**The Royal British Legion Women’s Section**

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Registered Charity Number 219279

**Annual Report 2021 2022**

**Accounts 2021 - 2022**

**Annual Conference Minutes 2021**

**OFFICERS AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE**

**President:** HRH The Princess Royal

**National Life Vice-Presidents:** Dame Mary Bridges DBE

Mrs D Ingham OBE

Mrs M A Lodder OBE

Mrs D P Valler OBE

Mrs Wendy Bromwich JP

Mrs M Humphrey

**National Vice-Presidents:** Mrs S Jones CBE, DL, JP, O ST J Five Counties of the

West

Mrs D Hill South Eastern Region

Elizabeth, The Dowager Countess of Scarborough LVO Metropolitan Region

Mrs J Lewin-Smith DL Eastern Region

The Lady Grey of CodnorNorth Western Region

Mrs AJ Murray MBE Northern Region

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE Northern Region

Mrs J Martin DL East Midlands Region

The Rt Hon The Countess Bathurst West Midlands Region

Auriol, Marchioness of Linlithgow Wales

Mrs J Andrew-Steer MBE Northern Ireland

**National Chairman:** Mrs H Spence

**National Vice-Chairman:** Mrs J Buxton

**Chairman of Finance:** Miss S Fishlock

**Past National Chairman:** Mrs P Chrimes OBE

**Central Committee Members** Mrs A Wylson

Mrs S Saban

Mrs M Cook

Mrs P Ayres

Mrs P Holden

**National Parade Marshall** Mrs L Hayworth

**Deputy Parade Marshall** Mrs M Miller

**Membership Council**

**Womens Section Representative** Miss E Cox

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**Annual Report**

The National Officers and Central Committee have great pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of the Royal British Legion Women’s Section.

**General Report**

**BY THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, MRS H SPENCE**

Dear Members,

At the commencement of this year, we were all still in the depths of lockdown. Although things are still not “normal” we are now able to meet in person all be it safely. Your Central Committee took the opportunity to meet in person for the first time in September. The virtual world has been an extremely helpful tool for all of us for the past 20 months but will never replace the human touch. I know that some of you are excited to be back at your meetings once again.

Welfare:

Our widows in receipt of the allowance continue to be supported and remembered especially at Christmas time. Our National Treasurer, Miss Sandra Fishlock, sent Christmas wishes on our behalf to all widows along with notification that a Christmas gift allowance of £30 was once again being awarded this year. A review of welfare grants was carried out this year and the cap which was £500 and had been in place for the past 10 years has now been lifted to £750. As we all know prices have risen greatly in the past year especially for items such as children’s furniture. The President’s Award Committee meet in person in September. Requests for scholarships are now coming through as Universities open once more. Again the Committee took the opportunity to review the current cap for scholarships and education grants. These have also been increased to £2000 from £1500 for scholarships and £750 from £500 for education grants. Both committees have made a commitment that caps will be reviewed every 12 months going forward. Officers & Central Committee would like to thank Edd Robinson and the grants team for their time and assistance over the past 12 months.

Membership:

Some Branches I know have been excited to be meeting once again. It was great to hear and see photos of you celebrating 100 years of the RBL & Women’s Section. Central Committee are aware that some Branches are finding it difficult to form Committees. Please do reach out to your County or Central Committee Representative who will assist you all they can. The County/National Supported Branch scheme we hope will support Branches whilst they rebuild their numbers, do also advertise that support is needed within your communities. We hope to have new posters out to Branches later in 2022.

As your Chairman I have represented the Women’s Section whenever and wherever asked. My first face to face representation was the services of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey. Mrs Jan Buxton, National Vice Chairman, accompanied me and we were both delighted to see our National Standard on parade proudly carried by our National Standard Bearer, Mrs Rachel Perkins. Both Jan & I represented the Women’s Section at the Festival of Remembrance and I was honoured to be on parade at Whitehall for Remembrance Sunday service. In November I had the privilege to represent the Women’s Section at HRH the Princess Royals charities forum in London. This was an opportunity for all of HRH charities to discuss the challenges and opportunities resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many congratulations to Sandra Fishlock & Emma Cox on their RBL Centenary awards. I would like to personally thank everyone on Central Committee for their support to me this past year. Thanks all so go to our Past National Chairman, Mrs Pat Chrimes, for always being at the end of the phone when needed. The last 12 months have been an extremely steep learning curve and I know I still have lots more to learn so thank you to you all for your patience and support.

