

THE ROYAL BRITISH

LEGION

NOVEMBER 2020

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A. Chamberlin 20

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THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION



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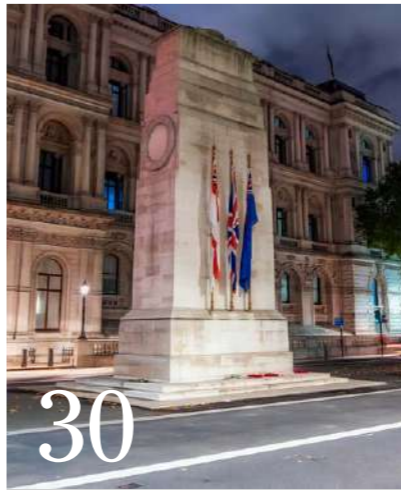
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On his Service in India and Burma during the Second World War



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ON THE COVER

This portrait of Captain Sir Tom Moore, by portrait artist and veteran Alex Chamberlin, hangs at the National Army Museum, which commissioned it in collaboration with the British Army. Museum visitors can book a time slot online for free at www.nam.ac.uk.

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NEWS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST LEGION
STORIES MAKING HEADLINES

Royal Air Force pilots from
No 58 Squadron RAF Bomber
Command, circa April 1940

NEW EXHIBITIONS AT DUXFORD FOR BATTLE OF BRITAIN ANNIVERSARY

To mark this year's 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, two new exhibitions have opened at IWM Duxford – *Battle of Britain: Ops Block* and the transformed *Battle of Britain Exhibition* in Hangar 4. *Ops Block* enables visitors to walk through the nerve centre of RAF Duxford, with accounts from those who worked there and a multisensory recreation of the events on the ground on 15 September 1940, when the Battle of Britain reached its climax. Rooms dedicated to 'people stories' are also new, and there is more on the role of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. The updated *Battle of Britain Exhibition* features iconic Second World War aircraft and interactive displays, and explores Duxford's historic links with the Supermarine Spitfire, as the base of the first operational Spitfire Squadron.

And if you can't visit in person, why not try IWM's free virtual-reality experience, detecting and identifying incoming raids from the Luftwaffe and reporting back to Fighter Command. Simply visit <https://observercorps.iwm.org.uk>

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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From left: Una Cleminson, James Bashall and Charles Byrne at the conference

THE LEGION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE REACHES MORE MEMBERS THAN EVER

On Saturday 19 September, the Legion made history with the first-ever live stream of its Annual Conference. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety concerns, the conference had been postponed from May, but went ahead online in September to a live worldwide audience, who cast virtual votes and asked at least 47 questions through an online submission box.

Addresses were made by the National President Lieutenant

General James Bashall CB CBE, National Chairman Una Cleminson BEM TD and Director General Charles Byrne, who discussed our new strategy to ensure the Legion is fit for the next 100 years. Updates were also given on fundraising and the Poppy Appeal; policy and campaign successes, such as Stop the Service Charge; and our help for beneficiaries.

Watch the conference at www.youtube.com/britishlegion

CLEVER CANINE COLLECTION

Richard Hignett of the Royal Wootton Bassett Branch has done some creative thinking when it comes to collecting for the Poppy Appeal this year. "To allow socially distanced fundraising, I am going to use my dog, Trim, on a lead more than two metres long, to sell poppies." We love the idea.

For more stories on fundraising safely during the Appeal, see page 36.



2,600 THE NUMBER OF TIMES THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE HAS BEEN VIEWED ON YOUTUBE SO FAR

CAPTAIN SIR TOM MOORE JOINS WITH THE LEGION

Captain Sir Tom Moore inspired the nation when he set out to walk 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday, in aid of NHS charities, raising an incredible £38.9 million (with Gift Aid). Since then, he and his family have set up the Captain Tom Foundation, and the Legion has been

chosen as one of its four charity partners. Nicola Wearing, Head of Philanthropy at the Legion, says: "The Foundation's mission is to inspire hope where it is needed most. It's an honour to have their support." Find out more at www.captaintom.org and read our interview with him on page 54.



PHOTOGRAPHY: NEWS GROUP NEWSPAPERS LTD



Michael Welch,
Chairman, Blakeney
Cley & District
Branch, at the local
war memorial

HOW LEGION BRANCHES COMMEMORATED VJ DAY

The 75th anniversary of VJ Day on 15 August was an unusual one given social-distancing requirements. But branches still remembered – some in quiet contemplation and others in creative ways. Here are a few:

Yeovil Branch

A socially distanced group gathered in front of Yeovil War Memorial. The Exhortation was read and the Last Post sounded, followed by the Two Minute Silence. As the clock struck 11 the Reveille was played, before Vice Chair Peter Forrester read the Kohima Epitaph.

A recently purchased PA system has proved invaluable to the branch. "Whenever we need to have the Last Post and the Reveille sounded, all we do is pop a USB stick into the PA system and play it," says Peter. "Gone now is the impossible task of finding a bugler at short notice – though nothing can replace a real one, of course. The 'Forgotten Army' were not forgotten on this momentous day by the people of Yeovil."

Shirley Branch

At Shirley Park Memorial, a restricted private event was led by Reverend Paul Day, while wreaths were laid by President Ernie Riley, Vice Chairman of the Far East Prisoners of War Kenneth Coy, and Chairman of the RAF Association Joe Mullen. Branch Chairman Ken Russell said: "We owe a great debt to the men and women past and present serving in our Armed Forces. For me, it is a privilege and honour to have been part of the service."

Blakeney Cley & District Branch

During the pandemic, the branch has been working on reaching its members and the wider community online. Its VJ Day event – attended by committee members at the war memorial while the vicar said prayers from his home – was all live streamed to the community. The branch continues to put its technology skills to good use, supporting clubs and arranging concerts and talks.

IN THE BUBBLE

Next December, a team of four men called The Bubbleheads will take on the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge: crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a 25-foot rowing boat, covering 3,000 miles, to raise money for The Royal British Legion.

Andy Taw was a Royal Navy Clearance Diver for eight years, and his colleagues Lewis Locke and James Piper also served. "On the boat, just like in the Forces, you want to operate as a well-oiled machine and be prepared for anything that comes your way," says Andy. The team chose to fundraise for the Legion because of the help it provides to the Armed Forces community.

Alongside the Legion, The Bubbleheads are raising money for Wessex Cancer Trust, which supported James and his wife Nikki after she was diagnosed with an extremely rare type of cancer six years ago. She sadly passed away earlier this year. "We know that times are tough and people don't have a lot of money," says Andy, as the team continue their training on land. "But we really want to raise the money for our charities – and get across the Atlantic as quickly as possible."

Visit www.thebubbleheads.co.uk to find out more about the challenge and the team's training.



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THE PRINCESS ROYAL GETS A BIRTHDAY PROMOTION

HRH The Princess Royal, President of the Legion's Women's Section, turned 70 on 15 August, which this year coincided with the 75th anniversary of VJ Day. To mark the occasion, she has been promoted to the roles of General in the Army and Air Chief Marshal in the RAF. Senior royals are treated as though they are members of the Armed Forces and are awarded ranks accordingly.

The Ministry of Defence said that Princess Anne's

promotion on her 70th birthday "recognises her invaluable contribution and commitment to the military. This includes long-term links with the Royal Navy, initially through the Women's Royal Naval Service and her promotion to Admiral Chief Commandant in 2012."

Princess Anne is known for her enthusiastic charity work and is patron to more than 200 charitable organisations.

WINNERS OF COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE AWARDS ANNOUNCED

As we all learn to adapt to a world containing COVID-19, we are more grateful than ever for the incredible work that is done in the community by members, volunteers and supporters of the Legion. In response, we have created the Covid-19 Community Response Awards to recognise outstanding community activities delivered in the Legion's name – and we are happy to say that the worthy winners are in!

Community Collaboration

1st place: Fivemiletown Branch

Fivemiletown has gone above and beyond, providing lifelines for its local community by raising money, securing funding, establishing a food bank and sourcing PPE. It continues to make an outstanding effort to reach and help all areas of its community.

2nd place: Duston Branch

Special recognition: Elstead Club



Creative Fundraising

1st place: Commander Stafford Seward, Kilmingdon Branch

In April, Stafford decided to replicate the green-waste collection service, which had been suspended by the council due to COVID-19, with a tractor and trailer (pictured above) advertising the collection days and asking for donations to the Poppy Appeal. The idea raised more than £2,000.

2nd place: Sophia Preston, aged nine, and Archie Hughes, aged ten, Galanos House Care Home

Digital Response

1st place: Steve Bishop, Events Volunteer

Steve Bishop is a volunteer Ride Captain for our overseas mass cycling events. Throughout the pandemic, Steve has helped the Mass Events team and all their cyclists to stay connected. He supported the team in delivering the virtual Poppy Ride event back in May and will be supporting further virtual cycling events in the coming months.

