MINUTES OF THE

OVERSEAS FORUM

HELD IN

THE DEGANWY ROOM
VENUE CYMRU, LLANDUDNO, WALES
Friday 17th May 2013 at 1400hrs.

Present:-	Eddie Hefferman MBE	Chairman Overseas Forum (Board of Trustees)
	John Farmer	National Chairman TRBL
	Chris Simpkins	Director General
	John Graham	Deputy Director General
	Sharron Lewis-James	Director of Human Resources
	Stephen Cooper	Commercial Director
	Charles Byrne	Director of Fundraising
	Ray Sheppard	Head of Poppy Appeal
	Marielle Postill	Head of Membership
	Beverley Harrison	Membership Support Manager
	Debbie Kimpton	Membership Services Manager
	Kayleigh McFeeters	Membership Support Officer (Overseas) – Secretary Overseas Forum
	Terry Whittles	Board of Trustees
	Martyn Tighe	Board of Trustees
	Rod Bedford	Membership Council Overseas
	Bill Burn	Membership Council North West
	Christine Berridge	Somme
	Anthony Brittain	Lyon
	David Campbell	Bielefeld
	Sharon Gail Campbell MBE	Dortmund
	John Davies	Sauerland
	Eric Duckworth	Fuengirola
	Bert Elson	Chonburi
	Fred Green	Mijas Costa
	David Harpin	Torremolinos
	Mary Jansen	Minden
	Mary Le Corney	Benalmadena
	Mike Newick	Malta
	Steve Reid	District of Germany
	Terry Salmon	Herford
	Liam Sherbourne	Falkland Islands
	Pamela Sweetman	San Francisco
	Denise Walker	Coin
	Don Young	Tenerife
	Robert Allan	National Chairman RBLS
Visitors:-	Stephen Berridge	Visitor (Somme)
	Jennifer Brittain	Guest of Lyon Delegate
	Polly Harpin	Visitor (Torremolinos)
	Udo Jansen	Visitor (Fallingbostel-Heide)
	Raymond Le Corney	Visitor (Torremolinos)

Colin Pilling	Visitor (Malta)
Chris Wyatt	Visitor (District Spain North)
Peggy Wyatt	Visitor (District Spain North)

Apologies:- Sue Freeth — Director of Operations

Item 1	**Exhortation** **1.1** The National Chairman led the Act of Homage.
Item 2	**Chairman's Introductory Remarks** **2.1** The Chairman of the Forum, Eddie Hefferman, welcomed the delegates and visitors and thanked them for attending. He made a special mention to the delegates from the Falkland Islands and San Francisco who have not been able to attend in recent years. He emphasised the importance of the Overseas Forum as a rare opportunity to get overseas delegates together. He highlighted the small number of questions submitted for the forum and expressed his hope that this was a sign that progress was being made. **2.2** The Chairman advised the delegates and their guests that he had invited members from the Board of Trustees, the Membership Council, Directors and Heads of Departments from Haig House to attend the Forum. Also in attendance was the National Chairman of the Royal British Legion Scotland, Robert Allan. **2.3** The Chairman explained that Rod Bedford was recently re-elected onto the Membership Council as the Overseas representative and will be the Overseas Branches and Districts primary ambassador from this point on. The Chairman will be retiring from his position on the Board of Trustees effective from the end of Conference and Rod will be chairing the Overseas Forum in the future. **2.4** The Chairman introduced the new Membership Support Officer for Overseas, Kayleigh McFeeters and explained that she is now the main contact for Overseas Branches and Districts.
Item 3	**Previous Minutes** **3.1** The Chairman presented the minutes of the Overseas Forum from 2012 held in Scarborough and asked if there were any comments. **3.2** It was Proposed by Mrs M. Le Corney, delegate for Benalmadena Branch, and Seconded by Mr T Salmon, delegate for Herford Branch that the minutes be accepted as a true account.
Item 4	**Matters Arising** There were no matters arising.
Item 5	**Membership Update – Marielle Postill, Head of Membership** 5.1 Marielle introduced herself and explained that her and her team would be

