

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

COUNTY CIRCULAR

January/February 2021

LEST WE FORGET

Keith Hughes
Former Branch Chairman Didcot Branch

Sir Philip Lavallin Wroughton KCVO KStJ
County Vice President

Our deepest sympathies go to their family and friends

BRANCH SECRETARIES: Please circulate to your members where possible.

COUNTY PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First of all, may I wish all of you a better new year than the old one. 2021 has not started off in great style, but at least some of us are now getting the job. Do keep yourselves safe and, certainly, don't risk your health on behalf of the Legion.

For those of you who didn't attend the virtual County Conference on 16 January, I have to say that it passed off well. Thank you to our MSO, Jennifer, and to our new County Chairman, Jim Sibbald, for all their hard work in preparation which ensured that it ran smoothly. You will have the opportunity to read the minutes in either this or a later newsletter. Jim – good luck in your time as Chairman.

In my address to the Conference I mentioned, among other things, our County centenary which is due to be celebrated this year. We were to hold it on 9 May but, given the current forecast of the virus situation by the Chief Medical Officer and others, the County Committee has agreed to postpone it to late September. Let's hope to goodness that we have more freedom to gather together by then. I have made initial inquiries of those who need to be consulted and we have agreed that Sunday 26 September would be suitable. As previously proposed, there will be a sponsored walk, followed by a short parade and then afternoon tea. The event will be held at the Sports Club in Ardington, near Wantage; for those of you who don't know the area, Ardington and the neighbouring hamlets of East and West Lockinge form part of the Lockinge estate, and the surrounding countryside is very picturesque. There should be plenty of parking, and refreshments in the form of a barbecue and licenced bar (from 12 noon) will also be available before the parade which, I hope, will start at about 2.30 or 3.00pm. The County Women's Section has kindly agreed to lay on tea (for a small donation) after the parade. So please spread the word to put the date in diaries as it would be good to have a large number of Legion members and supporters, together with local cadet and youth groups, attend. We will pass on further details once they are confirmed.

I must thank Andy Gale for his support as Vice-Chairman and then Chairman over the last six years. Andy and his wife, Jane, have not had an easy time, especially over the last year or so. However, ever-dutiful, Andy has carried out everything required of him to the best of his ability in this difficult COVID era. He remains our County Standard Bearer and we all wish him well in the national competition - should it take place!

Finally, elsewhere in this newsletter you will find the solution to the crossword that I set at the end of last year. I do hope that it provided a little light relief.

With best wishes to you all.

David

COUNTY CONFERENCE 16 JANUARY

The minutes of the County Conference have been sent out by email to Branch Chairmen and Secretaries.

The County Officers confirmed at Conference are:

President	Gp Capt D Drew
Chairman	Maj J Sibbald
Vice Chairman	Mrs R Edgington
Honorary Treasurer	Mr G Kay

NEW YEAR HONOURS 2021

The following members of the Royal British Legion have been included in the New Year Honours 2021 list,

Order of the British Empire

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

Stephen Leslie WEIR - For services to the Royal British Legion and to the community in County Antrim during Covid-19

David Mark HANMER - Area Representative and Regional Case Worker, Royal British Legion, Portugal Branch. For services to British Nationals overseas

Order of the British Empire

Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM)

Debbie LANGFORD - Chair, Newark Branch, Royal British Legion. For voluntary service to Armed Forces Veterans

Sheila Anne BOWER - Volunteer for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. For services to British Nationals in Spain

ELECTION RESULTS FOR WOMEN'S SECTION NATIONAL OFFICERS

Mrs Heather Spence of Hertfordshire is the New National Chairman and Mrs Jan Buxton of Derbyshire the new National Vice Chairman.

LEGION 100 TELLING OUR STORY

We'd like to ask Members to encourage everyone in their Branch to share their story for our Centenary. Every Member has a story and we need your help to spread the word. Download our poster to share on social media or print and display on external noticeboards you may have at your Branch/Club. If you'd like us to provide more information for upcoming meetings you may be holding please email

TellingOurStory@britishlegion.org.uk

The poster is attached.

