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### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Welcome to your first issue of *Legion* in 2021. The quiet New Year's Eve celebrations may be behind us now, but this issue still marks a fresh start.

This year, the Royal British Legion will celebrate its 100th anniversary. In 1921, when it was founded, the essential principles of Remembrance, fundraising and looking after your community were very much present, but the past 100 years have seen a great deal of change in how we pursue those goals. Our A Century of Service photo story

(page 22) shows the evolution of the RBL's activities and the leaps forward we have achieved. You can also read about the celebrations that branches are planning (page 42). Last year, I was greatly inspired by the many examples of your activities, and I look forward to visiting branches in 2021 to thank you personally. The grassroots are the RBL and without you we would not exist. Well done.

Over the past three years, the RBL has worked closely with its members to develop its brand. A new approach has been developed to ensure that

the RBL's identity is clear, easily communicated and fully representative of our members' incredible work and support for the Armed Forces community. In these pages, you'll read out how our new brand has been brought to life and how branches can

about how our new brand has been brought to life and how branches can start to put it in place across their online and real-life platforms.



I was also moved by the story of David Norris in this issue's Badge of Honour (page 56). Mr Norris served as a Radar Mechanic in the 1950s, carrying out his National Service in West Germany. It made me think of my husband Peter, a past Chairman of the RBL, who was also a Radar Mechanic in the same decade, serving in the RAF. Mr Norris writes of not knowing what the Army's role was in repelling potential Soviet invasion

until years later, but fulfilling his duty regardless. As the RBL looks to its next 100 years, the quiet service and sacrifice of the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families will remain central to all we do.

Una Cleminsor,

UNA CLEMINSON BEM TD National Chairman

For queries relating to the Royal British Legion, call 0808 802 8080 (8am-8pm, seven days a week, free from UK landlines and main mobile networks)

### **BE THERE FOR THE ARMED** FORCES COMMUNITY, WHEN THEY NEED YOU MOST.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, many who never imagined they would need support have come forward to us to seek help. They include people who may be isolated from their families, feeling lonely, facing homelessness, struggling to feed their children, and men and women in financial crisis.

There is now a new way you can donate to the Legion and improve even more lives. Our Poppy Supporters are an exceptional group of people who give a monthly gift to the Legion, ensuring financial, practical, and emotional assistance for our Armed Forces community all year round.

Will you consider becoming a Poppy Supporter today by giving £10 a month or more?

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HE ROYAL BRITIS LEGION





# Contents

FEBRUARY 2021



### IN THIS ISSUE

### 18 My Legion

Mark Bowling, President of the Chonburi Branch, Thailand, and David Powell, Mayor of Horley

#### 22 A century of service We delved into our records to

find out how the RBL has changed over the past 100 years

- 32 You asked, we answered How the RBL is tackling social isolation, welfare services and resource management
- 38 A brand that's fit for the future Introducing our redesigned identity, with the poppy at its heart
- 42 A year of celebration Find out how branches are planning to mark the RBL's centenary

### 48 Thank you to our

Ę

fundraising heroes How members made a success of the toughest Poppy Appeal ever

### Find us on Facebook @OfficialPoppyLegion

### REGULARS

- 3 Welcome from National Chairman Una Cleminson
- 6 News
- 56 Badge of Honour
- David Norris, Radar Mechanic, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, British Army of the Rhine, 1955-1958 60 Reunions 63 Lost Trails 65 Letters

winner in para bobsleigh



### NEWS

A round-up of the latest RBL stories making headlines

### Heritage heroes

The iconic sarsen stones of Stonehenge provided an impressive canvas for a projected tribute to the UK's heritage heroes, who ensured that visitor attractions remained open in 2020. Individuals representing eight organisations that have benefited from National Lottery Heritage Fund support, including the National Memorial Arboretum, which is part of the RBL, featured in December's display.

Volunteer Mick Byrne, depicted holding a poppy wreath, was chosen to represent the 227 volunteers who are essential to the smooth running of the 150-acre site. Since the Arboretum reopened to the public last June, after a nearly three-month closure due to COVID-19, the volunteer team have donated hundreds of hours of their time in front-of-house roles, tending the grounds and doing other vital work behind the scenes.

The Arboretum and the National Lottery Heritage Fund have a long association. A £2.85 million grant was used to support the Arboretum's Remembrance Centre Appeal, while a further grant of £297,000, received in autumn 2020, has ensured that the site can remain freely open to all.

Mark Ellis, Head of Visitor Experience at the Arboretum, said: "Since we reopened, visitors have told us that they feel safe and secure, that they enjoy their visit and that, most of all, they find our team to be helpful and friendly. This is a credit to the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of all of our volunteers." INTRODUCTORY OFFER FOR LEGION READERS

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Catalogue



### 75+1 YEARS OF FREEDOM FOR SARK

In 2020, the island of Sark, in the Channel Islands, marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day in lockdown, along with the rest of Britain. But there was another, unique 75th anniversary that also had to be delayed. 10th May 1945 was Sark's Liberation Day; the Channel Islands were the only part of the British Empire (in law) to be occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

However, the Sark Branch of the Royal British Legion was able to hold a Remembrance service as normal in November, despite the pandemic.

"As a group of islands, we completely restricted travel, with strict guarantine and testing," explains John Hunt, the branch's Treasurer. "So Sark has never had any cases, and in November we were able to hold events exactly as we would have any other year."

From a population of just 490, the branch boasts 40 members, some of whom live off-island. The Remembrance service and parade were attended by 120 residents, and along with a 'Pyjama Day' and lunch, the branch raised £2,505.85 for the Poppy Appeal.

Members hope 2021 will bring more opportunity to celebrate. "We were going to hold a huge event for Liberation Day," says John. "There's a small core of islanders still here who lived through the occupation, including our Chairman, Lt Col Reg Guille MBE. We'll try again this year, and we're calling it 75+1."

#### Talk to us on Twitter @PoppyLegion

### **Branch Community** Support gets a fresh new approach

"The idea of Branch Community Support is essentially as old as the Royal British Legion itself," says lane Britton, Acting Social Isolation Lead. The idea that branches are best placed to deliver local support is foundational to the RBL, and since 2016, this has been known as Branch Community Support (BCS). "Now we want to make BCS easier and more accessible."

Telephone buddy Patrick Lanigan

To that end. Matt Ford joined the organisation last year in the new role of BCS Partnership Development Worker. One of the first things he has done has been to establish a working group, with representation from active BCS branches, chaired by John Boisson, BCS MC Rep, who will oversee the future of BCS.

"Branches that do good work should be recognised," says Matt. "For example, the incredible 38,000 phone calls to isolated people in 2020."

If your branch is interested in hearing more, get in touch with BCS on Office 365 or Yammer, or email bcs@britishlegion.org. uk. "We know our branches are keen to attract new members," says lane. "We think that BCS offers something really active and responsive that will attract new members who want to help their communities.'

### Telling our story

The RBL is honouring 100 years of making a difference in the Armed Forces community by piecing together its rich history in an online showcase.

We want to hear your stories so that we can celebrate the incredible work it is today. For more done every day across the charity. We are looking for

**RBL**-related records, artefacts, experiences and anecdotes that tell the story of our first century. This is your chance to share how your and others' work has made the RBL the amazing organisation information, go to rbl.org.uk/tellingourstory



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### MEMBERSHIP TRAINING A new, blended approach

Our branches take part in many aspects of the Royal British Legion, from managing community events to keeping funds safe. Our work could not happen at the level it does without the effective action of members. To this end, the RBL offers courses on everything from treasurer training to branch management. This is crucial for us to remain compliant with laws governing the behaviour of charities, while also helping to maximise our impact.

Since 2019, the RBL has been reviewing its training material with the help of members such as Hugh Ashton-Moore, County Chairman for Buckinghamshire. After much discussion among working groups made up of members, County Training Officers and other stakeholders. a blend of online and face-to-face training was settled upon.

"We only had face-to-face training

before and had to get people physically booked into a venue," explains Hugh. "But now I can have four branches online instead of just one in a room."

Hugh is excited about the flexibility that this offers. "People who work can come home, have their tea and then do a two-hour course. It will make such a difference."

Easier and guicker access to courses is key to keeping everyone up to date. Members will now be able to obtain the skills and awareness required for their role, something that is also beneficial for overseas branches.

