

County News

***The Newsletter of
Worcestershire County
Royal British Legion.***

Spring 2012 Edition

COUNTY CONFERENCE NEWS



COUNTY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

County Chairman's Report to the Worcestershire County Annual Conference – Bromsgrove Civic Centre - Saturday 14th January 2012

Distinguished Guests, County Vice President, Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to address you for the first time at our annual conference as your County Chairman. For the next few minutes, I will take this opportunity to give you a insight into what The Royal British Legion has achieved in the past year, along with an overview of the important challenges we face together in 2012 and beyond. In particular, I will reflect on the County's achievements over the past year and our plans for the coming 12 months.

For the County, our year started with two pieces of really sad news. Firstly in January, due to ill health both Jeff King our Chairman and Trevor Barry our Vice Chairman were forced to announce their resignations. Jeff took over as County Secretary from John Kimberley in 1991 and remained in post until 2009 when he succeeded Ken Draper as our County Chairman. Jeff has been a very busy chap over his many, many years with the Legion, and not least amongst the appointments he has held he was the County Training Officer, County Press Officer and more recently, the Webmaster (though I think the last appointment sounds more as though he's playing an on-line internet game of Dungeons and Dragons). In recognition of his many years of hard work and time given to Worcestershire County, the County Management Board unanimously agreed at a recent meeting that we should appoint Jeff to the position of a County Life Vice-President. We offer our sincere thanks to Jeff for his many years of devotion and for a job well done.

The second piece of sad news was of Trevor Barry's untimely death on Thursday 3 March in St Richards Hospice. He will remain an inspiration to us all as he epitomized the Legion's motto and always put 'service before self.'

The vacancies were dealt with by the County Committee at their first meeting of the year on 28th January: David Waldron and I were appointed by the Committee to serve as Vice Chairman and Chairman respectively until elections could take place in the autumn of last year. I know that David and I feel very humbled to be walking in the footsteps of our predecessors, and we would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who has given us so much support during the past 11 months.

The Royal British Legion celebrated its 90th Anniversary during 2011. If ever we needed a reminder of the power and influence of this great organization, the Legion's campaigning achievements of 2011 say it all. Following an intensive media and political campaign lead by the Legion across the length and breadth of the country, the Prime Minister announced last May that the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant would be written into the new Armed Forces Act. By doing so it ensured that Armed Forces personnel will be treated fairly in return for their service to the nation. This announcement came with a support package worth £40–£50 million for health, housing and education. As a result of this historic breakthrough, Service personnel and their families across the UK can now look forward to a fairer and more secure future.

Later, in November, we welcomed as a victory for bereaved military families, the Government's change of heart allowing the Chief Coroner to be appointed. This U-turn followed vigorous campaigning by the Legion – this time harnessing the power of our social media. We launched a fully-fledged Facebook campaign “Leave it out Ken”, encouraging members of the public to email their local MP and to seek their support for the cause. As a result, the Justice Secretary Ken Clarke did just that and overturned his earlier decision to abolish the position of Chief Coroner as part of the Public Bodies Bill.

Over the course of the year, energetic supporters rode, ran, climbed and trekked their way across a variety of countries and terrains to raise money for us. The 16th Pedal to Paris saw 300 cyclists ride 460km through English and French countryside before bringing Paris to a standstill, raising hundreds of thousands of pounds in the process. On foot over 70 runners took to the streets of London on a warm April day to raise £100,000 for the Legion by running the London Marathon. 20 intrepid explorers on the Freedom Trail retraced the escape route across the Pyrenees taken by escaping British and Allied Service men during World War Two. And most extreme of all was Lt Col Henry Worsely and his fellow Service personnel who recreated the Scott-Amundsen race across Antarctica to the South Pole. The two teams set out on Armistice Day, each recreating the routes taken by Captain Scott and Roald Amundsen. In the past 24 hours I have heard that they reached the South Pole sometime on 9th January.

