



# KENT COUNTY NEWS

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

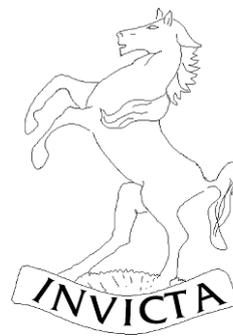
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Registered Charity 219279

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

**February 2018**

***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**

This year is certainly one of momentous events for us all and mine started on taking up the role of County Chairman, a position in which it is my honour to serve you all. Fortunately for me I have enjoyed the tutelage of Richard Cast over the last three years as his Vice Chairman and hopefully this will leave me well prepared for the task ahead.

We are lucky in Kent to have a well versed and committed County team able and willing to provide constructive support to our many and varied Branches. I am pleased to welcome some newcomers to the team in Jonathan Webb our Vice Chairman and Lisa Wolfe. Both have a wide range of skills and experience to bring with them that will help us all.

I mentioned events in this Centenary year of 2018 to mark the end of hostilities with Germany in World War I and some are quite pressing for us to finalise even though it is early in the year. Predominant in these is GP90 and somehow I feel many of you may not realise this is not so much about the Branch but about the Community around it. All those years ago young men and some not so young went off to fight a war for King and Country; they left in their thousands from the Villages and Towns to which all too few returned. Just as many families visited the Battlefields of France and Belgium in the original pilgrimage post WW1 we are solemnly charged to represent those same communities in GP 90 and we owe it to them and in Remembrance of those who died to get as many Standards and Wreath layers as possible across to Ypres. Remember "Service not Self".

£1000 is great value for 2 people with all costs covered for 5 days and here is the misunderstanding:

It does not have to be your Standard Bearer if he is not able to carry out a 5 day tour, we have a developing pool of those ready and willing from other branches who will carry your Standard with pride on the Tour, hopefully you may find a wreath layer among you but again if not the pool can help.

Costs; If you are from a smaller Branch not so well off for funds and have really tried to raise the £1000 for the two persons but have fallen short, then provided you have raised some of the monies we can help with up to £750 of the shortfall provided we see proof of your efforts. There are so many ways to raise that money, community grants from local councillors is worth trying. One branch raised a significant sum by holding a raffle at £5 per head from those who would like to go and £5 per punt is not bad odds for a 5 days all paid trip like this! There is just time to reappraise your thinking and we would like to see many more from Kent going so please make the effort! To register your

branch before the end of February go to <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/what-we-remember/great-pilgrimage-90-for-members/>

Lastly on Branch Community Support, with around 50% of our Branches signed up thanks to the efforts of Cherrie Harris I feel sure you will agree that the new Area Managers award that she received at Conference is richly deserved for such great work. If you are in the remainder who have not yet signed up please do, the benefits to those who we visit or contact can be profound and the statistics we provide in the simple reporting system means Government can see and support the RBL in this vital service we can give.

Well, enough from me for now other than to say our long serving (and suffering) MSO, Tony West, retires in March and by then we will know who his successful replacement is. Tony will be a hard act to follow but I somehow have the feeling that he will ensure his successor has his support to ensure a smooth transition. I am sure I echo your thoughts of deep gratitude to Tony for all he has done and achieved for Kent during his tenure. Thank you Tony!

*Richard Graham*  
County Chairman

### **THANK YOU**

Having now handed over the Title and Jewel to Richard Graham, your new County Chairman, I would like to thank all those who gave me their best wishes for the future.

I am extremely pleased that I have been honoured with the position of Life Vice President of Kent County and if I am called upon to carry out any duties in this role I shall be honoured to do so.

I can assure you I shall still be busy on your behalf with various tasks that your County Chairman has asked me to retain. These being a member of the KCC Respect and Remembrance Committee and also the Lord Lieutenants Drumhead Service Committee and 2018 Remembrance Committee.

*Richard Cast*

### **DONATIONS TO COUNTY FUNDS**

The following donations have been gratefully received:

£60	Burham Methodist Church
£250	Shoreham Branch
£300	Sevenoaks Branch
£1,000	Leeds, Hollingbourne & District Branch
£10	Mr & Mrs T Turner

### **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. The branches still outstanding are:

Minster & Monkton

Rolvenden

St Margarets at Cliffe

### **ANNUAL COUNTY CONFERENCE**

Headcorn Village Hall provided the venue for what proved to be an excellent Conference on 20th January with around 130 in the hall including 33 delegates from 31 branches and 14 Branch Standards in addition to the Union and the County Standard. Amongst the guests were His Worship the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr Malcolm Greer, and the Chairman of Headcorn Parish Council, Mrs Lynn Selby. The Guest Speaker this year was National Chairman Mr Terry Whittles and his speech is attached. An excellent presentation was also given by Case Officer Nikki Ward and this is attached too.

Mrs Mary Eldridge was made a County Vice President whilst Mr Richard Cast, Mr Ray Mann and Mr Harry Garrett were made Life Vice Presidents.