"Later this year, we will have a fit-for-purpose training system that is totally universal," says Hugh. "And I am very excited about that." To find out more about the changes to Membership Training, contact membershiptraining@ britishlegion.org.uk

"Now I can have four branches online instead of just one in a room"

### **INCREASE IN** MEMBERSHIP FEE

A reminder to members that the RBL's annual membership fee has increased from £17 to £18, as agreed in a vote by members at the 2020 Annual Conference. This change came into effect on 1st January 2021



Redcar RBL Branch Chairman Eric Howden, who served with the Royal Ordnance Corps, in front of the mural in the town's Garden of Remembrance Redcar's Garden of Remembrance stands on the direct hit from an enemy air raid on 21st October 1941, killing 15 people. Situated across the road from the North Yorkshire town's Cenotaph, the garden has flourished over the past 20 years since a group was set up, led by Eric Howden (Redcar RBL's Branch Chairman), to make the site into a place that people could visit and pay their respects.

blank," explains Eric. "A local artist, Drew Allan, agreed to do a mural for us at half the cost. And paint and erect the scaffolding for free." Even with the difficulties of lockdown and gale-force winds, Drew managed to complete the work just in time

the RAF, as well as the badge of the Royal British delighted with the result. "Hopefully, it'll generate the finance we need to complete the garden and celebrate the 100th anniversary of both the RBL and our branch in 2021."



### HONOURS 2021

Congratulations to the members of the Royal British Legion's family who were honoured in this year's list. Thank you for all your amazing work.

MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE (MBE) **Stephen Leslie Weir** 

For services to the Royal British Legion and to the community in County Antrim during COVID-19

### **David Mark Hanmer**

Area Representative and Regional Case Worker, Portugal Branch, the Royal British Legion For services to British Nationals overseas

MEDALLISTS OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE (BEM) **Debbie Langford** 

Chair, Newark Branch, the Royal British Legion For voluntary service to Armed Forces Veterans

#### Sheila Anne Bower

Volunteer for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal For services to British Nationals in Spain



12

### Making the benefits system fit for service

In November last year, the RBL and Poppyscotland released a much-needed report into the experiences of injured veterans who receive compensation and rely on the UK's social-security system to make up their income.

It was found that some injured veterans are being denied their full entitlement to employmentrelated benefits and pension credit because the state regards their military compensation as normal income. Other issues include problems with completing application forms, and the stress of being assessed by someone with no understanding of service-related conditions such as PTSD. The report recommends that the Ministry of

Defence, Department for Work and Pensions, and Social Security Scotland work together to:

- Share data on veterans with compensation who make a claim for disability benefits
- Use the most recent compensation assessments to inform disability benefit assessments
- Ensure that injured veterans are not forced to give up compensation to pay for support their civilian counterparts can access.

Charles Byrne, Director General of the RBL, said: "In 1921, the British Legion highlighted the needs of those injured in service to their country and asked the Government to listen to their voices. As we approach our centenary, I'm pleased to present this report as the latest step on that same journey." Find out more at britishlegion.org.uk.

### ARMY RECRUITMENT **INCREASES**



"Some injured veterans are being denied their full entitlement to benefits"

In early January, the British Army told The Guardian that it is on track to meet its annual recruitment target for only the second time in eight years, potentially as a result of the coronavirus pandemic acting as a "rallying cry to serve".

Alex Owen, Head of Armed Forces Marketing at the Royal British Legion, said, "The military has been a positive presence in our daily lives like never before in peacetime, so it's natural that COVID-19 boosted recruitment."

By early January, 7,719 recruits had joined up, which equals 78 per cent of the target. The Army's recruiting year ends

in March, and defence sources are confident the full goal will be met.

The Army's promise of secure employment at a time of national crisis, threats of redundancies and economic instability may have been a key factor in persuading young people to sign up, believes Owen. The difficulties created by the uncertain times "add to the military presenting an appealing, stable job with a tangible cause," he says.

As of I October 2020, the UK Forces Service Personnel stood at a strength of 195,050 members, a 7.2% deficit against the planned number of personnel needed as a workforce requirement.



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### ADVERTORIAL



Sergeant Dan O'Sullivan served in the British Army for 16 years. He says the Legion saved his life after an assault left him hospitalised for seven months.

"After 16 years' Service, six tours, two wars and six medals, I know that with your Army mates behind you, you can achieve so much.

But I didn't know how much I would rely on the Armed Forces community until I was badly assaulted by three men while on leave... and left in a coma for seven months.

When I woke up, the doctor said to me:

"You've got an injury called diffuse axonal injury, which is the worst type of brain damage. You should be dead. At the very best you should be vegetative."

I didn't have a clue what 'vegetative' meant and had to look it up on the internet. That still makes me laugh. But to be honest, there wasn't much to laugh about.

Back at home, I was scared of every knock on the door. I was 22 stone. I couldn't walk. I couldn't talk. I slept all the time. I knew something had to change. I kept thinking about an absolute legend of a man who I served with in Basra. He wasn't lucky enough to come back, but I was, and I couldn't just sit around feeling sorry for myself.

The Legion completely saved my life. I found comfort in their Battle Back Centre, which supports wounded, injured and sick Service and ex-Service people like me.

The Battle Back Centre has a wellbeing advisor, a life coach and a friendly face to help overcome any challenge.

And like all the Legion's services, gifts in wills play a key role in funding the Centre. I'm living proof that these gifts really do make a difference. The Centre gave me life, purpose, hope again. The motivation to keep on going.

"I would still be trapped in my house if it wasn't for the Legion and their Battle Back Centre." But as it is, I'm on track to becoming a personal trainer for other injured veterans. When I try and help these men and women, I always remind them – and myself – of what the great Dr Martin Luther King said:

**"THE LEGION COMPLETELY** 

**MY LONELIEST, I FOUND** 

**BATTLE BACK CENTRE.**"

SAVED MY LIFE. WHEN I WAS

AT MY LOWEST, MY HEAVIEST,

**COMFORT IN THE LEGION'S** 

'If you can't fly, well then run. If you can't run, well then walk. If you can't walk, well then crawl. And no matter what happens, you have to keep moving forward step by step every day.'

I've seen first-hand just how amazing the Royal British Legion can be, so I have made the important decision to leave a gift to the Legion in my Will.

It's so important that we keep supporting our Armed Forces community – serving, ex-serving and their families – now and in the future. I can think of no better way of thanking the Legion for giving me my life back than remembering them in my Will."



### Incredible transformations take place at our Battle Back Centre

People transform at the Battle Back Centre. That's according to our Battle Back Operations Manager, Sally Green.

Sally's own daughter, an ex-Navy Medic, took part in a Battle Back course three years ago. Sally says her daughter joined 'at her lowest point' with severe mental health issues and finished 'a different person'.

Hundreds of Service people, like Sally's daughter and Dan O'Sullivan, benefit from our life-changing courses at the Battle Back Centre at Lilleshall every year.

With an emphasis on adaptive and adventurous sports, our expert coaches encourage participants to push beyond their physical limitations and develop coping strategies for the future. At the end of their week-long course they leave with a newfound sense of purpose and friendships that can last a lifetime.

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Write your Will over the telephone. Call our partners Farewill on 020 3820 6419 to book a telephone Will appointment. Please notify the Customer Service team at the start of your call that you are a Royal British Legion supporter to get your Will written for free.



"Without funding the Battle Back Centre wouldn't exist. There are over 6,000 people who have benefitted from that funding, and my daughter was one of them, which is why I feel so passionately about it."

Sally Green, Operations Manager at the Battle Back Centre

### MY LEGION

Mark Bowling CHONBURI BRANCH



### "I'm so proud of the welfare support we provide"

it might be that a currently serving or ex-serving member of the Armed Forces is in Thailand on holiday and has a motorbike accident, or that someone who's retired out here finds themselves on their own and is unwell, so needs someone to go and see them.

The British Embassy in Bangkok will put people in touch with the branch if they know we can help. And if we can't, we'll contact their regiment or ex-regiment to see what they can do. I'm very proud of the welfare support we provide. Bert Elson, who runs our welfare, was recently highly commended in the RBL's Covid-19 Community Response Awards for

1ark with RBL supporter Khun Kanlava Samotong. at Chungkai War Cemetery, Kanchanaburi

his fundraising for local people who had become unemployed due to the pandemic.

Remembrance is another big focus. During the Poppy Appeal, we collected by placing boxes in bars, restaurants - anywhere there are expats. My son, who's 13, is at the international school, so we sold poppies there. We also had face masks made with the RBL logo and the branch crest - they sold very fast. Each year we hold Remembrance services, and in 2020 we also marked VJ Day 75, which was very well attended, despite heavy rain on the day. Ambassadors and

military and defence attachés from the Five Eyes countries attended the service, which was held at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.

Kanchanaburi is also the site of the famous Bridge over the River Kwai. It really does bring it home to be here. You can walk out of the cemetery and into a war museum that explains what happened. There's also a museum up at Hellfire Pass, where they made cuttings by hand for the railway. Many thousands of people died making their way up there, and it's a moving memorial. You're so aware of the history behind this place."

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"Thirty years ago, I visited

Thailand for the first time.

Like many people, I got the

bug for the place. I've been

living here for 15 years now

different world from the UK:

it's a lot more relaxed. The

people are really nice, the

weather is obviously very

Three years ago last

November. I became the

President of the RBL's

represents the whole of

Thailand – our members are

spread all over the country,

from the North East to Hua

Hin and Phuket. I've always

been interested in the Armed Forces; I didn't serve myself, but

one of my grandfathers was an

anti-aircraft gunner in Pembrokeshire

during the Second World War, and

London to support the Fire Brigade

during the Blitz. I don't have many

something in the Armed Forces. My

youngster, but I was a bit mollycoddled

We have about 150 members, and

I'd say they're almost entirely expats.

