



The Legacy

The Newsletter of the
Shaftesbury & District Branch
Royal British Legion

Edition 1/2021

April 2021

Your 2021 Committee

President	Commodore R AY Bridges (also RBL Dorset County President)
Vice-President	Brigadier A G Hughes CBE
Chairman/Welfare/BCS	Robin Miller
Vice-Chairman	Sue Minshaw
Hon Secretary	Reverend Chris Wray
Hon Treasurer	Don Curry
Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO)	Chairman
Assistant PAO	Vacant (volunteer required!) Small committee formed.
Membership Secretary (MS)	Chairman
PR/Publicity	June Hull
Hall Bookings Officer	David Taylor
Standard Bearer	Patrick Sharpe
Deputy Standard Bearer	Don Curry
Parade Marshal	Don Curry
Webmaster	Joe Guppy
Committee Members	E. N. Bowman, Ms C. DiMarino, W. Sherriff, Jo Slade, B. Lloyd, M. Hull
Branch Chaplain	Vacant (awaiting new Rector)
Assistant Branch Chaplain	Edred Bowman

Southwest Regional Welfare (figures up to November 2020)

In Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire and the Isle of Wight, along with all other area offices, Legion staff have moved to home working and have been contacting those we support by phone, email, video calls and post, adapting in the face of COVID-19 to overcome obstacles to support those in need. Over the past year, there has been a drop in caseloads, but a distinct rise in the complexity of cases. The drop of caseloads has been due to local communities rallying around to provide support to each other, strangers have reached out to those who are vulnerable and in need, offering services such as collecting shopping and essentials to keep social contact and let people know they are not alone.

As fundraising methods changed during November 2020 in the face of a lockdown, the public did not see our fantastic volunteer poppy sellers on street corners or in house to house collections. Our services introduced new support tools, evolving to new needs during the COVID-19 crisis. Many people sadly have lost jobs during the past few months, putting hardship and financial strain on families. The Benefits Debt and Money advice team has introduced a new income maximisation service, guiding those in need through what has been an unexpected time with their finances. The Legion outreach service has seen a rise in mental health related cases, those seeking support with health issues as people struggle with being isolated in the home. We have supported many families who lost loved ones of all ages to COVID-19. We have worked to ensure that all 16 national regional areas provide the same level of service and improvements have been made in procedures and working practices. An example of this was prior to March 2020 the national average waiting time for a person receiving tangible assistance from our services from initial contact was 17 days; this is now reduced to 2.1 days.

Dorset Welfare

The average age of those assisted covering all categories is 60 years old - a decrease of 5 years from 65 years old in 2019. The main categories of need in terms of percentage of funds spent are:

Mobility	35%
Housing	19%
Household goods	11%
MAGs	11% (Maintenance Annuity Grants)
Debt	10%
Funerals	6%
Crisis	5%
Miscellaneous	3% (including training)

The Royal British Legion administers MAGs on behalf of Regimental Funds and Benevolent Charities. These are grants awarded for regular financial assistance, designed to help beneficiaries in financial difficulty who need assistance with the cost of living. As might be expected, the age profile of the people we support reflects the type of grant they need from us. Our oldest beneficiaries are recipients of MAGs and mobility items, while the youngest are those who come to us in financial crisis or needing help to furnish their homes.

Branch Touchpoint

With the full training of our first Information Volunteer, the Branch Hall has qualified to become one of several Outreach Centres in England and one of the three in Dorset. The other two are in Christchurch Branch and Lyme Regis Branch. The main purpose of these Touchpoints is to assist beneficiaries to identify a range of support options available to them, ascertaining whether they need support beyond that which can be provided by the Branch, and if so confidentially passing on details to an Advice and Information Officer available in the region. It is estimated that up to 6.7 million people fall into the category of a beneficiary - summarised as those serving or who have served in the Armed Forces, their eligible dependants and carers. Unfortunately, the coronavirus crisis having closed the Hall, the availability of our Touchpoint has been curtailed. However see the next paragraph for the telephone contact number to use instead.

