



MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER FOR OVERSEAS

March 2016

HELLO FROM MSO (OVERSEAS)

Happy belated New Year. I feel that the last three months have not been any easier as I had hoped but I can definitely see a light at the end of the tunnel now. Many branches have made consolidated payments which have been processed successfully. Some have not been as successful but I can assure you I am working closely with Novacroft to resolve these and I appreciate your patience while I do this.

Many thanks to those of you who submitted their MS1 forms on time, I know this year there was some toing and froing with Rod, your Membership Council Representative to ensure you were compliant with the family members rule and we both appreciate the effort that was put in to rectifying this.

Annual Conference this year will be held at Eastbourne. On the Friday afternoon is an Overseas Forum and following the set up of last year, before this we will hold an Overseas training session commencing at 11.30am. Please remember that you do not need to be a delegate to attend the training or the forum and we encourage any members, officials or not, to attend.

I am sure you all read the recent correspondence from Anthony Baines, the new Director of Operations, which explains changes to the support structure for Overseas. I am sure many of you will remember Susan Watmough who is now responsible for the overall management of the Overseas Team. If you have any questions about this please do not hesitate to contact Susan at swatmough@britishlegion.org.uk.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter which has another welfare update at the end, thank you to everyone who has contributed and please keep the news coming in for the next edition which will be in June 2016.

Thank you once again for your very hard work,

Kayleigh

LATEST NEWS

2015 Renewal Process

What will happen at the end of March?

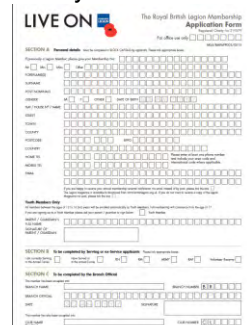
At the start of April, a list will be put together of all members with outstanding payments. This list will have had all pending payments removed from it. This list will then be sent to MSO's so they will have visibility of the members that are to be lapsed and can let the relevant branches know.

Then an automatic process will be put together in Care which will run on the last week of April to lapse the members that remain outstanding.

Problems with Processing?

Some of the hold ups with processing payments are technical problems and for that all I can do is ask for your patience. There are a number of things however that can hold up the process and I would ask that you consider these when making payments:

- **MS4 forms.** Once again there is only one application form that can be accepted, it is the only form with the LIVE ON logo on it (picture enclosed). If your branch has submitted any other application forms Novacroft have either returned them to the branch, or to me, and they need to be resubmitted.
- **Incomplete forms.** Please ensure that all applications (even ones sent with consolidated payments) have Section C completed – this is the Branch Name and Code. Also, it is vital that members complete Section G which is the formal application, this needs to be signed and dated.



The image shows a screenshot of the MS4 application form. At the top left, it features the 'LIVE ON' logo and the text 'The Royal British Legion Membership Application Form'. The form is divided into several sections, including 'SECTION A - Personal details', 'SECTION B - Current details', 'SECTION C - Details of the Branch', and 'SECTION D - Details of the Applicant'. Each section contains various fields for data entry, such as names, addresses, and dates. The form is presented as a grid of text boxes and checkboxes.

- **Multiple consolidated payments.** If you have made a consolidated payment and then make another, please complete a new spreadsheet. To add to the initial spreadsheet makes things very complicated.
- **Proof of payment.** Novacroft will not process anything unless they can trace a payment. When you send anything to them, renewals or new members, you must also include reference to payment, either with a cheque or a reference (ideally a copy) of the electronic transfer.

MS4 Forms

Once again, there is now only one accepted MS4 form. This can be obtained in hard copy by emailing popymembership@britishlegion.org.uk or in PDF format from Overseassupport@britishlegion.org.uk

Any other versions of application forms will not be processed.

Membership Handbook

At its meeting on 24th February 2016 the Membership Council approved the issue of a new version of the Membership Handbook.

Please note that this version contains major revisions including:

- An introduction to the Membership Handbook in Part 1
- Previous parts Part 3 'Groups' and Part 4 'Branches' now form a new Part 3.
- A new Part 4 that collates templates and forms previously situated across the handbook.
- Revisions in line with the new Membership Renewal Processes
- Revisions to the format and submission of Bye-Laws
- Financial compliance changes regarding branch bank accounts

The February 2016 edition is now online for branches to access here:

www.britishlegion.org.uk/membershiphandbook

Username: memhandbook

Password: TRBLmem£86

If your computer does not have the £ sterling sign, please copy and paste the password into the relevant box.