In Worcestershire we held an excellent service in the cathedral to mark the anniversary; it took place on the very birthday of the Legion and was the only one of a series of about 40 cathedral services across the whole county to actually hold it on the special day. During 2012, we intend to hold another service in Mid-May and to make a special invitation to all those concerned with the Falklands Conflict to join us to mark their 30th anniversary. On Saturday 2nd July, a County Rally and Drumhead-service took place in Catshill near Bromsgrove, and thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of Lickey End branch, we were able to combine the rally with their branch fun-day. Due to the considerable efforts of Shaun McCarthy our County Secretary and his wife Jean, a special 90th Anniversary Tea-Party was held in Kidderminster Town Hall on 4th June. Every Legion member in the county who was 90 or more years old was invited, a superb afternoon of musical entertainment was laid on, and the Mayor of Kidderminster made a special point of going around the room during the tea and talking to all of special guests. It was a memorable afternoon.

These events gave us excellent opportunities to engage with the press and local radio to highlight the work we do. Of course, you can only maximize on such a golden opportunity if you have a good Press Officer and, in this county, we have one of the best. Since Alan Kelly's appointment last January, he has launched himself into the task with gusto and great professionalism and we should recognize the brilliant job he is doing for us. Thank you Alan! Not least amongst his achievements has been the new format County Newsletter; I know he's currently working on the next edition and this should be dispatched to all branches in February. Under the auspices of a County Training Day, a series of briefings for Branch Chairmen, Secretaries and Treasurers was held at Claines on 8th October. A turnout of about 40 was better than at some events held during the year. Nevertheless, it still left a lot to be desired and every effort to support the activities and events of the county should be made by our branches. We can and must do better.

On the 5th August we had more sad news when we learnt of the death of Beryl Eades in the Royal Worcestershire Hospital. At the time of her death, Beryl was in Office as Chairman of the Littleworth & District Branch. Beryl gave so much help and support to her branch, Worcester County and at the Legion's Annual National Conference where she had served as a scrutineer for many years.

As Remembrancetide approached, the general public came out in force to support the Legion. With great support from the Mayor of Worcester, we held a Poppy Appeal Launch on the steps of Worcester's Guildhall. The County President even managed to squeeze into his RAF uniform for the first time in many years, and we were joined by the cast of the sell-out musical 'Oh What a Night'. I should tell you that the concluding section of the first half of the show was a very moving Remembrance tribute to the men and women of the two world wars and the more recent conflicts. A cheque for £2,000 for the Poppy Appeal was presented to me on the final night of the show. Also joining us for the Poppy Appeal Launch was a widow of the conflict in Afghanistan. The presence of Teresa Scully and her three beautiful children reminded everyone witnessing the Launch that we are here for today's generation of service personnel and their families; during the Act of Remembrance, Teresa kindly agreed to recite the Kohima Epitaph.

The 90th anniversary has given us all time to reflect some important facts: how over the past nine decades we haven't changed (this conference as an example) and how we are different – now a multi-million pound business enterprise. Today, the Legion is the largest charity supporting the ex-service community and is bigger than the next 5 added together; we spend nearly £1½ million per week on health and welfare support.

In January 2011 we took over the running costs of the Personnel Recovery Centre at Edinburgh, one of five PRCs that will be created to assist wounded, injured and sick Service personnel to recover and either return to duty or, with support, move successfully into civilian life.

The PRC's at Catterick and Tedworth House in Wiltshire are now open as is the Battle Back Centre at Lilleshall near Telford in the West Midlands. This state of the art facility will be a national centre of excellence for adaptive sport and adventurous training designed to accelerate physical, psychological and social recovery of wounded, sick and injured Service personnel. In December we launched The Royal British Legion Centre for Blast Injury Studies at Imperial College London. The Royal British Legion is providing £5 million to establish the centre, the first collaboration of its kind in the UK. The new centre will seek to increase understanding about blast injury patterns, improve treatments and recovery and develop better ways of protecting those serving in current and future conflicts - thus reducing the long-term impacts of such injuries on individuals, their families and the community.