The dedication to the Women’s Section of those members we have sadly lost over the past year will be greatly missed but the best way we can honour them is to continue our work to provide the support so much needed to our armed forces families. The list of support that the Women's Section has provided over the past 100 years is enormous and long may it continue.

We will ALWAYS remember them.

Yours sincerely,

Heather

**Heather Spence**

**National Chairman RBL Women’s Section**

**Regional Reports**

**MEMBERSHIP COUNCIL REP EMMA COX**

Hello Ladies

It has been another strange year as we all adapt to the new world we live in encouraged by the signs of hope from the vaccination and booster programmes.

I know many of you have been unable to meet up in person but remain dedicated to supporting each other and our beneficiaries from the amazing amount of fund-raising you are still doing for the Women’s Section benevolent fund. Thank you so much.

The Membership Council has continued to meet mainly by video meeting and wherever I can I have provided advice and guidance to our members. Working with the Central Committee we are looking for new ways to raise the profile of the Women’s Section and hopefully find new members to join us. If anyone has any ideas please do get in touch with us.

I look forward to seeing you in 2022

Emma Cox

MC Rep for the RBLWS

**EASTERN**

**Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire**

**Mrs S Saban**

Due to Covid times have been quiet but Hertfordshire County and all Branches are working well. A good County AGM was held and all went well.  Sadly Cambridge County has now closed along with Peterborough and Mania, Chatteris Branch are holding their meetings again and their officers are in touch quite often.  In Suffolk, two Branches are having their meetings again, Bury St Edmonds held their 100 Anniversary, well done. Witham Branch in Essex are holding their monthly meetings again. I wish all the Best for our next working year.

Stay safe

Eastern Area rep, Sandra

**EAST MIDLAND SHIRES**

**Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire**

**Mrs A Wylson**

There are two County Committees open in the East Midlands.  
Derbyshire has two Branches and Lincolnshire has 5 Branches.  
There are also two Branches in Nottinghamshire.

Due to Covid Pandemic it brought an abrupt end to all of our fundraising activities.  
Some branches have lost members to the pandemic and most members will have been affected by the loss of family and friends during this time.

Some Branches and Counties have only just started to meet again to start focusing on the forthcoming year of meetings, events and celebrating our Centenary which was sadly postponed.

Whilst we haven’t been able to meet up, Branches and Counties have kept in touch with their members using the telephone and several have logged on to the Virtual AGM.

Thank you to all the ladies for their continued support and we look forward to an exciting year ahead in in 2022.

Alyson

East Midlands Rep  
  
**METROPOLITAN**

**South West, South East, North West and North East - VACANT**

We apologise, we are not able to offer a report for the 2020/2021year for the Metropolitan region.

**NORTHERN**

**Durham, Northumberland, North Yorkshire, East Ridings, South and West Yorkshire**

We apologise, we are not able to offer a report for the 2020/2021year for the Northern region.

**NORTH WESTERN**

**Cheshire, Westmorland, Cumberland, North and East Lancashire, Isle of Man**

**Mrs P Holden**

All Counties in my Area seem to be doing ok at present, I don’t get much feed-back from my Reports, but I do keep everyone up to date on happenings as they arise. I am attending the Cheshire County Conference on November 20th as per invite from them.

Thank you for your Service Ladies

Pat Holden

**FIVE COUNTIES OF THE SOUTH WEST**

**Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire**

**Miss S Fishlock**

It was with great sadness we learnt of the death of Jennie Bailey in April, Jennie was the Area Rep. on Central Committee for a number of years and then was nominated as National Vice-Chairman in January 2020 and in October 2020 resigned due to ill health. Jennie is greatly missed by all who knew her.

The Regional Standard Bearers Competition was held on Saturday 23rd October in Ferndown Dorset, with competitors from Dorset and Wiltshire taking part. Congratulations go to Amanda Berryman from Wiltshire for winning and Lorraine Cole from Dorset for taking part.