EU Referendum – Information from the British Embassy in Madrid

The British Embassy in Madrid is supporting a campaign led by the Electoral Commission to make British expatriates in Spain aware that they may be able to register to vote in the forthcoming EU Referendum. It seems that very many expatriates don't realise they may be eligible to vote, and very few are registered to do so.

The Embassy has asked us to help the campaign by distributing the attached 8-point guide on how to register. If you have contacts with whom the guide can be shared, or events or venues where the issue can be discussed, then please do. All that British expats need to do is check their eligibility, and then visit www.gov.uk/register-to-vote to make sure they can have their say. The Electoral Commission will be very grateful for your help.

The Embassy have also released the following statements on the issue in conjunction with the Compliance Team of the DWP/DH based in Madrid:

EU Referendum

At the February European Council the Government negotiated a new settlement, giving the United Kingdom a special status in a reformed European Union. The Government's view is that the UK will be stronger, safer and better off remaining in a reformed EU.

The civil service is working full time to support the Government's position.

Of course, as required by the EU Referendum Act 2015, the Government is committed to producing clear information, ahead of the referendum, on the outcome of renegotiation, the rights and obligations in EU law, an assessment of alternatives to membership and publishing the process for leaving.

15-year rule

We know that the 15-year rule is a frustration for people who want to vote in the referendum but have lived outside the UK for longer than 15 years. The Government believes expats should retain their right to vote as long as they remain UK citizens and has promised to scrap the arbitrary 15-year rule as soon as parliamentary time allows. But given the time available before 23 June, it is not expected that the Bill will complete its passage and be fully implemented in time for the referendum. Those who are eligible to vote are encouraged to register online here <http://bit.ly/1RGrh5H> so they can exercise that right.

Outcome of the EU Referendum

We recognise and appreciate your interest in the referendum and what the outcome might mean for British nationals living in Spain and elsewhere in the EU.

The EU Referendum Act requires the UK Government to publish information on the outcome of the Government's negotiations on the UK's membership of the European Union, on important rights and obligations resulting from the the UK's membership and on examples of countries that are not members of the EU but have other arrangements with the EU. As this information is made available it will be publicised by the Government.

If you have lived outside the UK for less than 15 years and wish to have your say on the Referendum, you can register to vote (if you have not already done so) here: <http://bit.ly/1RGrh5H>

Please see more information on healthcare on the blog post on the EU Referendum on the following website:
<http://healthcareinspain.eu/2016/02/eu-referendum/>

NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

The Flying Poppy?

On 11th November in Portugal Brian J Turner, District Chairman of Spain South, took to the sky in a hot air balloon with the large RBL poppy attached to the basket (a little advertising is always handy).

This was the fourth time that Brian has attended this meeting, luckily they managed to make two flights a day for the four days they were at the meeting. In past years, due to the weather, high wind, rain etc they have had to pack up a lot earlier and head for home.

At this meeting Brian managed to clock up his 22nd flight in a hot air balloon. He has also been involved in 35 retrieves. Since April 2012 Brian has clocked up 22 flights in a hot air balloon and been involved in 35 retrieves. He has flown in Todi, Italy; Derbyshire, England; Altor de Chero, Portugal; and Igualada in the Barcelona area. This year he flew in the Azores, and in doing so became the first British balloonists to fly there. Due to the owner of the balloon having a holiday home and balloon in Spain Brian has flown many times in the Antequera area which is about 50km north of Malaga. Six members of Brian's branch, Los Romanes, have also had the thrilling experience of flying in a hot air balloon with the balloon owner and Brian.



Remembering the Sark fallen of WWI

In an act of homage to the 18 men of Sark who were killed during the First World War, the Sark Branch of the Royal British Legion will be parading the Branch Standard in front of the Men of Sark Memorial Cross at 6pm on the 100th anniversary of each of their deaths or, in the case of those who died around the same time, a joint ceremony will be held.

The first of these was Alfred John Denis who was a Merchant Seaman lost in the Mediterranean on 4th January 1916. The Branch marked his anniversary by adding his name to the Men of Sark Memorial Cross. An article about Alfred Denis entitled 'Sarks Forgotten Sailor' can be found here: <https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/46906504-42c3-4ca6-b188-e346db4c3f68>

For a full list of dates please see here: <https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/de4309bb-ce61-4826-94ab-fb71a715c465>
These are photos taken at the 4th January commemoration with Chairman, Lt. Col. Reg Guille MBE and John Hunt, treasurer and Standard Bearer. Mr Ash Jarmin was also present and played the Last Post.



Torre Vieja's Easter Processions

David McLachlan was the rather special guest speaker at the January meeting of the Orihuela Costa Branch of The Royal British Legion where he spoke to members about the origins and the workings of Torre Vieja's International Cofradia, Los Costaleros of Oración del Huerto.

