

*Our mission is to safeguard the welfare, interests, and memory of those who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces*

## Administrative Notice of County Group Meetings

Fellow Legionnaires. This Friday and Saturday, 1st & 2nd March, I will attend the County Chairmans' Seminar in Birmingham. The agenda includes the following items:

Developing a Common Purpose,  
D-Day 80 Remembrance Activities  
RBL priorities for 2024/25  
Membership Directorate Update and branch improvements  
Annual Conference 2024- Motions  
Membership Training  
County and Branch Guide development

So that you, the membership of Hampshire, can stay up to date with the latest news, thinking and improvements from Head Office and the wider Legion, I expect every Branch to send at least one officer: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, to attend either of the following Group meetings.

Saturday 23rd March between 12:30 and 14:30  
Old Basing Royal British Legion, Crown Lane, Old Basing  
RG24 7DN

Saturday 6th April between 12:30 and 14:30  
Fawley Royal British Legion, 3 Exbury Road, Blackfield,  
SO45 1XD

If no Branch officer is available, please arrange for a Branch committee member to attend. As before, the structure is informal with a question-and-answer session after each segment. Please ensure you send a confirmation of your attendance to the emails below.

Please Note: If you have any detailed questions, send them to me as soon as possible, this will allow time to give you the fullest possible answers on the day. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

Yours Sincerely

Tim Russell - County Chairman

Melvyn Cole - County Secretary

Royal British Legion, Hampshire

[hampshire.chairman@rbl.community](mailto:hampshire.chairman@rbl.community)

[hampshire.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:hampshire.secretary@rbl.community)

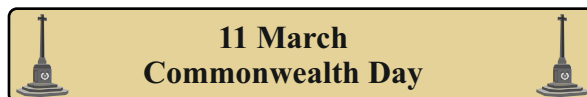
## The Commonwealth

On the 11th March we celebrate Commonwealth Day. The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The current Secretary-General (the sixth since inception) is the Right Honourable Patricia Scotland KC.

Each year Commonwealth Day is celebrated on the 11th March. The celebrations take place over a period of a week and include events and activities happening around the globe. The celebrations include faith and civic gatherings, debates, school assemblies, flag-raising ceremonies and cultural events.

The Commonwealth does a variety of things including -

1. Promoting democracy, good governance, peace and the rule of law.
  2. Assists to boost trade between member countries, to create prosperity for all.
  3. The Commonwealth Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform has an input in transforming the operation of justice systems and the delivery of justice across the Commonwealth. It does this by providing user-centred legal knowledge products, networks, and platforms, to ensure equal access to justice for all.
  4. The Commonwealth Countering Violent Extremism Unit supports Commonwealth member countries to prevent and counter violent extremism. A mandate was drawn up at the London and Kigali Summits, so that the Commonwealth Secretariat Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit can work with member countries to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism. It shares good practice, providing technical assistance and policy advice.
  5. The Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Rights Unit supports Commonwealth countries' efforts to promote, protect and respect internationally recognised human rights principles, standards and practices. DW
- Source - <https://thecommonwealth.org/>



## The RBL Battle Back Centre Lilleshall

The Royal British Legion Battle Back Centre Lilleshall was opened in 2011 to help Armed Forces personnel who are wounded, injured or sick to achieve the best possible recovery and either return to duty or make a smooth transition to civilian life.



The Battle Back Centre is fully funded by the RBL, but it needs constant support, the equipment and maintenance, even down to simple beds and bedding all require constant and much needed funding. In addition to their work with assisting the recovery of those suffering from both physical and mental injury, the Centre is open to all veterans, regardless of age, but there are some joining criteria for full participation in the courses, further details below.



Many of the participants in the recovery courses conducted by the staff have gone on to represent their country at many top-level sporting event and challenges, including the recent Invictus Games.

### Veterans Course Selection Criteria –

Participants must:

Be independently mobile.

Able to independently transfer from one vehicle to another.

Able to participate in activities.

Have a moderate level of mobility and fitness.

