

MINUTES OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION KENT COUNTY
NINETY-FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, HEADCORN, KENT
ON SATURDAY 21ST JANUARY 2017

1. Conference opened at 1 pm when the County Chairman, Mr Richard Cast, announced the Entry of the Dignitaries - the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr. Derek Butler and the Guest Speaker National Trustee and Chairman of the Membership Council Lieutenant Colonel David Whimpenny - escorted by County President Cllr. Leyland Ridings MBE JP.
2. The Entry of the Standards took place. Those present had a copy of the Roll of Honour and the County President asked that all be remembered during the silence. 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 Canon Paul Kerr and this was followed by the fallout of the Standards.
4. **Notice to Convene Conference** - The Membership Support Officer, Mr Tony West BEM, read out the formal notice convening the RBL Kent County Conference on Saturday 21st January 2017.
5. The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Derek Butler, gave the Civic Welcome, extending a warm welcome to all members to the Borough of Maidstone. He spoke about the Great War and the lifetime of suffering that affected not only those who survived but the families of those that both lived and died. The people of the town had a high regard for the services and this was particularly relevant during the centenary commemorations of the Great War. In the disturbed times in which we now live he was impressed by the school children of many nationalities who got on so well and set an example to all. He ended by wishing everyone a good Conference.
6. Mrs Bridget Dungey, Deputy Chairman of Headcorn Parish Council, spoke on behalf of the Council welcoming everyone there. She welcomed Conference back to Headcorn and said she hoped to see us back in 2018.
7. The County President, Cllr Leyland Ridings MBE JP, addressed Conference. He thanked Cllr Butler and Mrs Dungey 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 attending what he was sure would be a very good Conference.
8. The Chairman, Mr Richard Cast, welcomed all delegates and visitors to Conference and introduced the top table namely Conference Committee Chairman Mr Ray Mann, Guest Speaker Lieutenant Colonel David Whimpenny, County President Cllr Leyland Ridings MBE JP, Membership Support Officer Mr Tony West BEM, the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr Derek Butler, and the County Treasurer Mr Stefan Gatward. He also welcomed all the other guests.
9. **Apologies** - Apologies for absence had been received from:

Viscount De L'Lisle MBE

Brigadier M A Atherton CBE JP DL

Mr H A G Garrett

Mrs D Jackson BEM

County Patron

County Life Vice President

County Vice President

County Vice President

Mr Steve Woolford
Mrs Rosemary Walls
Mr Bob Hogwood

Conference Committee Secretary
Hythe & Saltwood Branch Delegate
Minster & Monkton Branch

10. **Agenda Changes** - The Conference Committee Chairman confirmed that there were no amendments or additions to the published Conference Agenda.
11. **Appointment of Scrutineers** - Mr T Lush (Smarden Branch) and Mr A Miller (Sutton Valence Branch). Proposed by Dymchurch Branch and seconded by Ramsgate Branch. Carried.
12. **Delegates** - There were **31 delegates representing 29 branches**
13. **The Minutes of the County Conference** held on Saturday 16th January 2016 were taken as read and proposed by Dover White Cliffs Branch and seconded by Sutton Valence Branch with no errors noted or addendums required. Carried.
14. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising.
15. **Annual Report of the County Committee** - The Membership Support Officer read the Annual Report on behalf of the County Committee.
16. **Election of County Committee Members**
Mrs Anne Austen - Chartham Branch (re-elected for 3 years)
Mrs Susan Foster - Elham Valley Branch (re-elected for 3 years)
Mr David Harris - New Romney Branch (3 years)

Proposed by Cowden, Hartfield & District Branch and seconded by New Romney Branch. A show of hands from the Delegates unanimously elected the members to the County Committee.
17. **Election of County Conference Committee Members**
Mr Peter Cooper - Smarden Branch (re-elected for 3 years)
Mr Trevor Mays - Cheriton & Morehall Branch (re-elected for 3 years)