	around for the duration of Conference and invited the delegates to visit them on the Membership stand. 5.2 Marielle presented a chart which showed the current organisation of the Membership department and gave a brief overview of Membership staff. 5.3 **Database** - Marielle explained that the Membership database, Pro2000 is now in its 13th year and is no longer operating effectively. As a result, a new database is being looked at and will hopefully be in place by renewal 2014. 5.4 **LOMAS** - Marielle gave an update on the Legion Online Membership Accounting System (LOMAS) which was initially rolled out last year. Marielle was optimistic about LOMAS explaining it had been taken on by 100% of Counties and 400 Branches have registered an interest in adopting it. The Branch roll out will start in August 2013 and 44 Overseas Branches will take part in this (9 from Germany, 16 from Spain North, 13 from Spain South and 6 from outside the Districts). 5.5 **Management Handbook** - Marielle explained that the Management Handbook is under review and a new version will be published in the Summer. 5.6 **Access to Information** - Marielle emphasised the vast number of Membership documents that are available digitally and asked the delegates to enquire with Kayleigh if they needed anything.
Item 6	**<u>Overseas Support Update – Kayleigh McFeeters, Membership Support Officer (Overseas)</u>** 6.1 **Branch Affiliation Fees** - Kayleigh reminded delegates that Branch statements will be issued by the end of February each year and that Affiliation Fees must be paid by 31st March. She warned that if the fees are not paid by this date Branches will not be eligible to send a delegate to Conference. She told delegates it was not advisable for the Branch to pay their affiliation fees before they received the Branch statement as adjustments may need to be made due to card returns. 6.2 **Exchange Rate** - Kayleigh explained that the Finance Department set the US Dollar and Euro exchange rate on 1st October each year and she will forward this information to Branches as soon as possible after this date. 6.3 **Branch Fund Initiative** - There has been some confusion surrounding the Branch Fund Initiative (BFI) Account so Kayleigh clarified that Overseas Branches *can* use the BFI account but reiterated that it must be used only for excess funds the Branch may have. It is a high interest account and there is little point transferring small amounts of money on a frequent basis due to bank transfer fees and bank exchange rates. 6.4 **Gift Aid** - On MS4 Membership Application forms there is a choice for the new member to declare if Gift Aid can be reclaimed on their subscription. Kayleigh asked that Branches remind new members they can only tick this box if they are a UK tax payer. 6.5 **Digital Update** - Kayleigh stressed the importance of all Overseas Branches being contactable electronically and thanked the large majority of Branches that already operate primarily by this method. 6.6 Kayleigh introduced the new generic email address: <u>Overseassupport@britishlegion.org.uk</u> and encouraged delegates to use this in future. 6.7 Kayleigh explained that she could provide Membership Listings or Membership Change Reports by email on request, but asked

	delegates to note that data protection means these listings can only be sent to Branch Committee Members. 6.8 **Conference Expenses** - All delegates attending Conference were reminded that if their yellow card was not stamped for all sessions of Conference then they would not be paid the 50% travel expenses by Conference.
Item 7	**Overseas Training Update – Beverley Harrison, Membership Support Manager** 7.1. **Membership Training Calendar** - Beverley presented the latest version of the training calendar. She acknowledged that the needs for training Overseas may be slightly different from those in the UK and that Overseas requests need to be approached differently, for example, in terms of financial viability. She explained that various travel and accommodation options are considered when planning courses to ensure maximum practicality. 7.2. Beverley highlighted a generic email for membership training: membershiptraining@britsihlegion.org.uk and urged delegates to use this to ensure requests get added to the calendar. 7.3. **Looking Ahead** - Beverley asked delegates to submit bids for courses as soon as the need for them are realised. 7.4. She explained that self-help options are being looked into, such as Branch Management courses. She asked that if anyone is in the position to do a train the trainer course please contact Membership Training. 7.5. Beverley advised that there is a list of nationally certificated courses held centrally and she cannot sign off courses that are not on this list. 7.6. Don Young, delegate from the Tenerife Branch explained how he updated his caseworker training using Skype which saved on the substantial expenses that would have been incurred in face-to-face training.
Item 8	**Membership Services Update – Debbie Kimpton, Membership Services Manager** 8.1. **Card Issue 2012** – Debbie told delegates that the feedback of last annual renewal from Overseas Branches was positive, with many receiving their cards before Branches in the UK. 8.2. **Annual Renewal 2013/14** – This has just started again and will generally follow the timeframes laid down for the previous year. Documents will be sent out at the beginning of September. 8.3. **Changes to MS6 Form** – Debbie explained that as a result of feedback from Overseas Branches the MS6 Card Return form will be amended. Due to the financial implications of returning the card and form back to the UK, the form will be amended to require two Branch Committee signatures to declare how many cards are being 'returned'. The form can be scanned and emailed to the Overseas Support Officer and the 'returned' cards are to be destroyed by the Branch Officials. The Branch will then be credited accordingly. 8.4. **Direct Debit** – Debbie will cover this issue later in the forum.
Item 9	**Operations Update – Sharron Lewis-James, Director of HR** 9.1. Sharron delivered an Operations update on behalf of Sue Freeth, Director

