

The Royal British Legion
The Royal County of Berkshire
and Vale of White Horse

COUNTY CIRCULAR

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020

LEST WE FORGET

Mr Norman Freeman
President Winnersh Branch and former County Vice-Chairman

Mrs Elizabeth Harrison
Royal British Legion Women's Section National Chairman
Called to higher service on 13 September following a short but valiant battle

Our deepest sympathies go to their family and friends

BRANCH SECRETARIES: Please circulate to your members where possible.

COUNTY PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

So, here we go again – another lockdown; and who really knows for how long? Well, I hope that everyone stays safe, especially as many of us must fall into the 'at risk' category.

Thank you to everyone who managed to do some collecting for the Poppy Appeal over the last couple of weeks. It was a shame that activities had to be closed down, particularly at the M4 Services. I hope you all managed to commemorate Remembrance Sunday in a fitting fashion, despite the restrictions.

As Christmas approaches, we look forward to the new, and may I hope, brighter year, 2021. That also means that we look forward to the County Conference which, sadly, will have to be held virtually. However, business will go ahead as usual and, of course, we will be looking for members willing to take up County Committee positions. Many of our current Committee members are well into their 70s and we really ought to be getting in some younger blood. Please think about whether you might be able to join the band; the tasks are not too onerous in general.

You will all know that 2021 is the Legion's centenary year. This applies nationally, for many Branches, and also for the County. We are planning a County commemoration, in the form of a sponsored walk, followed by a short parade and then afternoon tea on Sunday 9 May. Please bear this in mind if you wish to have a Branch commemoration. National plans are still being formulated. Of course, none of this may be allowed to happen, depending on the state of infections of COVID-19, but some planning has to take place, just in case – and let's try and be positive.

Finally, by way of some light entertainment, I have produced a locally based crossword with which you might like to try your hand. There are no prizes, but the solution will appear in the next newsletter. Dependent upon when this is published, it may be my last opportunity to wish all Legion members in the County a Happy Christmas. We may not be allowed to do all that we would wish, but I'm sure resourcefulness will come to the fore and you will all make the most of the occasion.

David Drew

Crossword is on page 7 and also attached.

POPPY APPEAL

Message from the Director General,

We would like to say a huge thank you and well done to everyone who has worked extremely hard over these past few months to help us deliver the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance-tide activity.

Although we had to adapt our plans a great deal to comply with government restrictions, we are so pleased that through the tremendous hard work and dedication of all Legion staff, members and volunteers, we were still able to provide our nations with ways to get involved remotely with Remembrance-tide activity and the Poppy Appeal.

Teams across the Legion have worked tirelessly over the last few weeks to ensure that we were able to reinforce the importance of Remembrance and the Poppy Appeal in the minds of people across the country.

These past few weeks have seen us gain amazing coverage in national media, we received over 36,000 requests for poppies in the post and over 200,000 poppies were downloaded allowing people to take part in this the largest national act of remembrance. We smashed our targets for online donations, My Poppy Runs and Fundraising packs and our Poppy Shop saw a record amount of orders placed in one day.

We'll have a picture of how much has been raised in the new year.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

Message received 16 November from Anny Ried

The Minutes of Annual Conference 2020 which have been reviewed and corrected for accuracy You are asked to destroy all previous copies of these Minutes.

Anny Reid
RBL Trustee and Chair of the Conference Committee

The Minutes are attached to the circular.

COUNTY CONFERENCE

As mentioned in the County President's comments the 2021 County Conference will be held virtually on Saturday 16 January. The Conference will have a shortened Agenda and we do not expect it to take any longer than 3 hours including breaks. We suggest a 10:00am start but timings and the agenda will be confirmed nearer the time.

The documentation was sent out electronically to Branch Chairmen and Secretaires on 27 October. If you have not received this or require further information please contact the MSO by email to jstrange@britishlegion.org.uk or telephone 07884 869920.

COUNTY ELECTIONS

The election process started in July for County Officers and the results are that Jim Sibbald, our current Vice Chairman, has been elected unopposed to the position of County Chairman and Rosemary Edgington our County Training Officer elected unopposed as County Vice-Chairman.

Congratulations to both Jim and Rosemary and they will take up their new roles in January at the end of the County Conference.

Andy Gale, current County Chairman, is thanked for all his hard work over the last three years.

COUNTY COMMITTEE AND COUNTY CONFERENCE COMMITTEE 2021

The deadline to submit nominations for these two committees was extended to 30 November but at present no nominations have been received.

Members and Branches are asked to consider suitable members for nomination and nomination forms are attached.

NO FACE TO FACE CASEWORK

Please note that the Legion continues to hold by the policy of no Face to Face Casework – this applies to all staff, volunteers and BCS reps none of whom should be visiting a Customer in their home / garden etc. I am sure that we have all abided by this but can you gently remind your volunteers that this continues to be the case.