He was supported by five branch members, all of whom are long time members of the fraternity, and all of whom took to the floor, resplendent in their ceremonial attire.

He explained that the International Cofradia is a company of International residents, both men and women who are resident in the area. The majority of the group are British but they are supplemented by Russians, Ukraines, Scandinavians and many from the continent of South America.

They number in excess of 100 people who have the task of carrying a large Paso, or float, depicting Jesus in the Garden of Olives, at the Torre Vieja Easter processions. David explained about the origins of the International Cofradia and how it was first formed prior to the Easter Celebrations in 2004.

Prior to the formation of the International Cofradia the paso was shunted around the streets on a motorised frame and a number of modifications were required to the structure so that it could be carried, rather than rolled.

Accompanying the float is the Ladies Section of the International Cofradia who walk alongside the paso dressed as penitents or Nazarenes. This year Cofradia will take part in two of the Easter processions, the first being on Monday evening March 21st and the second being on Friday evening March 25th.



District Committee Changes in Spain South

This photograph was taken after the Spain South District Annual General Meeting showing most of the new District Committee with the outgoing Chairman and Conference Committee Chairman.

The new committee is made up of Chairman Brian Turner, Vice Chairman Tony Burns, Secretary Joyce Bosworth and Treasurer Margery Taylor.



River Kwai Challenge



Well done to Colonel Chris Luckham, Thailand Defence Attaché and members of staff from the British Embassy Bangkok who completed the River Kwai Challenge. Along with their opposite numbers in Burma, they ran (over 110K) or cycled (over 200K) to meet at the Border crossing at Three Pagodas Pass, the peak temperature was 38 degrees. One of the runners Daniel Fallows said; "Three Pagodas Pass is the highest point of the infamous Thai/Burma Death Railway, where thousands of Allied servicemen suffered and died under brutal conditions during WWII. This made a fitting backdrop for Bruce Lancaster representing the Royal British Legion Thailand and the Thai Riders to present us with 75,050 THB (£1500) of personal donations from Thailand based veterans. A superb effort." They did this to raise funds for both the Royal British Legion and Action4Diabetics (A4D) a charity run by ex servicemen, they have raised so far about £10,400.00"



Top photo: Runners and Riders at The Bridge over the River Kwai

Right photo: Committee member and Thailand Rider Bruce Lee hands over 1,500 Pounds raised by members and Riders

Paphos Branch take tea with High Commissioner

RBL Paphos representatives had afternoon tea in the garden at the British High Commissioners Residence with the High Commissioner. After the tea they discussed spreading the word about Overseas voting registration to the local expat population in Cyprus.

Back L - R: Dave Perry (branch secretary), Mark Welstead (chairman), Ric Todd (High Commissioner).

Front L - R Chris Perry (Welfare rep), Diane Welstead (membership secretary).



Coin Branch Celebrates 10th Birthday

Around 72 members and guests of the Coin branch of the Royal British Legion gathered at 11am at the Round'n'about Bar and Restaurant on Wednesday 20th of January to celebrate the branch's 10th birthday.

To mark the occasion, Jean Merry baked a fantastic fruit cake and Rosie Mahoney decorated it with marzipan and icing that was simply delicious. The cake was devoured at such a rate that the "cake monitors" could barely keep up and there were few takeaways at the end of the morning.

Chairman Jo Taylor, fresh from her recent visit to Australia, recalled the day 10 years ago when she and her late husband Michael, together with Harry Petty, Albert and the late Margaret Speight, decided to establish a branch of the RBL in Coin. The early days saw the branch flourish at Hotel El Palomar until the venue closed in October 2010. The last event held there was the launch of the 2011 Poppy Appeal and members anxiously danced the night away to the music of Frank Sinatra wondering what would happen next. After a turbulent year at the International Bar on El Rodeo the branch moved home once again to enjoy the really warm hospitality of Pepe at the Miralmonete. In 2014 Pepe decided to downsize to his very successful café opposite La Trocha and the Miralmonete moved forward under new ownership. Sadly, at the end of the summer in 2015 the new owner of the Miralmonete decided to close for an extended period of time for refurbishment and the branch moved to the Round'n About Bar and Restaurant in Coin.

It is fair to say that 2016 will be a challenge for the management committee but rest assured they are up to the challenge and look forward to providing a rewarding environment for friends old and new to meet on the first and third Wednesday of every month. There is no doubt that the Coin branch of the RBL is a great success and anyone who wants to join will be made very welcome wherever the branch may call home at the time.