A large part of what we do is welfare:

stepfather actually tried to get me

to go to Sandhurst when I was a

back then and I missed the boat.

regrets, but I do wish I had done

I know my grandmother went to

Chonburi Branch. It

good. It's paradise!

– I moved from Tenby in

Wales – and it's just a

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David Powell goes to great heights (30,000 feet, in fact) to raise money for the RBL

"Uniquely, I served two years in Vietnam during my 25-year service as a soldier. In the mid 60s, I was stationed in London, where I accompanied Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Foreign Secretary George Brown on overseas trips. In 1967, I got a call telling me that the Foreign Office had requested I go to the British Embassy in Vietnam to run a security team of military police and Gurkhas. We patrolled the perimeter of the Embassy. I was there during the Tet Offensive in January, 1968 and witnessed many atrocities.

I come from a military family. My grandfather and great-grandfather were soldiers. My father was killed in Italy during the Second World War. Being a member of the Royal British Legion is in my blood. I'm the Mayor of Horley in Surrey, where I live, and I'm also the President of the RBL branch here.

When I was 78 years old, I wanted to raise money for the RBL to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. I read about a 70 year-old who was the oldest person to do a freefall skydive from 30,000 feet. I thought, well I could do that. Falling

Talk to us on Twitter @PoppyLegion

at 300 miles per hour from 30,000 feet was a wonderful experience. When I was 80, I decided to do it again, and then again when I was 82, breaking my own world record. Each time, I raised around  $\pm 10,000$  for the Legion.

David Powell HORLEY BRANCH

Last year, I was approached by several RBL members about the Earl Haig Sports and Social Club in Horley. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig donated the club to the community in 1923, but it had been destroyed by a fire. So the members asked, 'Have you got any ideas on how we could raise money?'



I made the connection to the

Menin Gate in Ypres, which is near

Western Front. We looked up the

mileage from here to Ypres so we

Horley Recreation Ground. We

we would cover the 165 miles.

worked out that if we did 330 laps,

We had four volunteers: me:

could walk that same distance round

where Field Marshal Sir Haig

commanded our Forces on the

There was a great sense of community. We had eight of our brothers from the RBL and the Veterans Breakfast Club in Crawley come and walk with us. We had chats with people and all the doggies came over, wagging their tails to see us. It was really great."

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AS SEEN ON



**MY LEGION** 

## A CENTURY OF SERVICE

POPPY DAY

As we look forward to our next 100 years, we delved into the archives to see how far the RBL has come, thanks to the dedication of members and volunteers

In 1953, bus driver John Robert Fraser buys his Remembrance Poppy. Opposite: Poppy Appeal Collectors in 2019. In recent years, some 40,000 volunteers have taken to the streets, train stations and supermarkets to raise millions The first 'Poppy Day' came out of the aftermath of the First World War, when returning ex-Servicemen faced crisis-level unemployment rates and an economy in freefall.

The red Flanders poppy had already been adopted in North America and France as a symbol of Remembrance; one of the few flowers to grow on the bomb-blasted former battlefields, it represented new life after so much destruction. Seeing the fundraising potential, the newly formed British Legion ordered thousands of artificial poppies to sell on Armistice Day 1921. This first appeal raised more than £106,000 to help veterans with employment and housing. Fast-forward 100 years, and an astonishing £50 million is now raised annually to create better futures for the Armed Forces community.

APPEAT

"Ever since the Legion was established in 1921, we've looked to the future as well as the past, constantly evolving to ensure we are fit for purpose," says National Chairman Una Cleminson. The RBL remains close to its roots, but as a progressive organisation, it continually reviews its services and allocation of resources, and adapts to what veterans need in the 21st century.



### A caring community

Hot meals from British Legion food depots, such as this one at Clapham Junction in 1932 (above), helped keep ex-Servicemen and their families going during the Great Depression, when there was little in the way of state benefits. The RBL continues to give practical support to veterans, whether it's through the Benefits, Debt and Money Advice Service; Legion care homes such as Galanos House (below); helping families through financial difficulties; or delivering thousands of weekly food parcels via the branch network during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Recovery An estimated 250,000 British soldiers lost limbs during the First World War – much of what we know now about orthopaedics is based on surgical advances from that time, as well as more recent conflicts in Afghanistan (2001-2014) and Iraq (2003-2011). The RBL's work in aiding the recovery of wounded, injured and sick personnel takes in many aspects, from funding the Complex Trauma Gym at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, to running Bravo 22, an arts-related recovery programme. The RBL pledged £50 million over 10 years to Personnel Recovery Centres in 2010, established the Battle Back Centre, which has been attended by more than 7,000 serving and ex-serving personnel since it opened, and is a key delivery partner of Team UK for the Invictus Games.

A wounded soldier learns to walk with artificial legs at Queen Mary's, Roehampton, a London convalescent hospital that specialised in fitting prosthetic limbs, in 1915 **Opposite: Afghanistan veteran** Andy Barlow in the Complex Trauma Gym at DMRC Stanford Hall

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Royal patronage The strong association between the British Royal Family and the Armed Forces led to a close relationship from the earliest days of the British Legion. The charity was granted the right to use 'Royal' in its name in 1971, on its golden anniversary. HM The Queen has served as patron since 1952, when her reign began. She has attended the Festival of Remembrance every year since she became monarch, except for two occasions. Above, HM The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh with RBL dignitaries at the Royal Albert Hall for the Festival of Remembrance in 1955, and below, HM The Queen arrives at the performance in 2004.



Talk to us on Twitter @PoppyLegion



### Journeys of Remembrance

A decade after the end of the First World War, 11,000 veterans, widows, mothers and sweethearts visited the battlefields of France and Flanders on a three-day 'pilgrimage of love and remembrance' organised by the British Legion. They lodged with locals before laying wreaths at the Menin Gate memorial in Ypres on 8 August 1928. Exactly 90 years later in 2018, Legion members carried their Standards to the Menin Gate: Remembrance is and always will be central to the RBL's support of the Armed Forces community.



### REMEMBER D Day? The Two Bob Watch Pre-decimal coins were phased out on D Day or Decimal Day but

10/0-105

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

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"I am concerned about social isolation – the pandemic has made me realise how much the RBL means as a source of friendship and support in the community. I feel our role is to provide a forum for connection by encouraging phone calls, afternoon meet-ups, lunches out [when permitted]; whatever we can do. It's vital"

### Social isolation

#### **Gail Walters Assistant Director Midlands**

#### The RBL has been a force for

good for almost a century, and the membership has been at the heart of its work since its founding as the British Legion in 1921. Over the years, the charity has evolved to better serve those it supports - adapting the services and advice it offers as the needs of the Armed Forces community change. The tireless efforts of branches and members on the ground have been a vital contribution to our work throughout, and their insights are key to helping us consider what we could be doing better.

In the November issue of Legion, we highlighted how we have been asking for your opinions on a number of issues through initiatives such as the membership engagement survey and the forthcoming Town Hall (see page 37 for more information). We have been overwhelmed with responses, but the topics of welfare services, social isolation and governance were recurring themes. Here, representatives from the RBL explain how we are responding to the issues raised.

LLUSTRAT

"COVID-19 has provided so many challenges to so many people, but the RBL's branches have really stepped up to help tackle social isolation within the Armed Forces community - the response has been absolutely amazing. At the heart of this work is Branch Community Support (BCS).

two-fold. Firstly, it helps branches provide support within their local communities, and tackle loneliness and social isolation through initiatives such as telephone buddies and home and hospital visits. But it is also about finding those hard-to-reach members of the Armed Forces community who might not know (or think) they are eligible for support. Branches are the RBL's boots on the ground our eyes and ears - and can identify and refer people, helping us reach all those who could benefit from our support.

While the pandemic has obviously posed difficulties around face-to-face interaction, branches have found novel and intuitive solutions to support the most vulnerable in their communities during these difficult times - some of which we celebrated in our recent Community Awards.

