

**MINUTES OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION KENT COUNTY**

**NINETY-FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, HEADCORN, KENT**

**ON SATURDAY 20TH JANUARY 2018**

1. Conference opened at 1 pm when the County Chairman, Mr Richard Cast, announced the Entry of the Dignitaries - the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr. Malcolm Greer and the Guest Speaker National Chairman Mr Terry Whittles - escorted by County President Mr Leyland Ridings MBE JP.
2. The Entry of the Standards took place. Those present had a copy of the Roll of Honour and the County President asked that all be remembered during the silence. This was followed by the Silent Tribute and the Calls played by the two Buglers.
3. Prayers were led by the County Padre, the Reverend Canon Paul Kerr and this was followed by the fallout of the Standards.
4. **Notice to Convene Conference** - The Membership Support Officer, Mr Tony West BEM, read out the formal notice convening the RBL Kent County Conference on Saturday 20th January 2018.
5. The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr. Malcolm Greer, gave the Civic Welcome, extending a warm welcome to all members to the Borough of Maidstone. He said he was pleased to see so many who worked on behalf of the Service Community. As mayor he supports a number of charities including the Blackthorn Trust which offers medical care, specialist therapies and rehabilitation through work placements. They offer help to people with mental or physical health difficulties and the latter currently includes disabled ex-Service men from Afghanistan. He thanked Conference for inviting him and his wife saying it was a privilege to be there.
6. Mrs Lynn Selby, Chairman of Headcorn Parish Council, spoke on behalf of the Council welcoming everyone there. She welcomed Conference back to Headcorn adding that she was happy that the Headcorn Branch had been saved from probable closure due to their Legion awareness programme in an expanding village. She said she hoped to see us back in 2019.
7. The County President, Mr Leyland Ridings MBE JP, addressed Conference. He thanked Cllr. Greer and Mrs Selby for their words of welcome and for their presence at Conference saying it was good to be back in Headcorn once again. He then thanked everyone, in particular the delegates, for attending what he was sure would be a very good Conference.
8. The Chairman, Mr Richard Cast, welcomed all delegates and visitors to Conference and introduced the top table namely County Treasurer Mr Stefan Gatward, Guest Speaker Mr Terry Whittles, County President Mr Leyland Ridings MBE JP, Membership Support Officer Mr Tony West BEM, the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr. Malcolm Greer, and the Conference Committee Chairman Mr Ray Mann. He also welcomed all the other guests.
9. **Apologies** - Apologies for absence had been received from:

Viscount De L'Lisle MBE

Brigadier Maurice Atherton CBE JP DL

Mr Harry Garrett

County Patron

County Life Vice President

County Vice President

Mrs Linda Fletcher  
Mr Clifford Butler  
Mr John Todd & Mrs Jenny Todd

County Standard Bearer  
New Romney Branch Delegate  
Canterbury Branch

10. **Agenda Changes** - The Conference Committee Chairman confirmed that there were no amendments or additions to the published Conference Agenda.
11. **Appointment of Scrutineers** - Mrs Ann Austen (Chartham Branch) and Mrs Cherrie Harris (New Romney Branch). Proposed by Maidstone Branch and seconded by Chartham Branch. Carried.
12. **Delegates** - There were **32 delegates representing 30 branches**
13. **The Minutes of the County Conference** held on Saturday 21st January 2017 were taken as read and proposed by Sevenoaks Branch and seconded by Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch with no errors noted or addendums required. Carried.
14. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising.
15. **Annual Report of the County Committee** - The Membership Support Officer read the Annual Report on behalf of the County Committee.
16. **Election of County Committee Members**

The Chairman announced the result of the ballot for County Vice Chairman. There had been two nominations, Mrs Cherrie Harris (New Romney) and Mr Jonathan Webb (Dover White Cliffs). 26 ballot papers had been received and after the count - in the presence of both candidates - it was declared that Mr Webb was the winner and would take up the appointment directly after Conference.