2nd place: Steven Carr, Huntingdon Branch

Special recognition: Jessica Sands, Women's Section

Individual Impact

1st place: Mark Brennan, Hadleigh Branch

Mark is a key member of Hadleigh's community, getting the whole town involved with Remembrance activities. When COVID-19 struck, Mark completed a VE Day memorial garden in the local school grounds and also painted a large mural (pictured below) to commemorate the landings at Juno beach, which was mounted in the town centre. For VE Day itself, Mark, his Vice Chair and their wives decided to create a transportable commemorative show using a flatbed truck mounted with speakers and decorated with bunting and flags.

Joint 2nd place: Trudy Davies, Llanidloes Women's Section; Jack Kemp, Alicante Branch



Internal Team Collaboration

1st place: Paul and Mo Wallace, Oakengates Branch

At the start of lockdown, Paul, Mo and their branch members continued to support the socially isolated within their community with regular phone calls and offers of help. Paul also works closely with the Area Team, AIO and MSO, as well as local businesses, community groups and other support organisations.

2nd place: Ford Branch

Special recognition: Bert Elson BEM, Chonburi Branch

A LEGION FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Join the conversation on how to make sure the Legion continues to help create better futures for our Armed Forces and their families

The Legion celebrates its 100th birthday next year, and has seen a lot of change in all areas of life during that time. As an organisation, we too have changed and adapted, but as we embark on our next 100 years, we want to make sure that we are absolutely fit for purpose and ready to meet the increasingly complex needs of those we serve and their loved ones.

The new vision for the Legion's future entails bringing together our nations, communities and individuals to create better futures for our Armed Forces community and their families, and there are changes that we need to make to achieve this goal. Our members' insights are key to helping us to consider what these changes will be, so we have been asking for your opinions on a number of issues.

National Chairman Una Cleminson BEM TD says: "Our members' work within their local communities is tireless and outstanding, so it makes sense to build the Legion of the future with their insights in mind."

Questions we face involve the changing needs of the Armed Forces community, how

we approach social isolation – even more important in these times – and how we keep the Legion relevant in today's society. We also need to evaluate how we allocate the generous donations of the public and members, how to use technology in the most effective and efficient way possible, how to communicate with both members and the general public, and how we should continue to raise awareness of Remembrance, fundraising and our campaigns.

We have already started these conversations with members through our Membership Support Officers and the newsletter, so if you haven't already, do make sure you are part of it. Let's work together to make the Legion's next 100 years even better than the last.

HOW TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Subscribe to our member newsletter to stay updated and involved. Email your full name and membership number to memberships@britishlegion.org.uk

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MY LEGION

"WE'VE BEEN WITH THE LEGION THROUGH THREE GENERATIONS"

Tanya Hayman followed in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother and is now a long-standing member of the East Grinstead Branch. This is her 30th year of selling poppies



Tanya at the
Menin Gate,
where she
laid a wreath
for GP90

Ironclad, which launched the Battle of Madagascar. It started on 5 May 1942, and he died on 8 May. My mum was about one, and someone told my gran about The Royal British Legion. It was the Legion that got my mum into what became the Royal Soldiers' Daughters' School in Hampstead. She boarded at age six and became head girl.

My mum, Mrs Gwynneth Shuttleworth, is 79 and she's been selling poppies since 1958. This will be the first year she can't sell them because of the coronavirus. I can still

I started selling poppies 30 years ago. My gran, Mrs Margaret Owens, died, and I decided to sell poppies in her memory because she was a big supporter of the Legion Women's Section.

She was born in 1904 so she went through two World Wars. Her second husband, George Owens (my grandfather), was a Sergeant and a member of the South Lancashire Regiment. He was part of Operation

raise money because I sell poppies to my clients – I'm a hairdresser. My clients don't leave unless they've got a poppy; they are very loyal. I started off raising about £30 or £40 a year, but last year, I raised about £350. It will be down this year because of COVID-19, but I'll have raised a couple of hundred.

We're in Ashurst Wood, which comes under the East Grinstead Branch. It's where Sir Archibald McIndoe did his pioneering work

with burns; the Queen Victoria Hospital is just up the road. I'm born and bred in the village.

For VE Day this year, our street party was cancelled because of COVID-19. On 7 May, I heard Zoe Ball on Radio 2 talking about VE Day cookies. Now, I like to bake. I can't go to the Women's Section meetings during the day as I'm working, but I bake a cake for their morning coffee. I thought, 'I can bake these cookies.' Within 24 hours, it was all done: I made 120 cookies and delivered them to 80 houses – to everyone in the village who was over 75.

Next year, the Legion will be 100 years old and in May 2022, our Women's Section will celebrate 100 years. We're the oldest in Sussex and the third oldest in the country, so it's quite important. My gran loved the Legion and held practically every post. I think my mum has done the same; she's President of the branch's Women's Section at the moment. I don't know how many others have been with the Legion through three generations."



Above: Tanya's grandmother, Margaret (seated, second right), became involved with the Legion in 1944



Left: Tanya's mother, Gwen, has sold poppies for 62 years



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A man in military camouflage uniform stands in the center of the frame, surrounded by tall, golden-brown grass. In the background, there are stone ruins of a building, possibly a castle or fort, under a cloudy sky. The man is wearing a beret and a belt with a buckle. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

OUR NEW FRONT LINE

As the world went into lockdown, Armed Forces members, Legion staff and volunteers were called upon to join the fight against coronavirus. These are their stories

The rapid responder

PHOTOGRAPHY: GEORGE BROOKS

Major Steve Little
Royal Monmouthshire
Royal Engineers (Militia)

"My CO gave me a call at 10pm on a Thursday night asking if I could report for duty the next day to support the COVID-19 response. I hugged my daughters, not sure when I'd return. I was mixing with other Service personnel and maintaining social distancing, but we couldn't risk others getting ill."

The
first call

Amanda Brownlie
Legion Case Officer, Cheshire
and Merseyside

"I haven't seen a client face to face since March. We've started helping people differently in lockdown – because many food banks near us closed down, and the post was really affected, we had to find new ways to make sure beneficiaries could get food in the fridge, such as supermarket food boxes. You have to ensure people have their immediate needs met before you can start on the bigger stuff."

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**Sergeant Jenny Hall
Princess Mary's Royal Air
Force Nursing Service**

Jenny was on call nearby London's ExCeL centre as part of a critical-care transfer team, supporting the London Ambulance Service. Military medical specialists formed ten critical-care transfer teams to transfer patients from ICUs around the city to other ICUs and the NHS Nightingale temporary hospital.

The safe hands



The lifeline

**David Martin
Legion Benefits, Debt and
Money Advisor**

"The people that we help are some of the most vulnerable members of society. During lockdown, evictions and face-to-face tribunals for Disability Benefits Appeals have been put on hold, but we're braced for when they start up again. So many people have lost income – we're helping them to maximise what they do have coming in and claim their benefit entitlement."

PHOTOGRAPHY: CROWN COPYRIGHT 2020, STUART WOOD

The caring face

Kerina Derrick
Senior Care Assistant,
Dunkirk Memorial House,
a Legion Care Home

"I was off sick for about four weeks and when I came back, everything had changed. We had extra infection-control precautions in isolation, which meant nursing in gloves, aprons, masks and visors. It has been hard seeing how lonely the residents feel without visitors – they're so much happier now their families can come inside our dedicated visitor room wearing PPE and practising social distancing."



PHOTOGRAPHY: JIM WILEMAN, CROWN COPYRIGHT 2020

Jason Montgomery
Leading Air Engineer,
RNAS Culdrose

Jason is part of a small group at the West Cornwall air base that is taking part in a project set up by Warrant Officer Scott Barnett to produce face masks on 3D printers. Nearly 7,000 have been donated to doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and care homes. Once printed, the masks are flat packed with other components to make a complete face shield and are then given to local governments for sterilisation ahead of distribution.



The last line of defence

The friendly voice

Grace Anderton Mental Health Nurse and member of Aldridge Branch

"I joined the branch last September and signed up to be a telephone buddy. Once a week, I speak to members to check they're OK and have plenty of food supplies and help. It's a great way to keep them connected during isolation and have a friendly chat away from virus talk. We all need communication and support."

PHOTOGRAPHY: STUART WOOD

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A YEAR TO

REMEMBER

There will be a feeling of absence at the heart of this year's Remembrancetide and Poppy Appeal. But whether we're watching from home or supporting in distanced circumstances, we will remember them

An extraordinary year for Remembrance, 2020 is also remarkable for the challenges the coronavirus presents after stealing into our lives at the beginning of the year.

Since March, men and women serving in the Armed Forces have been supporting essential workers on the front line in the fight against COVID-19, including building Nightingale hospitals, delivering PPE and medical equipment, and working at testing centres.