While BCS deserves to be championed, that's not to say it's perfect. There are always lessons to be learned that will help us make it

Launched in 2016, its goal is

in developing future improvements. A group of RBL members who are already involved in BCS will provide feedback to help shape the initiative's future while also flagging ways that the process can be made more user friendly for those navigating it for the first time. In addition, we are also employing a full-time member of staff, whose role is to provide support to

branches who want to get involved. One socially isolated member of the Armed Forces community is one too many, but it is hoped that these ongoing improvements to BCS - and the involvement and feedback of members - will help us become even more integral to local communities in the UK and overseas."

stronger, and there are still stumbling

communities as they would like to be.

that we are involving the membership

To counter this, we're making sure

blocks that prevent all branches

from being as embedded in their

Share your thoughts on **Branch Community Support at** surveymonkey.co.uk/r/onBCS

### YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED

We have been asking members for their thoughts on the RBL's future. Here, we respond to the issues that are most important to you

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### Welfare Nicola Cook **Assistant Director of Operations** "It seems that there "There's lots of support out there for

is still not enough

support for those

Forces, with many

for them? What are

you doing?"

veterans and I don't think there's a deep gap that the RBL and the sector aren't filling. It's more about better communication of the support that we who leave the Armed offer – providing help from cradle to grave, for veterans, their spouses and children under the age of 18, whatever falling through the net. challenge they might be facing. We've evolved a lot during the Are you doing enough

COVID-19 pandemic and have provided a number of new services as a consequence. Five years ago, our focus was generally on singular needs – members of the Armed Forces community who needed a washing machine, for example. Now we support very complex cases – the street homeless or sofa-surfing homeless, and those with serious mental-health issues or drug, alcohol and gambling addictions - and 60 per cent of our time as a welfare team is spent supporting vulnerable people who have a multiplicity of needs.

To respond to these challenges, we have set up two direct-access services. One is a service provided by our outreach team, where we support those who are struggling with day-to-day life. It means that beneficiaries are contacted on the same day so support can start immediately. The other service is in relation to supporting people to stay in their home, and now people can access our independent-living service

directly, speeding up the support we can put in place.

Another way we've adapted to the pandemic is by setting up an income-maximisation service. This provides support to those who might be struggling to make ends meet with their current level of household income. It may therefore be supporting newly unemployed veterans who are finding themselves in financial trouble. It could be helping them to navigate the benefits system or something as simple as a health check for their finances.

It is so important that we encourage beneficiaries to come forward when they need support. We are therefore looking to develop our strategy to build on our relationship with the Armed Forces and those who are still serving, so that they are aware of the Royal British Legion and know we are there when they need it most. We are looking at our strategy for engagement with the Armed Forces, and would love to hear people's ideas as to what we may need to do in the future.

Ultimately, though, we can only assist those who come forward. While we work on getting the message out there - and our new brand will help with this (see page 38) – members have a critical role to play. The more you can support us and drive awareness of our work, the more members of the Armed Forces community we can help."



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"How do we ensure that resources such as money, staff and other assets are used carefully and managed effectively?" **David Whimpenny Member Trustee** 

As with all charities, the RBL is structured to enable us to work in a way that best supports us in achieving our goals, controlling risk and meeting legal obligations. We are regulated by the Charity Commission of England and Wales, as well as having to comply with 20 other regulatory bodies.

The charity is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees, led by the National Chairman. The Board provides overall strategic direction, but delegates responsibility for the administration and day-to-day running of the RBL through the Director General to the Executive Board.

Being a trustee means making decisions that impact on people's lives. The trustees have a legal responsibility over the RBL's finances and property, and ensure that it operates within its charitable purpose. In order to do so, there are a number of committees focusing on areas such as finance, audit and risk, governance and property, among other things. This ensures that the RBL applies the appropriate skills of its trustees to make informed decisions to run the charity effectively and deliver

**YOUR VIEWS** 

# Governance

support and services to our Armed Forces community and their families. Trustee David Whimpenny explains the importance of his role: "Being a trustee of the RBL enables me to ensure that the charity is run in the interests of the people we are

allows me to help the organisation to be as forward-thinking and effective as possible, supporting individuals within the Armed Forces community to live fulfilled lives and making sure their unique contribution is never forgotten. As we look forward to our next 100 years, this is more important than ever." **GET INVOLVED** 

here to support. As a veteran myself,

those who need our assistance. Being

this is very important to me. I know

first-hand how vital our work is to

a trustee is a stimulating role that

Our next Town Hall will be held at 12.30-2.30pm on 16th February. Be a part of it at eventbrite.co.uk/e/137592417625

Find us on Facebook @OfficialPoppyLegion



# A brand that's fit for the future

Our redesigned identity is simple in its message to create better futures for the Armed Forces and their families. This is the story of how it came together – and what it means for you





### "The logotype is inspired by the lettering on the Grave of the Unknown Warrior"

**The Poppy Appeal** is the Royal British Legion's landmark fundraising event, raising tens of millions of pounds each year to help our Armed Forces community. Yet, in a 2018 survey, fewer than half of people tracked for their brand knowledge associated the Poppy Appeal with the RBL.

"It's a shocking stat," says Gary Ryan, Director of Remembrance and Marketing. "It means there's a huge number of people who are supporting the Poppy Appeal who don't know that the RBL is behind it."

It's vital that what the RBL does is 'seen' – and not just so it gets the credit. For a charity, having a clear, consistent message makes it easier for the people who need you to find you. This can make the difference between veterans reaching out for life-changing support in good time, and only contacting the RBL in desperation as a last resort – or, perhaps, not at all.

This is why the RBL has developed a new brand identity to simplify the message about what it does – create better futures for the Armed Forces

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community through Remembrance, campaigning and welfare.

"In the past, different parts of the RBL almost operated their own identity," explains Gary. "It was easy to go down the route of, 'Ah, new service, new product – let's give it a new name, a new look and feel.""

At one point, there were around 36 different sub-brands of the RBL, including Civvy Street, Poppy Runs and the Poppy Appeal itself, so the organisation's main message got lost in all the noise.

"We have lots of different types of audiences, but the more that people understand there's the one brand behind all the different facets of our work, the more likely we are to make an emotional connection and for everyone to understand what the RBL does," says Gary.

"There were some real practical problems with the old brand and corporate identity as well,' he adds. The most serious of these was legibility, especially when the logo had to be resized to fit a small space. Additionally, it didn't show up very well on screen when used on digital platforms. Many users commented on the way the poppy looked as if it had been slapped on as an afterthought, as though it wasn't part of the organisation.

"That's why we've put the poppy right into the middle of things in the new logo," says Gary. "That's how we want our beneficiaries, members and volunteers to feel, that they are at the heart of the organisation. If we can make that work in reality, then that's a great thing."

The new brand identity is fresh and modern, while at the same time drawing on deeply valued traditions of Remembrance, heritage and unity. The logotype is inspired by the lettering on the Grave of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, and the secondary palette of mauves and greens is drawn from colours associated with British military-medal ribbons.

The new branding launched on 26th January, just as the RBL prepared for its centenary-year celebrations. However, "this isn't a commemorative brand", says Gary. "It will be used for years to come and is part of the RBL's

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From left: The RBL has many different audiences and the new brand identity needed to resonate with all of them; an expanded colour palette is drawn from medal ribbons; simple, direct imagery is key

### "We want our beneficiaries, members and volunteers to feel they are at the RBL's heart"

strategic aim for a consistent, clear brand as it looks to the future."

The RBL's staff, volunteers and branches, as well as groups from the Armed Forces, all came together to help create the new identity as part of a three-year consultative process that began in 2017, feeding back on the first iterations. "We put five concepts in front of the different groups and they were very honest if they thought a concept didn't look right, had too many words or if they didn't get it," says Gary.

The RBL presented the final successful iteration of the new brand framework at County level, at the 2019 Annual Membership Conference, and more recently at the fundraising conference held in April 2020. Representatives from the National Memorial Arboretum and the Ministry of Defence have also had input.

"There's nothing better than consulting with people who are going to actually use the brand identity or be at the receiving end

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of it, for a reality check," says Gary. "The feedback process was infinitely valuable and it's exciting to now be rolling this out."

There's no need to throw out stationery or merchandise showing the old logo. The RBL is taking a no-waste approach and HQ and branches will be using up existing materials first. It's vital that charity money isn't wasted.

If you chair a branch, fundraise or run an RBL-related Facebook page and you're wondering where to start with the new brand framework. there will be tools and resources, including leaflets and artwork for event materials, available at rbl.org.uk/membersbrandpage.

"The brand portal on the website is going to be something that grows. We've launched with some bare essentials and then, as we understand which assets are most important to members, we will keep dropping them in," says Gary. "We decided against a centrally sourced procurement system for products such as, say, an

RBL-branded gazebo for use at events, because a lot of our members have very good relationships with local businesses and can get good deals. Instead, we'll have simple, easily downloadable designs for members."

Gary estimates the new brand identity will pay for itself very quickly as the RBL won't be commissioning sub-brands anymore. "It's not just about saving money, though," he says. "If we can increase the rate of people attributing our successes to the RBL by even 10 per cent, that's paying in spades, because that's a very large number who now understand what we do, increasing awareness of our welfare work and driving donations so that we have more funds to spend on beneficiaries in the long term."

The roll-out of the new brand identity has already begun, with nearly 400 members at a digital Town Hall in January providing positive feedback. Gary thinks the public will follow suit. "You'll be surprised just how easily people will understand us."