Proposed by Sevenoaks Branch and seconded by Chartham Branch. A show of hands from the Delegates unanimously elected the members to the Conference Committee.
18. **The County Vice Presidents** were confirmed as Mr Harry Garrett, Mrs Dot Jackson BEM and Mr Peter Cooper.
19. **County Vice President** It was proposed by Orpington & District Branch and seconded by Isle of Sheppey Branch that Mr Alan Clarke MBE, a former long standing members of the County Committee and County Conference Committee, be appointed a County Vice President. Carried unanimously.
20. **Presentation of Accounts** - The County Treasurer, Mr Stefan Gatward, presented the County accounts for the year ending 30th June 2016. He highlighted the very generous donations totalling more than £18,200, from branches and other sources plus the County's almonisation of welfare grants. He said the BFI has been significantly enhanced by the higher interest rate and commended it to branches. Because these accounts were now more than six months old he also presented an interim report showing the movement of

accounts during the period 1st July and 31st December 2016. The report was proposed as accepted by Sutton Valence Branch and seconded by Whitstable Branch. Carried

21. **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 Ceremonial Coordinator's Report

The County Training Officer, Mr Roy Bingham BEM, presented his report and spoke about the importance of branch officers, and others, being aware of the responsibilities that came with holding office or an appointment at branch level. He said that many newly elected committee members had no idea of what running a branch entailed. Also some of those that had held office for years were unaware of changes to their roles. He would therefore be holding four workshops for branches between January and March.

22. **Address by the former Area Manager** - The Chairman introduced Ms Sandra Fruish, the newly appointed Assistant Director of Membership. Ms Fruish began by referring to her written report which was in the Conference pack and spoke about the need for collaborative working. She went on to say her farewells to Kent on leaving the role of Area Manager, a role she had held for the past four years. She praised and thanked all those in the County for making her job so much easier.

She introduced her successor, Mr Craig Spence, before introducing Case Officer Nikki Ward who gave a short presentation of 'A Day in the Life of a Case Officer'. Ms Ward's talk primarily focussed on one beneficiary and the multiple issues that can become apparent after one home visit.

23. **Presentation of the County Plan** - The County Plan for 2017-2020 was presented to Conference who accepted it with a show of hands.

24. **Adjournment** - Conference then adjourned for a 15 minute break. On reassembling the number of delegates remained unchanged.

25. **Presentation of County Awards** - The Chairman invited the County President and the Lieutenant Colonel Whimpenny to present the awards.

MOORE TROPHY
(Branch efficiency)

New Romney Branch

NEWPORT CUP
(Branch with largest percentage membership increase)

Dover White Cliffs Branch

MUNGEAM CUP
(Standard Bearers Competition Winner)

Mrs Linda Fletcher
Rochester & Strood Branch

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

Mr Julian De Zille
Downs Branch

BANGER CUP
(Standard Bearers Competition Novice Winner)

Miss Victoria Harris
New Romney Branch

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

Miss Victoria Harris
New Romney Branch

CONNIE WILLIAMS CUP
(Group Efficiency)

Shepway Area Group

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

Mr Mike Robinson
Shoreham Branch

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

Shoreham Branch

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

Whitstable Branch

County Certificates were presented to Mr Richard Fry of the Fordcombe Branch and Mr Mike Sterba of the Staple Branch.

26. **County Chairman's Address** - The Chairman began by outlining the Great War commemoration events he had attended before thanking firstly, all members for their work on behalf of the Legion and secondly, the members of the County Committee and its sub-committees for working hard and for raising the profile of the Royal British Legion in Kent. He then outlined the work that he, and every other County Chairman, gets up to during the year. It involved numerous meetings at ranch, county, area and national level as well as many non-Legion meetings, primarily with the military, KCC and local authorities. He stressed the importance of Branch Community Support (BCS) saying that, whilst every branch did it, they needed report what had been done. He said that County Committee members would continue to provide the link between their individually designated branches and the County Committee. They were there to be called upon for help. He also revealed his aim to reform the Invicta Branch as a County online branch. The use of social media to communicate would be aimed at the younger members that the Legion needed so badly. He concluded by saying that the history of Kent has shown throughout the years a county of spirit and the ability to do good things and serve our cause. The profile of the County has been raised and branches need to continue to be active. He issued a challenge to everyone to spread the word about the Legion and its work.
27. **Resolution** - The Cowden, Hartfield & District Branch delegate presented the following motion on behalf of his Branch, "This Conference requests that the existing policy of charging the full membership fee for each branch to which a member belongs, to be reviewed. The Membership Handbook states that "Every member must pay the annual membership fee". It is inferred throughout that this fee, currently £17, is payment to be a member of the Royal British Legion. Nowhere does it say that this fee is payable for every branch to which a member belongs". The motion was seconded by the Paddock Wood & District Branch and was carried.
28. **Resolution** - The Sutton Valence Branch delegate presented the following motion on behalf of his Branch, "This Conference asks the County to hold seminars this spring to consider The Future of Branches, their changing role, challenge and membership and to report the findings to the Membership Council and the Board of Trustees". The motion was seconded by the Smarden Branch. The County Training Officer responded saying that the four workshops he would be holding addressed many of the points that the delegate wanted covered and to hold further seminars would be pointless. The resolution was put to the delegates and was carried.