Meanwhile, the Second World War generation are among those who have suffered the most during the pandemic. As we honour their contribution, we also remember that the Legion is committed to their care, whether that's in one of our six residential homes for military veterans or by supporting elderly ex-Service people to live independently and safely.

Remembrancetide and the Poppy Appeal, this year more than ever before, go hand in hand to honour the sacrifices of the Armed Forces community, now and in the past, and ensure we can continue looking after those who have done so much for us. The familiar events will be different this year, but wherever you are in the country, please join us in keeping our solemn promise of Remembrance. >>

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY

Remembrance Sunday 8 November

The sight of 10,000 uniformed Service personnel marching along Whitehall, saluting the Cenotaph as they pass, on Remembrance Sunday is both stirring and poignant. It's one of our national rituals: a short religious service; wreath laying by HM The Queen, senior royals, politicians and Commonwealth representatives; and the Two Minute Silence, when the chimes of Big Ben ring out at 11am to mark the end of hostilities in the First World War on the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" of 1918.

This year, although the traditional form of the parade is not possible due to restrictions on gatherings in the ongoing pandemic, the event will go ahead, attended by representatives from the military and veteran associations, as well as the Royal Family. The country will still take part in a collective



"ANYONE WHO
NORMALLY
ATTENDS WILL BE
REPRESENTED IN
SOME WAY"

act of Remembrance, supported by the Legion.

"We want to make sure that anyone who normally attends feels that they are represented in some way. That's the most important thing, that people know that Remembrance is for them," says Catherine Parums, Head of Commemorative Events at The Royal British Legion.

This is also a significant year for the Cenotaph itself – 2020 marks the centenary of its reconstruction from a temporary war memorial built in wood and plaster to the current Portland-stone monument designed by Edwin Lutyens, unveiled on 11 November 1920 by King George V. Additionally, this year is the centenary of the burial of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. The Cenotaph and the Abbey now form the nexus of Britain's story of war and peace.

"We can't have ten people shoulder to shoulder laying wreaths together, so there will probably be people doing it on behalf of others. Apart from that, we're trying to make it as close to normal – or the 'new' normal – as possible," says Catherine. "We are currently in a wait-and-see situation."

While the Legion realises that there will be disappointment among those who had hoped to take part in the March Past, it is important that in such an extraordinary year, we honour the Service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

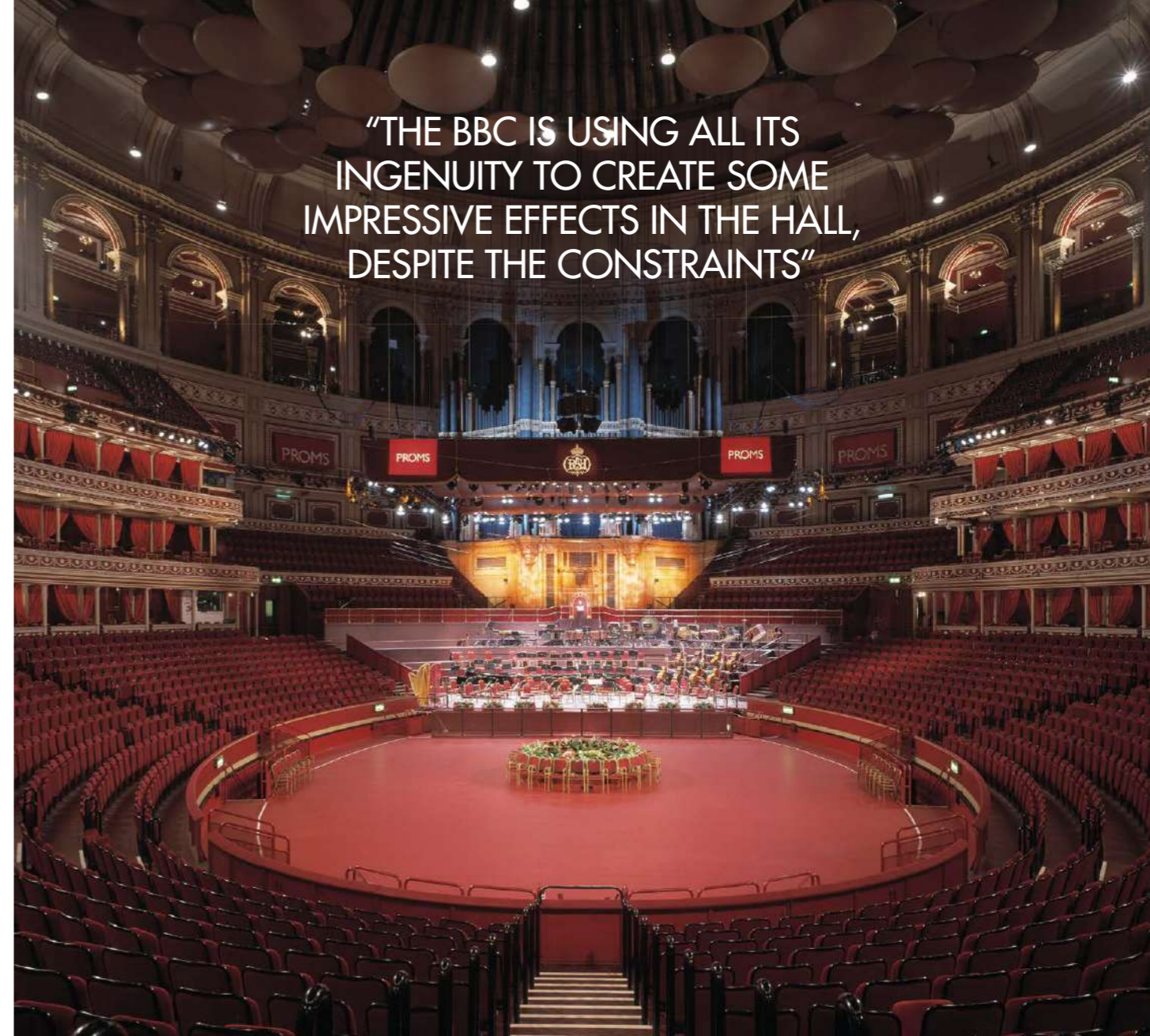
OBSERVING REMEMBRANCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Legion is encouraging members and the public to pay their respects at 11am on Remembrance Sunday at home or locally. "We have all learned this year how to commemorate important events from home, whether that's virtual ceremonies or staying connected through WhatsApp," says Bob Gamble OBE, Assistant Director of Commemorative Events. "We recommend you support what your Civic Authority is planning at a local level and recognise Service and sacrifice that way. That's what Remembrance Sunday is about."

The Tomb of the Unknown
Warrior in Westminster
Abbey, 1920



"THE BBC IS USING ALL ITS
INGENUITY TO CREATE SOME
IMPRESSIVE EFFECTS IN THE HALL,
DESPITE THE CONSTRAINTS"



Festival of Remembrance Saturday 7 November

"One of the lessons we learned after VE Day and VJ Day this year was that you can achieve a huge impact with a small ceremony," says Robert Lee, Assistant Director of Remembrance and National Events. "What really counts most isn't the numbers or even the rank of those taking part, it's the emotional impact of the story and what it means to people today."

The BBC and the Legion are pulling out all the stops so that the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, that much-loved highlight of Remembrancetide, can go ahead. Although it won't have a live audience, nothing will detract from its power in this rollercoaster of a year.

From military fanfares to medleys of the Forces'

favourite tunes, the show promises to be strong on emotion. There are planned tributes to the current Armed Forces who have supported front-line NHS staff during the pandemic, along with poetry, archive footage and moving testimony from veterans.

At the time of going to press, the show was scheduled to be pre-recorded over several days at the end of October and will be broadcast on Saturday 7 November. "We've been working closely with the Royal Albert Hall team who have just finished working on the Proms, so it's been useful learning from that experience," says BBC Series Producer Catherine Stirk.

"The BBC is using all its ingenuity to create some impressive effects in the hall, despite the constraints," adds Robert. "So there will be some surprises in store." >>

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Allan Wilmot
Born in Jamaica in 1925,
served in the Royal Navy and the RAF

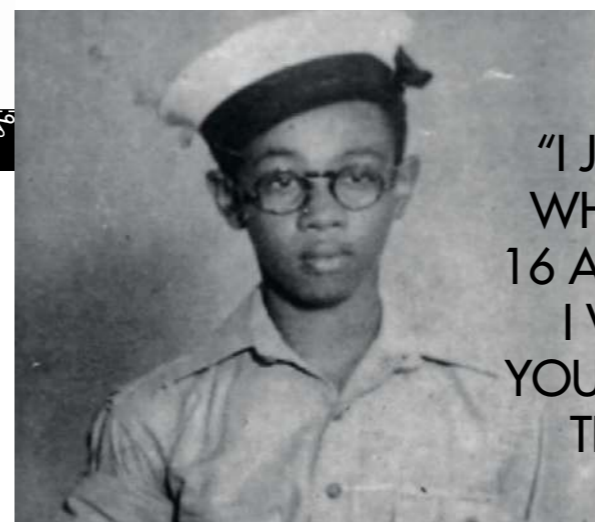
"I joined the Royal Navy when I was 16 and a half. Actually, 17 was the lower limit but I was a tall fella, you see, and I looked 17. I was posted on HMT *Hauken*, which was a minesweeper – a suicidal thing, but I didn't realise it at the time – and I was the youngest on ship. It was all right in the day, you could see the mines, but at night you could see nothing! One bomb – then eternity. And I lived through that.