CENTENARY AWARDS, DEADLINE EXTENDED TO 8 MARCH

As part of our centenary celebrations during 2021, we're using this opportunity to reward and recognise the incredible efforts and achievements of all our staff, volunteers and partners across the Legion family (including NMA and Poppy Scotland), who have contributed to the huge success of the Legion in its first one hundred years and have set it up for success in the future.

The scheme is based on the Legion's values and behaviours and looks to recognise those individuals and or teams who, through their contribution have exemplified one or more of our Values and Behaviours.

The nominations should demonstrate how people/organisations have brought distinction to their area of work, gone above and beyond and demonstrably enhanced the work, principles, and ambition of the Royal British Legion.

If you know an individual/organisation, whom you feel deserves to be recognised for their efforts and dedication to the Legion's work, you are encouraged to nominate them for an award.

The nomination form is attached.

We look forward to receiving your nominations and if you have any queries please contact membershipawards@britishlegion.org.uk

You have until 8 March 2021 to submit your nomination.

MS1 FORMS AND STANDARD BEARER SECTION 5 OF MS1 FORM

There are still some MS1 forms and Standard Bearer Section 5 that have not been updated or confirmed if Officers are continuing for the year October 2020 to September 2021. Standard Bearers need to either sign or confirm by email their intent to sign Section 5 of the MS1 form. Please contact the MSO for further information if your Branch has not submitted details for this year.

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 currn be visiting a Beneficiary in their home / garden etc.

BRANCH COMMUNITY SUPPORT BRIEFING FEBRUARY 2021

Legion Branches are at the heart of our communities and, with a network of 2,500 branches across the British Isles and Overseas, we have the potential to offer support to the Armed Forces Community wherever there is a need.

Branch Community Support is how Branches promote the objects of the Legion as set out in the Royal Charter and provide support for local Legion beneficiaries in their community by:

- Having a tangible offer for their members to be involved in supporting others. At a time where this is becoming increasingly important and people are more interested in community support this means that our existing members can become involved and, in addition, is a way of attracting new and more active members.
- Making our Branches active participants in their communities, raising awareness of the Legion and enabling us to become a trusted partner in community initiatives.
- Being the Legion's eyes and ears in a very local area and ensuring that veterans, families, carers and serving personnel, who need to feel connected and supported when they are feeling lonely, socially isolated or disconnected, can find support from the Legion.
- Having a well-trained network of Branches and supporters in a County ensures that our area teams can work together with our membership, making and receiving, referrals for support to people who are feeling lonely and socially isolated.

Branch Community Support is the first level of support offered by the Royal British Legion and the key services are:

- Home and Hospital visits
- Telephone Buddy calls

- Awareness events
- Bereavement (Funeral representation i.e. Standard Bearer attendance)
- Local touchpoints (UK only – and subject to Area Manager approval)

At present, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we are following national government guidance to ensure we only carry out Telephone buddy calls to protect both Beneficiaries and our Branch Community Support volunteers. As we emerge into a post Covid world we want to see what other activities our Branches would like to do to support communities.

We now have over 880 Branches registered to deliver a range of activities across the UK and Overseas and have therefore put in place a dedicated BCS team to help and support Branches. We have also established a Working Group, chaired by John Boisson, made up of representatives from our Branches and Counties.

Over the coming months the BCS Team and Working Group will be:

- Improving our communication both in terms of listening to our Branches and making sure everyone has the correct information.
- Developing and reviewing the activities Branches can deliver as part of their support to communities.
- Ensuring we understand the work our Branches are doing so that we can promote and talk about this in a positive way. Having reports on activities from Branches is key to this and we need to improve this.
- Reviewing both the training resources and also how training for BCS Supporters and BCS Representatives is delivered. At present it isn't as clear as it could be, and we want to improve this. There will still be a requirement for training, but we want to ensure it meets the needs of all.
- Reviewing and modifying the BCS Guidance. We know that having this in a better format will make it clearer and more accessible. The aim is not to change the guidance just make it clearer.