Coin Branch take to the slopes

On Thursday 25th of February 2016, an intrepid group of 24 explorers from the Coin Branch of the Royal British Legion took a coach trip to the Sierra Nevada ski resort at Pradollano in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This is Europe's most southerly ski resort and although small in comparison to other European resorts the facilities are considered top-rate and it has hosted numerous ski and snowboard events. High in the Andalucían Panibetic mountain range the village is one of the highest in the area at 2,150 meters and the resort's 30 lifts (2 Gondolas, 15 Chairlifts, 5 Surface lifts and 8 Magic Carpets) with an amazing capacity of 49545 skiers/hour go up to a breath-taking 3282 m.



Of course, with an average age of 73, the RBL group was more interested in the scenery and the food on offer rather than the skiing. However age did not prevent the entire group from taking advantage of the senior discount on the ski lifts (a return trip was only €5 for the over 80s) and throwing snowballs in the brilliant white and powdery snow at the top. The weather could hardly have been better with a daytime high of 0C at the peak and a balmy 7C in the village below. Organiser Peter Brown was heartily congratulated by a tired group of travellers at the end of a wonderful day and the Branch PRO, Charles Edwards, and his wife Maria Paz were fortunate enough to win the quiz on the way home. Life is good for members of the Coin Branch, why not join them at Yates Bar and Grill at 11:00 on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month?

Mollina Goes Crazy to Support the Poppy Appeal

When approached by the Mollina branch of the Royal British Legion to donate a prize for their "Festive Draw" Michael Dyde of Lazy Days Spa suggested instead a golfing day with a difference, using the sites 19 hole Crazy Golf Course.

For the €5 ticket fee entrants each had a round of Golf and a mug of Hot Chocolate to warm their cockles and €2.50 was donated directly to the Poppy Appeal. With the football card and raffle the total raised was €150.00 To entertain those not on the course Branch Chairman Marty Power produced one of his famous picture quizzes and the sun shone all morning.

The crazy golf was won by Dave Leech of Fuente de Piedra with a magnificent score of 55 and he was awarded a prize of a Spa Voucher promptly claimed by his wife Gail.

The picture quiz was won by "the Luvvies"

Lez Gonnella, Poppy Appeal organiser for the Branch, commented "for some of us raising funds for Legion

beneficiaries is an all year round activity and occasionally it is good to put the FUN into fundraising, this was a great day enjoyed by everyone there and we recruited two new members."

The Branch meets on the second and fourth Tuesday each month at Parque la Vina Mollina @11am.



Contact Dave on punshon.dave@gmail.com for further details

A Poppy is for Life not Just Armistice

A personal view from someone who never served:

Waking up on New Years Day without making any New Year Resolutions, the first words I heard on the news were "The Celebrations went without incident" a sad reflection on the world today where conflict and hatred is round every corner. As a lifelong supporter of The Royal British Legion I began to ponder

"Why do I do what I do ? "

After the parades down Whitehall and high streets across the UK how many people polished off their medals , removed the car poppy and put them in a cupboard until next year whereas to some of us in TRBL the poppy is part of our every day being. There are three pillars of my support for TRBL even though I never served in any of the Armed forces.

REMEMBRANCE It is easy to remember the sacrifice of those who serve the general public during times of conflict, but the floods in the UK remind us that we do not need an enemy to prompt dedication and commitment, and I include the Fire Brigade and Police Forces in my personal remembrance.

FUNDRAISING Though it is useful in terms of TRBL to focus on Armistice celebrations it is essential for cash flow, and need, to raise funds all the year round. Relief is not and never will be a once a year occurrence and it helps to reinforce remembrance that need is not only a result of armed conflict.

COMRADESHIP It is quite easy to recognise the comradeship of those who served in the same unit but less easy to acknowledge the needs of family, friends and supporters and even occasionally those with whom we have little in common.

Living in Inland Spain, mainly for health and lifestyle reasons, away from the multiplicity of charitable demands of the UK the TRBL allows me to offer something in return .

Dave Punshon
Branch Membership Secretary

The Mollina branch of the TRBL meets on the 2 and 4 Tuesday of each month at Parque La Vina (bar area) at 11am Further details from punshon.dave@gmail.com or the branch website www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/mollina

Festive Draw Record For Mollina branch



A decision to break away from the traditional “Christmas draw” certainly paid off for the Mollina branch of The Royal British Legion when their draw held on 26th January raised €731. There were over 30 prizes donated by members and local businesses and further fundraising on the day took the total to well over €800 towards the Poppy appeal. Lotteries promoter Bill Montgomery thanked everyone for their support and remarked that holding the draw in the same week as Miserable Monday had lifted everyone’s spirits.