I then came to England and did training for the Air-Sea Rescue and motorboat crew in Scotland and Calshot near Southampton. My plan was to learn as much as I could, and if I survived the war, to apply for the Merchant Navy. Every day I had to face something new. Most of the time, I was the only black face on the crew. You had to be at a certain standard of education to get in the Air-Sea Rescue and the others were like, 'How did you get in?' But I said to myself, 'I'm not going to let this get hold of me.' It was ignorance on their part and they needed to get to know me, and I settled in.

I was stationed in Castle Archdale, Northern Ireland. We had to coordinate with the Sunderland flying boats and Catalina seaplanes. When the flyers realised they couldn't make it, they'd ditch for the water and we'd have to go there and pick them up before they froze to death. It's estimated we saved about 17,000 lives in all.

Remembrancetide brings back memories, good and bad. Years ago, I was there at the Cenotaph, doing the March Past, but now I'm in a wheelchair. As the years go by, the old chaps die; it's frightening when I look around now. I am one of the few still alive. I still think about my mates who didn't make it.

This year, of course, Remembrance is not the same, but the memory's there. That's the most important thing. Nothing's forgotten."



**"I JOINED UP
WHEN I WAS
16 AND A HALF.
I WAS THE
YOUNGEST ON
THE SHIP"**

REMEMBRANCETIDE 2020

Exploring service:



Who are the helpers now?

Teaching Remembrance

Preserving Remembrance and helping new generations to learn about the Second World War generation is vital. And as schooling looks very different this year compared with the recent past, it's the perfect time to roll out resources that have been developed by the Legion, together with the National Literacy Trust, to help children explore their shared heritage of Remembrance and understand its relevance to today.

One such resource is the Book Club, which is focused on Bali Rai's novel *Now or Never: A Dunkirk Story*. Private Fazal Khan, a young Muslim soldier, makes his way from India to the beaches of Dunkirk in this extraordinary novel for young people. Book Club materials include films of interviews with veterans and input from the author himself – perfect for children to explore Remembrance, whether learning at school or at home.

The Legion has also maintained its strong links with youth group organisations: a partnership with Girlguiding has developed resources for all stages, from Rainbows to Rangers, to help them discover links between their own experiences of this unique year and those of the Second World War generation; more work is also in the pipeline with the Scouts and the Cadets. >>

"WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT FUNDRAISING CHANNELS THAT WE COULD USE EVEN IN THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO"

New-look Poppy Appeal 22 October-7 November

When the pandemic arrived on UK shores, Claire Rowcliffe, the Legion's Director of Fundraising, knew straight away that the Poppy Appeal would have to look different in 2020. "I wouldn't say it was panic stations, but there was a very quick realisation that it would be highly improbable that we would be able to deliver the Poppy Appeal as we ordinarily do," she says.

What hasn't changed is that every poppy counts, just as it always has, says Claire. The British public will have opportunities to obtain a poppy and to donate to the Poppy Appeal wherever they live. Socially distanced fundraising by collectors in public places will be a part of this year's appeal; there was a pause on face-to-face fundraising during lockdown but this was lifted in August.

Another thing that has not changed is the dedication of the 40,000 Poppy Appeal volunteers. "We have a cohort of passionate supporters," says Claire. "We are ensuring that they are engaged", even if they can't take part in person.

People who have collected in the past should not feel compelled to do so this year. "Because of their passion for the organisation, some people do feel it's their duty," says Claire. "But they should not be collecting if it is not safe for them to do so – or they don't feel safe doing it. The safety of our

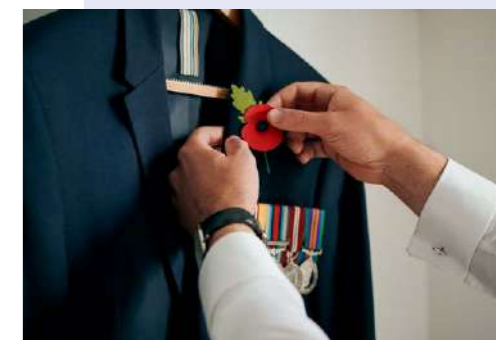
volunteers is paramount."

But for those who do want to collect, we have been issuing Poppy Appeal Organisers (PAOs) with detailed guidance and risk assessments, which Community Fundraisers are supporting them to implement. All volunteers will be provided with appropriate PPE and will have a daily risk-assessment checklist to complete.

What you won't see this year is collectors on the streets or house-to-house collections. "To be stood there with your tin and your poppy tray isn't appropriate because you can't maintain social distancing," says Claire. In supermarkets, however, collectors can have a table between them and people donating – in fact, lots of collectors already do this.

Ben France, Head of Corporate Partnerships at the Legion, points out that focusing on supermarkets will also mean that collecting can take place even if more stringent lockdown restrictions come into force in the coming weeks. Talking about the discussions he and colleagues had in March, he says they looked for "the fundraising channels we could use even in the worst-case scenario" – supermarkets fit that bill as they would be open even during a second lockdown.

"My team and I looked at how supermarkets could help us deliver collections in a new way," explains Ben. "Could they help us bank the money, distribute stock within stores



Every Poppy Counts: making sure the message is heard

In October, we launched an advert in support of Every Poppy Counts, which featured in high-profile slots on ITV and Channel 4. The film highlighted the work and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they never stop striving to keep us safe, whether that is in conflict or in the fight against a deadly virus. It also served to remind us of how important Remembrance is this year – how we still managed to come together for VE and VJ Day, even if not physically, and will do so again in November. A second ad for our social media channels reinforced the fact that although this year's Poppy Appeal is different, it is also more crucial than ever that people get involved and contribute.

The Legion's Every Poppy Counts advertising campaign has aired on TV and social media

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"WE'RE USING AN ARMY RESERVE CENTRE AS A HUB FOR OUR LOCAL POPPY APPEAL"



Sergeant Ross Murphy
Poppy Appeal Organiser for
Cockermouth in Cumbria

"I've served with the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment for the past 14 years, and I've helped out with the Poppy Appeal all across Cumbria for several years. Last year, they were struggling with distribution in the Cockermouth area so I said I'd jump in and help – and now I'm PAO. You look forward to getting ready for the Poppy Appeal and helping out as much as you can.

Preparations for this year are good. Some of the supermarkets are willing to take us in and have a table, and some aren't, so I'm just going to drop off boxes. I think that's where we may struggle, because I know that when volunteers are there at the front door with tins, people are more generous than if the boxes are just there on the end of a till. But the schools are all on board. Everyone is willing to help out.

In terms of volunteers, I have more than 30. Most are going to help out with the distribution side. I work out of one of the Army Reserve Centres, so I've set that up as a hub and we're going to use it as a Counting Centre and for distribution of the PPE, buckets and poppies. There shouldn't be much contact between me and the distributors. I'm trying to limit it as much as I can.

I think we were expecting it to be worse. We thought there may be a box in a couple of shops where shop owners allowed it. When we got the phone call to say we were a go for maybe 50 per cent of what we want, it was a massive bonus. I was happy with the amount we raised last year, but my aim this year is to beat that target – whether there's a pandemic or not." ➡

– anything to help deliver, as much as possible, a volunteer-free collection?" Each supermarket had a different response, but they all wanted to help.

Those conversations were at a time when it looked like the Poppy Appeal might have to go ahead with no face-to-face collecting. "There will be quite a few volunteers, but we've still been able to set up these slightly new ways of working, which we're hoping will allow us to deliver the Poppy Appeal with fewer volunteers and in a safe way that's compliant with COVID-19 regulations," says Ben.

The Legion is working closely with the online payment platform PayPal Giving Fund UK on an online charity campaign page. It has also launched a partnership with the banking app Revolut to allow customers to donate via the app. And QR codes and 'text-to-donate' technology will be far more widespread than in previous years. While these things were already in the pipeline, the necessity of finding new income streams and ways to donate has added urgency to the work, says Ben. "We can trial technology and ways of working on a massive scale this year, because we have to. The learnings from that are going to be incredibly interesting."

