



KENT COUNTY NEWS

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July 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 would like to thank all of you who attended the County Parade held at Dover on Sunday 11th June. It was a good turnout and for the first time in many years saw the Kent County parading through this important location of not only the gateway to Kent but also to England. The Dover White Cliffs Branch, as the co-hosts, put together a very good parade. Thanks, must go to them and also the local and town council for their support of the event and use of the Town Hall for the Refreshments.

Our new Ceremonial team of Geoff Lees (County Parade Marshal), David Harris (Deputy County Parade Marshal), Linda Fletcher (County Standard Bearer) and Julian De-Zille (Deputy County Standard Bearer), did extremely well on their first major event. I was also pleased to see the Standard of the Invicta Branch (County Holding Branch) back on parade.

This month you were all involved in some way in Armed Forces Day whether it was at the local Flag Raising or at one of the many Armed Forces events in Kent. I personally, because I was on holiday, attended the flag raising in Falmouth and the Armed Forces Service in Birmingham (well-travelled this Chairman). Wherever you were your attendance on behalf of the Legion is important to not only support the Armed Forces but also shows that we are still there to support and help them.

Last month Tony sent a request to the Branches from Haig House requesting details of local Remembrance Parades. This was mainly for Head Office requirements. However, since that came out, the Lord Lieutenant of Kent's office has also asked for the same information. For Remembrance Day 2018 they have set up three Remembrance Committees to cover all areas of Kent on which a separate member of the County Committee has been invited to sit on, and an overall Committee which I have been invited to sit on. The Committees are to seek out where the Lieutenancy needs to ensure that it has DL representation at as many Remembrance events as possible. Therefore, if you haven't done so already could you please let Tony West have details of parades and services in your Location. That way we should have a good representation of DLs at all our local Remembrance Day events.

Coming events which need your attention and details are in this newsletter, if not already sent to you, are:

Annual Accounts: The accounting year has now closed and your accounts should be submitted. The timescale is from now until 30th September. However, to give time to ensure details are at Head Office can you aim to have them in by mid-September, this allows for holidays and corrections. The County Audit Days will be available to you from next week and please call on us and attend the offices in Aylesford on the day of your choosing (subject to published dates). It costs nothing just your attendance with completed records.

Elections County Chairman & Vice Chairman. Yes, three years have gone by already and both these posts need to be initially nominated after which an election will be held if there is more than one nominee for each post. This is your opportunity to elect your senior team to run Kent County for the next three years, so please give it your close consideration and not just leave it to others.

Branch Compliance: We are also three months away from the end of the Legion Year and your Branch AGMs will be due. The Membership Council are serious this year about enforcing the rule that each Branch must have four separate people as its main Officers, i.e. Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. The Committee needs to be a minimum of three separate people and there must be a named Branch Community Representative (formally Welfare Officer), who can be one of the committee members. To some branches this is no problem, to those of you who don't have this make up NOW is the time to get started on seeking out these persons.

Richard Cast
County Chairman

DONATIONS TO COUNTY FUNDS

The following donations have been gratefully received:

£52.50	In memory of Mrs Elizabeth Robson
£2,000	Westerham Branch

BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We are delighted to report that we now have 31 out of 68 eligible branches registered for BCS with Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch having signed up since the last newsletter. That's almost 50 per cent. Thank you to all those branches that have already registered.

Repeating what was included in the last newsletter, the question has been asked, "What is Branch Community Support?"

- Do you visit individuals in hospital following an operation or episode of ill health, providing an opportunity for them to talk and experience companionship?
- Do you visit individuals in their own homes for a cuppa and chat, preventing isolation and loneliness?
- Do you make telephone calls to check on someone or just to see if they need something, if they do not have family close by or they are away?
- Do you provide bereavement support by sending a 'Standard Bearer' to an ex-Service person's funeral?
- Does your Branch hold coffee mornings, community fun days, BBQ's or fetes where you promote the good work of the Legion?

All of the above falls under Branch Community Support (BCS) and we know that most of you already carry out some fantastic work, but we do not always get to hear about it. We encourage you to sign up for BCS, record what you do and then, together we can raise the Legions profile and help prevent social isolation and loneliness.

Requests for reports for Quarter 2 have been sent to those registered branches. It is of vital importance to the Legion to record what branches do, even if it's only sending a Standard Bearer to a funeral or spending some time with a lonely person. That action can mean so much to someone and for BCS, it all counts. Of course, if you have not carried out any actions then you don't need to complete the report for this quarter.

