents of the Membership Handbook which, along with the Royal Charter, governs what we do within the Legion.

COUNTY CONFERENCE

Attached are the Minutes for this year's County Conference held on 21st January along with two papers and also the questions put to the Guest Speaker with his responses.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Annual Conference is being held in Southport over the weekend of 20th/21st May. Delegate applications from the following branches have so far been received at Head Office:

Canterbury
Cheriton & Morehall
New Romney
Orpington & District (2)

If your Branch is planning to send a delegate to Annual Conference please ensure the application is submitted to the Conference Administrator at Head Office by 24th March at the latest. Please contact the MSO if you need an application form.

OFFICE 365, MAP, LOMAS AND BCS ACCESS

Branch officers can be provided with an email address that is branch and role specific to use and gain access to Office 365. All Branches have had these addresses allocated but not all Branches have made use of them. Where there has been a change of officer the same address is used but a new password is required. Please contact the MSO to have the password re-set or to start using Office 365.

Here is located the Membership Administration Portal (MAP) which is a place to store branch documents and share information between the branch officers. In MAP Branch Officers can access membership listings, such as current members and members with payments outstanding.

Also on the Office 365 site is access to the Legion Online Membership Accounts System (LOMAS) for those Treasurers who have attended training. Access to use LOMAS is completed at the end of the training session.

Branch Community Support (BCS) is also now accessible direct through this site. One of the current Branch Officers or Committee with access to Office 365 can register the Branch or it can be registered through the MSO. Branches can report their local welfare/BCS activities via this site.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORMS

Please ensure this information is passed to the Branch Membership Secretary

This is a reminder that Form MS4/RMFAPP002/0515 is the only version of the form that can be used and is available to order from the Poppy Appeal, not County Office. Please submit your orders to PoppyMembership@britishlegion.org.uk or by phoning 01622 795801 or 01622 717172. Because of the larger than A4 size the form must not be photocopied.

Membership Amendment Advice forms (MS2) used for changing personal details (reporting a death or change of address or name etc.) and also Transfer Request forms (MS7) are also available from the Poppy Appeal, not County Office.

COUNTY WEBSITE

The County website can be found at <http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/kent> and includes useful information about the Legion, County and Branches. If you wish to publicise a Branch event or tell the world what you are up to or anything that is Legion related then send the information to webmaster Sammie Cast at kentrblwebmaster@btinternet.com. Please send it as you would like it to appear on the site so that Sammie doesn't have to tinker with it. She should be able to just copy and paste. Read it through a couple of times to make sure it's readable to you and, more importantly, to the readers who may know nothing about what it is you are saying.

COUNTY AND NATIONAL AWARDS

You will have seen from the awards presented at Conference that although there were two County Certificates presented there were no National awards. We urge all members to consider who in their Branch could be considered for a merit award.

The different levels of awards are:

- Branch Certificates can be awarded by the Branch Committee to members who have made a conspicuous contribution to the Legion at Branch level or to the Legion in general. The MSO can provide a blank certificate.
- County Certificates are awarded to those members that have made a conspicuous contribution at County level or whose 'above and beyond' work has come to the attention of the County Committee. Applications are made to the MSO.
- The first of the three National awards is the Gold Badge which can be awarded to a member who has given at least eight years meritorious and conspicuous service to the Legion. Recipients must already hold a Branch and/or County Certificate. Branches must bear the cost of the badge.
- National Life Membership can be awarded to a member who has given at least ten years meritorious and conspicuous service to the Legion and already holds a Gold Badge.
- The National Certificate of Appreciation is the highest award the Legion can give and can be awarded to a member who has given at least twelve years meritorious and conspicuous service to the Legion and already holds the other National awards.

The full criteria for the National awards is on the reverse of the application form available from the MSO.

Poppy Appeal awards are separate and organised through Poppy Appeal Organisers.

WELFARE REFERRALS

This is a reminder that **all** those requesting welfare assistance need to be referred to the Legion's Contact Centre on **0808 802 8080** (calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks) or via e-mail at info@britishlegion.org.uk. **No** calls should be referred direct to County Office or to members of the Welfare Team, i.e. Case Officers and Advice & Information Officers.