Throughout the year and across the country, the level of public support for the work that we do has been unprecedented; the public's response should give us all fresh motivation to ensure that the Legion continues to develop and improve. We need both volunteers and staff. The staff can't do it without you. And likewise, we need to recognize and fully embrace that fact that members and volunteers can't do it without professional support. It's a partnership. Members, volunteers and staff share a common purpose – to stand shoulder to shoulder with all who serve and to support them, elderly and young alike. All of us here in this room today have one common bond and that is our commitment to support our Armed Forces community ...past present and future. Let us therefore at this meeting reaffirm to do the very best by the service men and women of this country

and of course their families. 2012 promises to be an equally busy and challenging year where the interests of our Armed Forces personnel – in active service across the world – remain ever prominent in the public consciousness. With continuing pressure on government resources and the backdrop of redundancies and changes to the Reservist capability, our relevance to the existing Armed Forces community is more vital than ever before. Are we up for the challenge? Will the Legion continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with all who serve? With your continued support, enthusiasm and energy I know that we will.

Anthony Hartley-Woolley MBE JP
Chairman, Royal British Legion Worceste

AWARD PRESENTATION

During the County Conference on January 14th Ken Draper, Life County Vice- President presented long service medals and the following awards

Branch efficiency

Pritchard Cup (branch with 300 or more members). Wythall Branch.
Taffy Mathews Cup (branch with fewer than 300 members) Lickey End Branch.
Runners up. Littleworth and District Branch.

Poppy Appeal Awards, based on greatest percentage increase over three years.

Poppy Appeal Cup. Harltebury Branch.
Una Worrall Trophy for second place. Birtsmorton Area PAO.

Standard Bearers Cup.
Winner of the annual Standard Bearer's Competition. Ferril Green. Beckford and Ashton-Under-Hill Branch.
Runner up. Alan fish. West Malvern Branch.

See front cover for the images.

FRAUD WARNING

Though not novel, recently there have been many attempts to obtain money by deception from Legion members over a wide area, including one notorious individual. Avon and Somerset Police have issued a “Wanted” notice for this person who is now operating East of England, where there have been cases reported in Nottinghamshire, Essex and Norfolk.

Certainly, Branches are vulnerable especially due to the insignificant sums sought, which may well have been handed over in good faith, no doubt in some cases as a refund from the County should be forthcoming, given the alleged circumstances of the individual.

Whilst County Staff throughout this region and beyond have alerted Branches to the scams perpetrated, it may be prudent to remind all Branches that members need to be aware of the welfare procedures for cases where individuals seek urgent financial support to get out of a difficulty. Also, it seems necessary to reiterate that the Royal British Legion is not an emergency service, and reassure both Branches and Clubs that there is help available for anyone in dire need from statutory authorities, such as the local Police or Adult Social Services (0344 8008014), who have the facility to arrange bail warrants or deposit of funds from next of kin.

BRANCH TALK OFFER

We have had an offer from some one who has done much research into Op Freshman” upon which the film “The Heroes of Telemark” was loosely based. If any branches are interested, please contact the County Secretary, Shaun McCarthy

COUNTY WEBSITE

Don't forget to visit our Website on a regular basis for all the latest news.

www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/worcestershire/groups--branches

NATIONAL AWARD OF GOLD BADGE.

The cost of the National Award of a Gold Badge has increased considerably since the last order for Gold Badges was put forward in 2010. The reason for this is the increase in the price of gold by 46%, and also the increase in VAT from 17.5% to 20%. This has increased the cost of a Gold Badge from £168.00 to £228.00 per Badge. Please note that a new order for Gold Badges is being submitted and the cost for the Badges once received will be £228.00 per Badge

COUNTY YOUTH OFFICER

My name is Dot Baker, I have been a member of Lickey End Branch of The Royal British Legion for 3 years. I joined the legion as my partner is a former serviceman, and his passion for the legion has been passed on to me.