The new County Chairman, Mr Richard Graham was handed the Chain of Office by his predecessor, Mr Richard Cast and his new Vice Chairman, Mr Jonathan Webb, was introduced. Two new members - Mr Geoff Lees and Mrs Lisa Wolfe - were elected to the County Committee. Four members - Mrs Cherrie Harris, Mrs Margaret Clarke, Mr Clive Richards and Mr Dave Harris - have stood down although Mrs Harris continues as County BCS Rep. The County Officers and Committee for this year are:

County President Mr Leyland Ridings MBE JP  
 County Chairman Mr Richard Graham  
 County Vice Chairman Mr Jonathan Webb  
 County Treasurer Mr Stefan Gatward FMAAT  
 Membership Support Officer Mr Tony West BEM

Committee:

Mr Ray Mann MAAT	Sutton Valence	Mrs Susan Foster	Invicta
Mrs Ann Austen	Chartham	Mr Roy Bingham BEM	Ashford
Mr Norman Williams	Isle of Sheppey	Mr Geoff Lees	Swanley & Crockenhill
Mr Stefan Gatward FMAAT	Invicta	Mrs Lisa Wolfe	Cheriton & Morehall

The Awards presented at Conference were:

<b>Moore Trophy</b> (Branch Efficiency)	New Romney Branch
<b>Newport Cup</b> (Branch with largest percentage membership increase)	Staple Branch
<b>Pauline Cast Shield</b> (Branch BCS Efficiency)	Swanley Crockenhill & Hextable Branch
<b>Area Manager's Award</b> (Most Outstanding Individual)	Mrs Cherrie Harris (New Romney)
<b>Mungeam Cup</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Winner)	Mr Paul Austen (Chartham)
<b>1945-1995 Anniversary Shield</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Runner Up)	Mr Julian De Zille (Downs)
<b>Banger Cup</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Novice Winner)	Mr Mervyn McAllister (Dover White Cliffs)
<b>John Partridge Shield</b> (Standard Bearer showing most progress in the year)	Mr Barry Rampton (Staple)
<b>County Certificates</b>	Mrs Jan White (Birchington) Mr Jim McDonald (Cheriton & Morehall) Mrs Mary Eldridge (Downs) Mr Derek Davison (Leeds & Hollingbourne) Mr Phil Bushell (RBL Village)

### **COUNTY CEREMONIAL PARTY**

Branches requesting the County Ceremonial Party to attend a parade or ceremony should be aware that the Party in full consists of the County Chairman, the County Parade Marshal and the County Standard Bearer or their deputies. The latest version of the form is attached.

Any Branch holding a parade may ask for the County Standard, always accompanied by the County Chairman or Vice Chairman, and other Branch Standards to join them on parade but there is no requirement to request the full County Ceremonial Party.

## **BRANCH STANDARDS OVERSEAS**

Branch Chairmen and Standard Bearers should be aware that you must have permission from the Legion to take a Standard overseas and they need to know exactly when and where it is going (paragraph 5.2 of the Ceremonial Handbook refers). Once authority has been given the Standard is then covered by Legion insurance. Application, by letter or e-mail, should be sent to the MSO at least one month before departure.

All must remember that it is the Chairman's Standard not the Standard Bearer's so whenever a Standard is taken on parade in this country or overseas a suitable entry should be entered in the minutes of a meeting of the Branch Committee. This is so everyone knows where the Standard will be at any given time.

## **TRAINING**

The County Training Officer, Roy Bingham, has arranged for a number of County Seminars and National Courses to be held in the Capel Morris Centre in the RBL Village. Details are below and anyone interested in attending any of them should contact Roy at [roybingham@europe.com](mailto:roybingham@europe.com) or on 01233 750421.

### **Branch Management Seminars**

Sat 17 Feb      Sat 10 Mar      Sat 14 Apr      Sat 24 Mar      Sat 28 Apr

### **Branch Treasurer Courses**

Fri 20 - Sun 22 Apr      Fri 14 - Sun 16 Sep

### **Recruiting Advisor Courses**

Sat 7 Jul      Sat 27 Oct

### **County Conference Committee Course**

Sat 9 – Sun 10 Jun

## **COUNTY GROUP SYSTEM**

Last week saw the AGM of the Shepway Group and what an uplifting experience it was! I came away thinking that there are so many members countywide who are missing out on such a good evening. And this begs the question, why?

Our outgoing President, George Harvey OBE, commented on how valuable group meetings are and I cannot disagree. We share news of neighbouring branches' events, we commiserate on difficulties (e.g. membership services) and offer encouragement to one another. Most of all, we share comradeship and as so often happens, the best part of the evening is when we sit together after the business part of the evening and simply enjoy one another's company as like-minded people, in the name of Legion comradeship.

We open our doors to members of the Legion countywide – Invicta Branch members who cannot necessarily commit to regular branch meetings are made more than welcome – and two branches attend who have no functioning group in their own areas. We do not limit our meetings to branch officers only – all branch members are very welcome. We relish hearing of one another's successes, especially with the Poppy Appeal collections, and this inspires us to continue in our endeavours. We only meet quarterly and this month we were lucky enough to be able to enjoy the company of County Recruiting Officer Norman Williams who delivered a presentation about recruiting and retention of members.

All of this begs the question – why are other groups countywide not functioning equally as well? For the first time in my memory, there were no awards at County Conference for groups, purely because

groups are not working as they should. Although Shepway Group has won county awards in recent years, we do not exist for winning awards – we exist because it is pleasurable and we enjoy the friendship we give to one another.