BRANCH ACCOUNTS - END OF YEAR

Please ensure this information is passed to the Branch Treasurer

Treasurers are reminded that Branch Accounts were to be closed at 30th June and that a copy of the accounts together with supporting Bank Statements plus a letter of 'Authority to Disclose Information' **for each account** must be submitted to the County Office by 30th September at the very latest.

Branch Officers should be ensuring that as much help as possible is given to the Treasurer to ensure that they can successfully close down the books and produce the Branch Accounts.

The branch accounts documents (the Treasurer's Packs) have been sent by post and they should have been received by the end of June. They will also be published on Office 365 for those on MAP. If a hard copy is preferred please contact the MSO. Please note that packs will not be sent to branches that are registered on LOMAS and electronic copies have already been sent to those branches.

BFI statements will be distributed to branches during July for the quarter ending 30th June. Please wait to receive your BFI statement before finalising your Branch Return. If you have not received your BFI statement by 31st July please contact the MSO.

AUDIT/EXAMINATION OF BRANCH ACCOUNTS

Once again we have arranged some Branch Audit Days with the Independent Examiners in the RBL Village although because of available space, this will have to be on a timed appointment basis only. If your branch wishes to take up this opportunity to get your books audited, there is no cost to you except the travel costs by your Treasurer. The dates for these audits are:

Wednesday 12th July	Thursday 17th August
Wednesday 19th July	Thursday 7th September
Thursday 3rd August	Wednesday 13th September
Wednesday 9th August	Wednesday 20th September

All are from 10am until 1pm. Please contact Richard Cast on 01795 474179 or at richardcast@btinternet.com to arrange your appointment. Audits will take place in a meeting room provided by RBLI and treasurers must report to RBLI Reception in the first instance. Car parking is in the Capel Morris car park and the postcode for satnav is ME20 7NL.

If, however, you want an IE to come to you, there will be a need to reimburse the examiner their travel costs at the time of visit. Please contact the Examiner well in advance to arrange examination of your accounts. Their details with residential areas are:

Richard Cast	Sittingbourne	01795 474179
Stefan Gatward	Tunbridge Wells	01892 522765
Paul Austen	Chartham	01227 731385
Lewis Kerton	Paddock Wood	01732 850358
Ray Mann	Staplehurst	01580 891997

Whether you come to the RBL Village or an IE comes to you the IE will need to see:

- All statements for each branch bank account from 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2017
- Paying in books from 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2017
- Cheque books from 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2017
- All receipts from 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2017
- Branch Fund Initiative (BFI) Statements from 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2017 (If applicable)
- Branch Minute book
- Any other financial information for the branch that would be useful when auditing the accounts, i.e. further explanations on amounts spent.

Note: Treasurers will have seen from their Treasurers Pack that BFI statements will not be available until 31st July.

Remember, if you are coming to the Office, you must get all your officers to sign the Branch Accounts Form and two of the signatories to sign the Authority to Disclose Information letter. That way, on completing the audit the documents can be copied and the originals left for the MSO.

If your Branch does not wish to use a Legion IE then branches can officially use up to £60 of branch funds to pay a suitable qualified person to examine its accounts. By qualified, this means that they have some type of professional accounting qualification. A retired accountant, banker or bookkeeper in your Branch could, if willing, audit another branch's accounts. They may not audit your own branch accounts as they would not be 'independent'. The Legion's IEs are there to audit branch accounts, not to complete the forms.

If you have any difficulties please let the MSO know sooner rather than later; we are here to help.

STANDARD BEARER TRAINING

The next standard bearer training sessions take place on Sunday 20th August and Sunday 17th September at the Capel Morris Community Hall, Aylesford, 10 am to 1 pm.

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.

Ann Austen
County Ceremonial Coordinator

BIRCHINGTON BRANCH

On Monday 19th June members of the Branch and the Birchington parish Council met up at The Square to raise the flag to mark the beginning of Veterans Week. Unfortunately the local schools were unable to join us this year, but we welcomed the Standard Bearer from the Margate Branch RNA who joined our Branch Standard Bearer for the ceremony. The Parish Council Chairman, Cllr. Neville Hudson, raised the flag and Rev. Ben Crick led the prayers. Afterwards we were welcomed to the Parish Office for refreshments.



DYMCHURCH & DISTRICT BRANCH



On Sunday 4th June Veteran and Branch Member Dave Kerr was taken to visit the Normandy beaches where the D-Day landings took place. Dave was 16 years old at the time he joined the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders having to lie about his age. He was seen off on his trip by Branch Chairman Ron Dean, Vice Chairman Ron Hammond and Secretary Dave Tyler. The trip was made possible by The Taxi Drivers Charity for Military Veterans who organised and paid for the 4 day visit. We all thank them very much.