41

# A YEAR OF

### Hugh King, Chairman

"We're planning to hold a dedicated service in Norwich Cathedral. It can be quite hard to book services for just one group, but we've had the go-ahead from the canon now. That'll be on 16th May, providing we're not in lockdown.

The hope is that we'll also be able to do a March Past, from Norwich City Hall to the cathedral, with our Standards. We have 62 branches here in Norfolk, and at GP90 [the Great Pilgrimage] we mustered 49 Standards, so if we can get enough publicity and interest, I hope to have at least 40 Standards at the March Past. We've maintained a high standard of recruitment and retention. We

target events such as The Royal

Norfolk Show and The Aylsham Show, where we can set up our marquee and recruit from there, and we pay attention to places where membership is falling.

Norfolk County

It's also crucial to engage local youth groups. We do a lot with Scouts, Guides and Brownies as well as local colleges and schools. At the moment, we're helping a college in King's Lynn start a Combined Services Detachment. Affiliating with groups and schools means that when we have AGMs, or hold services, for example for Remembrance, young people come along. For two or three years, we also took the Torch of Remembrance around the county, connecting veterans and young people together. We finished the tour at Norwich Castle, and now the Torch is at Halsey House. In 2020, our branches raised £6,000 for the care home; that went towards laptops and outdoors furniture, so that residents could stay in contact with their families and enjoy the gardens.

The other event for the centenary that I'm hoping to get off the ground is with North Norfolk Railway. I'm a keen railway man myself; I worked on Anglia Railways, and I was a director of Mid-Norfolk Railway. We worked with North Norfolk Railway before, helping veterans and isolated beneficiaries to connect and take advantage of cheap fares. The hope is that we'll be able to name a train after the RBL to celebrate the centenary. That would just be fantastic."

"We're planning to do a March Past from Norwich City Hall to the cathedral with our Standards"



# CELEBRATION

Need some ideas on how to mark the Legion's 100th birthday? We spoke to four branches who have found inventive ways to celebrate

### Berkhamsted, Tring & District

### Dave Hulbert

"In early 2020, I set up a commemoration planning group with the young people who support the Berkhamsted, Tring and District Branch. They come from nine local schools and groups including the Scouts, Guides and Cadets, and the initial purpose was to plan events for the 75th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day. Well, the youngsters appointed themselves a chair, vice-chair and secretary – they were very keen to do everything 'properly'.

Unfortunately, for obvious reasons, none of the plans came to fruition, which was such a shame. But the group kept going, and now the plan is to do a display to mark 100 years of the Royal British Legion, which will be held in the town's Civic Centre. We'll use social media to publicise the event and invite everyone in town to come and look at the display. The young people will give presentations on the history of the RBL and what they've learned in their research.

I think it'll be quite an event. The local community is very supportive of the Poppy Appeal – in 2019, we raised more than  $\pounds$ 50,000. While I'm not ex-service myself, I've been a member of the RBL since 1983, when I moved here. We used to have 1,200 members back in those days, and now at the last count it was 365.

So it's still sizeable, but we're going to do a big recruitment drive this year. There'll be lots of application forms at the exhibition!

The other big plan that has been rescheduled for 2021 was for a Cadet Shield. Jean and Brian Davies, who were our Secretary and Treasurer for many years, came up with the idea. Teams from our local Air and Army groups and Berkhamsted School CCF would compete in five tasks set in a single day, and then our Branch President would present the winners with a shield.

We like to talk about the RBL's values when we're recruiting new members and make it clear that we welcome new ideas – it's not stuffy. That's where the young people come in; they're fantastic supporters. I'm a retired teacher and headmaster, and I've always had an affinity with younger people. I think it's really important that they get involved."



### "We make it clear that we welcome new ideas – it's not a stuffy club"



### **Worthen**

### "There has been a branch here for 100 years, ever since the British Legion was founded"

Jayne Shergold, Branch Secretary "I was inspired to start thinking about centenary celebrations when my husband found something remarkable. Tucked inside a big box of magazines and other bits of paper from the 1970s was the original minute book from our branch. The first set of minutes was taken on 22nd October, 1921, just a few months after the British Legion was founded.

Worthen was originally a sub-branch of Hope & Rea Valley, and then it became its own branch on 16th September, 1922. The minutes discuss the purchase of two surplus wooden

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huts from Park Hall Army Camp, near Oswestry, for £40 each. Those huts were used as the branch's meeting place, as well as by the rest of the community, until well into the 1970s. They were sold to the village for a nominal fee, demolished, and a new village hall built on the same spot, where the branch meets to this day. A plaque is dedicated to the RBL's works with the inscription 'Lest We Forget'. We're a small branch, just 20 adult

we're a small branch, just 20 adult members and one youth member, but we're very active and dedicated, hosting events for Armed Forces Day, and the Poppy Appeal of course. Worthen is a small village, with fewer than 1,000 residents, but they're very supportive.

To mark the centenary, we're going to host a really special tea party. The idea is that lots of different groups will come together, so the local choir will sing for us, and we'll have people from the bingo group, the bowls club, the mother and toddler group, the gardening club – all the different elements of village life. There has been a branch in Worthen continuously for the past 100 years, so it's very important to us that it keeps going, with that core of dedicated members."



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Doorstep Crime is when someone knocks uninvited on your door and tries to sell you something or offers to do some work in your home or garden, in other words cold calling you.

Doorstep Crime is about callers who are not genuine and who will try to trick a person into giving them money for repair work.

Security systems, mobility aids, charitable goods, and other products and services may all be offered and pressure selling takes place making the homeowner feel anxious, uncomfortable and unsafe.

Surveys into Doorstep Crime indicate that older people are often the target of such cold calling.

Doorstep Crime is when a fraudster knocks on your door pretending to be an official from the Council, a water company or from the electricity or gas provider.

This type of crime is also called Distraction Burglary as the plan of the bogus official is to get into your home on the premise of inspecting your meters, your water supply or to discuss something that has come up as a result of a council meeting for example. In this type of crime, two people will arrive on your doorstep, one to distract the homeowner with friendly chat, the other to steal from you.

Having a Do Not Knock sticker on your door means that it is illegal for an unwelcome visitor to knock on your door to either sell you something or to distract you.



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### Duston & District

the area. There's a 2.5km distance and a 5km distance, designed in a figure of eight that loops around the community. We linked up with Upton Parish Council to organise it properly.

The money the walk raises enables us to do so much as a branch. We take people to the National Memorial Arboretum – local kids so that they can see what the RBL is all about, as well as veterans. Last year, an ex-submariner who is now in a wheelchair came to the Arboretum with us, and he said it was the most moving thing he'd ever seen. It's about showing the Armed Forces community how much we appreciate them. We were a runner-up in the RBL's COVID-19 Community Response Awards. To mark the centenary, two things are happening this year. The walk is now going virtual, so that you can plug the map into your TV or laptop and do it from your front room or exercise bike. That's one way of getting round the coronavirus restrictions! We're also putting I6 signposts in so that the walk can be a year-round event. We got funding from the council, who have combined the walk with Upton Day, so the RBL's presence will always be there in both villages.

The RBL stands for giving people a hand up, not just a handout, and for connecting people. That's what we want people to think about when they see the signposts and walk the walk."

"The Royal British Legion stands for giving people a hand up, not just a handout"

Talk to us on Twitter @PoppyLegion

Darrin Stevens,

Poppy Appeal Organiser, and

"We used to have maybe 15 members

outside Northampton. Over the past

expanded beyond belief, as so much

housing has been built around the two

villages of Upton and St Crispin. Now

Three years ago, we started doing

we have more than 120 members.

four of whom are veterans of the

a Poppy Walk for the Royal British

Legion. We wanted to create

something that would bring the

villages together, along with the

people who are spread out around

Second World War.

in our branch, which is located just

few years, the local population has

Tracey Fogg-Stevens, Chair



### THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDRAISING HEROES

The incredible stories of how members made a success of the toughest Poppy Appeal ever

Last year, the Poppy Appeal faced an unprecedented challenge. The most important fundraising event in the RBL's year, it usually brings in tens of millions of pounds to help us support our beneficiaries and create better futures for the Armed Forces community. However, the national lockdown, and the need to protect our volunteers and staff, meant that from early 2020 we had to plan to deliver the appeal very differently. Poppy Appeal Organisers collected at some supermarkets, distributed wreaths and placed poppy boxes in schools and local businesses. The RBL worked with its corporate partners, including major supermarkets, banks and other national and regional retailers, to make poppies available to the public in more than 10,000 outlets across the UK.

The downloadable poppy, available from our website, was displayed in windows the length and breadth of the country. Thousands of people signed up to take part in their own fundraising activities, and we'd like to say a sincere thank-you to all those who baked, knitted, coloured in, ran, walked, hosted raffles and worked so hard to make sure that the Appeal was a success.

Legion magazine has been inundated with your tales of how you celebrated the Poppy Appeal in unique and creative ways. Here are just a few...