WOMEN'S SECTION

I am pleased to announce that Kent County Women's Section is to be reinstated. There is to be a meeting on Saturday 23rd September in Whitstable and the format will be like an AGM/Conference. There are currently 10 Women's Section Branches that wish to stay open.

Our National Conference is on 26th April and I will be attending along with some of our Kent ladies.

Anne Hill

Chairman Kent County Women's Section

REGIONAL STANDARD BEARER COMPETITION

In the Regional Competition held at Cobham, Surrey on Sunday 26th February Kent County Standard Bearer Linda Fletcher came third in this, her first competition. Well done to her.

RBL VILLAGE BRANCH

The Branch is holding a Fun Quiz Night on Friday 10th March at 7pm in the Capel Morris Community Hall at the Royal British Legion Village. Tickets are on sale now and are £5 per person with teams of up to six per table. Previous Quiz Nights have always proved very popular and are always a lot of fun but tables are booked up very quickly. To avoid disappointment with booking tickets and to get further details please email robert.mccann@rbli.co.uk. Any raffle prize donations on the night (or before) would be very much appreciated.

RAMSGATE BRANCH

On Sunday 12th February a Memorial Service to mark the 75th anniversary of the Channel Dash was attended by Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Boyce and other distinguished guests at the Memorial Stone, Royal Harbour, Ramsgate. The Ramsgate Lifeboat was also in attendance.



In March 1941, following many successful attacks on the Atlantic Convoys that were so vital to Britain's survival, the German battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* entered the port of Brest for repairs. They were shortly joined by *Prinz Eugen*. With the ships under constant Allied air strikes and Hitler demanding increased protection for occupied Norway, the German Naval War Command decided to bring all three vessels home to Germany by way of a heavily protected daylight dash up the English Channel and through the Dover Straits – code named Operation Cerberus.



Aware this run for home might take place, the Royal Navy set up Operation Fuller to deal with the threat and Coastal Command flew air patrols over Brest and the English Channel both day and night to monitor the situation. Their plans were based on the assumption the German ships would leave Brest by day and complete the most dangerous part of their journey, the narrow waters of the Dover Straits, by night. This was the first of an almost unbelievable catalogue of errors that would have disastrous consequences.



The German battle group of 66 ships, with continuous air cover provided by 250 day and night fighter aircraft, left Brest at night on 11 February 1942 and reached the Dover Straits, virtually undetected, at about 11.00am on 12 February. The Fleet Air Arm's 825 Squadron, led by Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde and comprising six Swordfish aircraft and aircrews, were based at RAF Manston where they had been preparing for a night attack on the German ships.

Promised fighter cover of five squadrons of Spitfires, Esmonde agreed to lead his squadron in a daylight attack. Just one squadron, No 72 Squadron RAF led by Squadron Leader Brian Kingcombe, rendezvoused with Esmonde's squadron and so with fighter cover of only 10 Spitfires, 825 Squadron attacked the mighty Germany battle group. Against the guns of the big ships and the power of the Luftwaffe, the slow, out-dated Swordfish stood little chance. All the Swordfish were shot down and only five of the eighteen men who set out survived.

Although more than 30 torpedo attacks were launched against the German battle group, not a single hit was achieved. As a last resort, in the largest Bomber Command daylight operation of the war so far, 242 British aircraft were sent out against the German battle squadron but all to no avail. The only damage inflicted was by mines hit by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* but even that was minimal.

All members of 825 Squadron were honoured after the Channel Dash. Lt Cdr Esmonde was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross; gallantry awards were given to those who survived and a Mention in Despatches was given to those who died, the highest award possible as no gallantry award other than the Victoria Cross could be given posthumously.

On 23 February, *Prinz Eugen* was torpedoed off Norway, repaired and spent the rest of the war in the Baltic; *Gneisenau* went into a dry dock and was bombed on the night of 26/27 February, never to sail again; *Scharnhorst* was sunk at the Battle of the North Cape on 26 December 1943.

REQUEST FOR HELP - STOLEN MEDALS

Former Gunner and Japanese POW, 94 year old Geoffrey Blain of the Rolvenden Branch suffered a burglary at home over Christmas and thieves took four of his own medals plus three of his father's along with other personal items. Geoffrey is obviously very upset about the loss of the medals and a plea has gone out to burglars to return them. His own medals include his army number, 893176 GA Blain, and his father's with his number 28455. The full story can be found at <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/tenterden/news/rolvenden-medals-stolen-120939/> Any help that can be given by placing the details on social media etc. would be very much appreciated.