Not have been detained under Sec. 2 or Sec.3 of the Mental Health Act within the last 3 months or currently under a Community Treatment Order.



Please note that the Battle Back Centre is unable to provide clinical, medical or nursing support. They will give precedence to those who have not benefitted from other Recovery programme courses and the allocation process will be based on perceived need based on the facts presented. There is no age restriction however the Centre will require basic medical information, to ensure your safety, but details will be destroyed once the course has finished, in accordance with RBL GDPR

policies and procedures.

The course is fully funded by the British Legion and is free to attend. All meals and use of equipment is included. We do provide a mileage allowance, should you need to claim. The address is Battle Back Centre, Lilleshall, National Sports' Centre Lilleshall, Near Newport, Shropshire, TF 10 9AT. Information and photos from Tim Russell



## Op Courage - The NHS Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

The NHS launched Op Courage in 2017 to assist in specialist care and treatment of those in the UK armed Forces who are veterans, reservists or about to leave the service. The NHS clinicians include those who have a military background and are highly experienced in supporting the members of the armed forces community. The team works with various veteran organisations to assist in spotting the signs of mental ill-health and obtaining the right treatment and support.

Some of the issues that can be helped with include feeling overwhelmed, feeling low or unmotivated, trouble with sleep, problems with moving on from military life, controlling anger and frustration, alcohol, drug and gambling issues and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The NHS team includes Clinicians who have either a military background or are highly experienced in supporting members of the armed forces.

The first step is to make contact. Please see the poster on the second last page for phone numbers and email addresses.

After making contact you will be invited to meet with a clinician either face-to-face or by video call to establish what can be done to help. They will then tailor make a plan to suit your needs. You could be referred to other specialist services depending on requirements. If you would like family members to be involved this will also be arranged.

You can also contact your local GP for assistance and referral. Nobody needs to struggle on their own. The armed forces is one big family and there is help at hand! DW



## Droxford and District Branch News

The annual programme of meetings and events for Droxford and District Branch always includes four talks and over the years, these have been on a wide variety of subjects. To start our 2024 programme, we were privileged to welcome Lord West as our guest speaker.

Following a distinguished Naval career which included the award of a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for action in the Falklands War and culminated in his appointment as First Sea Lord, Lord West served in government as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Home Office for which he was awarded a life peerage. From his position in the House of Lords, Lord West remains highly influential in defence related matters and those of national security. As a prolific writer of articles and letters, his views continue to be widely sought and expertly conveyed through media coverage.

Addressing us on the subject of “National Security”, Lord West gave a frank and wide ranging round-up of geo-strategic and geo-political issues as well as giving an honest insight into many of the challenges facing today's Armed Forces. Questions were then invited from the audience, all of which were met with insightful responses. The opportunity to listen to such an informed speaker was greatly appreciated by approximately 100 members and guests, 50 of whom then enjoyed a delicious supper cooked by a local caterer.

A number of Lord West's term-mates who joined the Navy with him at Britannia Royal Naval College attended and all present enjoyed an informative, convivial evening ensuring a great start to our programme for the year.

Article and images kindly provided by Cdr Rob Scott RN Droxford and District RBL



Lord West was welcomed to the Branch by Chairman, Lt Cdr Janet Melson



Lord West pictured with Branch members Admiral Sir Jock Slater (also a former First Sea Lord) and Mr Nigel Atkinson, Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire

## Regional Youth Standard Bearer Competition

The regional Youth Standard Bearer Competition was recently held and our Hampshire County RBL Youth Standard Bearer Natalia Szymkiewicz achieved first place in the Regional Standard Bearer Competition.

Natalia will now go forward to compete in the National competition. We wish her the very best in the quest for perfection.