**POPPY APPEAL** 

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I can honestly say that your pillow has made the world of difference...and fully endorse your pillow as being quite unique in its ability to maintain support throughout the night ""

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### **Callington & District Branch, Cornwall**

"Aileen Moore, a member of our community, suggested on social media that we create a poppy wave for Remembrance Day [pictured above]. You could hear the clicking of knitting and crochet needles all around town, and 9,000 poppies were made in the end. Veteran John Courtis suggested the addition of stainless-steel soldiers, made by Steve Pridham. The local streets were also decorated with poppies and crosses, and we are very proud of everyone involved in this fantastic community effort. Collectively, the branch raised more than £17,000 for the Poppy Appeal." Margaret Bond

"A huge community effort meant Callington & District raised more than £17,000"

### Whitchurch & District **Branch**, **Buckinghamshire**

"We followed the advice from the RBL that door-to-door poppy sales should not be undertaken. In late October, one of the villages that is covered by our branch, Hardwick, sent each of its 100 or so households an envelope containing two poppies and a raffle ticket. The raffle ended up raising  $\pounds$ 700 – at least double the amount usually raised there. A tribute was also set up on the village green by the Hardwick Village Association, led by Fiona Blacklock." Amanda Tofield, Chairman

### Elm Park Branch, Hornchurch

"Barry Mugglestone, our Chairman, had the idea of making a Wall of Remembrance [pictured below] from wooden crosses, which locals could write on in memory of loved ones and make a donation. In just a few days we had 65 crosses up, and raised £1,200 before Remembrance Sunday - we were featured in The Sun. Our fundraising total was £1,750." Councillor Stephanie Nunn



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### "The Forces Wives Challenge smashed its targets, raising more than £5,000"

### **Forces Wives Challenge**

The Forces Wives Challenge, a social enterprise that unites women who have partners in the Armed Forces through adventure and challenge, launched a virtual bike ride to raise money for the Poppy Appeal (pictured below). Members of the group, alongside their friends, families and supporters, took part all over the world, from New Zealand to Hungary. The group aimed to cycle 2,020 miles and raise £2,020; they smashed their targets, cycling 10,900 miles and raising more than £5,000.



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**POPPY APPEAL** 

### Augher/Clogher Branch, Northern Ireland

"Mrs Jean Bell [pictured above] has sold poppies for her branch for 57 years. She swiftly overcame COVID-19 restrictions by placing her boxes on a table in the doorway of her garage, which she could observe from her kitchen window. She then telephoned her friends and neighbours and invited them to call in to place their donations on the table and pick up their poppies. In this way, she raised £530 in a rural area that has been very hard-hit by the pandemic." *Alanna Meharg, Membership Support Officer for Northern Ireland and ROI* 

### Mansfield Branch, Nottinghamshire

Lucy Harvey, aged 11 (pictured below with Poppy Appeal Organiser Michael Beresford), began making face masks for family members earlier in 2020. She then decided to sell them and donate the funds to the Royal British Legion, as she was concerned, her mother Grace says, that the regular volunteers for the Poppy Appeal wouldn't be able to sell poppies this year. She raised £186.78, which helped bring Mansfield Branch's total fundraising to £17,205,30.

Do you remember turning your back, putting your hands over your eyes, seeing your bones, then hearing a tremendous thunderous sound? Do you recall the passing heat wave, a tornado force air blast, and an almighty ear-shattering explosion?

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- \* collecting oral histories and ephemera to preserve the heritage of the British nuclear tests.



Let us know if you are a nuclear veteran (Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Merchant Navy or Atomic Weapons Research Establishment), and we will work with you to provide tailored support. We do not know how many veterans need help, but would like to find out.

Call us on 0208-144-3080 or info@bntva.com

"We want to contact and support, all the British nuclear veterans from the tests carried out during the Cold War period". Ceri McDade BNTVA Chair



The Regimental Shop





#### Houghton & District Branch, Hampshire

Jack Broughton (pictured above), a veteran of the Afghanistan conflict and a lower-limb amputee, undertook a 22-mile walk in November in aid of the Poppy Appeal. He walked from Hazeley Down Memorial in Hampshire, site of a First World War pre-embarkation camp, to Southwick Memorial, near Southwick House, where Eisenhower and Montgomery met to prepare for D-Day. Jack, who lives in Hampshire with his wife and their four-year-old daughter, raised £1,602 for the Royal British Legion.

"Jack Broughton, a lower-limb amputee, undertook a 22-mile walk and raised £1,602"

MATT ALEXANDER

HOTOGRAPHY:



### London Poppy Day

Serving personnel stepped up for London Poppy Day (pictured above), the only regional Poppy Day that was able to go ahead under COVID-19 restrictions. Members of all three branches of the Services collected alongside a small group of volunteers in the capital's railway stations, observing protocols for safe fundraising including wearing PPE, cashless donations and social distancing.

### Berkhamsted, Tring and District Branch, Hertfordshire

The young people of St Mary's School and Victoria Primary School in Berkhamsted – some as young as four years old – created poppies this year, which were displayed in Berkhamsted Royal British Legion Club. Pupils at St Mary's also wrote Poppy Poems, which are mounted in photo albums and kept for members to read.

### Whitchurch & Pensford Branch, Bristol

"Together with Mark Barnes, I spent I42 hours at the Tesco Extra in Brislington, managing to raise £14,505.91 for the Royal British Legion – a new store record!" Steven Barnes, pictured below, seated, with (from left) Lord Mayor of Bristol Jos Clarke, Mark Barnes and Andrew Varney



### BADGE OF HONOUR

Personal accounts of military events

### **David Norris**

RADAR MECHANIC Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) 1955-1958 "I was born in Machen, a village in Wales, in May 1937. I was a child during the Second World War and my family weren't military; my father and grandfather worked in the pits. But my father went to London to be trained as a bricklayer and then build air-raid shelters there. I don't know exactly how long he was away from home, but my first memory of him was when he returned.

In the years following the war, every able-bodied male was required to do National Service. When I was 18 years old, I could either be conscripted for two years, or I could volunteer, signing up for at least three years, and choose the Service I wanted. In 1955, I requested to join the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME). I did my basic training at Blandford Forum, Dorset, then went on to Arborfield, near Reading, for training as a Radar Mechanic.

After I had completed my course and passed the examination, I was posted to Germany as a Craftsman. It took a lot of skill to work with the radar, so we were all quite proud of our rank. In January 1956, I travelled to Harwich, where I boarded a ferry boat crossing the North Sea to Hook of Holland. We shipped at midnight, arriving at 5am. It was my first time on a boat and it was very wild and stormy. From there, I headed on to Delmenhorst, West Germany, as part of the 77th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

My block had been constructed for the Wehrmacht. Though it had been well built, with double-glazed windows and central heating, it was draughty and only one of the radiators in our room gave off heat. I soon bought myself a two-bar electric fire, an electric heat pad, a small heater to boil water and a sleeping bag. At night, the temperature would drop to -20°C outside. It wasn't a lot warmer inside, unless you were inside a working radar set, where the temperature was 27°C! In these conditions, the batteries on the trucks would freeze and split.

It was around this time that I started having difficulty walking and my legs were covered with large red marks. The Medical Officer examined me and was baffled by what he saw. I was transported to a RAF hospital, where I was placed in an isolation ward, since no one knew if I was

#### Talk to us on Twitter @PoppyLegion



contagious, and ordered not to get out of bed. Later that evening, a Senior Medical Officer arrived from another hospital and examined me. He ordered more blood tests. Some days later, he told me the diagnosis was Erythema nodosum [a type of skin inflammation] and my white blood cell count was very low. But the good news was it was not contagious. I was confined to bed for seven weeks. I had so many blood tests that I grew to dread the smell of the ether that they used to clean my arm. They couldn't tell me what caused the condition, but thankfully it never returned.

We went to Holland, Belgium and many parts of Germany on exercises, or 'schemes' as they used to call them. As a Radar Mechanic, I was mostly sent along in the event that something

Above right: David,

third from right, at his barracks at

Arborfield Cross,

Berkshire, in 1955

"At night, the temperature would drop to -20°C outside, and it wasn't a lot warmer inside!"

#### **VETERANS REMEMBER**



went wrong with the radar sets or a fault occurred. The exercises mainly seemed to be for the Royal Artillery, the men operating the guns. There was one instance where I woke up in the middle of the night because an RA officer was running around the camp throwing firecrackers. They were simulating an attack by the enemy in order to show us

what to expect. But I often felt my main purpose on these exercises was to sample the local beer.

We went to many places, including Dusseldorf, Hanover, Hamilton, Bonn and Todendorf Firing Camp. When the weather was fine and sunny it was quite enjoyable, but during the winter it was not so pleasant. On at least one occasion, with snow on the ground, an officer went around giving everyone a rum ration - I wondered if we were entitled to it because of the amount of snow, but it was much appreciated at the time.

This was more than ten years after the war ended and you could see very little bomb damage. When we travelled to different camps, I was always amazed at how much rebuilding had already been done. I remember we went to Cologne one weekend and thought it was a very nice city with a beautiful cathedral.

