



Bedford and District newsletter

Chairman's message

Welcome to the January 2022 issue of the Bedford and District newsletter

Branch Three-Year Plan and Programme of Events

We have developed a three-year plan, which was adopted at the January branch meeting, explaining what we are going to do, why we want to do it, and how we are going to do it. This is an important step in reviving the Branch as it gives us some targets to aim for.



We are also putting together a programme for the coming year. This includes our usual meetings, and we are going to hold more social activities and events. A copy of the proposed programme is included later in the newsletter. There is one important thing: if there is something else that you would like to see included, please let the Branch Committee know. But, please be prepared to take on its organisation!

Branch meetings now quarterly

One thing we must mention: we have changed the frequency of the formal Branch meetings from monthly to quarterly. This means that the meetings will now be every three months, on the second Tuesday evenings of January, April, July and October, with the Branch AGM on the second Tuesday of November. The dates are all in the programme.

Members will be able to take part in future Branch meetings online. You can use an ordinary web browser, so you will be able to join the meeting using either a smartphone, tablet, or PC, without needing to install any extra software or apps.

For the other two months in each quarter, we are organising social meetings and other activities.

I wish you all a very happy, prosperous, and healthy 2022.

Peter Davies

Branch Chairman

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Improving Branch Communications

If you have an email address, it would really help us if we could use it to communicate with you. Please let our Branch Secretary know it by emailing BedfordDistrict.Secretary@rbl.community and including your name and Legion membership number.

Branch photographer wanted

We're on the lookout for someone to take photographs of Branch events, so we can use them to help raise awareness of what we are doing.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact the Branch Chairman or Branch Secretary. Contact details on the back page.

Update from the AGM

Peter Davies writes:

If you weren't able to get to the AGM on 9 November, I can let you know that we now have new(ish) Branch Officers and Branch Committee Members—a good mixture of 'old guard' and 'new blood'.

We have a new Branch Secretary, **Michael McFarland Campbell**. I have known Michael for over 15 years. We have worked together on many projects with The Scouts. The fact that he always lived 'over the water' has not made working together at all difficult: using things like video chat and secure document sharing has made it as easy to work together as if we lived in the same town. He is an experienced Branch Secretary. He will be supporting the Branch from his home in County Kildare in the Republic of Ireland. He hopes to be able to get over to Bedford a few times during the year to meet everybody face-to-face.

Robin Thomas, remains our Branch Treasurer and Membership Secretary, and I repeat my sincere thanks to him for all his hard work looking after the Branch's finances so well.

Michelle French, whom you all know as our Poppy Appeal Organiser, has taken on the role of Branch Community Support Representative. Thanks to her for taking on this vital role.

Richards Stearns and **Malcolm Holloway** remain on the Branch Committee and I am delighted to welcome two new members, **Captain Ben Mason**, and **Charlie Guntrip**.

Many of you already know Ben, he has been a Branch Member for many years and for his day job he is Director of Music for the Band of the Grenadier Guards. He has volunteered to join the committee as he wants to help move the Branch forward.

Charlie is one of our newest Branch Members and was a member of the Army Cadets when he was younger. He works in traffic management for a motoring organisation. He is keen to offer a younger perspective on the development of the Branch.

Welcome to Michael, Ben, and Charlie.

Opportunities

We currently have the minimum permitted number of Branch Committee Members—4 plus the Branch Officers. We would like to bring the Branch Committee up to maximum strength—7 plus the Branch Officers—so we repeat our plea for some more volunteers.

Things have started to move forward with the Branch, and we are entering an exciting time that will reinvigorate the Branch as we enter our second century.

Contact the Branch Secretary or Branch Chairman if you would like to join the committee.

Upcoming events

Following some suggestions made by branch members who can't attend meetings during the week, but who want to be involved in Branch activities, meet other members, and feel part of the Branch, we are organising some alternative activities including:

Curry Nights

On the third Saturday of each month, starting in February, we invite members to meet together for a meal at the Royal Gurkha on Tavistock Street, which is owned and run by one of our Branch members. Obviously, this is to be self-financing. It is another way for members to get to know each other better and build comradeship. The meal is to start at 1945 hrs. The first one is on Saturday 19 February.

Any member who wants to attend should let the Branch Chairman know by the Wednesday beforehand, so we can let the restaurant know numbers in advance.

Chairman's "At Home"

Also on every Saturday afternoon other than the third of the month, the Branch Chairman will be "At Home" at The Bear public house on the High Street, Bedford, where all Branch Members and Veterans are welcome to join him for a "Noggin and Natter" from 3 pm.

In Memoriam

We remember and pay tribute to two very long-standing and well-respected Branch Members who passed away during the year: Margot Clark and Bob Colman. Our deepest condolences remain with both Margot's and Bob's families.

Margot Clark

Margot had been a member of Bedford & District branch for longer than most of us can remember and had been a volunteer for the Poppy Appeal for almost 40 years. We will all have our fond memories of Margot, including of her being a stalwart at Branch meetings, folding raffle tickets whilst the business of the meeting proceeded. Always smiling whatever she was doing, Margot was a true example of Service not Self.

Bob Colman

Bob Colman had served the Branch and the Legion for over 30 years. A former member of the Royal Artillery, Bob served in Germany. He was our Branch Secretary, Branch Chairman, and, most recently, before he retired at the AGM in 2018, Branch President. He had been a Branch Committee member or Officer since 2000. He was always a true gentleman and, just like Margot, a fine ambassador for the Legion's motto, "Service not Self".