Beneficiaries and Disbursements

If you are a serving or ex-Serviceman or Servicewoman or eligible dependant who needs help of any kind, or you know of someone else who does, please ring the Chairman on (01747) 854765. Do leave a contact telephone number if he is not in. He has the telephone numbers and email addresses of all those professionals in the Legion we may call upon for help well beyond our own resources, so we are able to invoke considerable support if it is needed. Strict confidentiality is always assured.

Poppy Appeal Past

At 30 September 2020, last year's total Poppy Appeal total from the Branch was £19,280. Locally, 60% of this figure was from coin and 40% from notes. We are extremely grateful to the following shops for their Remembrance window displays last November: Kit & Kaboodle at 47 High Street; Cranbornes at 63 High Street; Paws and Claws at 2 Bell Street; Squires at 29-31 High Street; Santander at 53 High Street; Bargains at 54C High Street; Tourist Information Centre at 8A Bell Street; Naomi House Shop at 46A High Street; Coconut & Cotton in Swans Yard; JOT Carpets & Flooring at 3 High Street.

Poppy Appeal Present

For this year so far, and with more time until 30 September 2021 before the Poppy Appeal total closes, we have forwarded £7,736 including Gift Aid. Up to the end of March 2021 the Poppy Appeal had nationally collected £24 million. Once again we hope that many shops in the town will participate in the shop-front display for Remembrance during the two week period from Saturday 30 October 2021. There is always a need for more Poppy Appeal collectors; if you wish to volunteer please contact (01747) 854765.

Amazon Charity Giving

In the first quarter of 2021 Amazon donated £30,849 to the Legion. To date the company has donated a total of £164,824 to us. These donations are designated by regular customers to specific charities.

Christmas 2020 Honey Sales

Honeycomb and honey sales made £91.13 for the Poppy Appeal this year, and 35 members and friends were provided with Christmas honey and honeycomb. Our supplier in West Moors again kindly let us have the stock at wholesale prices and we sold it at retail prices, with proceeds forwarded to the Poppy Appeal. He has 110 hives and his bees cover a wide area with different crops, including heather, chestnut and/or wild flowers. Farmers encourage him to keep his hives adjacent to their crops with a planted border of wild flowers to promote pollination. This year was again a good crop.

ANZAC Day

Our usual 25 April 2021 ceremony on Park Walk this year has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Mayor or a senior Councillor will lay a wreath on the Town Memorial on behalf of the townspeople at 11 a.m.

VE Day

Owing to the then prevailing pandemic restrictions on Saturday 8 May 2021, limiting outside gatherings to no more than 15 people for commemorative events, the ceremony will be limited to a simple wreath-laying on the Town Memorial at 11 a.m.

VJ Day Sunday 15 August 2021

Pandemic restrictions are due to end on 21 June, but we should all monitor progress on the roadmap at the time. It is hoped that the solemn ceremony at 11 a.m. will commemorate the 76th anniversary of VJ Day, the effective end of the Second World War, at the Town Memorial on Park Walk, Shaftesbury. Watch the local Press and notice boards for information.

Membership

The annual membership subscription rises from £17 to £18 from 1 April 2021 for new members, and for all existing members with a renewal date of 1 April, as agreed in a vote by members (137 against 83) at the 2020 National Annual Conference. The subscription had hitherto remained the same for the previous four years.

Serving or retired Servicemen and women, and their dependants are eligible to join, as is anyone (even those with no Service connections) who subscribes to the aims and objectives of the Legion. Anyone wishing to join should contact the Membership Secretary on (01747) 854765. We presently have 135 members. Every existing member is asked to support the permanent recruitment drive.

New members may join:

Online at <britishlegion.org.uk/membership>,

By telephone and credit or debit card on 0808 802 8080, but please ring p.m., as earlier lines are usually busy.

Or with a paper application provided by the branch.