	of Operations, who had tendered her apologies. 9.2. Sharron explained that the geographical spread of Overseas casework remains varied with cases ranging from Peru to Syria. However, most cases are in Western Europe's ExPat Communities. She said there is an increased demand across all areas, specifically for assistance with food costs and basic essentials. Further increases are anticipated for essential goods, support with debts and repatriation. 9.3. Financially, year to date figures show an increase in case volume, especially in Spain, where, if current trends continue, will be double the number of cases supported last year. 9.4. Sharron warned that an increase in enquiries in Germany is expected. Requests from assistance with employment related grants and information in Germany have increased by 300% in the last year. It is likely the Legions employment support services will be increasingly called upon until 2018. The Legion have identified employment as one of its key development areas and will work to provide beneficiaries with long term solutions to difficulties encountered moving back to Civvy Street. 9.5. Sharron gave an example of a Fijian who served in the Royal Corp of Transport in the 1960's. He approached his Branch with an idea to start a family business. He wanted help to purchase two bulls and five cows. He is now in a position to sell milk and calves to support himself, his family and his community. This support only cost the Legion £1,100. 9.6. This idea of spending relatively small amounts of money that have a significant impact not only on the individual but on the community is hoped to be the basis of how the Legion operates in the future. 9.7. Sharron explained that alongside this the Legion continues to develop existing and new relationships with partner agencies based in the UK and abroad. 9.8. She asked Overseas Branches for help as they know who in their areas the Legion should be working with. If there is an agency they are aware of that is not being utilised, they are encouraged to tell Operations. Likewise, if they spot a trend in beneficiary requests they were encouraged to report it. In this way joint knowledge can be used to be best prepared to help beneficiaries. 9.9. Sharron thanked the delegates for all work Overseas did as the figures are only borne out due to the work they do.
Item 10	**<u>Fundraising and Poppy Appeal Update – Director of Fundraising, Charles Byrne</u>** **10.1.** The Chairman introduced the new Director of Fundraising Charles Byrne, who gave an overview of fundraising and a Poppy Appeal Update. **10.2.** Charles spoke briefly about his background before he arrived at the Legion which was primarily in retail in UK and across Europe. He highlighted his awareness of the Overseas Branches being different from those in the UK due to rules and practices. **10.3.** Charles explained just raising money is not enough, the general public need to understand what the British Legion is and what it does and that is also part of fundraising as that generates the money. **10.4.** The Poppy Appeal gives people a chance to meet those in uniform and break down barriers, as the forces, from the civilian point of view, can be quite intimidating. **10.5.** Charles highlighted that currently the government are reducing its spending and there are increased demands upon services. The amount of giving has