It has been a difficult time for all members and branches over the past 18th months, but members have started meeting and fundraising again.

At the beginning of September, Ida Kenne a member of Hartland Women’s Section, received the Women’s Section Gold Award. Members and family join the celebrations, Ida became a member at the age of 17 and she is now 103, the award was well deserved.

Best Wishes

Sandra Fishlock

Regional Rep on Central Committee

**WEST MIDLANDS**

**Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, North Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, Birmingham, Warwickshire**

**Mrs P Ayres MBE**

This report is in a way a duplicate of last year’s as not much has changed. That said, hopefully, after the last couple of years coping with lockdowns and isolations, groups are reforming and looking to do things together again.

Sadly membership still seems to be declining in my area. Although I keep up to date with the remaining branches via email there are a few that still prefer paper correspondence. Some branches who are listed at Headquarters within my area haven’t responded to either contact so not sure whether they are dormant or not but I keep trying!

It would be good to hear from membership especially at this time -

1. ‘What are we doing and don’t want to keep doing’ or
2. ‘What are we doing and do want to keep doing?’

I have decided NOT to put myself forward to be re-elected in January 2022 for Central Committee and have informed my area accordingly.

I have served on various committees of around twenty years for Headquarters and have had some wonderful experiences and met some lovely people of which I thank them all for enriching my life.

Mrs Pat Ayres

(Chair - Kemble and district RBLWS branch

**SOUTH EASTERN**

**Berkshire, Kent, Surrey, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Sussex**

**Mrs M Cook and Miss S Fishlock**

Ladies – at last we are able to meet up again (but still with care) and it is so good to be able to have ‘face-to-face’ meetings as Central Committee had in September. Both Sandra and I have started to visit Branches and Counties again, enjoying Cream Teas and catching up on the news. Also our Standard Bearers are able to practice and take part in Competitions. Congratulations to Helen Mannering of Berkshire, who is the SE Regional Standard Bearer, and we wish her well in the forthcoming National Standard Bearers Competition May 2022.

Thank you to all Branches who have still managed to send funds to the Women’s Section in spite of the lock-down, and you will see from the Welfare Report this is being put to good use. Do keep in contact with Central Committee if you know of anybody (with Service connection) who is in need of help. Remember they do not have to be members.

It has been encouraging to be able to help keep Branches as County Supported Branches. Please do not hesitate to contact Sandra Fishlock for assistance.

Finally, a special note from Margaret:- This is my final contribution to the Annual Report for SE, as I step down at the January AGM after ten years! Where has the time gone? A lot of changes have taken place during this time. I am pleased we are still here supporting and celebrating our great Organisation’s Centenary. Hopefully I was a small help. Thank you all for your support and friendship. Best wishes for the future when I hope to see some of you.

Take care Margaret and Sandra

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

We apologise, we are not able to offer a report for the 2020/2021 year for the Northern Ireland District

**WALES SOUTH**

**Mrs M Cook**

Unfortunately because of the Covid restrictions I have been unable to visit but have kept in touch by e-mail, letters and have been pleased to receive telephone calls from some of my Welsh friends. Like all of us, members are beginning to meet again for Coffee

and hopefully a lot more Social activities. I hope some of the Welsh members will join us at the National Memorial Arboretum on the 11th June 2022. We want as many Standard Bearers as possible to parade and get the message out "the Women's Section are still here for the next 100 years".

With best wishes for the future and do take care.

Margaret Cook

**NATIONAL PARADE MARSHALL**

**Laura Hayworth**

After an uncertain start to 2021, and subdued static wreath laying ceremonies to mark the RBL Centenary in May, thankfully I can report that Standard Bearers and Parade Marshals alike have been delighted with the return to 'business as usual' in the latter half of 2021, being able to once again take part in funerals, parades and competitions.

Regional Winners will compete in the National Standard Bearer Competition on Friday 13th May 2022 at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre near Westminster in London. We will still have our own WS Judges and Parade Marshals and our competition will be held first followed by the RBL. The exact timing of the start of the competition will be advised nearer the time.