The photo shows Natalia receiving the Ian McDougal Youth Standard Bearer's Cup at the County Conference from Lt Gen Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL and Mrs McDougal. DW



## Lymington Branch 100th Anniversary

Lymington Branch holds its 100th anniversary on 24 March 2024 at St Thomas Church in Lymington at 14:00. If you are in the vicinity on the day, please support their celebrations. All Branch members and Standard Bearers are welcome. Food and entertainment will be provided at the RBL Club and is also open to non members. DW





## Private Alec Hopkins - Royal Marines Light Infantry

Number CH/1963(S) Private Alec Hardham Hopkins served in the Royal Marines Light Infantry. He was born in 1898 in Kingsclere and died in Edinburgh at the Rosyth Naval Hospital on 14th January 1919 aged 20 as a result of glandular fever due to an infection of wounds received on the Western Front. He was in the Chatham Division, Royal Marine Light Infantry and was the son of George and E. E. Hopkins, of Barton House, Kingsclere.

During the First World War the Royal Marines consisted of the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI), sometimes referred to as Red Marines and Royal Marine Artillery (RMA), sometimes referred to as Blue Marines. Both elements were to be found on board a Royal Navy ship. The RMLI were under command of the 63rd Royal Naval Division (RND) while deployed on land for the First World War. The RMA were also deployed on land in batteries and were deployed with army artillery. 63rd (Royal Naval) Division was an infantry division on active service from September 1914 to April 1919. The division saw action during the Siege of Antwerp (1914), Battle of Gallipoli (1915), Battle of the Somme (1916) and the Third Battle of Ypres (1917). To begin with the Division was raised from reservists and volunteers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. In 1916 the RN Division suffered heavy losses and was then transferred to the British Army as the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division. After the beginning of the First World War a Marine Brigade was raised from four infantry battalions was formed from men of the Royal Marine Light Infantry and Royal Marine Artillery and placed in four infantry battalions. Each battalion came from Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Deal respectively and took on the name of their depot. The purpose of the units was to secure and defend ports established overseas. Two further brigades consisting of volunteers (four battalions each) were raised soon after. The eight battalions were named Drake, Benbow, Hawke, Collingwood, Nelson, Howe, Hood, and Anson. Thereafter each battalion was numbered from 1 to 8. These comprised 63rd Royal Naval Division. Once trained and equipped the division deployed to the Western Front.



Private Alec Hopkins  
Gravestone at St Mary's Church  
Kingsclere

British and French forces in Belgium were being pushed back by the Germans and the supply lines from Britain were vulnerable. On 24th August 1914 German cavalry patrols reached the port of Antwerp, Belgium. This imposed a threat as the Germans would be able to launch a naval attack from there on the southern coast of England. On the 27th August the Royal Marine Brigade landed to secure Antwerp and hold it. On 30th August the rest of the RMLI landed. The idea to use Antwerp was abandoned as western France was a better option and the RMLI were withdrawn on 31st September.



Royal Marines Light Infantry  
cap badge

Gallipoli. The 63rd RN Division was deployed to Egypt and then participated in the Gallipoli campaign, fighting at Anzac Cove and Helles. On 28th April four battalions of the Division were deployed to Anzac to reinforce Australian and New Zealand troops. After this the Division deployed to Helles and remained there until the end of the campaign, when it deployed to France.

Western Front. The 63rd RN Division participated in the last phase of the Battle of the Somme on the River Ancre to capture Beaucourt. They had four objectives - to capture the German trench complex (Dotted Green Line), the road to Beaucourt station (Green Line), a trench around the remains of south west Beaucourt (Yellow Line) and Red Line beyond Beaucourt. 1st RMLI bns Howe, Hawke and Hood attacked the Dotted Green Line and Yellow Line. 2nd RMLI bns Anson, Nelson and Drake attacked the Green Line and the Red Line. Beaucourt was captured by the Division.