SAINSBURY'S STEPS UP

Sainsbury's has been a long-standing corporate partner of the Legion for 26 years. In the absence of volunteers in store, the programme of activity for this year's Poppy Appeal is its most ambitious yet. It will include paper poppies at manned tills, as well as:

- Cashless donation options at tills
- Exclusive poppy-inspired merchandise in selected stores and online (profits donated to the Legion)
- Paper poppies and fixed donation options at sainsburys.co.uk/poppy
- A trial of static contactless units in 12 stores
- Poppy recycling collection points in stores after Armistice Day
- Nectar point donations on the Nectar app and website

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"SOME OF MY VOLUNTEERS
ARE OBVIOUSLY
DISAPPOINTED THAT THEY
CAN'T TAKE PART THIS YEAR,
BUT I THINK THEY'LL ALL BE
BACK NEXT YEAR WITH
GREATER DETERMINATION"



Left: Mursila Sohail, one
of Moira's star volunteers
in Oakengates

Below right: Jane with
her collector Jim Smith (on
right), who, together
with his wife Doreen, has
raised £35,025.63 over
the past five years

Moira Wallace Poppy Appeal Organiser for Oakengates in Shropshire

"In a normal year, I have around 40 volunteers, some doing the supermarkets, some delivering boxes. We have the Army Cadet Force (ACF) who do street collection. We normally go into two care homes and two assisted-living complexes. We provide poppies to 13 schools and to a large industrial estate where there are lots of factories. Last year, we did between 150 and 160 deliveries to various locations and raised about £29,000.

That's all going to be different this year, but I have a plan. Rather than saturate all the areas that we have, I'll target key locations such as post offices and the bigger convenience stores that do quite well. I'll get as many of them that want to, to help with deliveries. So far, all but one of the schools have said they still want poppies and school packs.

Some of my volunteers are obviously disappointed that they can't take part this year, but I think they'll all be back next year with greater determination."

Jane Abraham Poppy Appeal Organiser for East Liverpool

"For anybody who wants a poppy, there will be somewhere where they can go and get one in the Merseyside area. I can't see there being a problem with the schools that we supply poppies to. That being said, I'd usually be a bit more organised at this point in the year. I'd know which supermarkets I need to find people for and I'd know which collectors I could certainly rely on.

There is quite a lot of uncertainty out there at the minute. I think both supermarkets and collectors are reluctant to commit themselves because things are changing so quickly; new [information] seems to be coming out every day.

The guidance from the Legion has been quite helpful. There has been a lot of it, and initially, it was changing by the day, but it seems to have settled down now and I've got a good idea of what we need to do.

We will get there – we'll make a good effort and we'll do what we can. And that's all anybody can ask, isn't it?"



DOWNLOAD YOUR POPPY

This year, the Legion is asking supporters to download and print the iconic Remembrance poppy from www.britishlegion.org.uk. Send a picture of your poppy on display to membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

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1. The Westminster Collection Poppy Gold-Plated Proof £5 Coin £25

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2. QVC UK The Poppy Collection® Collector's Edition Homecoming Ribbon Brooch £20

Decorated with ombre hand-painted enamel. Created to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. A third of the purchase price will be donated to the Legion. Available at www.qvcuk.com/poppy

3. M&S Collection Poppy Cufflinks £15

Enamelled cufflinks with clip fastenings. Part of the Poppy Collection®. All profits will be donated to the Legion. Available in store or at www.marksandspencer.com

4. Deramores Poppy Cushion Crochet Kit & Pattern £20

Craft your own cushion cover with a design inspired by Flanders Fields. Part of a new poppy-themed range for knitting and crochet. 10% of the RRP (ex VAT) is donated to the Legion. Available at www.deramores.com

5. Pets at Home Poppy Collar Charms

Charms that your pet will wear with pride. £1.50 for a single glitter collar charm and £4 for the clip-on collar charm set. All profits will be donated to the Legion. The full poppy range is available at www.petsathome.com

6. Sainsbury's Poppy Pen £4.50

Featuring floating glitter and four poppies printed on each side. Packaged in a poppy-printed box. All profits will be donated to the Legion. Available in selected stores until 13 November and at

www.sainsburys.co.uk/poppy from 24 October.

7. Derbyshire Distillery Eleventh Hour Gin £22.99

Richard Aspinall, an Army veteran and Derbyshire Distillery employee, created the concept for this gin. £3 will be donated to the Legion for every bottle sold. Available at www.derbyshiredistillery.com/product/eleventh-hour-gin

8. Emma Bridgewater British Legion ½ Pint Mug £19.95

Last chance to buy Handmade in Stoke-on-Trent. £5 from each sale will be donated to the Legion. Available at www.emmabridgewater.co.uk

9. Lakeland Poppy Cupcake Cases £2.29 for 48 cases

Last chance to buy Greaseproof paper cases, oven safe up to 180°C and microwave safe. 60p will be donated to the Legion for every set sold. The full poppy range is available in store only.

10. Apta Ceramic Poppy Wall Plaque £6.99

Last chance to buy Show you remember with this plaque. 50p will be donated to the Legion for every one sold. Available at Notcutts and garden centres nationwide.

EVERY PURCHASE YOU MAKE HELPS THE PEOPLE THE LEGION SUPPORTS



THE HIDDEN CRISIS

The pandemic has shaken our core foundations of home, family and work – with a huge cost to mental health. So how has the Legion kept beneficiaries supported through lockdown and isolation? We found out

Social distancing and the pandemic have had a huge impact on all of us – the Armed Forces community included. And for those who are isolated in an abusive relationship, in unmanageable debt, or couchsurfing because they're homeless, the coronavirus has only made things harder to deal with.

A major study by the University of Nottingham into the mental-health impact of the pandemic found that levels of anxiety and depression in the UK's general population are far higher than normally seen. At the Legion, both the Outreach Service and the Benefits, Debt and Money Advice (BDMA) Service report that, with tens of thousands of veterans contacting the Legion's helpline, there has been a marked change in enquiries as a result of COVID-19, consistent with poorer mental health across the country.

This time last year, a caller might have made a fairly straightforward request – saying that their electric scooter was broken, for example, and asking if the Legion could help

with a replacement. "But in the early stages of lockdown, these kinds of calls dipped off," says Nicola Cook, Assistant Director of Operations, "and what we have seen is a significant increase in the numbers of people experiencing domestic abuse – men abusing women, women abusing men and abuse in same-sex relationships – and in incidences of severe mental health. These are people who've either got

individuals with a strong sense of resilience and get-up-and-go. Suddenly, the rug gets pulled from beneath them and they're just not equipped to deal with that. COVID-19 has created situations that people are finding more and more difficult."

Early on, it was clear that the most vulnerable of the Legion's beneficiaries needed help and they needed it urgently.

"EARLY ON, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE MOST VULNERABLE OF THE LEGION'S BENEFICIARIES NEEDED HELP AND THEY NEEDED IT NOW"

an existing mental-health condition or who are experiencing mental-health issues for the first time. We're also seeing people who have a drug, alcohol or gambling dependency and, sitting at home, are turning to those familiar crutches for support."

The picture is complicated, explains Nicola, because "you're talking about people who've been in the Armed Forces, fiercely proud

"When the phone lines went quiet for a couple of weeks in April, it gave us some time to think," says Rachael Thomas, Regional Specialist Services Manager. "We knew people who struggle anyway would be in an even worse situation.

What could we do to help? First, we developed a more straightforward triage system and implemented this as part of a direct-referral pilot scheme. This went live across Greater Manchester and Lancashire in June. If someone mentions deteriorating mental health, for example, we follow up straight away. We've provided Connect Assist with more targeted questions so that >>

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a caller can be referred directly to the Outreach Service and telephone contact made within 24 hours. It has vastly reduced waiting times, and we’re exploring how and when we can replicate this across other areas.”

The Legion’s BDMA Service also recognised another new cohort in need of support. “People who have never had to access welfare benefits in their lives have suddenly been made redundant or been furloughed and seen a 20 per cent drop in their income,” says Jennie Anderson, Regional Specialist Services Manager with the BDMA.

“They are not in significant debt but they need help with budgeting and an overview of their finances. So we brought in our Income Maximisation Service (IMS) at the end of March. This is a quick intervention looking at where they can make savings and what discretionary payments they might be able to claim.” IMS also tries to help beneficiaries get into sustainable situations before they hit crisis point.

“Debt and mental health go hand in hand and always have done, even before the pandemic,” says Jennie. “As an organisation, we try to >>

“We save lives on a weekly basis”

Duncan Maile has been a Regional Outreach Officer (East Anglia and Essex) for three years, after 18 years in the Royal Navy and a career in social work and the National Probation Service.

“We deal every day with veterans at the high end of self-harm, who may be thinking about ending their lives. Men, especially those with a military background, are poorer at communicating their issues – it’s a case of ‘Suck it up and crack on with it.’ They crack on, they break and then they come to us.