	as a result declined. The Royal British Legion is running approximately 8% behind where it was last year, but the 90th year was exceptional and we are at the same point as we were this time two years ago. **10.6.** Charles presented Annex C of the programme which shows the Poppy Appeal figures for 2012-13 so far. Some growth, particularly areas in Spain, has outstripped the trends. **10.7.** By the end of June, the problems with the definitions of areas on CARE will have been resolved so that Overseas numbers will be reported the same way as all other Branches. **10.8.** The Poppy Appeal and direct marketing are The Legions two main sources of income. Both depend heavily on cash which is the easiest thing for the public to scale back on so it is not surprising that cash donations are going backwards. **10.9.** The other worry regarding direct marketing is that the Legion has been using the same donors and supporters often and for a long period of time Charles stressed the importance of obtaining new supporters. The best way to do this is by word of mouth to people who are already interested in us, for example at events or through friends. It is important for us to collect data such as age and gender to communicate effectively with supporters. **10.10.** Charles highlighted that the draw down of troops from Afghanistan means the Legions cause is not so prominent in the public eye. **10.11.** No one person owns The Legion and everyone is involved in it for a period of time, our roles as stewards as to hand it over in a stronger position than it was before. Therefore changes are needed to increase income in a hard market. **10.12.** Charles talked about his plans for the future of Fundraising and the Poppy Appeal. He said work needs to be done on the Case for Support – this means making it clear to donors who we are and that giving to another service charity is not the same as giving to the Legion. **10.13.** Charles emphasised the importance of responding to our supporters by embedding a customer service culture in Fundraising. **10.14.** To please our supporters Charles advocated the need for more products, such as Poppy Picnics and an online portal for PAOs to manage the PA process. **10.15.** Regarding merchandising, Charles explained they are testing the water with products such as dated poppy pins and friendship bracelets. **10.16.** Charles concluded by saying that there are challenging times ahead but these cannot be ignored if the Legion is to be handed on in a stronger position. **10.17.** The Chairman added that if Branches have any questions about the Poppy Appeal Overseas to contact Vanessa Dean at vdean@britishlegion.org.uk.
Item 11	**Questions** **11.1.** Membership Fees – Mijas Costa Branch. Frederick Green was invited to read out the question submitted by the Mijas Costa Branch: 'We, and I am sure other overseas Branches are the same, have members who do not have UK bank accounts and cannot, therefore, pay their membership fee by DD. Once again would the membership and finance departments look at the possibility of paying DD through accounts held overseas.'

Debbie Kimpton explained that as Marielle mentioned, the system that is currently in place is outdated and cannot facilitate direct debit payments from overseas bank accounts. As part of the project looking for a replacement system for Pro2000, they are looking at introducing different payment options and how to accommodate overseas members. It is anticipated that a new system will be in place by renewal 2014.

The Chairman added that all Countries deal with Direct Debit differently. A visitor from the Fallingbostel-Heide Branch explained that the European Direct Debit system is being simplified. The Director of Finance, John Graham will look into this. Anthony Brittain from the Lyon Branch explained they find it much easier to have all of their subscriptions paid locally in cash and then a bulk payment made from the Branch to Head Office. The Chairman explained this had been tried in the past and could cause more work to all involved.

11.2. Elections to National Office - Mijas Costa Branch

Frederick Green was invited to read out the question submitted by the Mijas Costa Branch:

'We recently had 3 different election processes to conduct. Overseas Representative on the Membership Council, National Vice-Chairman and 3 vacancies on the Board of Trustees.
Our members have asked us to submit a proposal that each applicant should submit a brief personal message on a suitable medium which could then be distributed to the branches (DVD?) or accessed on line (video). This would then enable the members to make a far more informed choice for such important office – as merely reading a short resume, with a passport sized photograph attached, did not convey any sense of personalities of the applicants.'

Marielle Postill replied that during the last round of elections it was decided not to publicise CVs on the internet due to confidentiality of personal information, however, brief statements of candidates were included in the Legion Magazine. The idea to create video messages is a good one, but to ensure that the quality is consistent, these would need to be centrally produced. It would need to be budgeted and scheduled to ensure it was available at the right time. Mailing a DVD would be expensive so we would have to look at options to securely publish the messages. Private YouTube channels may offer a solution for this and we could e-mail a link to all Branches who have an e-mail address. The idea is good and the cost and workload will be looked into.