The 63rd RND continued to fight and were deployed on the north bank of the Ancre to attack German positions on 17th February 1917. 188 Brigade and two battalions of 189 Brigade captured 700 yards of the road north from Baillescourt Farm towards Puisieux, to gain observation over the key terrain of Miraumont. They then went on to participate in the second Battle of Passchendaele from 26th October to 10th November 1917). 188 Brigade of 63rd RND captured Varlet Farm and Banff House. The centre of the attack was halted on the road between Bray Farm and the village of Wallemolen. That night Banff House was abandoned and the line reformed at Berks House. On 30th October, the 63rd RND came under heavy German artillery fire at their start line. Minimal progress was made and they were unable to link up with the adjacent Canadians. This meant that the troops at Source Farm and Vapour Farm were vulnerable. The Canadian outpost at Source Farm was reinforced to form a defensive flank to Vapour Farm. The 63rd Division suffered 3,126 casualties between 26th and 31st October. Night attacks allowed the position to be consolidated at a further loss of 14 killed and 148 wounded. It is most likely that Private Alec Hopkins was wounded in action at this time and evacuated back to England where he died. dw

**We remember**



## Kings Worthy Remembrance



**K**ings Worthy is just outside Winchester and I had the opportunity to visit the local church in an ongoing quest to find Commonwealth War Graves and photograph them. This is part of a task I set myself several years ago to remember the Fallen wherever they may be resting. The church is on a pilgrimage route from Winchester to Canterbury and has a memorial to those who fell in both world wars (as above). Of interest is a grave to a nurse of the British Red Cross, a sergeant of the RAF and a captain in the Army Education Corps. There are also many names on the memorial and a grave of a captain in the 60th Rifles (King's Royal Rifle Corps). Photos taken by Olive Wall. DW



## Membership IT Systems Support

The RBL Membership IT Systems Support have distributed some important information to branches for all those within the RBL Community that use IT concerning advanced email protection features that have been enabled on all RBL Community accounts. Their message is as follows -

Subject: Advanced email protection features enabled for your RBL Community account. As part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding your digital experience, we have recently enabled advanced email security functionalities on the Membership Administration Portal (MAP) to keep personal information and data secure. These enhanced security features act as a robust shield against malware and spam.

### Anti-Malware Protection:

The Microsoft 365 Defender system diligently scans files and programs, identifying and neutralizing any potential threats before they can harm your device. Think of it as a digital guardian, always on the lookout to keep your information secure.

### Anti-Spam Measures:

Unwanted emails and spam can be not only annoying but also potentially harmful. These updated security protocols filter out these unwanted messages, allowing you to focus on what matters most without the distractions and risks associated with spam.

We have a commitment to adhere to GDPR regulations, ensuring that personal data is handled and stored securely, and these enhancements are a significant step towards achieving that goal. If you are ever concerned that you have not received a legitimate email in a timely manner, please contact us on [Membership.ITSupport@rbl.community](mailto:Membership.ITSupport@rbl.community) so that we can investigate.



## Poppy Appeal Matters

Julie Lax has been standing in for Claire Smith who has returned after her maternity leave. A very big thank you is extended to Julie for all the hard work she did in this regard. We wish her well for the future.

We also welcome Claire back. Please note that Claire is experiencing a few IT problems with regard to Poppy Appeal matters and hopes that this will be resolved shortly. DW





## Other News

### Hampshire RBL Golf Dates 2024



Calling all Royal British Legion golf players! There are three days arranged for 2024 so please put these in your diaries, contact your mates and enter as many as you can to support the RBL POPPY APPEAL and to win prizes for yourself and kudos for your Branch.

**April 8th.** Sherfield Oaks Golf club near Basingstoke. 18 Hole 4-man team Texas Scramble, consisting of coffee bacon roll, 18 holes of golf and a 1 course lunch.

**May 13th.** The Army Course, Aldershot. The annual RBL Pairs stableford competition playing for the Bob Knight trophy. Team of four, best pair of scores within wins. Food before and after golf.

**June 3rd.** Armed Forces Day, Sherfield Oaks, near Basingstoke. Four-man team event, with team prize, secret pairs and individual plus NTP and LD prizes. Food before and after golf.

Forms and cost details for all of these days are now available and requests for these can be sent to me directly or be found on the Hampshire RBL events website nearer the time.