“I’ve got an advocating role for veterans, not just across mental health but across all the services. Where we’re at now in the pandemic, all sorts of issues are coming to the fore, including addiction, which is like a flower: you water it, the person opens up and then you get to

the nub of the issue.

“I recently did a presentation to the Royal Military Police, because they have been having a spate of self-harm during lockdown. They have procedures, but people do need to actually talk with someone about it, and you get a plan then. If you have a plan, you’re moving forward. If the plan starts off with an intent to self-harm, as it often does, we turn that plan around and say: ‘Let’s address your finances. Let’s address your accommodation, let’s address your addiction.’ The reward for me is to witness people’s journeys to the point where they say, ‘I’m now in a much better place. I’ve got access to services, I’ve opened up and I’m not alone.’ We save peoples’ lives on a weekly, even daily basis.”

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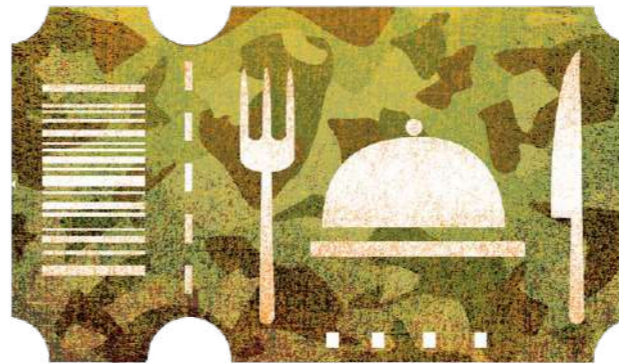
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understand what the triggers are for a deterioration in people's mental health. A lot of the time it's debt: that worry of 'I can't pay my bills, I can't feed my children.' People who've never navigated the benefits system before don't know where to turn, but we can help."

The advantage of the IMS is that, unlike debt advice provided by the BDMA, it is not a regulated activity and therefore doesn't have to follow the strict compliance procedures around recording advice, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The IMS can provide immediate advice and information at the point when it is needed most. It is also specifically tailored to both Service and ex-Service personnel, who may be at risk of a 'benefits overlap' if in receipt of War Disablement Pensions.

"With the IMS we can get in, give the advice and close the case; we don't have to follow up unless there is a wider issue. If someone's got no income, an appointment in three weeks' time is not going to help them. They need to know what they can claim and they need that advice straightaway," says Jennie.

While the Legion has responded effectively to COVID-19, both Jennie and Rachael see the autumn as the calm before the storm, as the furlough scheme and the ban on evictions for non-payment of rent come to an end. "We're anticipating a surge in referrals," says Rachael. "We're constantly reviewing resource so we don't leave anyone in a compromised position."

"Life outside Service was tough"

When Lawrence Philips left the Army due to injury, he struggled to adapt to his new life. "I was depressed, suicidal. I never wanted to leave Service and found it really tough to adjust," he says.

His fiancée Danielle advised him to get in touch with the Legion and see if he could find help there, which, thankfully, he did.

Local Case Officer Paul James was able to get Lawrence the mental health support he needed and things improved.

However, still struggling financially, Lawrence took out a small £500 loan in December 2019 to help get his family through Christmas.

When the pandemic hit and he was unable to work, the debt suddenly spiralled out of control.

Once again, Lawrence turned to the Legion for assistance, and despite the restrictions due to COVID-19, the Benefits, Debt and Money Advice team were able to help. They arranged a three-way call with the creditors and took control of the situation to

negotiate a significant discount on the debt. This allowed Lawrence to clear a much smaller payment.

Now, with the weight of that debt off his shoulders, Lawrence has found work as a supervisor in two local schools, where he hopes his background in both physical instruction and the Armed Forces will help him to climb the ladder.

"I will be forever grateful to the Legion. I don't really want to think about where I would be without them," he says.

Debbie Harding, Area Manager for Lawrence's local area, adds: "Unmanageable debt has clearly affected thousands of people during COVID-19. We are delighted that we have been able to help him."

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AND LAWRENCE
WAS UNABLE TO
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THE CENTENARY AWARDS

A new awards scheme will recognise and reward the Legion's members next year as we celebrate 100 years of supporting the Armed Forces community

Since the Legion was founded in 1921, its members and volunteers have dedicated their time and effort to supporting the Armed Forces community and remembering their sacrifice. To mark its 100th birthday, the Legion is launching a new initiative in 2021 to reward and recognise these vital contributions. At the centre of the celebrations is the Centenary Awards, a project that will shine a light on the tremendous achievements of members who are dedicated to helping the Legion support ex-Service personnel and their families.

The Awards will recognise outstanding actions of individuals across the UK in five categories: service, collaboration, passion, excellence, and valuing our people. Unlike the existing certificates, badges and awards, where the criteria is generally focused on something quantifiable – be it duration of

membership or amount raised – the Centenary Awards aim to find those members who perhaps haven't been acknowledged in the past but who are still doing something unique that deserves honouring.

"What we want is to recognise people who aren't within our current award system," explains Phillip Badger, the Legion's Membership Development Manager. "A lot of our members don't think they're going above and beyond, but instead just doing their day-to-day. It's often a vocation. But when you think about what you're doing for the organisation, a lot of it – if not all of it – is going to be worthy of recognition."

In the Legion's centenary year, it will be more important than ever for members to tell their stories, says Catherine Parums, Head of Commemorative Events. "2021 will be a chance for us to come together as an organisation and recognise the work >>>



CENTENARY AWARDS

we are all doing on the same level,” she says. The Awards, and the Reward and Recognition Scheme that will also acknowledge the amazing work of the Legion’s 105,000 volunteers, as well as staff and partners, are all based on our values and principles. There is no rank or hierarchy involved, and you don’t need a line manager or Branch Chairman to sign off your nomination.”

Across the Legion, it can often be the case that members “can’t see the wood for the trees”, Phil adds. “Many of them will say: ‘This is just something I do because I believe in it.’ Our members have a sense of working with and for their community – togetherness and adding value is really important to them.” The Awards have been designed to recognise that work for the outstanding achievement and commitment it is.

“It’s an opportunity to share our stories with one another,” says Catherine. “In its 100th year, it’s vital that the Legion draws together the people who have done so much for us and celebrates them.”

What you need to know

There are four levels of Centenary Awards, from County Awards up to a National Winner who will be decided by public vote. The Awards begin at the branch level, with members leading the process of nominating their comrades who are making a difference in local communities.

County Conferences in 2021 will host award ceremonies for nominees and winners, and their stories will be shared across the network of branches and members. The Area Awards will then recognise five winners from each county; the winners chosen by the Area teams will be entered into contention for one of five National Awards.

The stories of the final five will be published online, with Legion members and the public voting for the National Winner. The winner’s story will be featured in *Legion* in 2022. “We hope that the stories of all the winners will inspire others and show what is possible for Legion members,” says Phil. “Making the stories public will also show how members and the public value the contribution of their peers. We want members to share these stories with their families and their local communities, and build a wider profile of the Legion and what membership can look like.”

The award categories

Service Outstanding contribution to support and serve the Legion’s beneficiaries
Collaboration Working closely with others to achieve shared goals in their community, and building trust through strong communication and support

Passion Demonstrating passion for helping the Legion, with a positive outlook and resilience in the face of adversity

Excellence Striving to be the best they can, creating new ideas and approaches, and challenging others constructively

Valuing Our People Supporting and encouraging other members, and recognising and valuing everyone’s contribution to the Legion.

“WE WANT TO CELEBRATE THESE STORIES WITH MEMBERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES”

NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR A CENTENARY AWARD

To put forward a fellow member, all you have to do is write a nomination that details how great they are, why you think they are a worthy winner of a Centenary Award and how they meet one of the five award categories. Visit rbl.org.uk/legion100 for details on how to submit your nomination.



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1940-1946



I was conscripted into the Army when I was 20. I'd been expecting it for quite some time so it wasn't much of a surprise.

As we were all in the same boat, I didn't find it too unpleasant; we were comrades of the moment, not knowing how long it would last. It was certainly quite different, though – I was suddenly living with 500 people, having had a peaceful existence with just my family until then.

I had grown up in West Yorkshire with my sister Freda, at first in Keighley and then in the village of Riddlesden. I was born in 1920, towards the end of the fourth wave of the Spanish flu pandemic that swept the globe from 1918 to 1920. Fortunately, none of my family was directly affected, but the horror of it was impossible to avoid. Nine miles from our home, at the Raikeswood Prisoner of War Camp in Skipton, where hundreds of German soldiers were held after the Great War, the virus had quickly taken hold. Many prisoners were infected and several guards also died.