There were two nominations for membership of the County Committee:

Mr Geoff Lees - Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch (3 years)  
Mrs Lisa Wolfe - Cheriton & Morehall Branch (3 years)

Proposed by Dover White Cliffs Branch and seconded by Cheriton & Morehall Branch. A show of hands from the Delegates elected the members to the County Committee.
17. **Election of County Conference Committee Members**

Mr Steve Woolford - Gillingham Branch (re-elected for 3 years)

Proposed by Shoreham Branch and seconded by Canterbury Branch. A show of hands from the Delegates elected the member to the Conference Committee.
18. **The County Vice Presidents**

Proposed by Chartham Branch and seconded by Elham Valley Branch. A show of hands from the Delegates confirmed Mr Harry Garrett, Mr Peter Cooper and Mr Alan Clarke MBE as County Vice Presidents.
19. **County Vice Presidents** It was proposed by Ashford Branch and seconded by Sevenoaks Branch that Mrs Mary Eldridge, a former long standing appointee of the County Committee, be appointed a County Vice President. Carried.

It was further proposed by Ashford Branch and seconded by Shoreham Branch that retiring County Chairman Mr Richard Cast and former County Chairman and current Conference Committee Chairman Mr Ray Mann be appointed Life Vice Presidents and that Vice President Mr Harry Garrett be appointed as a Life Vice President in recognition of his ambassadorial work on behalf of the County and the Legion. Carried.

20. **Presentation of Accounts** - The County Treasurer, Mr Stefan Gatward, presented the County accounts for the year ending 30th June 2017. He commented on several points including an accounting error caused by LOMAS which had to be rectified.

The audited accounts were proposed as accepted by Isle of Sheppey Branch and seconded by Cheriton & Morehall Branch. Carried.

Because these accounts were now more than six months old he also presented an interim report showing the movement of accounts during the period 1st July and 31st December 2017.

21. **County Reports** - All present had copies of the following reports:

- Community Fundraiser's Report
- County Benevolence Officer's Report
- County Recruiting Officer's Report
- County Training Officer's Report
- County Youth Officer's Report
- County Ceremonial Coordinator's Report

Mrs Jane Ayres, Community Fundraiser for West Kent, said that in November 2016 Kent had raised £1.74m but last year this had risen by 10% in West Kent and 12% in East Kent, far exceeding the National increase of 5%. This was due to a very generous public and the hard work of the 170 PAOs and their teams who pulled all the stops out. It was evident that public awareness of commemorations and Remembrance had encouraged donations. The total so far this year had reached £1.5m and was on course to exceed last year's total.

Ms Susan Foster, County Youth Officer, said that although some branches worked well with their affiliated youth organisations others needed to activate their affiliation rather than just have framed certificates on the wall. Groups had approached her during her visits wanting to know and get more involved with their branches. Once the links had been regained there were some youngsters who would be ready for becoming Youth members then getting involved as individuals. A bonus would be that the youngsters would then bring their parents who could then become members themselves. These were the members of the future that so many branches needed in order to survive. It was up to us, the Legion members, to make that first step.

22. **Address by the Membership Council Representative** - The Chairman introduced Mr Mike Alderson who spoke about the Great Pilgrimage (GP90). He reminded everyone of the impressive sight of the 110 Legion Standards at the Festival of Remembrance and said that, to date, 750 standard bearers had signed up for GP90 accompanied by 750 wreath bearers. He spoke about the tour itself and requested that those branches that had not registered seriously consider doing so.

Delegates put a number of questions to him.

- Dover White Cliffs said that more branch members wanted to attend. Mr Alderson said that others could make their own arrangements but they would not form part of the tour or the parade so travel, accommodation and insurance would be down to individuals.

