



# KENT COUNTY NEWS

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

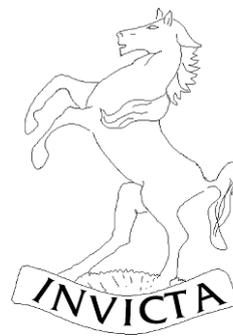
**Membership Support Officer**

Mobile - 07554 553263

e-mail - [twest@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:twest@britishlegion.org.uk)

**Welfare & Fundraising**

via Contact Centre - 0808 802 8080



Registered Charity 219279

County website: [www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/kent](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/kent)

**April 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**

During the past month I can consider myself briefed on most things. I attended the County Chairmen's Seminar at Haig House on 6th and 7th. The programme was in some cases very familiar for anyone who had read the Journal over the past couple of months. We were taken through the new Strategy and Structure which had been in the journal. You might think a grand title, but mainly re-aligning roles and introducing a few new departments and heads to make the Charity work in a cohesive manner in these modern times. The Branch Community Support Project was discussed and it is good to see that in Kent we are in 9th place countrywide. We currently have 18 out of 70 branches signed up to submit returns each month to show the amount of support we give the ex-Serving Community within our branch areas. Just a thought on this, when submitting the details each month it is not enough just to record that you contacted say two people in the month. You need to include the number of times. So if you call on one person five days a week that is 20-25 times not just one. Cherrie Harris on 01797 361807 is our County Coordinator so please give her a ring if you are unsure of things or want to sign your branch up.

Again, in the Journal you would have seen about the Great Pilgrimage in 2018 - GP90. This is where the Legion are planning to mirror the 90th Anniversary of the Pilgrimage to the WW1 Battlefields over a 4 - 5 day trip. It will include 2,500 Standards and 2,500 wreath bearers representing each Legion branch at a special service at the Menin Gate. The cost of the trip will be £1,000 to cover the two members representing each branch. The crunch is that the branches will have to pay. Branch funds can be used, or funds can be raised or branches with excess funds can help those with insufficient funds. The two representatives must be physically fit, and the Standard Bearer used that day must have undertaken Standard Bearer Training via the County Parade Marshals. They will not only take part in the trips around the battlefields, but on the day of the parade at the Menin Gate, 8th August 2018, they could be standing and marching for 8 to 10 hours. The final details still have to go through the Board of Trustees, although a tour company has already been earmarked and brought into the planning. There will be opportunity for visitors and those members not taking part to go on a shadow tour which will run alongside the main pilgrimage. Costs have yet to be finalised for this and individuals will have to pay their own way. Full details will be published once it gets through the Board of Trustees.

Veterans Gateway. You have, I hope, heard that the Legion won a bid from HM Government for funding to set up with other Service Charities a Gateway, or to give it a simple name a one stop call

centre to for all Veterans and their families to obtain the correct service that each charity can give. Veterans Gateway will commence to come online on 3rd April 2017. There are more details on this is sue of County News and branches will receive updates. It won't completely replace our own call centre 0808 802 8080 which is still in place, but means that if you come across a case and you don't know who to advise who could best help then put them in touch with the Veterans Gateway instead of our call centre.

I met with the Community Fundraisers, Jane and Julie, and whilst we discussed a great deal, most of it referred to the Poppy Appeal appointed local PAOs. I must ask you in the branches to continue to give these hard-working people your full support and thank you all for the £1,640,087 that is the total for Kent so far this year. Nationally this year has been another remarkable year, with the total at the end of March standing at £43,515,260.45! Compared to last year's figure we are currently 4.25% up. In West Kent we are short nine PAOs for this coming year and whilst five existing PAOs have agreed to cover for the time being we still need people for New Ash Green, Stanstead (Kent) and Fairseat. If you can offer your services please contact Jane Ayres or Margaret Clarke.

One point for branches, if you want to appoint your own Poppy Appeal Coordinator, they are precisely that. They can only coordinate with the Poppy Appeal appointed local PAOs in your branch area to ensure that the PAOs are supported by your branch members and liaison with your local links with civic authorities. They have no formal appointment and cannot obtain stock, posters or anything directly from Aylesford. They are also not in charge of the PAOs for your branch area.

As I must make room for other items in the County News, I shall hold the details of the Kent and Medway Civilian Military Covenant Conference to next month.

Enjoy the longer daylight and the sunshine and a Happy Easter to you all.