The highlight for me this year was of course the return to the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall with full capacity, where 8 Women's Section Standard Bearers represented us all with their usual smartness, pride and dignity. Thank you all, especially our National Standard Bearer, Mrs Rachel Perkins. I also had the honour of helping to marshal the Cenotaph March Past on Remembrance Sunday for the first time after being appointed as your National Parade Marshal. The weather was kind, but do remember that Women's Section Standard Bearers can wear a black overcoat in cold or wet weather conditions.

Another change this year was that Women's Section Standard Bearers may now wear their Veteran's Badge when in uniform, should they wish to do so. We are a Service Charity after all. Current serving personnel can also now carry a Standard in their own uniform, with permission from their relevant Brigade HQ.

I wish to thank my team of Parade Marshals for their continued dedication to duty and their enthusiasm for judging and organising training and parades, in particular Michelle Miller, the Deputy National Parade Marshal. I thank her for her support and friendship.

With the Women’s Section Centenary on the horizon, planned for 11th June 2022, I hope in the meantime you will remain safe and well and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in May and also in June at the NMA. It promises to be a very exciting year for the Women's Section!

Laura Hayworth

WSNPM

**Membership**

As of the 3rd November 2021, 2401 members had renewed so far, in the Women’s Section.

**Annual Women’s Section Welfare Report**

**1st October 2020 – 30th September 2021**

**Total YTD Spend**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total Grant Expenditure 2020-21 YTD** | |
| **Grants Total** | **£247,947.78** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Annual Spend from 2019-2020** | |
| **Grants Total** | **£ 257,601.04** |

**Grant to Individuals – ING Spend**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FYTD 2020-21 - P1-P12** | | | |
| **Grant Category** | **Grant Count** | **Grant Total** | **Average Grant Size** |
| Brown Goods - Bedroom furniture | 195 | £ 71,694.15 | £ 367.67 |
| Christmas Present Grant | 124 | £ 15,580.00 | £ 125.65 |
| Children's Uniform | 45 | £ 10,443.39 | £ 236.55 |
| Brown Goods - Carpets | 40 | £ 9,382.47 | £ 234.56 |
| Mobility Adaptations | 3 | £ 7,750.00 | £ 2,583.33 |
| Children's Clothing | 32 | £ 5,695.04 | £ 177.26 |
| Child Care Costs | 6 | £ 4,039.00 | £ 673.17 |
| Baby Items | 12 | £ 3,862.40 | £ 321.87 |
| Specialist Equipment | 2 | £ 3,102.50 | £ 1,551.25 |
| Other Exceptional Grant | 8 | £ 2,276.29 | £ 284.54 |
| Children's Medical Costs | 3 | £ 1,500.00 | £ 500.00 |
| White Goods | 3 | £ 649.99 | £ 216.66 |
| Children's School Club | 4 | £ 620.06 | £ 155.02 |
| Essential Food & Household Items | 1 | £ 200.00 | £ 200.00 |
| **Grand Total** | **580** | **£ 136,795.29** |  |

**Grant to Individuals - Additional Services Spend**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grant Category** | **Grant Count** | **Grant Total** |
| WSA | 72 | **£ 94,400.99** |
| PAS | 11 | **£ 11,998.00** |
| TV Licenses | 30 | **£ 4,753.50** |

**Exceptional Grant Reporting**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grant Category** | **Grant Count** | **Grant Total** | **Average Grant Size** |
| Baby Items | 2 | £ 848.87 | £ 424.44 |
| Brown Goods - Bedroom furniture | 7 | £ 3,675.96 | £ 525.14 |
| Brown Goods - Carpets | 1 | £ 196.95 | £ 196.95 |
| Child Care Costs | 4 | £ 3,419.00 | £ 854.75 |
| Children's Clothing | 2 | £ 675.00 | £ 337.50 |
| Children's Medical Costs | 2 | £ 1,000.00 | £ 500.00 |
| Children's School Club | 1 | £ 100.00 | £ 100.00 |
| Children's Uniform | 3 | £ 664.30 | £ 221.43 |
| Essential Food & Household Items | 1 | £ 200.00 | £ 200.00 |
| Mobility Adaptations | 3 | £ 7,750.00 | £ 2,583.33 |
| Other Exceptional Grant | 7 | £ 1,829.95 | £ 261.42 |
| Specialist Equipment | 2 | £ 3,102.50 | £ 1,551.25 |
| **Grand Total** | **35** | **£ 23,462.53** | **£ 670.36** |

* £24,462.53 of ING spend was awarded as an Exceptional Grant.
* This equates to 17% of the ING spend TD or 10% of the overall spend TD.
* Feedback from other Case Woking organisations has been very positive on the speed of exceptional decisions.