STANDARD BEARERS ATTENDING FUNERALS

The advice given to Branches in Jason Coward's message on 1 October regarding Standard Bearers attending funerals still stands. The relevant text from his message reads;

I can confirm that under current guidance from government Standard Bearer attendance at funerals is permitted as long as social distancing is maintained and the Standard Bearer is included as one of the 30 permitted attendees. If this is not possible Standard Bearers may 'line the route' as long as they ensure they maintain social distancing.

Jason Coward, RBL Board Trustee Chair, RBL Membership Council

BRANCH ACCOUNTS YEAR END 30 JUNE

Of the 32 Branches required to submit accounts for the year ending 30 June, 28 Branches submitted their accounts by the 30 September deadline. Thank you to all the Branches who achieved this.

One Branch has since submitted their accounts and the MSO is in communication with the remaining three Branches.

All Branches are reminded that very late submission of accounts (this year 4 December) will be classed as non returned as the accounts will be too late to be included in the Legion's annual accounts for 2020. The Internal Audit team will arrange a visit to any applicable branches.

MS1 FORMS AND STANDARD BEARER SECTION 5 OF MS1 FORM

Branches were advised the following by email from the MSO on 15 October.

Following the MSO virtual conference last week MSO's were advised that Branch AGM's are not defined in the Royal Charter as compulsory and that Branches will not have to hold an AGM this year if it is not safe to do so. We encourage Branches to hold a virtual AGM wherever possible.

With the MS1 form there are a few options.

1. Branch complete MS1 for this year and sign as usual. Send electronically to MSO.
2. If Branch Officers and Committee are staying the same as the previous year then a new form is not required. However, we must receive confirmation of intent to sign Section 4, Declaration of Acknowledgement of Responsibilities from a minimum of the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer (CSB Branches both points of contact). Would prefer a single trail with all three confirmations on one email, otherwise send individual messages.
3. Change of any Officer or Committee member, complete MS1 form with new details for that role. Send form to new officer so they can forward it to MSO and confirm in the message their intent to sign Section 4.

4. All or some of the required signatories do not use email and unable to confirm intent electronically. Please advise MSO of member's details and the MSO will contact the member by phone and verbally confirm the member's intent to sign.

The Branch Standard Bearer is also required confirm MS1 Section 5 – Standard Bearer and Standard Bearer Judge physical fitness confirmation. The same completion options as above apply. Details were sent by email to Standard Bearers on 23 October and to Branch Chairmen and Secretaires on 26 October.

Thank you to the Branches and Standard Bearers who have already sent in their details. Please remember the deadline for submission is 31 December.

BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORT MANDATORY TRAINING FOR BCS REGISTERED BRANCHES

Following on from three successful virtual training sessions using Microsoft Teams, the Oxfordshire MSO, Kevin Tobin, is running further BCS training for all Branches in the SE Midlands Area. The next course is on Monday 7th December and Tuesday 8th December. (7pm to 9pm). You will need to attend both sessions. This course is mandatory for all of those carrying out BCS and is followed by online training and a DBS check.

To apply for the training on 7 & 8 December please send details to ktobin@britishlegion.org.uk and copy in the Berkshire MSO jstrange@britishlegion.org.uk. Please supply your name, branch name, email address to be used for joining instructions and a telephone number.

The following BCS registered Branches have not yet attended the training:

Arborfield, Abingdon, Binfield, Bracknell, Burghfield, Caversham, Harwell, Holyport, Lambourn, Tadley and Wargrave.

The training is open to anyone who is a BCS rep or supporter. Branches that are not registered for BCS are encouraged to have someone attend to see what your branch is missing out on in providing for your beneficiaries. You may already be doing work in the community but you are not getting the credit or support you deserve. There are also issues around GDPR, Safeguarding and Insurance if you are working outside of BCS.

A lot of people are concerned about using online video conferencing so Kevin has prepared the following guide.

You will not be required to download any programme to be able to take part. The meeting can be accessed by laptop, i-pad or mobile phone etc.

You will receive an invite email that will have the opportunity to accept or decline taking part in the meeting. Near the bottom of the email you will see

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

[Learn more about Teams](#) | [Meeting options](#)

On the night and time of the meeting, just click on the "join Microsoft Teams Meeting" and you will be taken to Teams online. It will ask you for a name that you want to be displayed during the meeting. It will also ask for access to your camera and microphone. Allow it to use these as you will need them during the meeting. However you do have the options to turn them off. You will be placed in a waiting area and then accepted into the meeting by Kevin.