*Richard Cast*  
County Chairman

### **DONATIONS TO COUNTY FUNDS**

The following donations have been gratefully received:

£10.00	In memory of Mrs Joan Perrin
£35.00	In memory of Mr Russell Young

### **BRANCH MS1 RETURNS**

Thankfully all branches in Kent but one - Leigh & District - have now submitted their MS1s.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Any member whose renewal fell due on 1st October 2016 and who did not renew will now have been lapsed. This will be reflected in the Office 365 (MAP) reports on 3rd April.

### **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](mailto: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.

### **PERSONAL CHANGES**

**This is a reminder that when reporting changes to individual details by e-mail, e.g. death, change of address, change of name etc., you must include the member's name and, importantly, his or her membership number.**

## **STANDARD BEARER TRAINING**

The next standard bearer training session will be on 30th April at the Capel Morris community hall, Aylesford, 10.00am to 1.00pm.

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](mailto:annjaneausten@yahoo.co.uk) or 01227 731385.

I look forward to seeing you there.

*Ann Austen*  
County Ceremonial Coordinator

## **ANNUAL AUDIT OF LEGION ACCOUNTS**

As part of the annual audit, our auditors will seek confirmation from banks of the balances held in branch accounts. The banks will charge for providing this information, typically between £25-£30. We do not have relationship managers with every bank so are unable to ask the bank to reimburse the fee. However we will reimburse branches from central funds. If the branch wishes to be reimbursed could they provide:

- 1) Branch name and number
- 2) Name of bank where fee taken from
- 3) Bank Sort code and Account number (to make reimbursement)
- 4) Amount to be reimbursed (anticipate £25)

The branch can ONLY request a refund if this charge has appeared on their bank statement. Not all bank accounts will be charged a fee as the auditors have not sought confirmation for all accounts.

Requests should either be emailed to [branchaccounts@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:branchaccounts@britishlegion.org.uk) or posted to Branch Account Team, The Royal British Legion, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA

## **MEET THE TEAM DAY**

Although most branch officers know all about Membership in the Legion it is recognised that many do not fully appreciate the complexities of Welfare, or Branch Community Support as it is now known.

To this end there will be a series of 'Meet the Area Team' days in Kent, Surrey and Sussex where members of staff will be available to outline what they do and how it affects both beneficiaries and members, and also to answer all those burning questions you may have.

The day will include stalls manned by the Area Manager, Case Officers, Advice and Information Officers, Specialist Services and there will be a series of rolling presentations covering the various roles. There will also be a presentation from RBLI which will emphasise the close working relationship we have with partner organisations.

The Kent event will take place in the Capel Morris Centre on Wednesday 31st May running from 10am until 3pm and each branch is invited to send three committee members - Chairman, Secretary and Welfare Representative, or others in their place should they be unable to attend.

Information and attendance forms have been sent to branch chairmen and returns should be sent to the MSO by no later than 28th April. There is no cost involved but travel expenses must be borne by the branch.

There have been a number of changes to welfare over the past few years and this is a great opportunity to see how effective the new processes are.

## **VETERANS GATEWAY**

In November 2016 the Ministry of Defence announced £2 million of funding from the Covenant Fund for a one-stop service to better support British Armed Forces veterans in need. The service responds

to calls from veterans' charities and groups for help in navigating the wide range of services and organisations set up to support those who have served in the Forces.

The service will be the first point of contact for veterans and their families to access information, advice and support on a range of issues including healthcare, housing, and employment. It will allow information and services from partners to be accessed from one place and all enquiries will be followed up to ensure that veterans receive the right support.

The Veteran's Gateway will provide website, online chat, phone line and text message services available to any veteran, from anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day. Veterans can access face-to-face support through the Veterans' Gateway network of partners and organisations across the UK and overseas.

### **Why is it needed?**

More than 2,000 charitable groups currently offer help to veterans, but they can prove difficult to navigate. By having a first point of contact, the Veterans' Gateway team will be able to quickly work out which of the partners is best placed to help with the information, advice and support required.

### **Who is working on it?**

A consortium of military charities including The Royal British Legion, Poppyscotland, SSAFA and Combat Stress, and service provider Connect Assist is managing the contact centre. A wider group of 26 referral partners from military and other charity sectors have currently signed up to be a part of the Veterans' Gateway. This means that the service will offer advice and support on a broad range of issues and from a multitude of providers. Further referral partners will continue to be recruited after the Veterans' Gateway launches. The helpline will be run by Connect Assist located in South Wales and staffed by skilled advisers, many of whom we hope will be veterans or family members with experience of Service life.