Please do your utmost to participate. After all, they are being run for you and that of our great organisation.

Rick Bourne- Hampshire RBL Golf Secretary  
[rickbourne@yahoo.com](mailto:rickbourne@yahoo.com)  
 07900 648675

### Standard Bearer Training Dates 2024



#### Hampshire Standard Bearer Training 2024

	EASTLEIGH	ASH
	<b>Pavilion on the Park</b> 1 Kingfisher Drive, Eastleigh, SO50 9LH	<b>Ash Manor School</b> Manor Rd, Ash, Aldershot GU12 6QH

Please arrive ten minutes before training starts to prepare yourself and your Standard

Month	Day	Time	Day	Time
January	No Training		Tuesday 9th	18:50 - 20:00
February	No Training		Tuesday 20th	18:50 - 20:00
March	Sunday 17th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 12th	18:50 - 20:00
April	Sunday 14th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 16th	18:50 - 20:00
May	Sunday 12th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 16th	18:50 - 20:00
June	Sunday 9th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 18th	18:50 - 20:00
July	Sunday 14th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 9th	18:50 - 20:00
August	Sunday 11th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 6th	18:50 - 20:00
September	Sunday 8th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 10th	18:50 - 20:00
October	Sunday 13th	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 15th	18:50 - 20:00
November	Sunday 3rd	13:00 - 15:00	Tuesday 5th	18:50 - 20:00
December	No Training		No Training	

**Please note:** All Standard Bearer should attend two training sessions a year, and be physically fit enough to carry the Standard, as agreed when they signed the yearly MS1 Form.

**Annual RBL Conference Newport 10th - 12th May 2024**

**Hampshire Parade Marshal: David Graham**  
 E: [Hampshire.ParadeMarshal@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.ParadeMarshal@rbl.community) M: 07597 455112

## Operation Courage

OpCOURAGE

NHS

The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

### The first call for help takes courage

Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Specialist care and support for Service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families

The first step to getting help is to contact Op COURAGE or ask your GP, a charity or someone else, such as a family member or friend, to do this on your behalf.

#### Contact details

Call 0800 652 2867 or email [YTILS@nhs.uk](mailto:YTILS@nhs.uk)  
 The Op COURAGE urgent care and support service is accessible by healthcare referral only.

Call 0300 323 0137 or email [mevs.mhm@nhs.net](mailto:mevs.mhm@nhs.net) (includes the Op COURAGE urgent care and support service).

Call 0300 365 2000 or email [gateway@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:gateway@berkshire.nhs.uk)  
 The Op COURAGE urgent care and support service is accessible by healthcare referral or self referral by calling NHS111.

Call 0300 323 0137 or email [mevs.mhm@nhs.net](mailto:mevs.mhm@nhs.net)  
 The urgent care and support service is currently provided by other NHS services, as detailed below.

Call 020 3317 6818 or email [clm-tr.veterans@nhs.uk](mailto:clm-tr.veterans@nhs.uk)  
 (includes the Op COURAGE urgent care and support service).

For services in Sussex, Surrey or Kent, call 020 3317 6818 or email [clm-tr.veterans@nhs.uk](mailto:clm-tr.veterans@nhs.uk)

For services in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Oxfordshire or Buckinghamshire, call 0300 365 2000 or email [gateway@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:gateway@berkshire.nhs.uk)

For the Op COURAGE urgent care and support service, call 023 9438 7924 or email [snhs.veterans@nhs.uk](mailto:snhs.veterans@nhs.uk)

**Urgent and emergency support from other NHS services**  
 If you experience a mental health crisis you can also get help by dialling 111, booking an emergency GP appointment, visiting A&E or calling 999. If you are still serving, you can also call the Military Mental Health Helpline on 0800 323 4444.

#### Register with a GP

If you've left the military, it is important to register with an NHS GP and tell them that you've served in the Armed Forces so you can access dedicated services for veterans. To find your nearest GP visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).