The Team is very much looking forward to working together with our Branches over the coming months and in continuing the success of BCS.

If you require further information or support, please don't hesitate to contact the BCS team bcso@britishlegion.org.uk or find us on Office 365 and the BCS Information group on Yammer.

CALLING WW2 VETERANS WHO PASSED THROUGH OR HELPED LIBERATE THE NETHERLANDS

The Area Manger in Wales sent this to MSO to pass onto our Branches.

I have been approached by the FCO in Hague who on behalf of the Dutch authorities are trying to find relevant contact details of WW2 veterans (passed through or helped liberate Netherlands in WW2) so that Dutch children can write them letters of thanks around the time of VJ-Day 76.

The text below provides the outline of why etc

We have been asked to assist the organisers of the Wageningen Liberation Parade, who are a part of the Netherlands 4-5 May Committee. They are collating a list of all of the surviving veterans from World War II who were active in the Netherlands as they would like to send a letter to them written by Dutch children. The 75th Anniversary Parade and events were cancelled in 2020 and they were hoping to be able to have a 75th+1 event, but they feel that it is unlikely they will be able to in 2021. Therefore they would like to take the opportunity to send a letter to thank the veterans and to let them know that they are remembered by a grateful nation, regardless of the current situation.

The Defence Team in the Hague have provided this address TheHagueDefenceTeam@fco.gov.uk that any interested veterans or their families can pass relevant contact details to.

A NEW EXHIBITION – RAF WOMEN THROUGH THE WARS

RAF Air Defence Radar Museum, Neatishead, Norfolk

The Museum has, in planning stage, a new exhibition which reaches out to all female personnel who served in the RAF, either at Neatishead itself, or Coltishall, or from anywhere in the UK/UK Overseas bases from the Cold War period through to serving currently.

The aim is to record these memories for generations to come before they are lost to time, so the display will consist of still photographs and digital recordings.

If you have served in the RAF during this period and would be keen to share your memories with us, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Lynn Kerslake, Manager, ADRM, email: manager@radarmuseum.co.uk; leave a message on 01692 631485.

BRITISH MODERN MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY TALKS (BMMHS)

You may like to know that our County President, Group Captain David Drew, will be giving an evening talk via Zoom on 14 April entitled *Operation Carthage – the bombing of the Gestapo Headquarters in Copenhagen*. In March 1995, David Drew was invited, along with some 50 others, to Copenhagen to witness the unveiling of a memorial to those killed in Operation CARTHAGE on 21 March 1945. His uncle had been one of the casualties. Over the next two days he had the opportunity to talk to many of the survivors of the bombing raid on the Gestapo headquarters in the city, both aircrew and Danish civilians, including members of the Danish resistance. David will discuss the history behind the raid and some of the characters involved before going on to describe the raid itself, its failures and its successes.

Members wishing to attend this talk or any other can register and find out more details on the BMMHS website: www.bmmhs.org.

Enclosures:

Centenary awards nomination Telling our Story poster

Membership Support Officer (MSO)

Jennifer Strange
T: 07884 869920
E: Berkshire.MSO@RBL.Community
Or jstrange@britishlegion.org.uk

Welfare

Ben Evans, Case Officer
Ann Bethell & Victoria Gornall-King
Advice & Information Officers
T: 0808 8028080
E: Southeastmidlands@britishlegion.org.uk

Community Fundraiser

Gaynor Dingley (East Berkshire)
Tel. 07823 418842
Email: gdingley@britishlegion.org.uk

Sarah Brown (West Berkshire)
Tel: 07458 015792
Email: sbrown3@britishlegion.org.uk

Regional Clubs Relationship Manager, Midlands

Pauline Swann, T: 07970 375421
E: pswann@britishlegion.org.uk

BERKSHIRE & THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE RBL CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

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

1	L	O	G	U	E				3	K	N	I	G	H	T	6				
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- 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