I was able to drive a vehicle before I joined up. After a short test, I was given an Army driving licence so that I could drive the 'T' (telecommunications) truck or one of the larger lorries when we headed out on exercises.

We didn't have much interaction with Germans because the orders of the day were 'do n fraternise with the locals'. I recall once or

### "The BAOR's purpose was to stop Soviet tanks from attempting to invade"

encountering mild hostility towards us – mostly from youngsters with nationalistic feelings, I think. They objected to us being there. Well, the whole government objected to it. They had to pay Britain each year for the Army's presence and the figure was always being negotiated.

At the time, we never understood exactly what our role was in Delmenhorst. We'd have an exercise and then spend a few weeks at the camp, and then there was another exercise somewhere else. It wasn't until years later that I learned that the BAOR's purpose had shifted from occupying West Germany to defending it. Our presence was meant to stop Soviet tanks from attempting to invade. I remember thinking when I read that, 'Yeah, me and my Sten gun would do a lot to stop the Soviets!' Mainly, our time was spent undertaking exercises and maintaining the radar sets and Army vehicles at all hours of the day and night. I'm not sure we were invasion ready.

I was demobilised in 1958. The Army arranged a job for me in Newport. Later, I went on to work at the Standard Telephones and Cables plant in Newport, where the skills I learned as an REME were useful. In 1984, my wife and I moved to our current home, and while digging in the garden in early 2020 I came across an old cake fork and knife, stamped with what looked like service numbers. The fork is Ro708938 and the knife is 2719192. If any readers recognise the fork and knife found numbers. I'd love to hear from them."

### **BE OUR NEXT BADGE OF HONOUR**

If you or someone you know has a story to tell from their time in the Armed Forces, write to membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

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۱	ot
~	twice

Above: David

. a 'scheme' in

in his garden

Nijmegen, in the

Netherlands; the

pictured on

Deli If cardholder's name, address and signature are different from the one shown, please include these details.

### REUNIONS

Check our listings to find out if old friends are meeting up again soon

Contact Roger (Taff)

670224 or shep9409@

Sheppard on 01656

gmail.com

HMS OCEAN

ASSOCIATION

17th-19th September.

of one to three nights

More details to be

HMS LOWESTOFT

All R68 and L12 crew and

partners welcome. Stays

confirmed later this year.

Contact Jo Harlow for

updates at joharlow76@

### CORONAVIRUS

As there are restrictions on gatherings due to COVID-19, events are subject to cancellation. Please check with the event organiser and visit gov.uk for updates.

### NAVY

### **HMS PHOEBE**

16th-19th April, Aztec Hotel & Spa, Bristol. **Contact David Newson** at hmsphoebeassociation @outlook.com

#### 849 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON GANNETS

22nd-25th April, Hotel Mariners, Haverfordwest. All veterans, partners and guests welcome. Contact John Rawling at rendrive71@gmail.com

#### HMS BULWARK, **ALBION & CENTAUR** ASSOCIATION

7th-9th May, Best Western Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. 2021 AGM and gala dinner. For more information, contact Denis Askham at askhamd3@gmail.com

### HMS BROADSWORD ASSOCIATION

22nd May, WO & SR's Mess. HMS Drake. 25th anniversary reunion, with an unofficial gathering on Friday 21st May in The Union Rooms, Union Street, Plymouth. Book your place at hmsbroadsword.co.uk

738 KINGS SOUAD.

### **ROYAL MARINES** 12th-14th August, Exeter.

The belated 60th reunion available, including food will take place this year. and entertainment. Thursday: arrive at accommodation, evening informal get-together. Friday: coach to CTCRM to witness Green Beret gmail.com presentation and King's Squad Passing for Duty, followed by lunch and

drinks, then a semi-formal dinner in the evening. Saturday: free day. Members of the 738 who have not received an itinerary from Roger should

HMS Bulwark,

stationed near

in 2015

ASSOCIATION Ist-4th October, Best Western Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. 10th reunion including gala dinner. All who served in

Lowestoft during her RN contact him for details. service (1961-86) are

welcome (including wives/ partners/guests). Why not come along and meet some old oppos, make some new friends and have a 'swinging the lamp' session? We guarantee a weekend to remember! **Booking details to** come, or contact ian@hmslowestoft.co.uk

### ANTI SUBMARINE WARFARE ASSOCIATION (ASWA)

(TASI) (ASWI) 23rd October, Best Western Royal Beach Hotel. Southsea. 65th annual dinner and dance, £45. All ASW, UW and TAS welcome. Visit aswassociation. org.uk or contact Mr Bob Burton at webmaster@ aswassociation.org.uk

# Eceabat, Turkey

### ARMY

SINGAPORE DAWNWATCHERS' SOCIETY (SDWS) 13th-15th April, Hard Day's Night Hotel, Liverpool. Reunion for those who served in. or were attached to, the Intelligence Corps in Singapore, Borneo or Malay Peninsula in the 60s or 70s. **Contact Dave Wakelam** at davidwakelam396@ gmail.com

#### THE ROYAL ARTILLERY **BOYS AND JUNIOR** LEADERS'

ASSOCIATION 17th-18th April, Holiday Inn

Birmingham – Bromsgrove. 30th reunion. Contact Ted McKenzie on 07900 806235 or at exboysra.tm@gmail.com

### ARMY DOG UNIT NI (RAVC) ASSOCIATION Ist May, Royal British

Legion, Melton Mowbray. 2021 AGM & reunion. **Contact John Tucker** on 07734 113077 or johnatucker70@ yahoo.com

### 17 SQUADRON, **ROYAL CORPS OF**

TRANSPORT Ist-5th July, Ashdown WW2 Army Camp, Evesham. The 'Old Pals' are holding their annual reunion. **Contact Richard (Titch)** Fry on oldpals17sqn @outlook.co.uk



### RAF **ROYAL CORPS OF**

TRANSPORT 25th September, Eaton Socon Ex-Services Club. St Neots. The next annual reunion

- all who served with 38 Sqn RCT and their families are welcome. For more information,

contact the committee at rct38sqn@hotmail.com

### 53 (LOUISBURG) BATTERY R.A.

38 SQUADRON,

29th-30th October, Charnwood Arms Hotel, Coalville. Leicester. Please book your room directly with the hotel and let them know you are attending the reunion. **Contact Barry Key** on 01427 668860 or at barrygunner@ outlook.com

#### to celebrate the 60th anniversary of starting our service. **RAF BOYS ENTRANTS Contact Tony (Dusty) 42ND ENTRY TELEGS** Pinnell on 01 432 278593 ASSOCIATION 27th-29th April, Telford

Hotel & Golf Resort, Telford, Shropshire. Annual reunion. **Contact John Lewis** (Chairman) at jaslmlewis@aol.com

A reunion in Hereford

RAF BOYS ENTRANTS **43RD ENTRY** 30th May – 1st June, Three Counties Hotel, Hereford,

Woodhouse on 07811 401040 or mickjwoodhouse1946 @gmail.com

**Contact Mick** 

**RAF HALTON** 

**APPRENTICES** 

**103RD ENTRY** 

ASSOCIATION

3rd-4th July, Woodland

56th anniversary reunion.

Manor Hotel, Bedford.

**PLANNING A REUNION?** Please note that while the Royal British Legion's head office remains closed, we can only accept reunion information via email. Send details, especially the date, time and location,

with 'Reunions' in the subject line, to:

membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

### Advertisement Smartphones – helping you be closer to your loved ones

#### At last, using your smartphone can be easy, simple and stress-free. Find out how...

Modern mobile phones - smartphones as they're called – can do so much more than just make phone calls.

From browsing the web wherever you are, checking train times, acting as a sat-nav... And best of all they can make it so easy to keep in touch with family and friends – in so many ways, from sharing photos to making video calls.

But using them isn't always as easy as you'd want - and that's putting it mildly!

#### Do the manufacturers do it on purpose?

Sometimes it can seem like the manufacturers deliberately make them complicated - and how you do things is often hidden away. It might be easy once you know, but until you've been shown the easy way, it can drive you mad.

In fact only yesterday I was talking to someone whose Mum had got a new all-singing-all-dancing phone - but she couldn't work out how to answer a phone call on it! She's not daft - it's just that the phone didn't come with a manual telling her what to do.

Whether you have similar problems or you're trying to do something slightly more advanced, the thing is, it can be easy to use them... once you know how. But until you've been shown, it can be like talking a different language.

That's why I've published two books: *iPhones one Step at a Time* and *Android* Smartphones One Step at a Time.

#### Plain English... and that's not all

They explain how to use the phone, in plain simple language with pictures of the screen showing you exactly where to tap or slide your fingers. No jargon!

#### What's covered?

I can't list it all here. But amongst other things, you'll discover:

• The basics of controlling it – swiping, tapping, opening apps & so on.