Lez Gonella the branches newly appointed Poppy Appeal organiser was delighted with the result, the first event in 2016 “I took on the role with some trepidation as the branches contributions just seem to go up and up and in difficult economic circumstances this isn’t easy, indeed some branches in Spain are closing down, but if we can continue in the wake of today’s event we will have another good year.

Carrying on the Nautical theme (Bill was in the Royal Marines) the branch chose the same day to Launch the organisation of a cruise in October, with a presentation from Alcon travel. Normally it takes two to three months to sell sufficient places to attract the maximum donation to the Poppy Appeal but on this occasion it was sold out on the day. It is possible that circumstances force cancellations so readers can put their names on the waiting list by emailing Steve on sr.taylor@btconnect.com

British Legion Flock To Estepa

On Monday 14th March 2016 the church of Los Remedios in Estepa was packed with a mixture of RBL members, family and friends for the funeral of much loved Rev. Father David Worsley who died in Osuna hospital after a short illness (age 69)

The service conducted by Father Aldolfo, a local Spanish priest and personal friend and assisted by members of the Mollina Branch of the RBL David Knight (President) Marty Power (Chairman) Barbara Punshon (friend), celebrated the life of a remarkable man.

Father David entered the priesthood quite late in life after studying Theology at Manchester University towards the end of a successful career at Manchester Airport. Following his ordination David looked after a Church of England Parish in Hale Cheshire before moving to Spain 9 years ago to establish a Parish for expats.

Based in the Mollina area David soon became the Padre of the Mollina Branch of the Royal British Legion and 3 years later was also appointed Padre of Spain South District.

A one time player and lifelong supporter of Oldham Athletic David’s ashes will be scattered over his revered Boundary Park pitch.



OPERATIONS UPDATE

(Meagan Levin, Overseas Case Officer)

Pedal to Paris

Having worked for the Legion for 5 years as an overseas Case Officer and as I thoroughly enjoy my role, I saw an opportunity to do something challenging and at the same time support a good cause as well as promote the overseas work of the Legion. After completing my first sprint triathlon last year, I enjoyed being on the bike a lot more than any of the other disciplines and on the spur of the moment signed up for Pedal to Paris.

I cycle everyday to and from work, do a long bike ride of 40 or 50 miles once a week, plus I have 5 gym sessions a week to work on other aspects of fitness that improve endurance. I’m most apprehensive about the hills, especially from London down to Folkestone where there are no road closures and a lot of the climbs will be down to mental fortitude. Overall, I’m looking forward to the experience of cycling 284 miles; it will be challenging but I’m hoping at the same time fun and a good opportunity to meet other people with similar motivation and interest in raising funds to support the work of the Legion.

<https://www.justgiving.com/MeaganpedalstoParis>

Cyclone Winston Fiji

Tropical Cyclone Winston was the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall over Fiji on record. Striking Fiji as a Category 5 on 20 February 2016, Winston inflicted extensive damage on many islands and killed 44 people. Communications were temporarily lost with at least six islands, with some remaining cut off for more than two days after the storm's passage. Nearly 55,000 homes were damaged or destroyed and roughly 40 percent of Fiji's population have been significantly impacted by the storm.



Britain has strong historic links with Fiji and a significant number of Fijian National's serve in The British Armed Forces. To date the Overseas Team has been working with the Legion branch in Fiji to identify beneficiaries who have lost their homes and livelihoods . To date 5 beneficiaries have been identified and we are actively assisting them with rebuilding their lives. Below are some pictures of the damage in Fiji from a member of the branch.

Good News Story

The Legion was recently approached by the family of a client living in South East Asia. The client suffered a recurrence of mental health issues and was hospitalised by the authorities in country. His family approached the Legion requesting assistance with returning him to the UK. They had raised the majority of funds required for his medical repatriation but were unable to cover the full cost. Working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office a case was presented to other military benevolent charities who contributed towards the outstanding sum. From the Legion's point of view a case was presented to The Head of Grants as medical repatriations are outside of policy. As there was a very small amount outstanding and the family had used all resources available to them the remainder of the grant was approved. The client returned to the UK and is still supported by the Legion (Area Office, specialist services) as well as accessing support with regards to his mental health from statutory sources.

**THE NEXT OVERSEAS NEWSLETTER WILL BE SENT OUT AT THE END OF JUNE,
PLEASE SEND ANY NEWS ITEMS TO OVERSEASSUPPORT@BRITISHLEGION.ORG.UK**