**Acknowledgements**

To our members, we give deep gratitude for their dedication, support and fundraising. We are working diligently to ensure the future of the Women’s Section.

Please join us to celebrate The Women’s Section Centenary Thanksgiving at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Plans are being made to hold a service and there will be a parade of standards followed by afternoon tea.

Please encourage as many members as possible to attend this milestone anniversary. More information will be coming out in the lead up to the event.

Keep saving those 5p pieces! Donations raised will help to buy a new Women’s Section Buggy for the Arboretum.

WOMENS SECTION100

Save the Date

11th June 2022

**Financial Statements**

**2020-2021**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | |  |
| **GENERAL FUND 1ST JULY 2020 TO 30TH JUNE 2021** | | | |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **INCOME** | **TOTAL** |  | **EXPENDITURE** | **TOTAL** |
| b/fwd | 220194.51 |  | **CENTRAL COMMITTEE** |  |
|  |  |  | Travel | 274.20 |
|  |  |  | Accommodation |  |
| **DONATIONS** |  |  | Sundries | 208.42 |
| *see donation list* |  |  |  | 482.62 |
| General Fund | 555.00 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **NMA** |  |
| WS100 | 2117.36 |  | Contract | 11559.84 |
|  |  |  | Liz Tree | 216.00 |
| Benevolent Fund | 17255.15 |  | One off Maintenance | 612.00 |
|  |  |  |  | 12387.84 |
| In Memory | 2124.72 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **DONATIONS** |  |
| Legacies | 230925.03 |  | RCEL | 10000.00 |
|  |  |  | Benevolent | 104639.30 |
| **TOTAL** | 252977.26 |  | Legacies | 230925.03 |
|  |  |  |  | 345564.33 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **ANNUAL MEETING** |  |  | **SUNDRIES** |  |
| Hotel repayment | 85.00 |  | Auditor | 180.00 |
|  |  |  | Premier Badges | 281.40 |
| **SUNDRIES** |  |  | Christmas Cards | 51.00 |
| Pens | 222.00 |  | Annual Zoom Charge | 143.88 |
| Standard Bearers Bar | 25.00 |  | Premier Pins | 508.80 |
| Gold Badge | 25.00 |  | Alder Bags | 549.78 |
| Centenary | 355.50 |  | Alder Pen | 273.42 |
| Standard Diamond | 100.00 |  | Wreath | 20.00 |
|  | 727.50 |  |  | 2008.28 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **BANK INTEREST** |  |  | **BANK CHARGES** | 23.23 |
|  |  |  | **TOTAL** | 360466.30 |
|  |  |  | c/fwd | 113517.97 |
| **TOTAL** | 473984.27 |  | **TOTAL** | 473984.27 |

**MINUTES AND REPORT**

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**VIRTUAL AGM, MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**28th January 2021**

**THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION WOMEN’S SECTION**

**MINUTES**

**1. Caretaker National Chairman, Patricia Chrimes Open’s the Meeting**

*The meeting is opened to the song The Land of Hope & Glory*

**2. Exhortation and Silent Tribute**

*The exhortation and silent tribute was led by Patricia Chrimes, Caretaker National Chairman. Remembering all Ex-Service men and women, especially past National Chairman, Liz Harrison, who left well before her time and Barbara Todd, past Central Committee member and dedicated Women’s Section member.*