### **When will it launch?**

The Veterans' Gateway will launch in the week commencing 22 May 2017. On the day there will be a media launch led by the consortium.

### **What can I do?**

Inform your members about the Veteran's Gateway and help us ensure our veteran community is aware of the new service. The official launch date is Thursday 25th May but you may share the web address, [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk), and the phone number, **0808 802 1212**, from Monday 3rd April.

### **FREE YOUTH MEMBERSHIP**

It has now been officially announced that membership to the Royal British Legion is free for anyone from the age of 12 until their 17th birthday. It is easy to join using the ways available to everyone – either online, by telephone or a paper form in the post.

Work is being done on the Legion's Youth policy and therefore we can hope to see some development during the year to encourage youth membership and involvement.

My advice would be to sign up as many young people as you possibly can now, so that when the new policy is brought into being, we will already have the membership in place to benefit. If you have affiliated units, go to their parade nights and spread the word. Take membership forms with you and distribute them to all, as they include details of all the ways of joining. A parental signature or authorisation is required, which is why I suggest giving the form to every young person.

With 97 affiliated units in the County and by joining up just five members from each, we could potentially have nearly 500 youth members. Each of these young people has parents of the age who would bring enormous support to the Legion. If every county does this, just think how the Legion could grow! Please think about it and DO IT!

*Susan Foster*  
County Youth Officer

## **CLUB NEWS**

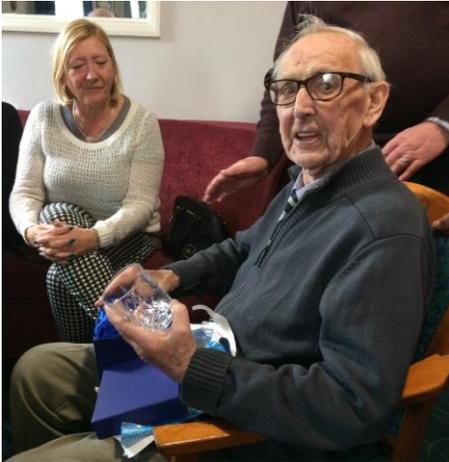
Clubs are reminded that the RBL Licence Application (C4/C5) and Club Accounts must be submitted within one month of the Club AGM date as laid down in the Club rules and by 31st March. To date applications have not yet been received at Head Office from:

Dymchurch  
Edenbridge

Hawkhurst  
Hythe

Ramsgate  
Whitstable

## **DYMCHURCH BRANCH**



Branch member David Kerr served with the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders between 1944 and 1946 (Army no. 14490376) and saw service in Italy and Austria. We believe he is our last remaining veteran of WW2. He celebrated his 89th birthday on 27th February and the picture shows David having been presented with an engraved glass by the Branch committee on Sunday 5th March at our RBL Club.

## **NEW ROMNEY BRANCH**

For St Patrick's Day the Branch organised a social lunch at Sotirios at Greatstone with 30 members and guests sitting down to a relaxing two course meal. It was also the perfect opportunity for the publication of our twice yearly 'INFO' newsletter.



Branch Members reading their copies of the Branch 'INFO' newsletter

## **FAVERSHAM BRANCH**

The Branch would like to invite anyone who may be interested to our Annual Dinner and Dance. It is held in the Alexandra Centre in Faversham on Saturday 13th May. £25 for a three course meal. 6.30 for 7.00pm. The Mayor of Faversham and other dignitaries will be attending as well as members and their families and friends. For any further information please contact Mrs Alma Huntley on 01795 534969. All are welcome.

Alma is trying to arrange a trip to the Somme departing on 5th September. Three days and two nights B&B cost £230 with a £30 extra supplement for a single room. This includes coach, ferry and trips to cemeteries and the Menin Gate. The trip will require 30 persons attending for it to be financially possible to run so again all are welcome. Anyone interested should contact Alma on 01795 534969.

## **SHEPWAY GROUP – VETERANS COFFEE MORNING**

Susan Foster and Cherrie Harris hosted another successful Veterans Coffee Morning on Saturday 4th March at Hythe Age UK. The aim of the morning was to provide comradeship and support to local Veterans and Legion members, with all present able to relax in the friendly welcoming environment of the Age UK centre.