I have 3 children of my own, though 2 are now adults themselves. I have been working in education settings for 15 years and I am qualified to work with people 16 and under.

I hope therefore to translate the skill sets I have acquired, on to the British Legion's Youth membership.

I will try to contact as many youth organisations as I can within the county and grow membership through these channels. I am open to any ideas anyone may have as long as they are positive.

If you have cadets or youth groups within your area, please contact me by e-mail : dotdjb@hotmail.co.uk

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES SUB COMMITTEE

The County has formed a new Events and Activities sub Committee made up with a mixture of County Committee and non County Committee members. The aims of which is to organise events and activities within the County, and to give any assistance to Branch events where help is needed.

The first meeting was held on 16th February, and various events within the county were discussed. If you are organising an event within Worcestershire, please contact me.

Dave Waldron.
Chairman Events and Activities Committee.
01905 453997

“OH WHAT A NIGHT”

‘Oh What a Night’

The Worcester Musical Theatre Company (WMTC) show at The Swan Theatre in Worcester closed after a very successful. With a ‘Remembrance’ section the musical variety show which started on 11th November featured local standard bearers, children from Claines School and buglers from the local Boys Brigade.

After a chance meeting with the producer of this years show Annette Summers, Acting County Manager and Shaun McCarthy, County Secretary worked with the group and provided information and advice on the Remembrance section of the show, Shaun also organised the Standard Bearers which represented both Worcestershire County, local branches and Women’s Section.

Speaking after the last night, Val Knight the producer said, ‘It was a great day when I met you at the 2010 launch of the Poppy Appeal and we started to make our plans. You have been so very nice to work alongside and I hope we will do so again, one day in the future’

The County Chairman, Tony Hartley-Wooley attended the final performance and was presented with a cheque by WMTC President Dick Saunders for £2000 towards this years Poppy Appeal. Tony thanked the company by saying ‘Oh what a show, Oh what a cheque’. They donated the proceeds from the raffle held at each performance and donations made for the souvenir program to this years appeal.



COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Worcestershire's Poppy Appeal 8% up £529,323.13

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone concerned. The Poppy Appeal Organisers, the volunteer collectors and the branches for all their hard work to make this Poppy Appeal so successful.

When talking to the Poppy Appeal Organisers a common theme has arisen. New volunteers are needed to support the fundraising activities around the County. I would ask, as a matter of urgency for the Branches to ask their members to volunteer to run or help run a fundraising activity during the year and to support the Poppy Appeal Organiser during the Appeal.

I do want to emphasise the importance of volunteer run activities. You are seen by the public as the experts from the Legion. You will raise more funds for the Welfare work because the very fact you are a volunteer adds gravitas and respect.

With your help I will be approaching companies throughout Worcestershire to increase corporate fundraising. I need your help with companies you might have worked for in the past, companies you might have run or are still employed by. If you know of companies that always seem to add a little extra to the collection tin each year, these are the companies I want to talk to. The level of fundraising they do will vary and depend very much on the company itself. I have fundraising ideas I can discuss with the company, from company car washes to departmental challenges to sponsored Golf tournaments.

I will be promoting 'Honour Walks' this year. Head Office has produced a pack we can give to volunteers to organise a sponsored walk, bike ride or clay pigeon shoot. If you would like me to go through the pack with you please let me know.

We have posters from Head Office and will be getting these up around the County in the next few weeks. Please let me know if we can put them in your Club or in your local pub. If you have any contacts with local walking clubs like the Ramblers please approach them to advertise and organise a sponsored walk on our behalf.

Please do get in touch with me if you would like to discuss any of the above or if you have any fundraising ideas I can help with.