Video phone calls – a great way to keep up with family who live a long

- way away. How to use it as a sat-nav... in the car or even on foot.
- Send emails from your phone.
- Instant messaging and how to use it. Most phones have a good camera built
- in here's how to use it properly.
- Share photos with friends around the world – quickly and easily.

Choosing and downloading apps. And obviously, you can make phone calls and send and receive text messages. ("Voicemail" is covered, too). All explained nice and simply. (Find out more in the free infopack – read on...)

#### What one reader had to say:

"Thanks for a fantastic smart phone book. Very pleasant staff as usual. I think this book should be sold with every smart phone. I have learnt so much from it, the info you get with the phone is nonexistent.

Smart phones are quite complex, and your books speak in plain English."

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Address

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### LOST TRAILS

Searching for old pals or have a gap in your family tree? We can help



### THE ITALIAN INTERPRETER

David Mancini's father, Quirino Armando Mancini (circled) was an interpreter for the Army in a camp for Italian POWs somewhere in Yorkshire during the Second World War. He possibly held the rank of Colour Sergeant and received several medals (pictured) that David is keen to know more about. If you have any information, he would very much like to hear from you. Contact: david@davidmancini.co.uk

### Looking for WRAC colleagues

lac Denley-lones writes: "I was in the WRAC during the 1960s working with the Royal Signals, based in Germany. I have managed to trace a few of my colleagues but I'm still trying to find Frankie King, Maureen Dodds and Mary Shaw (their maiden names)." Can you help? Jac is pictured here in the jacket with Frankie (left); Doren (in the beret), with whom she has recently reconnected; and an unknown woman. Contact: jac.denleyjones1@gmail.com

### LOST AND FOUND

Looking for someone? All we need is a photo, brief description and your contact details. Please note that while the Royal British Legion's head office remains closed, we can only accept submissions via email, at membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

> Already found someone through Lost Trails? Then let us know about it using the email address above.



### Highlander adventures

Barbara Hubbard-Marks' father, Alfred Velroy Hubbard (above), was a regular Seaforth Highlander before and during the Second World War, and part of the 51st Highland Division of the British Expeditionary Force in 1939. He was captured at St Valery but escaped by rolling into a ditch while on a forced march to a POW camp. Eventually, he was hidden by a Belgian family and then by Rev Dr Donald Caskie at the Seaman's Mission in Marseilles. He came home over the Pyrenees with Lieutenant Colonel Richard Broad. His medals were subsequently lost; Barbara is hoping a reader might be able to help her trace them and would be grateful for any more information on Alfred's wartime experience. Contact: bobon282003@yahoo.co.uk



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### LETTERS

### Time spent in Burma, memories of air raids, and a correction



branch on two occasions

and would recommend

granite wall contains the

the battle, of whom 544

paid the ultimate price for

our freedom. Pilots from

15 nations participated, with

127 from New Zealand. As

a seven-year-old boy, I saw

the battle developing over

hurried into the shelter by

my mother. I was not fully

aware at that time of the

significance of the event,

but since then, extremely

grateful for the outcome.

Maidstone before I was

### SIR KEITH PARK REMEMBERED In reference to Murray Rowlands' email concerning Sir Keith Park in the November issue of Legion, there is an excellent bronze bust of Sir Keith mounted

adjacent to the memorial wall at the official Battle of Britain Memorial Site at Capel-le-Ferne, Folkestone, Kent. It is very fitting for him to be placed as such. His difficult task was, of course, to visit all RAF bases to ensure that Air Chief Marshal Dowding's instructions were followed precisely. I have visited the

memorial on behalf of our Brian Vousden, by email

#### SHARED SERVICE IN BURMA

I was quite delighted to see the picture of Private Joseph Hammond of the 82nd (West Africa) Division in Burma in the September edition of Legion magazine. Like Private Joseph, I remember the Burma of 75 years ago. Having completed jungle training at the School of Artillery in Accra (Gold Coast, Ghana), I joined my regiment, 42nd Mortar Regiment, West Africa Artillery (106 Battery and then Regimental Headquarters), becoming a Sergeant Gunner. I am also 96 years old and was in Burma at the same time. I have vivid memories of

my service there, including impregnable bamboo jungles, bush hats, stifling others to do likewise. The heat, never being dry in the miserable monsoon season. names of the nearly 3,000 and the many fast-flowing aircrew who participated in chuangs [rivers] into the

mighty Irrawaddy Delta Wading through these swamps attracted the blood-sucking leeches. The only way of removing them was by the touch of a lighted cigarette, which made them drop off; pulling them left fragments under the skin.

I well remember many of my Army colleagues of those days, most of whom will be older than 95 years. Fred Mayers, by email

### MY FATHER'S STORY

Lance Sergeant George Conn DCM, 9th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), was killed in action in the North Africa campaign on 27th August, 1943. He was just 24, and left behind his wife and one-year-old son (me). George had been sent

to Egypt to join the Eighth Army and engage Rommel at El Alamein, where he was





successfully defeated. After a short leave back home to meet his new child, he returned to his company. Their half of the battalion took up a position on 9th May, 1943 near Enfadaville. He was mentioned in despatches and awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal on 19th August. The mention referenced him carrying a message under heavy fire despite serious wounds, and his "outstanding devotion to duty". He died eight days later. We are immensely proud of his actions and wonder whether his getting the message to the Commander changed the course of the battle. Peter Conn, by email If you would like to

share your story with Peter, email conn6423 @btinternet.com MEMORIES OF WAR

### IN LONDON In Bali on 8th November,

I read how Armistice Day was being remembered. How wonderful.

do remember a little of the last year of the war in East London. During the day, we played air-raid wardens. The low, rumbling roar of a doodlebug brought forth loud shouts of warning. I only recall actually seeing one, though. Standing on the Anderson, I watched it pass over, pointing its path. It disappeared from view in the vicinity of the 'Hammers' football ground.

Seconds later, the blast blew me off the shelter, and my war wound was a big bruise on my forehead. Years later, I heard how

my mum struggled to keep my elder sister and me fed and healthy. Mum only ate every other day. My dad got his medals, but I think my mum should have had one or two as well.

The lamp bulb in the photo [below] was our night light during the war. My mum told me that the Germans couldn't see from their bombers as they passed over us! The bulb still works today. Clive Walford, by email

### CORRECTION

In the November issue's Reunions pages, an event for 738 Kings Squad, Royal Marines, was mistakenly categorised under the Army rather than the Navy. This has been corrected for this issue and we'd like to apologise for the oversight. Editor, Legion magazine



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From the inventors of the teddy bear...



this is an ideal gift, particularly as a first Steiff bear for a little one – he's even machine washable!

13" (34cm) standing.

The Steiff Purity Law makes their teddy bears the safest you can buy.

Steiff

Danbury Mint,Davis Road, Chessington KT9 1SE. Order online at www.danburymint.co.uk/h13909 Telephone orders on 0344 557 1000

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### Steiff 2021 Cosy Year Bear

Please reserve (q'ty) bear(s) for me, as described in this offer. My satisfaction is guaranteed.	
Please charge my credit /debit card.	
Card No. 🗌 Mastercard 🗌 Visa/Delta	
Card expiry date Signature	
□ I will pay by cheque or postal order. We'll invoice you. SEND NO MONEY	' NOW
Title First Name (please print	clearly)
Sumame	
Address	
Postcode	
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S teiff are famous for the quality of their teddy bears. "Only the best is good enough for children" declared founder, Margarete Steiff, and they have stayed true to her word for over 100 years.

Thanks to the care they lavish on every bear, Steiff bears can be expensive, but every year they create a **"Cosy Year" Bear** – at a special low price – to introduce new collectors and children to the joy of Steiff.

### **Designed to be hugged!**

He's made from super soft, chestnut-brown plush with velvet-touch paw pads. Just look at that sweet face... the twinkle in those eyes...and charming handstitched nose and mouth. Even his gorgeous ivory satin bow perfectly matches the colour of the date – 2021 – embroidered on his right paw. <u>And he's</u> <u>most proud of his famous "button-in-ear" – your</u> <u>guarantee that he's a genuine Steiff creation</u>!

**The Steiff 2021 Cosy Year Bear** is crafted to the same high standards as Steiff's mohair collector bears, but amazingly he can be yours for just £69 (plus £4.80 postage and handling), payable in three interest-free monthly instalments of £23 (plus £1.60 p&h). Great value for a genuine Steiff original!

We are sure you will be delighted with your bear, but we offer a full money-back guarantee. If you are not completely satisfied, simply return your bear within 90 days for a FULL refund – <u>including</u> our postage & handling charge!

### Act now to avoid disappointment

A <u>real</u> Steiff teddy bear...for an irresistible price! Demand will be high, so we urge you to act now. Simply go to **www.danburymint.co.uk/h13909** or call **0344 557 1000**. Alternatively, post the order form today to Danbury Mint, Davis Road, Chessington KT9 1SE.



Makers of the world's most valuable bears.