In the 1930s, people were worried about Hitler and fearful of the rise of nationalism in Germany, but that all seemed a long way away until my first encounter with Germans much closer to home. In May 1936, the Hindenburg appeared in the skies of Keighley one sunny evening. On its way from Germany to the US, the airship, with swastikas painted on its tail, had diverted to our town specifically so that a missionary on board could drop a parcel and flowers in honour of his brother, who'd died of the Spanish flu contracted in the Raikeswood Camp 17 years earlier.

I left grammar school aged 15 and was articled to the water engineer of Keighley for three years, a job I loved because I was given so much freedom. After that, I went on to Bradford Technical College on a three-year civil engineers' course and became a student member of the Institute of Civil Engineers – not bad for a boy who hated calculus. But despite the normality of my carefree teenage years, with college and dances and family, we couldn't avoid the feeling that another war was possible. News from Europe was constantly on the wireless or screened at the picture house.

Father, Mother, Freda and I sat in silence around the radio at home and listened to Chamberlain declare hostilities at 11.15am on 3 September 1939. Everything then changed for my generation. Men weren't volunteering



as they had in the previous war because they knew what had happened to the millions who never came back.

In early April 1940, I was called up into the 8th Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding). I reported to the Infantry Training Centre at Weston Park near Otley, and we were trained quickly. The 8th Battalion was given Cornwall to protect [anticipating a German invasion of Britain]. I was then commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and went to the officer training unit in Halifax before being posted to the 9th Battalion. I found out we were going to India, at which point I'd been in the Army for more than a year. »

Above right: Tom as a Second Lieutenant, circa 1941

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WERE IN BURMA,
YOU WERE IN
DANGER, SINCE
THERE WERE
JAPANESE TROOPS
EVERYWHERE"**

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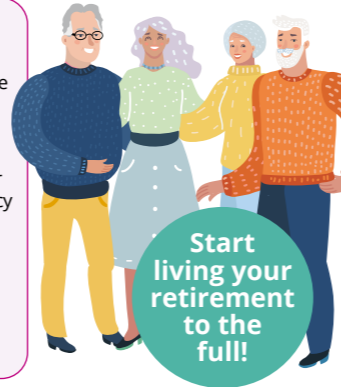
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Do you remember turning your back, putting your hands over your eyes, seeing your bones, then hearing a tremendous thunderous sound? Do you recall the passing heat wave, a tornado force air blast, and an almighty ear-shattering explosion?

If you have experienced these effects during the nuclear tests, or were involved in the clean-up, we would love to hear from you. The BNTVA is searching for British nuclear veterans in order to offer help in several ways by providing:

- * welfare services and telephone friendship groups
- * bereavement support
- * signposting to specialist charities
- * assistance with claiming a war pension
- * research into the effects of ionising radiation
- * reunions, events and conferences
- * public education concerning the British nuclear tests
- * 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



To get to India, we had to take a train to Liverpool and then a ship. Bizarrely, they made us practise getting onto the train – we marched up a plank into a non-existent area. Eventually, we did the real thing. We first stopped outside Freetown in Sierra Leone, where we waited for a week while one of the boats in the convoy was repaired. We then went on to Cape Town, where we did get to disembark, and spent a few pleasant days there. Eventually we went again by sea to then-Bombay; it had taken us eight weeks.

It was 1941 when I arrived in India. I was an Army motorcyclist, which was a skill

"MOTORCYCLES WERE THE QUICKEST WAY OF GETTING MESSAGES AROUND"

Below: Captain Sir Tom Moore's portrait in the British Army Museum, painted by artist and veteran Alex Chamberlin

I had brought with me from Yorkshire. I had my first motorcycle when I was 12; it was in a terrible condition but I got it working. Then my father bought me another one to do the daily journey from Riddlesden to college. He'd also trained me to read maps and be a competent navigator, another skill I was glad of in the Army.

In India, I was given the job of training other soldiers to ride motorcycles, as it was a requirement for dispatch riders. I enjoyed this because I had been riding them for a very long time. In the Army, motorcycles were used all over, certainly in both India and Burma. The conditions were often such that you couldn't drive a car or a lorry, so motorcycles were the quickest way of getting messages from one place to another.

In 1943, we were ordered into Burma and the Arakan as part of the Indian XV Corps, which was itself part of the Fourteenth Army. Generally speaking, wherever you were in Burma, you were in danger, since there were Japanese troops everywhere trying to infiltrate the British Army. But our role was more of a holding job, because the fight in Europe that was still going on was more important at that time.

One particular fight, the Battle of the Admin Box in February 1944, proved to

be one of the decisive moments of the campaign. The Japanese were about to launch their assault on Assam and tried to distract Allied forces by attacking the 7th Division on the Mayu Peninsula. We were ordered to go into the region in support of several other tank and infantry brigades and help the 7th Division, who were trapped in a clearing that had been hastily re-established as an administration area. Time was of the essence, but our progress was not easy.

As we advanced deeper into Burma, we found ourselves in rugged, near-impenetrable jungle in extremely hot and humid conditions, which only made the journey more arduous. Our orders were to push back Japanese troops from 'Tunnels Road', which was the only route between Maungdaw and Buthidaung, both of strategic importance. Once we arrived at the area, we found ourselves



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in a dangerous bottleneck with many other vehicles and men, all stuck in a ravine under enemy bombardment, waiting to get through the first tunnel; it was heavily defended by the enemy, with men and arms positioned all around and a 105mm cannon lurking menacingly at the far end.

By continually firing down the tunnel, as well as bombarding enemy positions from the ground and air, our infantry were eventually able to knock them out and disable the mighty cannon. We then had to hold our positions for several weeks, in extremely hot and sticky conditions. Out of ammunition and food, the enemy had no choice but to retreat. The Battle of the Admin Box claimed the lives of 6,600 Allied and Japanese troops, with more than 2,000 injured, but it was also a massive boost to our morale, proving we were finally turning the tide of the war in Burma.

I was sent back to England in early 1945, in order to train up on the new Churchill tanks at Bovington Camp in Dorset. The plan was that I would then return to India to train up the men on the tanks. I had been promoted to Captain by then, and it was in Bovington that I heard the news about Victory in Europe. Of course, everyone was delighted, because it meant that the fighting in Europe would stop and so would the bombing of British cities and towns. It was

"WE FOUND OURSELVES IN A DANGEROUS BOTTLENECK"

a great and important victory. But I felt conflicted, because all my friends were still in Burma fighting the Japanese, so I was very worried about them and the danger they were in. VE Day was almost an anticlimax.

When the Japanese finally surrendered, I went to Catterick Barracks in Yorkshire for a time, then back to Bovington to await my discharge from the Army. Once we'd all been demobilised, we held a reunion of ex-officers of the 9th Battalion at the Cheshire Cheese



Top: Knighted in a special ceremony in July 2020 at Windsor Castle
Above: A nurse shows her appreciation for his fundraising for the NHS

pub in Fleet Street. We decided to organise a regular meeting for all members of the 9th, and the first one was in Leeds with 168 people. As time went on, the numbers in attendance grew fewer and fewer, and sadly, by the 65th reunion, I was the only one left of the 168 that we'd

started with, so I decided to call it a day. I'm still in touch with various family members and descendants of the other men. My feeling for the Army was and still is great; I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Service, and even though I'm now over 100, I still have friends – much younger than me, of course! – who are in the Army.

Earlier this year, when we were facing the first wave of COVID-19, it felt very similar to the war. The NHS workers were on the front line, and they were essentially in mortal danger the whole time, doing their jobs to protect us. They did a magnificent job and that was why I wanted to raise money for them, because they deserved every penny and every bit of help."

Captain Sir Tom Moore's book, Tomorrow Will be a Good Day: My Autobiography (Penguin, £20), is out now.