BERKSHIRE ARMED FORCES VETERANS HUB LAUNCHED

The Armed Forces Veterans' Hub was launched in Royal Berkshire on Saturday, 7 November, following receipt of the Gold Award in the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme in 2020. This affirms the Fire Authority and Service's ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces community.

The Armed Forces Veterans' Hub launch event was hosted virtually by the Fire Authority, coordinated jointly between the Service and MP James Sunderland. It coincided with Remembrance Sunday, and has been designed to offer a place for veterans to come together, listen to high profile speakers and meet organisations who can provide them with advice or support them and meet each other.

Opening the event, Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Councillor Colin Dudley, said: "I am incredibly proud and honoured that our Service is hosting the first Armed Forces Veterans' Hub in Royal Berkshire. We have seen how successful the Hub can be in places like Surrey and in solidarity with our commitment to the Armed Forces community, I am delighted that we are able to host this initiative in Berkshire on a momentous weekend that remembers the sacrifice and selflessness of those servicemen and women."

During the event, guest speakers which included James Sunderland, MP of the Bracknell constituency and Rt Hon Col Bob Stewart MP, joined Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Angus Ross and Chief Fire Officer, Trevor Ferguson, alongside a number of charities and organisations that offer services to the Armed Forces community in marking this inaugural event. The Royal British Legion was represented by Patricia Chadwick, Area Manager.

James Sunderland MP, shared: "This is an incredibly important initiative that is close to my heart after serving in HM Armed Forces for 26 years. Joining forces with the Fire Authority to launch the Armed Forces Veterans' Hub in Royal Berkshire is very exciting as I hope it can offer a place for our County's veterans to come together and share experiences, as well as offer an environment for sharing crucial services that help our veterans and their families."

Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Angus Ross, said: "We hope that this launch will pave the way for many more events like this to take place over the coming months. The intention is to offer an environment, hosted by the Service, where veterans can come together and share their experiences. We need to appreciate that 'Veterans' are not only the older members of our community, but all who have served in HM Forces. The receipt of the Armed Forces 'Employer Recognition Scheme' Gold Award highlights just one step in our ongoing commitment to supporting our armed forces community."

As we move forward, the events and the way they are run will be kept under regular review in line with COVID-19 guidelines. They will be hosted at fire stations across the County, as soon as the COVID guidelines allow, placing them at the heart of the community.

BRANCH LEGACIES HELD BY FINANCE FOR BRANCH USE

You may be aware of Branch Legacy Trusts already. When legacies are gifted with a restriction to an area or Branch they are dealt with by the legacy Admin team and then allocated in accordance with the Will – if the gift is £5,000 or below we send it to the Branch directly for their use as a restricted donation. When the legacy is over £5,000 we create a Branch Legacy Trust which is held by Finance and from which Branches apply to draw down for use. We now have over 300 Trusts totalling £9m, many of which have been held for decades.

We want to encourage Branches and Counties to start using these funds rather than accumulating them. We know the previous process was not ideal so there is a new SOP 163 (replacing SOP 147) which provides more guidance and hopefully clarity to the Branches on how they can spend funds.

The Legacy team will be writing to Branches who have Trusts that are now more than 2 yrs old with little spend to date at the end of September. They will be writing in stages depending on the value of the Trusts to stagger responses. In this County there are seven Branches plus the County which have Trusts, either held by the Branch or Head Office.

It has been confirmed that Legacies can be used for Grants to support a Welfare Case within the area of benefit set out in the terms of the Trust.

HUNGERFORD BRANCH AND COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

The following article from Hungerford Branch appeared in the Newbury Weekly News.

Tribute to work of War Grave Commission

On a six-monthly basis a group from the Hungerford branch of the Royal British Legion visit our town's cemetery to clean the 13 Commonwealth War Grave headstones and place RBL wooden crosses on the graves.

I would like to place on record the excellent work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

All the 13 graves, some going back to 1915, have excellent headstones. There are some which have recently been replaced.

I think it is right and proper to pay tribute to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for the way in which they commemorate soldiers sailors and airmen who died in the service of their country, some over 100 years ago, in such an excellent manner.

John Parry
Chairman of Hungerford Branch

POPPY APPEAL

Arborfield Branch decorated the two roundabouts at either end of the main road through the village. This roundabout had three panels, one each for the Army, Navy and Air Force. The MSO decorated her front window.



If you have pictures you would like printed in the next circular please send them to the MSO.