- Royal British Legion Village said that it wanted to carry out its own agenda in the area. Mr Alderson's response was the same as that above.
- Birchington said it couldn't raise the £1,000 needed so it wouldn't be going.
- Staple wanted to know if the tour insurance covered those branches that had paid but were then unable to attend. Mr Alderson said that there were to be no refunds unless the whole tour was cancelled.
- Chartham asked if the residents of Ypres were aware of the event and would they respect the solemnity of the parade and service. Mr Alderson responded that the GP90 team had spend considerable time discussing the tour with the local authorities there and was assured that the event would be respected.

The National Chairman then spoke about the security aspects of the parade in Ypres.

23. **Address by the Area Manager** - The Chairman introduced Mr Craig Spence. Mr Spence spoke about the success of BCS in Kent and of his intention to have another *Meet the Team* day similar to that held last year.

He said he was very pleased with the membership and staff in Kent. He regarded it an excellent county that worked together.

He then spoke about the Legion's **Thank You** campaign this year which says Thank You to the First World War generation - **all who served, sacrificed and changed our world.** We will say Thank You to those people of all nations - not just those who fell on the battlefields, but those who played their part on the home front and those who returned to build a better life for generations to come. In the 100 years since the end of the war there have been many innovations that have changed our lives - poetry, arts, sports, education, multi culturism, votes for women and much more.

Mr Spence then announced a new award, The Area Manager's Award for the Most Outstanding Individual. The MSO read the citation and the award was then presented to Mrs Cherrie Harris of the New Romney Branch.

24. **Address by a Case Officer** - The Chairman introduced Ms Nikki Ward who gave an excellent presentation of *A Case Officer in the Community*, a story of how one seemingly simple request for help turned into something more complex.

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

25. **Presentation of the County Plan** - The County Plan for 2018-2021 was presented to Conference by County Vice Chairman Mr Richard Graham who outlined the major changes. He touched on the importance and input of County Committee before touching on welfare, fundraising and training. Under youth there was the warning that affiliations may, in future, be with County rather than branches. Mr Graham emphasised the need for good speakers who could talk to various groups and spread the Legion word. Conference accepted the Plan with a show of hands.

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

27. **Presentation of County Awards** - The Chairman invited the Mayor and the National Chairman to present the awards.

**MOORE TROPHY**  
(Branch efficiency)

**New Romney Branch**

<b>NEWPORT CUP</b> (Branch with largest percentage membership increase)	<b>Staple Branch</b>
<b>MUNGEAM CUP</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Winner)	<b>Mr Paul Austen</b> Chartham Branch
<b>1945-1995 ANNIVERSARY SHIELD</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Runner Up)	<b>Mr Julian De Zille</b> Downs Branch
<b>BANGER CUP</b> (Standard Bearers Competition Novice Winner)	<b>Mr Mervyn McAllister</b> Dover White Cliffs Branch
<b>JOHN PARTRIDGE SHIELD</b> (Standard Bearer showing most progress in the year)	<b>Mr Barry Rampton</b> Staple Branch

County Certificates were presented to Mrs Jan White (Birchington), Mr Jim McDonald (Cheriton & Morehall), Mrs Mary Eldridge (Downs), Mr Derek Davison (Leeds & Hollingbourne) and Mr Phil Bushell (Royal British Legion Village).

28. **County Chairman's Address** - The Chairman began by talking about the commemorative and other events held during 2017 and thanking branches for their involvement.

He mentioned the County's success in BCS and singled out Mrs Cherrie Harris for praise as she had spent time visiting branches, explaining BCS to them and getting them to register and report their activities.

The re-formation of a new County branch, the Invicta Branch, was one of his major successes and he said that he would be actively involved as its Chairman. He praised the County for its fundraising efforts, particularly at Remembrancetide. He then challenged the branches to talk to people about the Legion and recruit them so that their branches and the Legion Kent can continue into the future.

He ended by saying that on stepping down as Chairman he had a lot of people to thank, in particular his committee, sub-committees and the MSO.

Mr Cast then announced a new award, named after his late wife, to be presented to the branch most involved in BCS. Mr Cast's daughter, Miss Sammie Cast, and the National Chairman then presented the Pauline Cast Shield for Branch BCS Efficiency to its first recipient, Swanley, Crockenhill & Hextable Branch.