I feel it is important to discover why groups do not meet regularly and efficiently. I'm sure our Chairman would like to know why too. If you have any comments, either privately or to share here in County News, or would like any help to get your group up and running again, please contact Tony West our MSO.

If I have failed to inspire you to reactivate your group, rest assured that I, along with fellow members in Shepway, will continue to share excellent comradeship and long may the existence of Shepway Group Live On!

*Susan Foster*  
Shepway Area Group

### **100 MILES FOR 100 YEARS**

100 miles for 100 years is a lottery funded project to commemorate the centenary of WW1. Screensouth, a Folkestone based company, have been developing walking trails across the county with landmarks along the way which have special significance to World War One. The trails are at longest three miles long and there are accompanying leaflets and booklets to give the history of each landmark.

It is the intention that during the weekend of 24/25 February all trails will be open and it is hoped that there will be an average of 100 walkers at each trail.

Legion members are invited to walk the trails and also volunteers are sought who would be prepared to help out on walking days. Poppies will be planted along the walks and there will be a sheet to complete to show where the poppies are. The sheet is handed in at the end of the walk and will go into a draw, for a winner to be decided randomly. Volunteers are needed to mark these sheets and just to be on hand to meet and greet walkers.

Trails have been developed for Appledore, Canterbury, Deal, Dymchurch, Folkestone, Gravesend, Harbledown, Lydd, Margate, Ramsgate, Sittingbourne, Southborough, Tenterden and Tonbridge. There will be more to come and will be posted to the website as they are completed. The website, which is well worth a look, is – [www.kentww1.com](http://www.kentww1.com)

If you would like to volunteer to help or would like to know more, please contact Susan Foster on 01303 862779 or at [susanfoster61@btinternet.com](mailto:susanfoster61@btinternet.com)

### **100 YEARS OF CHANGE**

With the centenary of the end of WW1 this year, it may be the time to reflect on the changes over the past 100 years.

Britain entered the First World War on 4th August 1914 and when it ended in November 1918, over 12 million had been killed, which affected families in all corners of the globe, but it also started so many changes to the way we live today. Those changes may well have come about over the course of time but WW1 moved them forward a little faster and WW2 accelerated them faster still.

First of all let me remind you of what it was like 100 years ago. To start with, on average people lived to they were 56, to day it is 81. In 1914 women could not vote, there was no NHS or social welfare assistance and the old age pension had only been in existence for 5 years.

There was no such thing as television or radio, although there was the telegraph. The Romans had introduced central heating about 2,000 years previously but it did not catch on until later in the 20th century, most people used coal to heat their houses which contributed to the "smogs" that were prevalent in the 1950's. The telephone had been invented but few people could afford one and films were in their infancy being black and white and no sound.

The only bare flesh you saw on people were their hands and face and of course everyone wore a hat!! For the majority toilets were outside and often shared with other houses. Only the rich travelled abroad. Manned flight had been achieved but up to 1914 aircraft were made mainly of wood, paper and string.

Women were expected to have a job for a short time, then get married and stay at home having children and looking after their husband.

However, with the onset of war many things changed.

With the need for men to go and fight many of the jobs had to be filled by women. They became postmen, worked on the railway, made munitions and worked on the land. Later they joined the armed services but only in a non-combatant role. (Last year commemorated 100 years of women in the services).

With so many men on the front line, the war also saw advance in the way the general public viewed the services. WW1 also brought the war to home shores with the bombing of towns and cities and again in WW2, but with greater effect.

So what has changed in these 100 years

To start with we all live longer, with Tuberculosis (a killer in the early part of the century), measles, and similar conditions well under control and even Cancer not the death sentence it once was, plus antibiotics controlling infection.

We now have Universal Suffrage with women getting the vote in 1918.

Entertainment has changed. Although there were films a lot of people got their enjoyment from the Music Halls. Now of course there is television, with literally hundreds of channels to choose from, plus film and radio.

Communication has changed as well. Telephones became more available, but it was not until after WW2 that everyone was able to afford one in their home. Now nearly everyone, even quite young children, have their own mobile phone, the most advanced of which can connect to the internet and of course call to any country in the world.

Travel has become easier. Trips to the continent takes no time at all, in fact it is quicker to get to Paris by train than it is to Manchester from London and you can fly to the USA in 9 hours and Australia in less than a day.

There are many other things that have altered over the years, but the one that stands out for me is the change for the disabled, not only the advance in prosthetics but also the change in attitude of the general public. As the founders of the Royal British Legion soon found out, those who were disabled due to conflict, as well as those disabled due to illness of accident, were, in the 1920's, ignored where possible or if necessary locked away so they could not be seen, particularly those with a mental condition.

With so many returning from the front with disabilities the RBL started to change that with financial assistance where possible and of course the Poppy Factory to give work and stability.

In 1948 the Stoke Mandeville Hospital organised the first Wheel Chair Games for British WW2 veterans. This eventually became the Paralympics that we know today, followed by the Invictus Games, the brainchild of Prince Harry.