As usual there was a good mix of Veterans and Branch members from the local communities in Shepway. We were particularly pleased to welcome the ladies of the Dymchurch Women's Section and the Welfare Officers for the local RAFA Branch. Hopefully they enjoyed themselves and will become regular visitors to our Veterans Coffee Mornings.



From the left – Lorna and George Harvey (Chair New Romney) talking to Vernon and Esme Gough (RAFA)

## **ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH**

Cadets from *TS Brilliant* were put through their paces at the Royal Naval Parade on Thursday 23rd March when Commander Trevor Price RN, the Sea Cadets Southern Area Officer, carried out the bi-annual formal inspection. Branch Chairman Gary Faulkner and Secretary Jennifer Watts were delighted to be invited as *TS Brilliant* is affiliated to the Branch, which uses their Wardroom for Branch Committee meetings. The youngsters are very much involved on Remembrance Sunday in Tunbridge Wells and their four senior buglers are frequently called upon for other ceremonial events and funerals.

The overall Commander is Lt Cdr Jon Vanns RNR who is also a member of the Branch. His son, S/Lt Matthew Vanns, is now the new CO taking over from Lt Brenda Hide who has given 45 years service to the Unit.

## **BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORT - QUARTERLEY REPORTING**

Branches which have registered for the BCS are reminded that they should submit their quarterly activity report for the Quarter 1st January to 31st March by 10th April.

The 18 branches currently registered are: Birchington, Brabourne & Smeeth, Chartham, Cheriton & Morehall, Dover White Cliffs, Downs, Halstead, Isle of Oxney, Isle of Sheppey, Maidstone, New Romney, Paddock Wood, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Shoreham, Sittingbourne & Milton Regis, Smarden, Staple and Sutton Valence.

The report should contain details of activities conducted during this quarter and should include any expenditure incurred (the one off gift of up to £20 for any beneficiaries assisted).

Branches should submit these details by logging into BCS and clicking on new 'Activity Report'. The form is self explanatory and should be completed in accordance with any activities the Branch has undertaken during Q1 of 2017. When submitting the report you should select the month of March.

## **BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORT - LOCAL TOUCHPOINT**

When registering for BCS some branches have ticked the Local Touchpoint (LT) activity without prior consultation with the Area Manager (AM), and having received no subsequent approval to operate a LT.

Branches should be aware that to register for this particular activity they must follow the guidance below:

- Must have identified a need for an outreach session in their local area;
- If the branch believes there is a need, they must contact their local AM with that information;
- The AM will assess the information provided and make a decision as to whether the branch may operate an outreach session. It is at the AM's discretion and as such not all requests will be approved;
- If the request is approved, the branch must operate the outreach session in accordance with the '*Branches Occupying Premises*' policy document;
- The branch must also have at least one trained Information Volunteer to operate a local touchpoint;
- For those branches who can't operate a local touchpoint, information can still be provided in a number of ways, particularly whilst undertaking some of the other BCS activities.

It is suspected that many registrations for Local Touchpoint have been aspirational and we therefore need to ensure those Branches registering from the BCS 'LIVE' date until present (with LT selected) have carried out the correct procedure above. Those Branches who have registered for LT having not gone through the process nor received the AM's final approval, will have LT removed from their activity listing, unless the AM advises otherwise. Affected branches will also be advised of this action, with emphasis placed on the need to liaise with the AM should they wish to consider operating a LT.

The following message will now appear on the BCS registration page and branches will not have the LT activity shown unless they have the required permission.

**PLEASE NOTE: In accordance with Branch Community Support key activity guidance, Local Touchpoint should only be selected if prior consultation has been undertaken with the local Area Manager, and subsequent approval given by them for the Branch to operate a Local Touchpoint in their area. Any Branch who is deemed to have registered for this BCS activity without prior approval from the Area Manager, will have the activity removed from their registration form following submission, and prior to gaining access to the BCS framework.**

## **CHANGE OF RENT COLLECTION AGENT FOR RBL PROPERTIES**

On 9th April 2017 the Legion is changing its current rent collection agents from GVA to Fairhurst Estates Limited (FEL).

FEL have been instructed to continue to transfer the rent across to the Legion as before so there shouldn't be any impact on branches who receive rental income, and our Commercial Department will be monitoring the situation closely in case of any glitches.

Further details and information in relation to this will be issued directly to the tenant and a letter has been sent by Commercial to affected Branches. The change in contract will improve the effectiveness with which rental income is managed in the future.