BRABOURNE & SMEETH BRANCH

It is with deep regret that we announce that Countess Mountbatten of Burma, known to us as Lady Brabourne, died on the 13th June. Lady Brabourne had been the Branch President for many years and was a regular attendee at our Annual Dinner, AGM and the Remembrance Service as well as other events we held. She will be sorely missed.

GOUDHURST BRANCH

Led by our Standard Bearer, Mick Harris, three members of the Goudhurst Branch together with members of our local history society and guests visited Proville, a large village near Cambrai on 30 May to join the French in commemorating the crash of a Short Stirling bomber, that came down near their village on 30th May 1943. We learned that 400 villagers attended the funeral of the five airmen, despite a German ban on any show of sympathy for the Allies. In 1948 the people of Proville created a monument to ensure that the memory of the crew would be perpetuated.

We were invited to give an address to the assembled gathering numbering some 200 villagers together with their band. This was done in both English and French much to the pleasure of the local inhabitants. We thanked them for the respect and care which they continue to show to our servicemen. On behalf of the families of the airmen buried here we also thanked them for ensuring that their sacrifice has not been forgotten.



After the ceremony our group was invited back to the Mairie where we joined a champagne reception. Memorabilia and photographs had been displayed for us which were most interesting. We were most impressed that the event was still being commemorated after such a long time and so enthusiastically by so many. Later that evening we entertained several of the villagers to dinner.

The visit was arranged by Great War Battlefields Ltd, a Kent based tour company set up to arrange visits to cemeteries, battlefields and other places of interest in France and Flanders. All profits go to charity.

The historical details being as follows: -

A Short Stirling bomber EF 349, belonging to No. 90 Squadron of the RAF, took off on 29th May 1943 from Stradishall in Suffolk, one of 719 bombers taking part in a raid on Wuppertal in the Ruhr basin. On its way home, it was attacked in the skies above Cambrai at 2.07am on Sunday 30th May by a Messerschmitt 111 night-fighter piloted by Ludwig Meister. The bomber caught fire and two of the crew bailed out: Sgt H Maskell (air gunner) and Sgt L King (second pilot) landed safely but were captured by German soldiers.

The pilot attempted to steer the stricken plane towards open country south-west of the town, and it crashed to the ground with a gigantic explosion in some market-gardens outside the village of Proville, a mile from the town centre. The five crew members still on board were all killed: Flying Officer Robert Letters, the pilot and flight commander, aged 20; Flying Officer Kenneth Estcourt, bomb aimer, aged 28, from New Zealand; Sgt Frank Wells, radio operator, aged 20; Sgt Cecil Hughes, flight engineer, aged 22; and Sgt Ronald Raven, air gunner, aged 24. They were buried the following day at Cambrai (Route de Solesmes) Communal Cemetery, just the other side of Cambrai, in a plot of that civilian cemetery reserved for military personnel. Despite a German ban on any show of sympathy for the dead airmen, the funeral was attended by more than 400 members of the local population, and large wreaths were placed on their graves.

In 1948 the municipal authorities of Proville decided to erect a monument in remembrance of the crew. Placed on the exact site of the crash, the monument was unveiled on the fifth anniversary of the crash, 30th May 1948, at a ceremony attended by a large number of the people of Proville, as well as a number of relatives of the crew, and representatives from the RAF and the British Embassy. This led to the ceremony being held at the monument on 30th May of every year to recall the sacrifice of these airmen.

NEW ROMNEY BRANCH

Over the weekend of 17th/18th June the Branch had a busy time attending Lydd Club Day and the Varne Boat Club Armed Forces Day.

Lydd Club Day was on Saturday 17th June, with the Branch setting up a poppy stall and a plant stall. The well drilled team set up and settled down to an afternoon of fundraising, comradeship, tea and of course the obligatory tall stories!! We were visited by our usual regulars and also a steady stream of new customers, who donated generously for our plants.



The team waiting for the committee to return with the tea at Lydd Club Day!!

The Varne Boat Club Armed Forces Day was on Sunday 18 June at Littlestone. This event is in its second year and is starting to become established within the community. The Branch again set up a poppy/plant stall among the military vehicles, Riders Branch motorbikes and fun fair. In addition, to showing our commitment to Armed Forces Day the Branch Standard and members also attended the Hythe Armed Forces parade on Saturday 24th June.

SIDCUP & FOOTSCRAY BRANCH

On Saturday 27th May, the Branch held their annual Presentation Supper Dance. Three awards were presented by Branch Chairman Barrie Theobald-Hicks: Standard Bearer Peter Hucker received the Campbell-Manning Cup presented each year to a member of the Executive Committee; Secretary Ken Bishop had helped raise a lot of money for the Poppy Appeal and had been very helpful during the Poppy Appeal period; and member Marie Llewellyn who received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trophy as the most helpful and supportive to the branch. All profits from the evening went to Branch funds.