So today we don't ignore these veterans or all the others with disabilities anymore, but applaud them for their efforts. Who can argue about that attitude, if a Prince of the Realm can sit on his backside and compete with veterans, with no legs, in a game of Volley Ball.

Harry Chapman  
Swanley, Crockenhill and Hextable Branch

## **LEEDS, HOLLINGBOURNE & DISTRICT BRANCH**

To Commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1, Leeds, Hollingbourne & District Branch together with Hollingbourne Meadows Trust Ltd are aiming to create a living memorial, an **Avenue of Remembrance**. Comprising of 100 Hawthorne trees (two rows of 50) with 12 Silver Birch trees forming a circle of peace in the centre. As shown by artist's impression on the attached poster.

Our target is for this ambitious and striking memorial code named **Project 100** to be completed by 11-11-2018.

Funding/donation campaigns have been launched, the arrangements being that funds raised in excess of project costs (if any) will be shared equally between the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust Ltd and this Branch, who in turn will discharge their share into RBL funds and causes.

Those supporting our ambitious project with a donation or by sponsoring a tree (which would be acknowledged by a suitably inscribed plaque) would be joining with us in paying homage to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

### **We will remember them....**

For more information please follow the links below or contact Derek Davison on 01622 880650.

[http://www.hollingbournemeadowstrust.co.uk/Project\\_100.htm](http://www.hollingbournemeadowstrust.co.uk/Project_100.htm)

<https://www.facebook.com/Project100HMTL/>

<https://mydonate.bt.com/donation/donate.html?charity=hollingbournemeadowstrust>

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/hollingbournemeadowstrust>

## **MILITARY BAND CONCERT IN HAWKHURST**

On 10th February, at 7.00 pm, ABF The Soldiers' Charity is putting on a Concert at St Ronan's School, Water Lane, Hawkhurst, TN18 5DJ. The Kohima Band of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment will be playing, supported by the Queen's Regiment Corps of Drums. It will be a lively musical evening in the splendid setting of the school's "Great Space".

Tickets are £16 each and £8 for children (under 16). The organiser is Chris Parkinson, 01580 388402, [cjpgparkinson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:cjpgparkinson@tiscali.co.uk), Beech Cottage, The Street, Benenden, Kent TN17 4DB. Cheques should be made out to ABF The Soldiers' Charity and posted to the organiser, or contact him by phone or email for further information and to reserve your places and be told how to pay by BACS transfer.

*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:

Mrs Dot Jackson BEM	County Vice President
Mr Brian Stone	Ashford
Mrs Audrey Hawkins	Brabourne & Smeeth
Mr David Cole	Dover White Cliffs
Mr Norman Gould	"
Mr Robin Rose	Downs
Mr Roland Bodkin	Dymchurch
Mrs Patricia Feasey	"
Mr Francis Deverill	Eastry
Mrs Sylvia Gould	Hawkhurst
Mr Leslie Sterry	Herne Bay
Mr Michael Wraight	Hythe & Saltwood
Mr Stanley Dudley	Margate
Mr Graham Raulston	Orpington
Mr William Robson	"
Mr Christopher Harnett	Ramsgate
Mr Roger Todd	"
Mr Paul Cox	RBL Village
Mr Ernest Giddings	"
Mr Desmond Hurdidge	"
Mrs Patricia Stables	Sandwich
Mr Charles Stanley	Shoreham
Mr Derek Arnopp	Sidcup & Footscray
Mr Stanley Johnson	"
Dr Arthur Garland	Sittingbourne & Milton Regis - past County Committee
Mrs Frances Richards	Sutton Valence
Mr Eric Rooke	Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable
Mr John Cook	Westerham
Mr Frederick Westwood	Woodchurch



*Our deepest sympathies go to their families and friends*



## KENT COUNTY DIARY OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

Sat	3rd	Branch Management Seminar - Capel Morris Centre (10 am) (Cancelled)
Sun	18th	Regional Standard Bearer Competition - Cobham, Surrey
Sat	17th	Branch Management Seminar - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)

### MARCH

Sat	10th	Branch Management Seminar - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)
Sat	24th	Branch Management Seminar - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)

### APRIL

Sun	1st - 2nd	Medway Steam & Transport Rally - Chatham Historic Dockyard *
Sat	14th	Branch Management Seminar - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)
Fri	20th - 22nd	Branch Treasurer Course - Capel Morris Centre
Sat	28th	Branch Management Seminar - Capel Morris Centre (10 am)

### MAY

Sat	19th - 20th	Annual Conference - Belfast
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### JUNE

Sat	9th - 10th	County Conference Committee Course - Capel Morris Centre
Sun	?	County Parade (Cancelled)
Sat	30th	Armed Forces Day - Great Lines, Gillingham *

### JULY

Fri	6th - 8th	Kent County Show - County Showground, Detling *
Sat	7th	Recruiting Advisor Course - Capel Morris Centre
Sat	13th - 15th	Battles for Victory - Ellington Park, Ramsgate *
Sat	14th	Hythe Armed Forces Day Parade - High Street (10.15)
Sun	22nd	Step Short Parade - Folkestone
Tue	24th-28th	War & Peace Revival - The Hop Farm, Beltring *