BE OUR NEXT BADGE OF HONOUR
If you or someone you know has a tale to tell from their time in the Armed Forces, write to membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

REUNIONS

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

CORONAVIRUS

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

NAVY

HMS Ariadne

5-7 March 2021, Best Western Ipswich
10th reunion – all shipmates welcome, along with wives, partners and guests. Book through Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116. For details, contact Dave Sprinks on 07989 435701 or at dave-sprinks@hotmail.com

HMS Ganges Association

23-26 April 2021, Warner Gunton Hall Coastal Village, near Lowestoft
Annual reunion open to all those who served at HMS Ganges, as well as wives and partners. For booking details, please contact Tony Willders on 07787 106202 or at tony.wilders@btinternet.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association

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

HMS Saintes, HMS Cadiz, HMS Wizard (combined)

7-10 May 2021, Novotel Nottingham Derby Hotel, Long Eaton, Nottingham
A combined reunion (each has its own AGM). All members from each ship are welcome, as are friends, families, wives and partners. For more details, contact Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116 or at enquiries@iowtours.com

HMS Ocean Association

Rescheduled! New dates: 17-19 September 2021

All R68 and L12 crew and partners welcome. Stays of one to three nights available, including food and entertainment. More details to be confirmed next year. Contact Jo Harlow for updates at joharlow76@gmail.com

HMS Lowestoft Association

Rescheduled! New dates: 1-4 October 2021, Best Western Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea
10th reunion including gala dinner. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN 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! A one-, two- or three-night package is available or, if you reside locally, why not join us for dinner on Saturday night? Book through Isle of Wight tours on 01983 405116 or contact ian@hmslowestoft.co.uk

Anti Submarine Warfare Association (ASWA) (TASI) (ASWI)

Rescheduled! New date: 23 October 2021, Best Western Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea
65th annual dinner and dance, £45. All ASW, UW and TAS welcome. Visit www.aswassociation.org.uk or contact Mr Bob Burton at webmaster@aswassociation.org.uk



HMS Ocean



Sculpture celebrating the Apprentices Scheme at RAF Halton

ARMY

The Royal Artillery Boys and Junior Leaders' Association

Rescheduled! New dates: 17-18 April 2021, Holiday Inn Birmingham – Bromsgrove
30th reunion. Contact Ted McKenzie on 07900 806235 or at exboysra.tn@gmail.com

Singapore Dawnwatchers' Society (SDWS)

Rescheduled! New dates: 13-15 April 2021, 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

738 Kings Squad, Royal Marines

Rescheduled! New dates: 12-14 August 2021, Exeter
The belated 60th reunion will now take place in 2021. Thursday: arrive at accommodation, evening informal get-together. Friday: coach to CTCRM to witness Green Beret presentation and Kings 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 contact him for details. Contact Roger (Taff) Sheppard on 01656 670224 or shep9409@gmail.com

RAF

RAF Boys Entrants 42nd Entry Telegs Association

27-29 April 2021, Telford Hotel & Golf Resort, Telford, Shropshire
Annual reunion. Contact John Lewis (Chairman) at jaslmlewis@aol.com

RAF Boys Entrants 43rd Entry Reunion

30 May – 1 June 2021, Three Counties Hotel, Hereford

A reunion in Hereford to

celebrate the 60th anniversary of starting our service. Anyone interested in attending should contact Tony (Dusty) Pinnell on 01432 278593

RAF Halton Apprentices 103rd Entry Association
3-4 July 2021, Woodland Manor Hotel & Restaurant, Clapham, Bedford
56th anniversary reunion. Contact Mick Woodhouse at 07811 401040 or mickjwoodhouse1946@gmail.com

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

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Leslie Carrick's father Peter Murray Carrick (circled) did his National Service in 1947-49 at RAF West Kirby, and was also at RAF Upper Heyford. If you recognise anyone else in the photograph, or know anything about Leslie's father, he would love to hear from you.

Contact: Leslie Carrick at leslie@lsc-sprachen.de



Search and rescue

After Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945, Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI) was tasked with liberating and evacuating civilian POW camps in the Dutch East Indies. Henrietta Flinn writes: “My mother Bettina and her mother Johanna [pictured above] were interned in Banyu Biru, a camp in then-Java. It’s likely that they were evacuated in November 1945, first to Ambarawa, then on to Semarang.” She’d like to hear from anyone about “these operations in particular, and the liberation of Dutch civilian POW camps in central Java in 1945 in general”.

Contact: Henrietta Flinn at henriettaflinn15@gmail.com



»» Lost love

Do you recognise this young army officer? “I only know his name was Peter and that he was killed, possibly on the Somme,” writes Norma Collen. His cap badge suggests that he was a mounted soldier, and Norma recollects he had a keen interest in amateur dramatics. “He was engaged to my great-aunt, a nurse out in the field hospitals in France,” she explains. She wonders if a reader might have any more information about Peter.

Contact: Norma Collen c/o membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk



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.



STOP THE SERVICE CHARGE

In response to the article on your Stop the Service Charge Campaign in the September 2020 issue of *Legion* magazine, we have written to our MP, Sir Paul Beresford, to offer our full support.

All of the Commonwealth members of our Armed Forces and their immediate families should have an automatic right to remain in our country, for which they have fought and served, be it here or overseas in the likes of Afghanistan or Iraq.

All those veterans who have already been charged/penalised for remaining in this country should be reimbursed in full for all fees they have incurred, as well as any costs they have been charged for medical treatments by the NHS or for visas.

We are staggered to have recently learned that such a situation exists and look to our MP to urgently have it reversed by the Home Secretary Ms Priti Patel and our Government.

Peter and Robyn Cormack, by email

THE MERCHANT NAVY: THE FOURTH SERVICE

I feel I must point out that while it was right and proper to give praise to the Armed Forces of the Second World War during VE Day and VJ Day, I notice that little or no mention was given to the Merchant Navy.

Without these gallant men and women, those fighting could not have been victorious. It was these people who transported men and goods under extreme danger, with many in unarmed ships.

It should also be said that Churchill declared that they be known as the Fourth Service and should be accorded the same status as the other Services.

Tony Meade, by email

MEDALS FOR S. REYNOLDS

As a child, some medals came into my possession via my grandmother, who was Ethel McCarthy (Murr) and lived in Nottingham, Newcastle and Bridgnorth. I have three medals associated with the First World War that belong to S. Reynolds. The number on the medals is T-2-016091 and A.S.C, which I guess is the branch he joined. Lastly, the medals have DVR on them, which I think means driver, but I am not sure if that is a driver of horses or vehicles.

I would love to give these to one of his/her relatives but have no idea how to go about it. If anybody can offer advice or information I would be grateful.

Anthony Murr, by email



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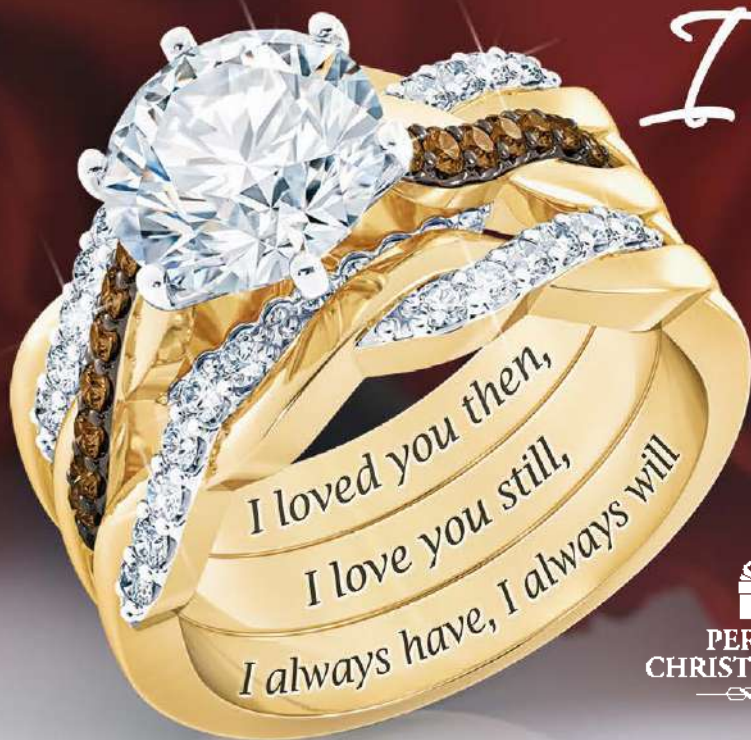
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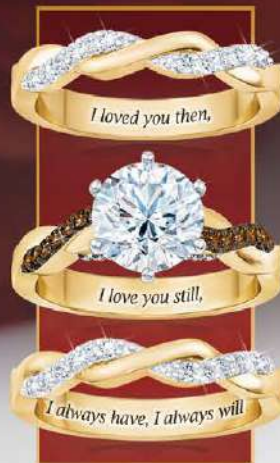
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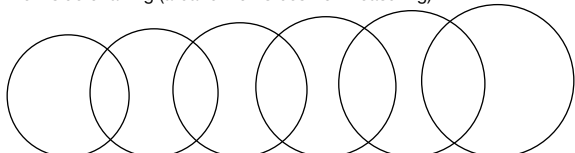
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With classic beauty, this ring trio elegantly conveys the depth of your love. The three bands offer a dazzling array of "mocha" and fiery white faux diamonds so similar to genuine diamonds that only the loupe of a jeweller can distinguish the difference! The rings can be worn stacked or individually. With the total diamond equivalent weight of over 2½ carats, this ring will turn heads wherever you go!

Beautifully presented

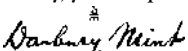
Your ring set arrives in a presentation case at no extra charge. Perfect for gift-giving or safe keeping!

Celebrate your love — order today!

The **I Still Do Ring Set** is exceptionally priced at £99 (plus £4.80 postage and handling), payable in three interest-free monthly instalments of £33 (plus £1.60 p&h). What's more, your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you are not delighted, simply return the set within 90 days for a FULL refund - including our postage and handling charge!

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