Enclosures:

Nomination forms for County Committee and County Conference Committee
Annual Conference 2020 Minutes
Crossword

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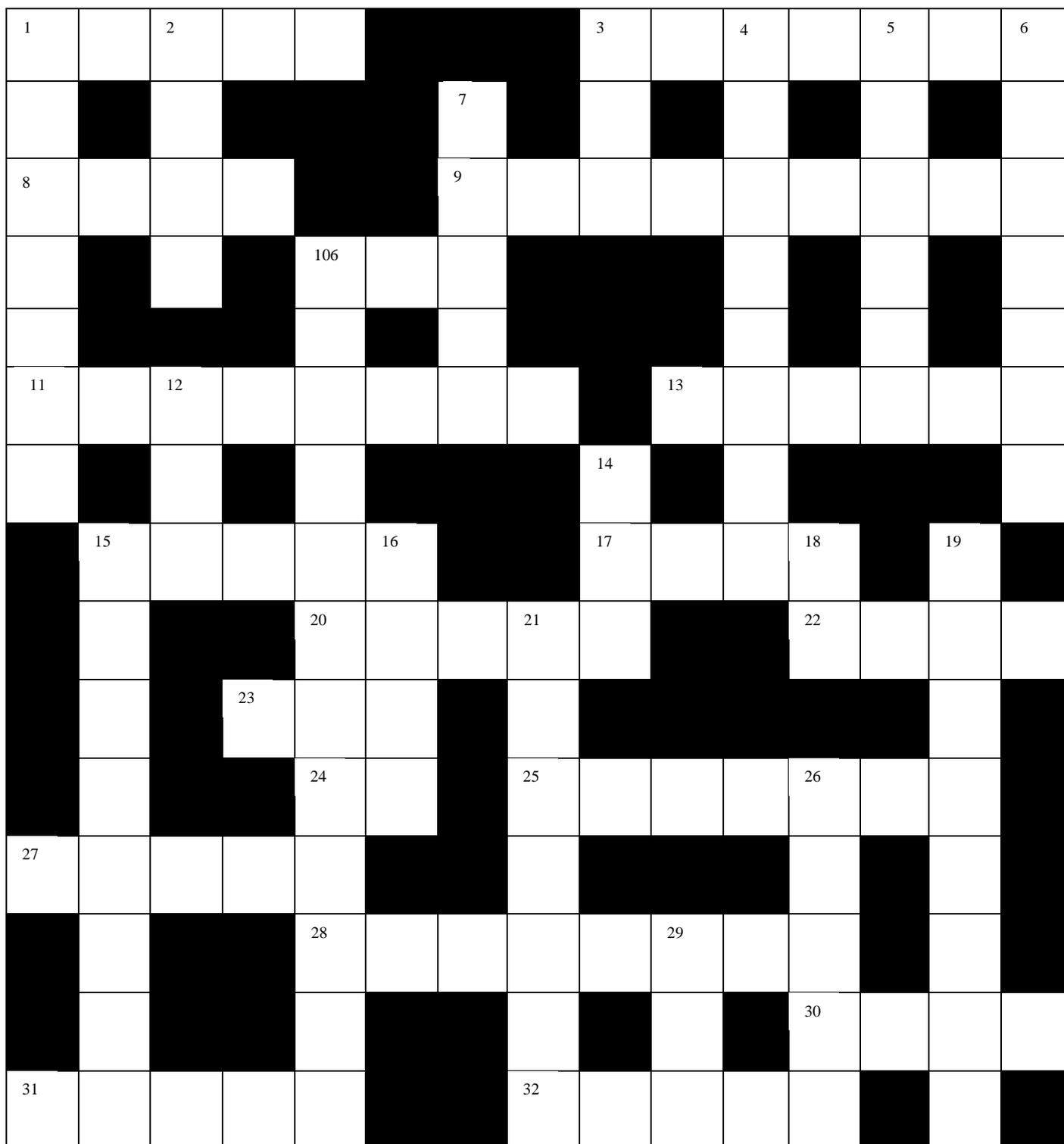
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BERKSHIRE & THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE RBL CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

The clues are mainly local or topical, a mix of general knowledge and mild cryptic



ACROSS

1. Cata..... , Mono
3. Chessmen
8. Jim's missing his first three
9. He pays pensions
10. Billiard, On
11. Conference herb?
13. North Sea platform
15. Beckham, Niven
17. Prince An.....
20. Undressed
22. Rim
23. We'll do a lot over Christmas
24. Musical Note

ACROSS (Continued)

25. Virtual seminar
27. Windsor dog
28. Not socially distanced
30. A lot goes on at Conference
31. Donkeys or fools
32. Ferguson, Bernhardt

DOWN

1. A load of books
2. Windy Chairman
3. Treasurer, O.....
4. Dormant after Christmas lunch?
5. Alice's mad

DOWN (Continued)

6. Peculiar
7. Throwing weapon
10. You'll want these if it's cold
12. A watery treat?
14. Peculiar
15. A girl's best friend
16. Christmas fruit
18. "..... the people"
19. Chinese (and now US) food
21. Huw or Colin?
26. Compass direction
29. Listener