For further information on Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, visit: [www.nhs.uk/opcourage](http://www.nhs.uk/opcourage)

### The 1939 - 1945 Canada Voluntary Service Medal



This medal was awarded to Canadian forces for eighteen months service between 3rd September 1939 and 1st March 1947. The Maple Leaf clasp on the ribbon indicates overseas service. There are other bars awarded for wear on the ribbon. They include one for Dieppe, Hong Kong, an ascending aircraft for bomber crews. 650,000 were awarded, and 525,500 have the Maple Leaf clasp for overseas service. DW

## County Contact Details

Postal Address for Hampshire County Committee  
Hampshire & IOW MEO (or Name), Royal British Legion, 199 Borough High St, London SE1 1AA

RBL Website: [www.BritishLegion.org.uk](http://www.BritishLegion.org.uk), County Website: <http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/hampshire>

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrbl/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrbl/) Facebook Email - [Hampshire.web@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.web@rbl.community)

Poppy Appeal - [www.facebook.com.poppy.HamsphireRBL](http://www.facebook.com.poppy.HamsphireRBL)

Contact us

It's your newsletter!!!

If anyone has any articles that they would like published in the Newsletter then please contact the editor (Colonel (Retd) Dudley Wall MSM MMM) with any information or articles by the 20th of the month at:

[HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com](mailto:HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com)

### ALL LEGION ENQUIRIES

(including Welfare requests) should be directed to the national call centre

**0808 802 8080**

### County Personnel

Patron Lt Gen Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL

County President Col Andrew King

County Vice President Brian C.N. Soffe

County Vice President Robert G. Knight

Chairman Tim Russell [Hampshire.Chairman@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.Chairman@rbl.community)

Vice-Chairman Robert Bartlett [Hampshire.vicechairman@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.vicechairman@rbl.community)

Treasurer Ges Brown [hampshire.treasurer@rbl.community](mailto:hampshire.treasurer@rbl.community)

Independent Examiners - G.S. Brown and M. Davis

Committee members - Secretary Melvyn Cole, John Davies, Paul Holyoake, Brian Mansi, Avril Mitchell, Vic Thorn, David Barton

County Management Board: Tim Russell, Robert Bartlett, Ges Brown, Melvyn Cole, John Davies

Conference Committee: Chairman Brian Mansi, Secretary Avril Mitchell, Pat Prior BEM QVRM, Melvyn Cole, Nigel Thomas,

Rev John Morley

Cups Sub-Committee: Avril Mitchell, Pat Prior BEM QVRM. Brian Mansi

Annual Conference Delegate: Tim Russell

Poppy Appeal Manager North: Sarah Ferris

Poppy Appeal Manager South: Claire Smith

Regional Poppy Appeal Manager: Clare Peppiatt

Poppy Appeal Coordinator - North: Vacant

Poppy Appeal Coordinator - South: Pat Prior BEM QVRM

Principal Recruiting Officer: VACANT

County Training Officer: John Davies

Community Support: VACANT

CCSC: VACANT

Clubs Liaison: Paul Holyoake

Communications Support: Dudley Wall [HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com](mailto:HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com)

County Webmaster: Avril Mitchell [Hampshire.Web@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.Web@rbl.community)

Youth Officer: Steve Slack [Hampshire.CYO@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.CYO@rbl.community)

Events Support: VACANT

Parade Marshall: David Graham, Deputy Parade Marshall: Andy Cassidy

County Standard Bearer: Pete Pullin, [ppullin@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:ppullin@britishlegion.org.uk)

Deputy County Standard Bearer: Andy Cassidy

County Youth Standard Bearer: Natalia Szymkiewicz

Ceremonial Support: David Graham, Karen Graham

County Padre: Reverend David Roache

Golf Officer: Rick Bourne

Membership Engagement Officer: Holly Church, Membership Engagement Manager: Martin Pelling

Membership Council Representative: Gerry Nunn

Public Relations Officer: VACANT

Independent Examiners: Ges Brown, Mike Davis

UK Honours Awards: County President, County M.E.O.