### AUGUST

Sun	5th - 9th	GP90 Tour - Ypres Salient and The Somme
Wed	8th	GP90 Tour - March to Menin Gate, Ypres
Sat	18th - 19th	Headcorn Combined Ops Military Vehicle & Air Show *
Sat	25th - 27th	Military Odyssey - County Showground, Detling *
Thu	30th	Pedal to Paris - Greenwich to Dover stage

### SEPTEMBER

Fri	14th - 16th	Branch Treasurer Course - Capel Morris Centre
Sat	15th - 16th	Salute to the '40s - Chatham Historic Dockyard *
Sun	23rd	Centenary Drumhead Service - County Cricket Ground, Canterbury (3 pm)

### OCTOBER

Sun	?	County Standard Bearer Competition - Ditton
Wed	?	Poppy Launch - County Hall, Maidstone
Sat	?	County Poppy Lunch - Brompton Barracks
Sat	27th	Recruiting Advisor Course - Capel Morris Centre

### NOVEMBER

Fri	2nd	Thanet Festival of Remembrance - Winter Gardens, Margate
Sat	10th	Festival of Remembrance - Royal Albert Hall
Sun	11th	Remembrance Sunday & Armistice Day

### DECEMBER

Sat	15th	Carol Service - Capel Morris Centre (2.30 pm)
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### JANUARY 2019

Sat	19th	County Conference - Headcorn Village Hall (1 pm)
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\* County Recruiting Trailer

Updated: 29th January 2018

## Kent County Conferences 2018

### Guest Speaker - Terry Whittles, National Chairman

Three sections – looking back, looking forward and personal comments

#### Looking back:

Very busy year for the Legion. Certainly has been for all members of staff – Head Office, field, care homes and break centres. Me too – and our members and volunteers throughout UK and abroad – so thank you.

Some specifics – I know you know this, but just a summary as a reminder:

- We launched our Five Year Strategy. Four clear priorities
  - **Those We Serve** – must always be our number one priority. We are the largest, but can't do everything and other charities have specialist services that complement ours. Collaboration – me and DG and EB
  - **Championing Remembrance** – centenary this year, but remembrance must continue beyond. Reaching younger and more diverse audiences. Digital platforms being further developed
  - **Strengthening Membership and Volunteering** – felt unloved in the past, recreated Director Membership (and added volunteering). VSU now well developed. Annual Conference I used the phrase "Team Legion" – I see we each have a role to play – Staff, Members, Volunteers and we are all on the same side.
  - **Operational Excellence** – mostly the bits we don't see (Finance, HR, IT, Legal) A lot already under way to improve.

Those are the 4 areas we are focusing on. Now a few highlights.

- Last year, we answered more than a million requests for help from the Armed Forces community, across our Pop-In Centres, website and our contact centre. And I bet there were still more handled locally by branches.
- In April we established the Veterans' Gateway, with our partners (primarily Poppyscotland, SSAFA and Combat Stress). The Veterans' Gateway, which connects veterans and their families to organisations which can help on a wide range of issues including housing, finance, mental health and employment is a great example of how we can work in partnership with other organisations. It provides a one-stop-shop for the Veteran community, funded for the first 2 years by central government (£2m).
- As ever, we can also be really proud of the work done by our Care Homes. Galanos House in Warwickshire is one of The Royal British Legion's six Care Homes, with a specialist Dementia care wing. It turned 50 this year and it has recently been classified Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. Dunkirk Memorial House is also rated as Outstanding and has been formally recognised for its high level of Dementia care. And outstanding is the highest possible award.
- This year also saw us once again supporting Invictus Games competitors and their friends and families through a twelve month programme, culminating in taking 264 family members to watch their loved ones compete in Canada.
- In campaigning, we continued our work to be a powerful voice for the Armed Forces Community. Our Count Them In campaign called for a question in the next census asking whether or not somebody had served or was currently serving in the armed forces so we, other armed forces charities and local authorities will be able to better plan for their needs. The Office for National Statistics initially rejected our request but, following a concerted campaign at both national and local level, well supported by many Legion members, it has now decided to formally recommend a question for inclusion and I am optimistic that the Government will accept that recommendation – particularly as many MPs supported our campaign.

- As Remembrance is one of our 4 strategic priorities, we combined various elements of Remembrance activity at national level into a single Remembrance Team, which includes the NMA – as we know a central focal point for Remembrance in the UK. Our national Remembrance campaign once again asked the nation to ‘Rethink Remembrance’ and it culminated in our Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall. Amongst other things, this year’s festival commemorated the centenary of the Woman’s Auxiliary Corps and also marked the formation of the Royal Air Force Regiment 75 years ago and the centenary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
- The festival was watched by a TV audience of nearly six million viewers with the service and parade at the Cenotaph watched by nearly four million. For the first time, over 100,000 people also took the opportunity to join in the Two-Minute Silence online by visiting our website and our Facebook page.
- We saw the opening of the fantastic new Remembrance Centre at the NMA, where visitors of all ages can now enjoy a wide variety of high quality, interactive activities and an immersive film experience, projected onto multiple screens inside. The Centre has deservedly won a number of awards and I can highly recommend a visit.
- Staying with the NMA for a moment, we held a huge scale event there to commemorate ‘Women at War 100’ which received really positive acclaim.
- We’ve also started to make positive steps in Membership renewals. Over the past twenty years, our Membership has seen a decline of 8% per year in renewals. We’ve worked hard to change our renewals process and as a result, this dropped to 4% last year and we will continue to try and improve that. We currently have 237,000 Members.
- This year also saw a restructure of the Executive Board (more later), strengthening key areas with new Directors appointed in our Membership & Volunteering and our Information Management and Technology functions. We’re putting a huge investment of time, effort and expertise into significant and much-needed improvements in our IT equipment and systems. We are also working hard to fix the basics and aiming to provide a stable IT infrastructure.
- The last financial year was the most successful in our history, raising a total of £104 million. Last year’s Poppy Appeal (to September 2017) raised our highest ever amount, £46.6 million and the early indications are that this year’s is also going to be a great success thanks to all the hard work that took place across all our branches.