STAPLE BRANCH

The Branch held a dinner for members, friends and supporters at the Black Pig in June. This proved to be an excellent evening of good food and good company. Such evenings are popular and we intend to hold more of the same in the year ahead.

On 16th May a number of us went on a coach outing to Bletchley Park. This was an interesting and thought-provoking day.

On the evening of 25th May members and friends met in the Black Pig again. This time it was for a a hugely enjoyable and successful Quiz Night. £119.75 was raised for the Poppy Appeal.

Sunday 11th June was the County Parade in Deal where our Standard was paraded. That day also saw the commemoration of Falklands Liberation Day at Pangbourne College Chapel. This was attended by the Chairman and member Jed Newton, both Falklands veterans, Jed's brother being one of the 252 servicemen lost in the conflict.

BAND OF THE BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

With the generous support of the Headmistress and staff of Benenden School, The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas will be appearing on Thursday 13th July at 6.30 pm for a Reception and Sounding Retreat. The event is on behalf of ABF The Soldier's Charity and tickets cost £32. Payment should be sent to Martin Stoneham, 139 Hever Avenue, West Kingsdown, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 6DT. For further details phone 01474 853014.

THE BELGIAN COMMUNITY OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS 1914-1919

During the First World War hundreds of refugees from Belgium came to Tunbridge Wells and were helped by the local people under the leadership of the Mayor, Charles Whitbourn Emson, and a committee of local dignitaries. They included wounded and medically-discharged Belgian soldiers as well as civilians from all walks of life and were just a fraction of the estimated 250,000 refugees who were in the UK during the years 1914-1919.

Local group CREATE is currently working with academics from the University of Kent and University College London to uncover this self-styled Belgian Colony's story (the Gateways Research Project), and in parallel to this, there is to be a "Tunbridge Wells Belgian Week 2017" from Saturday 15th to Sunday 23rd July. More info is at www.twbelgianweek2017.org.uk

Events will include a concert on 15th July featuring a choral mass setting by local composer James Whitborn and with a guest appearance from a young oboe student from Antwerp, a T20 cricket match between the Tunbridge Wells cricket team and a team from the Royal Brussels Cricket Club, and an Impro Show performed by the local group Claquers Impro and Improfiel from Belgium. There will also be a Heritage Trail around the town created by the research project volunteers.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Branch Secretary Jennifer Watts is involved in this project being the Legion representative on the Steering Committee for WW1 at the Town Hall along with the President and a former Mayor himself, David Wakefield.

She will also be giving a short talk on Passchendaele – 3rd Ypres, at Hawkenbury Cemetery Chapel on the afternoon of Remembrance Sunday, following the Commemoration at the Crosses of Sacrifice.

... AND FINALLY

The British Legion needs you to come and lend a hand
And try to help your fellow man and do the best you can
Sometimes in life things go wrong and no one seems to care
But when you visit veterans you see a sadness there
They fought for Queen and Country so we could all be free
And now it's time to show them all what it means to you and me
So come along and join us and show that you care
And give them all the help they need, and let them know we'll be there.

Florence Owen
BCS Rep Maidstone Branch

Regards to you all

Tony West

Membership Support Officer



LEST WE FORGET

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

Mr Dennis Leadbetter	Ashford
Countess Mountbatten of Burma	Brabourne & Smeeth - Branch President
Mr William Flowers	Cheriton & Morehall
Mr Peter Goldsack	Dover White Cliffs
Mr Graham Oxley	Downs
Mr Kenneth James	Eastry
Mr David Bunker	Headcorn - Branch Chairman
Mr Ronald Craker	Kemsing
Mrs June Clark	Knockholt
Mr Michael Turner	Margate
Mr Roy Chandler	Royal British Legion Village
Mr Richard Gough	"
Mr Michael Rayfield	"



Our deepest sympathies go to their families and friends



KENT COUNTY DIARY OF EVENTS - 2017

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 *
Sun	20th	Standard Bearer Training - Capel Morris Centre
Mon	21st - 3rd	MSO on Leave
Thu	31st	Pedal to Paris - Greenwich to Dover stage

SEPTEMBER

Sat	16th - 17th	Salute to the '40s - Chatham Historic Dockyard *
Sun	17th	Standard Bearer Training - Capel Morris Centre

OCTOBER

Sun	8th	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)
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JANUARY 2018

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

Updated: 30th June 2017