If you have any questions please direct them to the Regional Property Team Leader, call 03330 114320 or email [CommercialAdmin@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:CommercialAdmin@britishlegion.org.uk).

## **BRANCH RENTS - FAQs**

Head Office has compiled a short list of rental income FAQs which we hope will help explain the current system.

**How is branch rental income collected?**

- Rent collection is outsourced to an external agency. The Legion is currently using the company GVA, but will be moving to Fairhurst Estates Limited from April 2017. We have written to Branches to inform them about the change in agency, although they should not be affected by this change.
- To collect rent, GVA sends invoices to clubs and other third party tenants on the dates stipulated in the lease agreements.
- GVA then sends the rent to Head office with a monthly report, which shows what rent has been invoiced, payments received from clubs and other tenants and details any arrears (per tenant per property) where rent has not been received.

#### **Under what circumstances is rental income not deposited into a branch account?**

- In 2014 the Legion introduced a new policy, agreed by the Board of Trustees, which stipulated that no branch should hold more than £5,000 in its local branch bank account. Funds above this amount are securely held by the Legion in the branch's BFI account.
- In terms of branches connected to unsold BPTs, in March 2016 we introduced a new policy whereby any branch with more £5,000 in its local bank account would have its BPT rental income automatically transferred into their BFI account. If the branch did not have a BFI account, one was opened for it. The affected branches were written to about this change between March and July 2016. The rental income receipt appears on the branch's quarterly BFI statement.
- Where a branch return shows that a branch has less than £5,000 in its local bank accounts, rental income continues to be paid directly to the branch by BACS, using the account details on our system.

#### **What happens to rental income when it is held in the BFI?**

- Any rental income held in the BFI will attract interest at the prevailing BFI rate (which is currently 2%).
- Rental payments to branches (either into the BFI or by BACS) are made in time to reach the branch's account on the due date under the lease. This usually means that the branch receives the rent before the rent is received by Head Office from our rent collection agency.

#### **Can a branch spend rental income held in the BFI?**

- Branches are able to withdraw restricted BPT funds from the BFI to fund branch eligible expenditure. Therefore, a branch wishing to withdraw a relatively small sum to cover normal branch operating expenditure should complete the BFI withdrawal request form in the normal way.
- If a Branch wants to withdraw a significant sum from the BFI, for example to pay for work to their property, they should contact the BPT Team for advice. In most cases, significant sum requests would involve the branch submitting a Branches Occupying Premises form and would require approval from the BPT Trustee Committee.

#### **What happens if a tenant does not pay their rent?**

- In the event that a tenant does not pay their rent, due to the payment process described above, the branch will still often receive one instalment. The branch will not receive any further rental income until the arrears have been cleared.
- GVA (and in future, Fairhurst Estates) are responsible for debt collection and chasing of arrears.

Regards to you all

*Tony West*

Membership Support Officer

Email: [twest@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:twest@britishlegion.org.uk)



## LEST WE FORGET

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

Mr Paul Hardisty	Brabourne & Smeeth - Vice Chairman & PAO
Mr Derek Gurr	"
Mr Thomas Parsons MBE	Cowden, Hartfield & District
Mr Tony Richards	Goudhurst - Chairman
Mr Peter Dahlhoff	Isle of Oxney Branch
Mr John Harris	Lamberhurst & Bayham
Mr Clifford Wallis	Meopham, Cobham & Luddesdowne
Mr Bryan Riley	Ramsgate Branch
Mr Bill Williams	"
Mr Michael McDonnell	Shoreham
Mr Derek Lewiston	St Margaret's at Cliffe



*Our deepest sympathies go to their families and friends*



## KENT COUNTY DIARY OF EVENTS - 2017

### APRIL

Sun	16th - 17th	Medway Steam & Transport Rally - Chatham Historic Dockyard *
Sat	22nd	Laying Up / Dedication of Elham Valley Branch Standards - Lyminge Church

### 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 *
-----	-------------	--

### 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)
-----	------	---

### 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 March 2017

**Royal British Legion Village Branch**

**Fun Quiz Night**

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Community Hall, Capel Morris Centre  
Royal British Legion Village  
Aylesford ME20 7NL

Start time 7pm

Bring your own food and drink (and a glass!)

Tables/Teams of 6

(Raffle prize donations very welcome)

Tickets £5 per person



Details from [robert.mccann@rbli.co.uk](mailto:robert.mccann@rbli.co.uk)

A fundraising event for Remembrance