REQUEST FOR HELP - THEATRE PLAYS RESEARCH

I am an academic at the University of Kent (and on the Gateways to the First World War consortium) and am currently looking for volunteers to take part in a new public history project researching war-plays written and performed across England, Scotland and Wales during the Great War. The project aims to create a database of all new theatre produced during the war as well as a festival.

I'd really like to have a geographically diverse volunteer group, as well as to have volunteers with different interests and backgrounds. With the British Legion's links with the First World War I was hoping this might be something that would be of interest to members.

More information can be found at <http://www.gatewaysfww.org.uk/projects/recovering-first-world-war-theatre-0>. I can also be contacted at RFWWT@kent.ac.uk with any questions.

Many thanks for your help in advance.

Dr Helen Brooks

Senior Lecturer in Theatre History, University of Kent, Canterbury

Regards to you all

Tony West

Membership Support Officer

Email: twest@britishlegion.org.uk



LEST WE FORGET

Notification has been received that the following members have passed on:

Mr Kenneth Potter	Benenden
Mr Reginald Lohan	Dover White Cliffs
Mr Sidney Gibbons	Downs
Mrs Phyllis Hadlow	Faversham
Mr John Bird	Hawkhurst
Mr Peter Smith	Headcorn
Mrs Hetty Harkup	Isle of Sheppey
Mrs Lorraine Riley	"
Mr Brian Vaughan	Maidstone
Mr Kenneth Taylor	Margate
Mr Dennis Whitehead	"
Mr David Smith	Minster & Monkton
Mr Alun Boyes	Rochester & Strood
Mrs Rosa Willis	Royal British Legion Village
Me John Pring	Royal Tunbridge Wells
Mr John Redman	St Margaret's-at-Cliffe



Our deepest sympathies go to their families and friends



KENT COUNTY DIARY OF EVENTS - 2017

MARCH

Sun	12th	Standard Bearer Training - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)
Sat	18th	Branch Management Training - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)

APRIL

Sun	16th - 17th	Medway Steam & Transport Rally - Chatham Historic Dockyard *
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MAY

Sun	7th	Poppy Walk - Whitstable Castle (10 am)
Sat	20th - 21st	Annual Conference - Southport
Wed	31st	Meet the Area Team - Capel Morris Centre

JUNE

Sun	11th	County Parade - Dover (3 pm)
Sat	9th - 11th	Folkestone & Ashford Military Show - Sellindge Show Ground *
Sat	24th	Armed Forces Day - Great Lines, Gillingham *

JULY

Sun	2nd	Dover White Cliffs Branch Poppy Walk
Sat	8th - 9th	Battles for Victory - Ellington Park, Ramsgate *
Tue	25th-29th	War & Peace Revival - The Hop Farm, Beltring *

AUGUST

Sat	19th-20th	Headcorn Combined Ops Military Vehicle & Air Show *
Sat	26th - 28th	Military Odyssey - County Showground, Detling *
Thu	31st	Pedal to Paris - Greenwich to Dover stage

SEPTEMBER

Sat	16th - 17th	Salute to the '40s - Chatham Historic Dockyard *
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OCTOBER

Sun	8th (tbc)	County Standard Bearer Competition - Ditton
Wed	25th	Poppy Launch - County Hall, Maidstone
Sat	28th	County Poppy Lunch - Brompton Barracks

NOVEMBER

Fri	3rd	Thanet Festival of Remembrance - Winter Gardens, Margate
Fri	10th	Dover Festival of Remembrance
Sat	11th	Armistice Day
Sat	11th	Festival of Remembrance - Royal Albert Hall
Sun	12th	Remembrance Sunday

DECEMBER

Sat 16th Carol Service - Capel Morris Centre (2.30 pm)

JANUARY 2018

Sat 20th County Conference - Headcorn Village Hall (1 pm)

ARMED FORCES DAY EVENTS

JUNE

**Sat 24th The Great Lines, Gillingham
Pencester Gardens, Dover**

*** County Recruiting Stall**

Updated: 28th February 2017