11.3. French District - Somme Branch

Christine Berridge was invited to read out the question submitted by the Somme Branch:

'Would the forum re-visit the request of the formation of an Overseas District for France.'

	Marielle Postill replied that it was a costly exercise to attempt the formation of the Overseas District for France and the Branches on the day voted against the formation. We would need to establish if all the reasons why Branches voted against the formation have been addressed before for a second time attempting to create a District. Additionally, if the option is pursued, a postal ballot may prove to be more cost effective than a Special General Meeting and procedures may need to be adjusted to achieve this. **11.4.** Overseas Forum – Tenerife Branch Don Young was invited to read out the question submitted by the Tenerife Branch: 'As the Overseas Forum takes place on the Friday before Conference, would it be possible to move it to the Saturday. In many cases this would save at least one night's accommodation costs. Travel costs for many overseas branches are becoming a reason for smaller Overseas branches being able to afford to send a delegate.' Marielle Postill replied that the timing of the Overseas Forum will be taken into consideration when planning the 2014 Annual Conference meetings. In view of the tight Conference timetable on Saturday and Sunday and the need to be cost-effective, we may look at combining the Overseas Forum and the Membership Forum as one option.
Item 12	**<u>Date/Place of Next Forum - Chairman of the Forum</u>** The Chairman again thanked the Delegates for attending and wished them a good conference. The date and place of the next Forum will be Friday 16th May 2014, in Torquay. The time and venue will be advised closer to the date.

Presentation of Thanks

1. The National Chairman reminded delegates that this was Eddie Heffermans final Conference as the Overseas member on the Board of Trustees. The Chairman expressed his gratitude for Eddie for doing a brilliant job and presented him with a token of thanks.

2. On behalf of all Branch delegates who have attended a forum over the past 12 years the Chairman of the Membership Council then presented Eddie with a very well deserved certificate of appreciation.

3. Eddie admitted that the past 12 years had been hard work but he took it on as a challenge as he thought that the Overseas Branches deserved better treatment. He believed that if you wanted to change something, you should get yourself elected into a position where you can try to do something about it. He said he had enjoyed every minute of his role, which he viewed as the best on the Board of Trustees due to the amount of travel it involved to places he would otherwise not have had the chance to go to. He reminded the delegates that when he was elected he warned 'you get what you get' and ended by saying they certainly got it.

4. Eddie then handed over to Rod Bedford who asked the delegates to contact him if they had any questions or problems. Rod explained the Forum is very important and he would ensure all Membership Council Members attended in the future.

5. Rod thanked the delegates for their support and promised his in return. He made a special mention of thanks to Nik Epton who supported the Overseas Branches for a long time and to Eddy Hefferman for all his hard work in making Overseas the success it is today.

Eddie Hefferman MBE

On his way back home from Annual Conference Eddie Hefferman MBE suddenly died of heart failure.

Eddie, 70, was a long-time active Legion member who rose to become the Overseas Representative on the Board of Trustees and Chairman of the Legion's Conference committee.

Eddie was instrumental in the forming of the Herford Branch of the Legion in February 1992, initially holding the position of Entertainments Officer. He went on to hold the positions of Poppy Appeal Organiser, Welfare Officer and Branch Chairman. He was the District Parade Marshal 1996-99 and the District Chairman 1999-2002. He is a qualified Welfare Case Worker, Parade Marshal, and Standard Bearer Judge.

Eddie made a massive contribution to the Legion, especially in regard to the Overseas Branches and Districts, and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Poppy Appeal Figures up to May 2012
+ any Increase on Previous Year