29. **Motions** - There were no motions submitted to Conference.
30. **Annual Conference Delegate** - A show of hands from the Delegates agreed that the new County Chairman, Mr Richard Graham, should represent Kent at the 2018 Annual Conference in Belfast.
31. **Address by Guest Speaker** - The Chairman introduced the National Chairman, Mr Terry Whittles.

He began by reporting on the Five Year Strategy, launched last year, which has four clear priorities:

- Those We Serve
- Championing Remembrance
- Strengthening Membership and Volunteering
- Operational Excellence

He went on to say that more than a million requests for help were received in 2017 and spoke about the launch of the Veterans' Gateway contact centre, our Care Homes and our involvement in and support for the Invictus Games in Canada.

Mr Whittles highlighted how Remembrance has played a big part in the Legion year and how it has helped make the financial year the most successful in our history. A total of £104 million was raised with £46.6 million during the Poppy Appeal - again, the highest ever.

This coming year sees commemorations for the end of the First World War and also the Great Pilgrimage (GP90) to Ypres and the surrounding area. Our 'Thank You' campaign gives everyone to thank the WW1 generation that contributed so much to what we have today. Not just the armed forces but those that were left behind too.

Membership is one of the main priorities and more is to be done to simplify processes and support the members. This would include changes to the Royal Charter which was deemed to be unwieldy and largely irrelevant.

Mr Whittles finished with an overview of his personal responsibilities as National Chairman thanking all those who made his job possible and saying how proud he was of team Legion and its achievements.

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

32. **Questions to the Guest Speaker** - Two questions from Canterbury Branch had been sent to the National Chairman prior to Conference.
- The first asked if the Legion had been involved in the Invictus Games and whether Prince Harry's involvement had been recognised. Mr Whittles referred to articles in the Legion magazine that showed how support was given to the wives and families of the UK competitors both at home and in Canada.
  - The second concerned the re-production of large 11.11.11 flags to be flown from buildings. Mr Whittles said there were no plans at present to re-introduce them.
  - Mr Ray Mann then asked Mr Whittles if the changes to the Royal Charter, mentioned in his address, would also mean change to the Membership Handbook. Mr Whittles replied that yes, there would be changes and the Membership Council had a small working group looking specifically at this document.
33. **Donations** - The Chairman invited branches to present donations to the County President who expressed sincere thanks to those branches on behalf of the County. Donations were:
- |       |                              |
|-------|------------------------------|
| £300  | Sevenoaks Branch             |
| £250  | Shoreham Branch              |
| £1000 | Leeds & Hollingbourne Branch |
34. **County Conference 2019** - It was announced that the next County Conference would be held on Saturday 19th January 2019 at Headcorn Village Hall.
35. **Charge of County Standard Bearer** - The Parade Marshal mustered the Standard Bearers and the County President charged the outgoing County Standard Bearer Mrs Linda Fletcher (deputised by Mr Julian de Zille in her absence) thanking her for her service over the past year, and charged the new County Standard Bearer, Mr Paul Austen, welcoming him to the post.
36. **Destroy Ballot Papers** - There were no ballot papers.
37. **Vote of Thanks** - The County Vice Chairman, Mr Richard Graham, thanked all persons involved with Conference on behalf of the Conference Committee and the County Committee. He gave special thanks to the dignitaries, the guests, the Parade Marshal and Standard Bearers, to the 1st aiders, photographers and raffle ladies and to those at

Headcorn Village Hall. Presentations were made to the Mayor and Mayoress and to Mr and Mrs Whittles.

38. **Handover of Office** - The outgoing Chairman, Mr Richard Cast, then handed over the Chairman's Jewel to his successor, Mr Richard Graham.
39. **The National Anthem** was followed by the March Off of the Standards.
40. **Close of Conference** at 5.05 pm - the County Chairman thanked all for their attendance.
41. **The Raffle Results** were then given to Conference - the raffle raised £366.

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