**3. Service Rev’d Peter Hills (including the Women’s Section Collect)**

*Rev. Peter Hills welcomed all present.*

Good morning! I had one piece of good news last year. I discovered that I was not growing old after all: I was just clinically vulnerable! There was not a lot of good news though. Since our last AGM it has been a year of loss. A loss of freedom we have not seen since the Second World War. Who could have dreamt that it would become a criminal offence in this country to sing in church, to hug a friend, to welcome even our closest family into our homes? We miss human company most of all. So many of us have lost loved ones and friends since this time last year. It is not so much the numbers, though a hundred thousand deaths in ten months is an eye-watering statistic. So is the fact that Lockdown has also cost lives and jobs and plunged many families into poverty and young people into mental illness, both of which will remain a reality long after COVID-19 has become a distant memory. But it is people who matter to us, not statistics and facts. The ones we remember, the ones we can name, the ones for whom we weep, the ones we were never able to hug again – including our own lovely Chairman, Liz Harrison. Nor have we been allowed to remember those we remember every year in the usual way. No parades or gatherings. No reunions of comrades. No clapping the Chelsea Pensioners at the Royal Albert Hall.

But life goes on. The work of the Women’s Section goes on. Nothing stops you from your work of care and support. Come rain or shine, flood or snow, disease, or lockdown, you are there. We may have to do things rather differently, it is true. I think I am in danger of contracting a newly discovered condition known as Zoomophobia! So, through it all, we have something to celebrate, to be glad about. And more work to do, there are still servicemen and women abroad, in dangerous places, and there are still families who wait for them. There are still veterans, widows and children who look to the Royal British Legion for help and support, and the Women’s Section is so much a part of that.

And I have noticed that none of us has forgotten how to laugh, thank God. So, I shall say a litany of Remembrance for all those we remember today, followed by that prayer I am always asked to say, the Gift of Tears; and I invite you to say with me the Collect of the Women’s Section. (I suggest that you mute yourself, or it will sound like a busy beehive.)

*The Litany of Remembrance, the prayer the Gift of Tears and the Women’s Section Collect was read out.*

**4. Vote of thanks to Revd. Peter and Opening Remarks**

*The Acting Chairman thanked Revd. Peter for his service and welcomed everyone for coming.*

I may not be seeing you, how I am missing seeing those warm, friendly faces. My warmest of welcomes to you all is no different though. Had somebody said to me this time last year what lay ahead for everyone, I think my response would have been something like codswallop, or you’re talking through your hat!!!

I warmly welcome our guest speakers today, Mrs Una Cleminson, National Chairman, Royal British Legion and Mr Jason Coward, Membership Council Chairman. Both Una and Jason will address us later. Mr Edd Robinson who will give our Welfare Report and warmest wishes to all our Vice Presidents.

You will all know I am sure that we the Women’s Section were formed in July 1921, a couple of months after the RBL you may ask why? I will tell you, because at that time the RBL decreed Women would not be eligible for ordinary membership, but that a separate Women’s Auxiliary would be set up, how things have changed. That is the reason we will hopefully celebrate our Centenary in July; you will hear more on this from our Caretaker Vice Chairman and Conference Chairman Margaret Cook later.

Our very first conference July 1921, a provisional committee was formed with Countess Haig becoming our First President, with Lady Robertson the First National Chairman. The Central Committee was established in 1923 and the late Queen Mother became our President in 1924 until her death in 2002. HRH The Princess Anne became our President 1st March 2003.

Well, what a year we have all endured and still doing so, March was the last time your central committee met in person, as the Country went into Lockdown, it was also the last time we saw our Chairman Liz. New ways of communication were found mainly via Zoom, sounds like a cannon going off! Your Central Committee have been meeting via Zoom and we knew how you all were/are facing difficulties by not being able to meet and fundraise as only the Women’s Section know how, but let me assure you, our Beneficiaries have not suffered as you will hear when Edd gives our Welfare Report later.

Many Branches have kept in touch with each other via telephone or letter keeping our members up to date, some have used the technology available to them, Skype Video or mastered, here comes that word again, Zoom! This pandemic has certainly changed our lives and the way we do things, not being able to meet, see friends, relatives I think has been the hardest, especially for those who have had to shield. I know support has been there in varying different ways, via phone calls, doorstep visits when allowed food parcels etc and why? Because we all belong to a compassionate caring organisation, which is noted in many circles.

Only a couple of weeks ago I took a telephone call from the private secretary of our president who had come across a homeless ex-service lady who he felt we could help. I helped via telephone calls that took up most of the day, so I know although you have been unable to meet and help those in need face to face, this has been done by whatever means have been available to you. My sincere heartfelt thanks go to you all. You all know the rules, stay safe, stay well, stay home, and save the NHS.