By far the simplest way to pay is by Direct Debit, and the membership department will send you a DD form to fill in if you request it by telephone on the 0808 number above. Currently 76% of our membership pays by DD. In the event of problems, members should ring the Branch Membership Secretary on 01747 854765 for advice or assistance.

Affiliated Groups

Our group comprises five local youth groups and two adult groups. Shaftesbury Car Link provides heavily subsidised, not-for-profit, volunteer driver transport for both young and old to attend medical and social appointments where taxis or public transport are unavailable. To book telephone 07763 426664 and speak to Martin or June. With 48 hours notice there a greater chance you will receive the service you require. Trustees of the Friends of Westminster Memorial Hospital have recently voted to affiliate with us, and we will hold a short informal ceremony to welcome them as soon as the Hall re-opens. We intend to hold a Group Seminar in the Hall on Friday 15 October 2021, from 6-9 p.m., to consider mutual assistance and fundraising, and re-affirm contact details.

Branch Social Events

Thursday coffee mornings, presentations, lunches and monthly bingo sessions have been cancelled or postponed until further notice due to coronavirus precautions. All six presenters whose talks had to be cancelled have kindly agreed to come back later when we re-open:-

Rodney Atwood: "The Dorset Soldier Who Won the First World War".

Kate Saker: "Dementia", an awareness session.

Barry Brown: "Samuel Cunard".

Major General Chip Chapman CB: "Current Perspectives on the Middle East - Terror, Tension and Turmoil".

Jane Hutchings, North Dorset and Purbeck Community Development Worker on Trading Standards in Dorset Council: "Avoiding Scams", an awareness session.

Colonel Nick Fox OBE: "Setting France Ablaze - The French Section of the Special Operations Executive in WW2"

The Branch Hall

The sixteen year plan for Hall maintenance and repair is on track, within budget and satisfactorily completed. When we are able to re-open the Hall we will resume Thursday coffee mornings, and Poppy Appeal Bingo on the last Fridays of the month. We hope that all twelve previous User groups will re-book their regular sessions. Two other groups have shown interest in booking the Hall on a regular basis, and we await their decision.

Legion Hall Bookings

The Hall is presently closed and in light care and preservation until coronavirus strictures are lifted. For all booking enquiries when the current restrictions are over please contact David Taylor on 07720 443319 or email djtdjt1@djtdjt1.plus.com.

Legion Centenary

The Legion celebrates its centenary as an organisation in 2021, and we intend to publicise it fully during this year's Poppy Appeal. It was originally formed on 15 May 1921 and brought together four national organisations of ex-Service personnel established after the Great War of 1914-1918. Its purpose was to care for those who had suffered as a result of service in the Armed Forces in the Great War, whether through their own service or through that of a husband, father or son. It was granted "Royal" status in 29 May 1971, on its 50th anniversary, when membership was extended to serving members of HM Forces. The RBL is the third most popular charity in the UK after Cancer Research and Macmillan Nurses. Shaftesbury and District Branch was formed on 18 November 1922.

Dorset County Awards

At the January 2021 online Dorset County Conference we were delighted and proud to receive two county awards. Shaftesbury & District Branch won the trophy and certificate for the highest percentage increase in Poppy Appeal funds raised over the previous year of the thirteen medium-sized branches (101-300 members), Also announced was the award to us of a certificate of appreciation from Shaftesbury Rotary for services to the local community during the pandemic. Well done to the committee and all our members and volunteers!

Donating Unwanted Foreign Coins

Our Dorset Community Fundraiser advises us that we are unable to exchange at banks, because they accept only foreign banknotes, not coins as they involve more work, storage and training for a smaller return. However, we may use the simple three-step process at *Leftover Currency* online, or send them direct to the Poppy Appeal, RBL Village, Aylesford, Kent, ME20 7NX.

Diary Dates (watch notice boards, the Branch Website on Google, and local Press for details)

All future events have been cancelled and presentations postponed until the present stringent coronavirus restrictions are lifted by the government. Members and volunteers will be given the maximum notice about changes in future plans.