#### **So that was last year in a nutshell, now looking forward:**

- 2018, as the centenary of the end of the First World War, is a big year for Remembrance, which is one of our charitable objects. August will see us undertake The Great Pilgrimage 90. But I want to say a bit more about that event later.
- We will also be running a campaign called ‘Thank You’- marking the centenary and giving the public at large, as well as the Legion community, the chance to thank the generation who made that sacrifice and contributed to so much of what we have today. Not just the obvious remembering of the armed forces, but those who stayed behind, those who came up with new ideas and innovations – the whole generation. You will soon hear more about this and how you can get involved.
- In Membership Services, we know there are still huge challenges ahead, which is why Membership is one of the main Legion priorities and a key part of our Corporate Strategy. As a direct result of what you’ve told us, we are focussing on the following areas in 2018:
  - We will continue to support all our members. We know that Legion magazine is an important communication tool but we also need to look to the future at our online and digital presence, to develop ways to engage more effectively. If you have an email address, let Membership Services know as one of the small but important changes is the monthly sending out of a members newsletter by email
  - We will be simplifying our processes and structure, to make it easier for Members to be Members and Branches to be Branches.

- We will be reviewing what it means to be a Legion Member and what we can offer as an organisation to make sure we retain our Members but also that we attract and recruit new Members.
- At Annual Conference I told delegates what my 4 main objectives were as Chairman. I won't test you by having a quiz, but as a reminder: Delivering the strategy; collaboration, both internal and external; producing an effective Legion national group structure and reviewing our internal governance. As part of that last one – reviewing internal governance, I want to ensure our governing document, The Royal Charter, is relevant and up-to-date to fulfil our purpose effectively. Having consulted with external legal experts on our current Charter it became apparent that, were we a new charity approaching the Charity Commission to be registered, our current Charter would not be acceptable. With that in mind I spent some time with internal and external legal bods to identify what changes would be advisable and/or necessary. However, having done some of the initial legwork, my intention now is to review the charter with as many members as possible, probably by holding local roadshows with a view to presenting a revised version at Annual Conference 2019.

I am keen that you, our Members, are the driving force behind this review. My ambition is to ensure that this process is as robust as possible and that Members from every county can have their say. With that in mind, you will shortly be hearing from the Membership Team about how you can get involved in this review.

- As we approach the end of the 100th anniversary commemorations, it's more important than ever that we remain relevant and that people outside the Legion understand the work we do. As a result, we have undertaken a review of how we present ourselves to the outside world, to understand how we can improve that and be as clear as possible about our work and our purpose. Our Members have played a really valuable part in this, taking part in a number of workshops and also through a very useful session at the County Chairmen's conference in September. We will keep you updated as we move this forward.
- Of course, a lot more will be going on throughout 2018 but, apart from business as usual, those are the major upcoming things.

#### **And so on to a few personal comments**

- As Chairman I have, as usual, been kept pretty busy. Aside from lots of meetings (mostly in London), reading papers, writing papers, dealing with correspondence, hosting or meeting with many outside guests and organisations, I have done a fair amount of travelling. In fact I checked my diary for the 12 months October 2016 to September 2017 and found that I spent 141 nights away from home on Legion business. If you're thinking of going for NVC or NC this coming year as both positions will be up for election, just bear that in mind. Trustees aren't quite so busy if you're considering election to one of those positions.
- I represented the Legion at many Remembrance events at home and abroad, including Arras, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, El Alamein (75<sup>th</sup>), the National Commemoration Day in Dublin and, of course, D-Day in Bayeux Cathedral.
- In line with the requirements of tighter legislation affecting all charities and an increasing expectation by the Charity Commission that trustee boards act in a very professional manner, for the first time ever in the Legion's history, I instigated an annual appraisal system for individual trustees, giving each one my view of their performance and, perhaps more importantly, getting their personal views on Legion issues. Individual's views are, of course, kept confidential between me and them. This process has proved very valuable and is being enhanced to include personal development plans for each trustee – I have a meeting on 31 January with the DG and HR Director to bring this about. And before you ask, yes the trustees will shortly be conducting an appraisal on me and my performance.
- Now to Great Pilgrimage 90. Why is it named that? Because in 1928, one year after the completion of the Menin Gate in Ypres, the Legion held the Great Pilgrimage to tour the battlefields and it culminated in a parade on 8 August 1928 at the new Menin Gate. GP90 is both our way of marking the centenary of the end of the First World War and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that Great Pilgrimage. I