Annex A

BRANCH	CODE	Poppy Appeal for 2011 + % increase on 2010
Central Brittany	**BR3534/ XAI12**	**£9,113.06/ up 41%**
Chonburi – Thailand	**BR3588/ XBD02**	**£21,201.68/ up 159%**
Coin	**BR3567/ XBD50**	**£9,518.66/ up 31%**
Herford	**BR3463/ XAJ16**	**£8,323.97/ up 62%**
Linazay	**BR3582/ XAI15**	**£7,370.61/ up 84%**
Los Romanes	**BR3579/ XBD60**	**£1,342.00/ up 243%**
Mijas Costa	**BR3474/ XBD41**	**£11,444.74/ up 57%**
Mollina	**BR3552/ XBD49**	**£1,173.36/ up 36%**
Rheindahlen	**BR3461/ XAJ17**	**£10,173.68/ up 141%**
Tenerife	**BR3487/ XBE03**	**£9,939.48/ up 16%**
Torre del Mar	**BR3496/ XBD47**	**£7,012.33/ up 9%**
Torrevieja	**BR3456/ XBD13**	**£9,541.59/ up 23%**

Delivery of Welfare of Overseas: - Key Highlights

Annex B

- Legion expenditure on Immediate Needs Grants Overseas during last financial year (2010/11)

  Head Office: £76183
  Spain CWO £39,730

  Total £115,913

- Legion expenditure on INGs in the current financial year as at 30th April

  Head Office: £ 48,981
  Spain CWO: £ 13,535

  Total: £62,516

  Based on these figures we expect the annual Legion expenditure on Overseas Immediate Needs Grants this financial year to be similar to that of 2010/11.

- In 2010/11 there were 376 Overseas enquiries received at Head Office from over 42 countries. We anticipate that numbers for this financial year will be similar (193 enquiries up to 30th April of this year).

Overseas Welfare Enquiries & Assistance - trends

- Key areas remain repatriation to UK, medical costs, on-going living costs, respite and residential care costs (both locally or back in the UK). To date this financial year we have assisted with the travel costs of 18 beneficiaries repatriating permanently to the UK from around the world (8 of them being from Spain)

- There has been a significant increase in the number of applications we make to our Service Charity partners to provide annuities for beneficiaries who are struggling to "make ends meet" on a limited income and for whom repatriation is not realistic option.

- More beneficiaries are finding themselves in a situation whereby they have become the full time carer for partners or immediate family or who are alone and no longer able to live independently and need either respite care support or longer term residential care.

- There has been a significant increase in the number of both welfare enquiries and cases from within the Serving Community (primarily in Germany). The key areas being debt and relationship breakdown.

- We continue to respond to complex cases involving clients with complex and/or multiple needs and issues – homeless (including

street homeless – cases in Spain, Philippines & the USA this year being some examples, mental health problems, substance misuse issues (primarily alcohol) and clients taken seriously ill or being involved in a serious accident Overseas. However these cases do not appear to be increasing in overall numbers. In such cases the case worker/branch, the FCO, the Head Office Grant Giving team and UK County Offices work closely together to provide practical guidance and emotional support to the client and family members both in country and back in the UK. It is the continued strengthening of our collaborative partnerships that allows us to do this effectively.

Collaborative Partnerships

- We continue to work closely and strengthen our working relationships with the FCO (FCO Desk officers and social work advisor in London as well as the consular sections across the globe), Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League (RCEL) and the American Red Cross (Veterans Dept.). These collaborative partnerships are essential especially where there is no Legion presence.

- There has been significant increase in the number of enquiries and cases from our beneficiary community in the USA – enquiries relating to repatriation to the UK due to loss of job, bankruptcy, unable to afford on-going medical costs. The American Red Cross has been extremely supportive in assisting our beneficiaries to access the limited voluntary sector support available locally in addition to visiting, completing our paperwork and providing moral support to our beneficiaries.

- There is evidence from our CWO in Spain that suggests more of our beneficiaries are being signposted to sources of local help and are making concerted efforts to access services in Spain. The FCO partnership with the Legion and Age Concern España (ACASA) has worked hard to deliver outreach work across Spain and support us to provide Spain specific information to our caseworkers and beneficiaries. In particular it is through the hard work and support of, our volunteer caseworkers that beneficiaries have been able to access local services. It is acknowledged however, that whilst individuals are applying to statutory services, cut backs in local funding and the lack of resources means that some individuals are being assessed and confirmed as eligible, only to be told that there are no financial resources available to provide the necessary assistance. This is also happening within the UK and sadly is unlikely to change in the near future.