Tribute needs to be paid to a dedicated compassionate lady, September brought us a devastating blow with all too soon, passing of our National Chairman Liz Harrison. Liz was very passionate about the Women’s Sectionat all levels. Liz was a compassionate, caring, loving, loyal considerate person with a great sense of humour that sadly many never got to see. She firmly believed the road we all travel is mapped out for us, rest in eternal peace Liz.

Both Liz and Jennie had a vision for our way forward and the future of the Women’s Section. Liz is greatly missed by her Legion Family, none more so than her own very close family and friends. I am in regular contact with both Peter, her husband, and her Brother Peter.

A Second blow hit central committee also in September when our elected Vice Chairman Jennie, due to ill health, found the need to step down. This left us without a Chairman and Vice Chairman, I think that is a first in the history of the Women’s Section. I came back as Caretaker Chairman with Margaret Cook as Caretaker Vice Chairman. Jennie, we know you are online, we all send you best wishes, hopefully your health improves very soon for you and your family.

After today you will have a new chairman and Vice Chairman. I know in my heart, you, the membership and Central Committee will give both ladies the support and respect you have given and shown to both Liz and me.

**5. Apologies**

Mrs Doris Ingham OBE, Mrs Wendy Bromwich JP, Mrs Joanne Steer MBE, Mrs Sara Jones CBE DL JP O’stjand Mrs Marilyn Humphrey.

**6. Minutes of Conference 2020 (Already circulated)**

*Delegates were asked to propose the minutes, before the AGM via email.*

**7. Minutes adopted Proposed and Seconded**

Proposed: Sandiway&Cuddington

Seconded: Leatherhead

**8. Matters Arising (Previously Received)**

*Matters arising were asked to be sent in before the AGM via email.*

In the Annual report, Burgess Hill Branch, Sarah ‘Voice’, should read Sarah ‘Voce’

**9. Financial Report given by Women’s Section National Treasurer (already circulated)**

*The Women’s Section Treasurer Sandra Fishlock read out the Financial Report.*

**FINANCIAL REPORT FOR NATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING 2021**

Good morning, Madam Chairman, guests, and fellow members, it gives me great pleasure to present the Financial Report for the Royal British Legion Women’s Section.

I have been asked to inform you that no Women’s Section money was used for the new Legion Logo, as we know some of our members were concerned that it had.

First, I would like to inform you that since May 2020 your officers have been trying to arrange online banking, not as easy as normal Business online banking because we must have Commercial online banking. I can report that in December, all but one of the members of the Finance Committee received their card, card reader, and Pin number, myself and one other member are able to access the account, 2 more have a log in problem, but I am hopeful that we will be up and running by the end of the month.

*No Management Account at Present this will be sent out to you once I have it.*

Would you please turn to the General Fund Accounts these are for 1st July 2019 to 30th June 2020.

**General Fund Accounts for 1st July 2019 – 30th June 2020**

There are some printing errors in the account you have received, could you please add under Grant “Closing balance from Barclays Bank £209,849.42 this was the account that I have shown under investments in previous years.

Since I took over as National Treasurer, I have been trying to change the address and add my name to this account, to no avail. The only way we could do this was to close the account and have the money transferred into our General Administration Account. Emma Cox, Pat Chrimes, and I have checked 7 years of records and cannot see that this account was earmarked for anything. This will be transferred to BFI once the online banking is working.

The total Income should read £256,715.48, on the Expenditure side under Standard Bearers. The Regional Competition should read £57.15, Total Expenditure £36,520.97, and the full total is £256,715.48, you can request a copy of the correct account from Katy.