Nick Martin – Community Fundraiser – 07721 432 921 nmartin@britishlegion.org.uk

ARTICLES FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER

As this is **your** newsletter if you have any news or forthcoming events then please send them to the County Press Officer. It is intended to publish a newsletter on a quarterly basis, so we need input from our members and branches. The articles are normally included on the County Website as well.

Alan Kelly. E-mail: alan@alkel.co.uk. Telephone: 0121 445 2574.

EYES RIGHT PROJECT

Eyes Right is a prevention project, aimed at reducing the incidences of avoidable sight loss within the county. A staggering 50% of sight loss is preventable and we hope that, by awareness raising and through free simple eye checks, we can make a difference. The project is aimed predominantly at the 50+ age group because this tends to be the time when sight problems start to develop and the team can be booked to deliver talks and/or to conduct sight checks. The sight checks do not replace a full eye examination, but they have been useful in helping people to identify that there may be a problem and the team will give advice about making an opticians appointment if they feel this is required.

For more details, or to arrange a talk to your branch, contact the co-ordinator of Sight Concern Worcestershire's Eyes Right Project, Kath Cheer on 01905 723245 kath@sightconcern.co.uk.

REGIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISOR

An ex Royal Green Jacket, Scott Darrington, is now employed by the Royal British Legion as the Regional Health & Safety Advisor for the Midlands area. In his statement, Scott says:

"I have only been in the post a few weeks and have met so many people. I am overwhelmed by the contributions made by volunteers and clear dedication of employees, with one goal, helping ex/current Service personnel and families.

Health & Safety has had a rough ride over recent years; with the press not helping matters. I believe a common sense approach, good communication, understanding, involvement and planning is vital to help organizations comply and understand current H&S legislation. Health & Safety should never be a burden, good Health and Safety works in the back ground and should flow with the specific job. I understand simple changes can affect different people, but it is how those changes are communicated and managed that makes the difference.

I am here to provide advice and give clear direction on Health & Safety issues you may encounter whilst working for the Royal British Legion. I do not know all the answers and I challenge any Health & Safety professional who does, but I can certainly find out, so use me. I am new to this Charity so don't just tell me or I will forget, don't show me because I will just remember, involve me because I will learn! "

Contact details:

Scott Darrington

Mobile: 07585 883406

Email: SDarrington@britishlegion.org.uk

ARMY RUGBY UNION

The Royal British Legion is one of the sponsors of the Army Rugby Union, to acknowledge this ongoing support the ARU has released a commemorative RBL poppy design rugby shirt.

The shirt is black in colour, design features falling poppies to the shoulders front and back. Lone soldier silhouette to the front and cenotaph to the back of the shirt. Left arm as worn the Royal British Legion logo, to the right arm as worn the Royal British Legion 90th anniversary logo. To the centre of the chest to the front of the shirt is 11.11.11, ARU crest to the left chest and the words 'We Will Remember Them' to the back of the shirt.

The link below is to the ARU shop webpage, which also features the promotional video for this new shirt. A percentage of the profits made from the sales of these shirts will be donated by the Army Rugby Union to the Royal British Legion.

<http://shop.armyrugbyunion.org.uk/products/Black-Poppy-Shirt.html>

The Army Rugby Union Team will play against Worcester Warriors at Six Ways on Wednesday 7th March.

COUNTY EVENTS

March 29th. Lord Lieutenants Awards Evening. The Guild Hall, Worcester.

March 31st/ April 1st. Branch Treasurer's Training Course, more details from County Secretary.

April 23rd. Saint George's Day Dance hosted by Lickey End Branch. Tickets and raffle tickets available from branch Secretary, Alan Kelly. 0121 445 2574.

May 13th. Evensong at Worcester Cathedral. Service of Rededication and Commemoration of the Falklands Campaign.

May 19th/ 20th. Annual Conference 2012.

If you have any events taking place in the county, please let the County Press Officer, or County Secretary know, for inclusion in the next newsletter and also on the County

CONTACTS PAGE

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01905 453997

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01905 621458

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