New Facebook page

The Branch now has its very own Facebook page, which can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/Bedford-and-District-branch-Royal-British-Legion-110407071531566/>. We encourage you to go and like it. It will be used for sharing public-facing updates and information from the Branch.

Holidaying in Cyprus?

We've received information from the Paphos branch to let members know that if you are holidaying in Cyprus there are two branches in the Republic of Cyprus, Larnaca and Paphos; and one in the Turkish North, Kyrenia.

"We are here if you need any help or assistance during your stay. Even if it's only for a chat about places to visit or local customs," says Dave Perry, Paphos Branch Secretary.

Paphos.secretary@rbl.commutiy

Help wanted! From Healing & District branch

Our RBL Area Office in the East Midlands was contacted by one of the last remaining veterans of WW2. He is 99-year-old Arthur who will be 100 on 27 February 2022.

He wanted someone to visit him as he didn't get many visitors.

I was so lucky that I was the nearest BCS to him and we have had some lovely afternoons chatting.

He served in WW2 in the Northampton & Norfolk Regiments seeing active service in Egypt and Sicily before being wounded and returned to service in the UK.

He was an active member of the RBL and his wife was a PAO for 52 years.

I have contacted the Regimental Secretary of his Army Regiment The Royal Anglians and they are going to send some serving soldiers with a birthday cake and some beer.

I am trying to get 100 birthday cards sent to him for his special day.

I know that we all want to help and this is a great chance to get involved. Let's have cards from all over the RBL community.

I am happy for you to post your cards to me so that I can deliver them to him. Please feel free to pass my details on. Please address your cards to:

Arthur,
c/o Alyson Wilson
Chairman & BCS
RBL Healing & District Branch
8 Pine Walk
Healing
Grimsby
North East Lincolnshire
DN41 7NR

Many thanks,

Alyson

Annual calendar of events

2022

January	February	March	April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 – 19:30 Branch Committee meeting, Microsoft Teams • 11 – 19.30 Branch General Meeting, Microsoft Teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 –10:30 Veterans' Brunch, North End Club, organised by VCN and Clapham Branch • 19 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – Branch Committee meeting, Microsoft Teams • 5 – 10:30 Veterans' Brunch, North End Club • 19 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing • TBA Trip to Bletchley Park, self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 – 10:30 Veterans' Brunch, North End Club • 12 – 19:30 Branch General Meeting, North End Club • 16 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing
May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 – 19.30 Branch Committee Meeting, Microsoft Teams • 7 – 10:30 Veterans' Brunch, North End Club • 21 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing • 28 – Trip to The Colonel's Review, Final public rehearsal of HM The Queen's Birthday Parade, self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-5 HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend (possible events arrange in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council) • 4 – 10:30 Veterans' Brunch, North End Club • 18 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing • 20-22 Possible trip to Beating Retreat, Horse Guards Parade, self-financing • 26 – Veterans' Weekend, Armed Forces Day, Parade and Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 – 10:30 Veterans' Brunch, North End Club • 7 – 19:30 Branch Committee Meeting, MS teams • 12 – 19:30 Branch General Meeting, North End Club, • 16 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 – Possible Summer Barbecue evening • 20 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing
September	October	November	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 – 19:30 Branch Committee Meeting, MS Teams • 13 – 19:30 Possible Autumn Games Night, North End Club • 17 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 – 19:30 Branch General Meeting, North End Club • 15 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – 19:30 Branch Committee Meeting, MS teams • 8 – 19:30 Branch Annual General Meeting, North End Club • 11 – Armistice Day, Parade at Merchant Square • 13 – Remembrance Day, Parade and Service at Embankment & Harpur Square • 19 – 19:45 Curry Night, Royal Gurkha, Tavistock Street, self-financing 	

Branch Contacts

Branch Chairman

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Branch Secretary

Michael McFarland Campbell

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Email: BedfordDistrict.Secretary@rbl.community

Branch Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Robin Thomas

Email: BedfordDistrict.Treasurer@rbl.community

Branch Community Support Representative

Michelle French

Telephone: 07391 713445 (BCS/Welfare matters only)

Email: BedfordDistrict.BCS@rbl.community

Poppy Appeal Organiser

Michelle French

Telephone: 07757 026435

Email: shellfrench@yahoo.com

Branch Website

<http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/Bedford>

Branch Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/Bedford-and-District-branch-Royal-British-Legion-110407071531566>

Poppy Appeal Thanks

We thank all who helped with this year's Poppy Appeal in Bedford & District, especially Michelle French, our Poppy Appeal Organiser.

The final total raised this year is still being counted, but it is at least **£29,912.22**.

All of this money raised will help the Legion to support the most vulnerable in our society, be it older veterans that we care for, those who suffer from social isolation, or those who are simply overwhelmed by the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic

Thank you! We really couldn't do it without you.

Got a story?

If you want to share something with your fellow Branch members, please send it to BedfordDistrict.Secretary@rbl.community for inclusion in the future newsletters.

Please note that we may not be able to include all contributions.

WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

We're here every day of the week to support the whole
Armed Forces community.

If you need help or support call us or chat live online.



0808 802 8080



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