29. **Annual Conference Delegate** - A show of hands from the Delegates unanimously agreed that the County Chairman, Mr Richard Cast, should represent Kent at the 2017 Annual Conference at Southport.

30. **Address by Guest Speaker** - The Chairman introduced Lieutenant Colonel David Whimpenny, National Trustee and Chairman of the Membership Council.

He began by saying that 2016 had been a dramatic year seeing Brexit, the election of President Trump and continuing conflict across the Middle East. On the other hand the Queen had celebrated her 90th birthday and we were successful at the Olympics and Paralympics.

The Legion continued to focus on the Great War commemorations with the main events being the Battle of Jutland and the Battle of the Somme.

Over 100,000 enquiries were answered during the year and support was given to over 37,000 beneficiaries. The new Veteran's Gateway will be launched in the Spring providing a single point of contact for the entire veterans community involving the Legion, SSAFA, Combat Stress and others. It will help veterans with the whole range of queries and pass them to the organisation that can provide the right help.

Our campaigning for those with Mesothelioma as well as our Insult to Injury and our Count Them In campaigns have proved to be very successful as has the Poppy Appeal which has no doubt reached the previous year's figure of £45.6 million. However, counting had not finished so it was too early to give an accurate figure. Thanks went to everyone involved.

Mention was made of the success of all Remembrance events and also about a major project at the NMA which includes a new visitor experience.

It is recognised that the membership process still needs improving although it is significantly better than the previous year. The membership teams will continue to monitor and correct as errors are discovered. There are concerns that the inclusion of the Women's Section has raised a few problems and these are currently being addressed.

Lieutenant Colonel Whimpenny then outlined the new Five Year Strategy for the Legion which will address the problem of the needs of beneficiaries becoming more complex despite the downsizing of the Armed Forces. Because we cannot do this on our own there is a need for more collaboration with other charities and partners. There are four major priorities under the strategy:

31. Impact (Improving the ways we help people)
32. Remembrance (Championing commemoration and passing the torch to the next generation)
33. Membership (forging stronger links with our membership)
34. Operational Excellence (improving the Legion's ways of working)

He finished by outlining the proposed 90th Anniversary of the Great Pilgrimage in August 2018 saying that it would be an unrivalled Legion Membership event - one that could involve every single branch.

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

35. **Questions to the Guest Speaker** - A number of questions from branches had been sent to Lieutenant Colonel Whimpenny prior to Conference but he announced that he had not received them. A copy of the questions paper was handed to him and he said he would respond to them later.

- 36. **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:

£500	Shoreham Branch
£100	Sutton Valence Branch

- 37. **County Conference 2018** - It was announced that the next County Conference would be held on Saturday 20th January 2018 at Headcorn Village Hall.

- 38. **Charge of County Standard Bearer** - The Parade Marshal mustered the Standard Bearers and the County President charged outgoing County Standard Bearer Mr Geoff Lees, thanking him for his service over the past few years, and charged the new County Standard Bearer, Mrs Linda Fletcher welcoming her to the post.

- 39. **Destroy Ballot Papers** - There were no ballot papers.

- 40. **Vote of Thanks** - The County Vice Chairman, Mr Richard Graham, 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, the Parade Marshal and Standard Bearers, to the 1st aiders, photographers and raffle ladies and to those at Headcorn Village Hall. Presentations were made to the Mayor and Mayoress and to Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs Whimpenny.

- 41. **The National Anthem** was followed by the March Off of the Standards.

- 42. **Close of Conference** at 4.35 pm - the County Chairman thanked all for their attendance.

- 43. **The Raffle Results** were then given to Conference - the raffle raised £332.05.

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