have been involved with this event since its inception; in November 2014 I was approached by the Last Post Association as they wanted to commemorate the centenary but did not have the logistical clout to carry through, so could the Legion help? They wanted 11 November, but I advised against that as it falls on a Sunday in 2018, so all Legion hierarchy, royals and senior officials would be at the Cenotaph, so 8<sup>th</sup> August was selected as it marks the first day of the 100 days offensive that finished the war and, as our founder, Field Marshal Haig said, the 8<sup>th</sup> August should be a date never forgotten. It will be the Legion's largest ever membership event, with branches and counties parading their standards, representing both the Legion and their local communities. I would like as many branches as possible to participate; for branches that may have difficulty finding the funds (£1000 in total for a SB and wreath layer for a 5 day tour including transport, accommodation and all meals) some more wealthy branches are offering to assist and some counties are providing a central county fund for this purpose. Additionally there is a national central fund to which Counties and Branches may contribute in order to help other branches throughout the country. It is administered by the Comradeship Funding Group established by the Membership Council and consisting of 2 MC representatives and 5 County and District Chairmen from around the UK. And that's enough on GP90.

- Almost finally I would like to say a few words about our Executive Board, the Board of Directors if you will. At the time of Chris Simpkins' retirement as Director General in August 2016 we had a DG and 6 other directors – Fundraising, Operations (welfare), Marketing, Finance, Commercial and HR. When Charles Byrne moved up to the DG post that left a vacancy in fundraising; within less than a year all the other directors apart from Marketing had also moved on – 3 retired and one became Chief Executive of Combat Stress. Charles, to his credit, took this as a positive opportunity to consider what would be best for today's and tomorrow's Legion rather than just replace like for like, so he consulted both externally and internally and rejigged the responsibilities of the Executive Board. This resulted in a Director General and 7 rather than 6 directors – the seventh being the Director of Membership and Volunteers, Emma Cannings. So, in addition to Charles and Emma we now have Claire Rowcliffe as Director Fundraising (on promotion), Antony Baines as Director Operations (on promotion), Gary Ryan as Director Remembrance and Marketing (the one who stayed!), Daniel Oppenheimer as Director Finance and Commercial (recruited), Paul Clements as Director Information Management and Technology (recruited) and Sue Donaldson as Director HR and Organisational Development (recruited). I have to tell you that I am so pleased that this group has blended well together and there is a huge increase in the amount of cross-organisation work at the highest level, rather than stovepiping we have seen in the past. I work very closely with all the directors, having regular one-to-one meetings with each of them, and have complete confidence in their commitment to the Legion, their quality of leadership and their capability. Might I say the same goes for the Chief Executives of both the NMA and Poppyscotland.
- Finally. I feel very positive about the future of the Legion, the services we offer to our beneficiaries and the way we are working ever more closely with each other internally and with our charity partners. We all have our individual roles, whether it be as a supporter, a volunteer, a member, a part of the membership management structure or a member of staff. I can't do my job without your support – even if you don't see me that often. I repeat; we are all team Legion and I am very proud of our achievements.

## A Case Officer in the Community

*"No one should have no one"* is what Age UK tells us and their website states that over 1.2 million older people in the UK are chronically lonely.

Being a Case Officer in the community, I regularly come across the older, lonely person who has lost touch with family/friends and whom I refer for our befriending service, through BCS ( Branch Community Support ) However, more recently I have seen an increase in the younger client who experiences loneliness through disability/divorce/bereavement. Loneliness can compound ones mental health and lead people to isolate themselves further still from friends and family. The stigma of mental health can make people feel that they have little to offer others, eroding their self- esteem and making it more difficult for them to build relationships.

Last year I visited Jonnie. He called our Contact Centre needing financial assistance and advice- he was struggling to pay his bills. I booked a home visit as Jonnie advised he was looking after his three year old son, Bobbie. When I arrived I was greeted by a very smiley little boy who promptly and politely told me "I'm Bobbie, I'm 3 and my mum's dead"- My heart sank, quickly thinking what I could say next, Bobbie asked "are you any good at 'Meccano?" and he ushered me inside. I told him that I had 3 daughters and I asked if it was like 'lego' to which he replied, "sit down and I'll show you". I found myself sitting on the floor, with Bobbie half on my lap, when Jonnie appeared, promptly apologising that Bobbie had opened the door; thinking that I was his new playmate. No training in the world can prepare you for a situation that I had just faced but I knew this wasn't just a man calling the Legion, requesting financial assistance; this case was far more complex.

Jonnie looked drawn and tired as he slumped into his chair. With my hands on the Meccano but my ears ready to listen, Jonnie thanked for me coming, as if he hadn't expected me to keep the appointment. He was struggling with back pain ( which he had sustained through riding motorbikes as a youngster) , adjusting to being a single parent, along with grieving and financial worries; he broke down in tears. Seeing him cry, Bobbie put his arms around me and said "are you going to make my daddy better?" I looked into Bobbie's eyes and told him "I will do what I can to help and support you and daddy"

It was as if a weight had been lifted, Jonnie smiled, relaxed back in his chair and started to tell me his story. He had been in the RLC for 4 years and when his services were no longer required he became a self employed mechanic, working mainly on motorbikes. His wife, Melanie, had the same passion for speed and thrills and rode her bike daily to work. One night on her way home from work she was involved in an accident and tragically died at the scene.

Jonnie realised he had to re-evaluate his life and that Bobbie was his priority now, so he ceased working and took up the role of full time dad. Like a lot of men, Melanie had been the one who managed the finances, so this was new to Jonnie and he admitted to struggling to making the pennies stretch each month. Being a very proud man, he hadn't asked for any help, until he contacted the Legion and I was so glad that he had made that call.

We addressed each concern as he spoke. Jonnie needed instant help but also long term planning and intervention for him and Bobbie. Jonnie expressed a desire to move nearer to his brother in a different County, not only for support for him and to combat the loneliness, but also it would mean Bobbie could see his cousins. I made a telephone call to the Local Authority so that Jonnie could register for a move and downsize and a Housing officer offered to visit him to talk through his options. I called the local food bank and they arranged food parcels for him. I contacted the local Childrens Centre and they made contact and gave him clothes for Bobbie and gave him parental support too. A telephone call to our Benefit, Debt and Money Advisors proved fruitful as Jonnie wasn't claiming all the welfare benefits that he was entitled to, so I knew that they would support him to maximise his income. Things were looking up for Jonnie and my Meccano skills were improving as I slotted pieces together under the watchful eye of young Bobbie, as we talked!

Over the weeks ahead, I kept in contact with Jonnie and after a few months, his Housing officer called me to advise that a move was imminent and that a 2 bed property had become available near to his brother in a neighbouring town. The Legion financially supported Jonnie with the removal costs to be able to relocate. I wanted to give them as much support as possible with their move, so I contacted the Local Childrens Centre and they supported Jonnie with finding a nursery place for Bobbie, so that he could make new friends. I called upon my links with the Shaw Trust and they have offered Jonnie a voluntary place, assisting young people with

mechanics; which hopefully will give him the confidence to get back into the workplace and continue what he loves. The Local Branch, who had previously signed up for BCS (Branch Community Support) have made contact and visited Jonnie, offering encouragement and support. They were very surprised that a befriending referral was requested for someone so young, but they have welcomed both Jonnie and Bobbie into the local area. He has also registered with a GP and has taken my advice and registered for bereavement counselling. The future looks brighter for Jonnie and Bobbie

So let me take you back to the beginning:

*"No one should have no one"* is what Age UK tells us and their website states that over 1.2 million **older** people in the UK are chronically lonely.

Loneliness doesn't just affect the old and as a Case Officer in the community, I am more aware that the younger men and women need our support to combat loneliness. As you have just heard with Jonnie and Bobbie's story, Case Officers make visits but never really know what to expect until the client tells their story and then we spring into action- providing support, advice, guidance and prevention. Branches play a valuable part in our role and together, we make a difference. Branches that sign up for Branch Community Support are there to help those of all ages and if you haven't already done so, please sign up, so that you too can help the likes of Jonnie and his son, Bobbie.

Nikki Ward

Case Officer for the South East



PROJECT

100

Hollingbourne Meadows Trust  
Community & Nature Activity Centre



## Avenue of Remembrance

The mission is to plant an Avenue of Remembrance with 100 Trees in 2018, to commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1.

We need volunteers and donations.

We are hoping to crowd fund the project.

Please consider a small donation.

Please follow and share our Facebook page.



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**Just <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/hollingbournemeadowstrust>**

**Please make all cheques & cash payable to Hollingbourne Meadows Trust Ltd & post to address below.**

**Making reference to Project 100.**

**Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/Project100HMTL//>**

**Email: [hollingbournemeadowstrust@gmail.com](mailto:hollingbournemeadowstrust@gmail.com)**

**HMTL Web: [www.hollingbournemeadowstrust.co.uk](http://www.hollingbournemeadowstrust.co.uk)**

**RBL Web: [www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/kent](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/kent)**

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# REQUEST FOR COUNTY CEREMONIAL PARTY

Before completing the proforma below, branches/organisations are advised to contact the Membership Support Officer to determine that the proposed date of their parade or ceremony does not clash with a previously arranged event.

*Branches requesting that the County Ceremonial Party attend a parade or ceremony should be aware that the Party in full consists of the County Chairman, the County Parade Marshal and the County Standard Bearer or their deputies.*

Early in the planning stage of any ceremonial event it is advisable for the organisers to invite the County Parade Marshal or his representative to attend a planning meeting so that his advice can be sought, thereby preventing any embarrassing situations arising on the day.

-o0o-

Branch: .....

Event: .....

Day, date and time: .....

Time parade forms up: .....

& .....

Location: .....

Names of additional .....

County Officers required .....

to attend parade: .....

(see paragraph above) .....

Name of branch contact: .....

Appointment: ..... Tel: .....

Approved  
County Chairman: ..... Date: .....

Approved  
Parade Marshal: ..... Date: .....

Please return form to: Membership Support Officer  
The Royal British Legion  
South East Area Office (Kent)  
Royal British Legion Village  
Aylesford  
Kent  
ME20 7NL