We started the year with a balance of £15,368.21

We received a Grant of £12,700.00

Closing Balance from Barclays Bank £ 209,849.42

Donations £14,364.71, I will explain these at the end of my report

**Annual Meeting**

**Hotel repayment** £2,220.00

**Conference Raffle** £416.00

**Donation** £15.37

**Tombola** £151.00 I would like to thank Winchester WS for arranging this stall

**Sundries**

**Diamonds/Badges** £107.00

**Pens/Pins** £1,170.00, I still have 20 pens, if you would like them please let me know

**Bank Interest £353.77**

**Income Total £256,715.48**

**EXPENDITURE**

**Central Committee Travel/ Accommodation** £13,421.25 this was a saving of £7,139 on last year

**Sundries** £62.63

**Officers Seminar** £1,526.41

**Standard Bearers –** FOR is the Festival of Remembrance £277.00 was a repayment for accommodation for the year before.

**Regional Competition** £57.15

**Annual Meeting**

**Standard Bearers Expenses** £3,128.00

**Central Committee Travel** £849.08

**Hotel** £5,708.25 less the income £2,220 the total was £3,488.25 a saving of £3,000 on last year

**Courier** £187.20

**Hall** £3,434.00

**Wreaths** £234.29

**Photographer** £1,189.00

**Sundries** £139.00

This is a total saving of £6,105

**Sundries**

**Footprints** £125.00 this was for printing of the leaflets we had last year

**RSN** £1,303.26 this was The Royal School of Needlework for repairing our National Standard

**Benevolent Fund** £2,865.00

**Badges/Pins** £1706.39

**Pens** £539.98

**Auditor** £180.00

**Widows Christmas Cards** £10.96

**BFI Transfer** £100.00 this was a trial to see if transferring to BFI worked it did eventually

**Bank Charges** £31.12

Our total expenditure was £36,520.97

We carried £220,194.51 forward, this included WS 100 £2,993.60, please keep saving your 5ps they do add up!

The NMA Fund of £1,033.38, there was a very generous donation from Miss Foster for £500, and Branch Closures £533.38,

The Benevolent Fund of £6,776.06, this will be transferred once the on-line banking is working.

I hope the accounts are clear, if you have any queries, please let me know and I reply in writing. I also hope you are happy with the arrangement for sending donation to me, I do try to bank the cheques within the week of receiving them, and you receive a receipt plus a thank you letter, within the fortnight.

The accounts were audited by Kumar Associates of Romsey, in August.

**Proposed: Sandra Fishlock**

**Seconded: Wallasey**

Before I close, I would like to inform you that some members have sent donations to me, in memory of Liz Harrison, we will be arranging to have a tree planted in our garden at the NMA in her memory, if anyone would like to donate please send it to me.

I would like to thank you for your help and support during this year.

**10. Results of Ballot for National Chairman and Vice Chairman & Central Committee Election**

*The results of the ballot for National Chairman and Vice Chairman was read out by MSO Jamila Hussain.*

I am pleased to announce the results of the National Officer election. The Women’s Section National Chairman position goes to Heather Spence of Ware branch. Many congratulations to Heather Spence. And the position of the Women’s Section National Vice Chairman goes to Jan Buxton Of Chesterfield branch who ran unopposed.

Congratulations to the both of you and we look forward to welcoming you both in your new positions.

We did open nominations for Central Committee reps for a number of positions however we only received one nomination. We understand that it is a very difficult time for many and that we may not reach every member as we can only communicate online during the pandemic. For this reason, the current Central Committee reps have kindly agreed to stay in position for another year which is in accordance with the RBL guidelines until such a time that we can hold elections that will attract more members.

**11. Confirmation National Life and Vice Presidents**

**National Life Vice-Presidents:** Dame Mary Bridges DBE

Mrs D Ingham OBE

Mrs M A Lodder OBE

Mrs D P Valler OBE

Mrs Wendy Bromwich JP

Mrs M Humphrey

**National Vice-Presidents:** Mrs S Jones CBE, DL, JP, O ST J Five Counties of the

West

Mrs D Hill South Eastern Region

Elizabeth, The Dowager Countess of Scarborough LVO Metropolitan Region

Mrs J Lewin-Smith DL Eastern Region

The Lady Grey of CodnorNorth Western Region

Mrs A J Murray MBE Northern Region

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE Northern Region

Mrs J Martin DL East Midlands Region

The Rt Hon The Countess Bathurst West Midlands Region

Auriol, Marchioness of Linlithgow Wales

Mrs J Andrew-Steer MBE Northern Ireland

*The Acting Chairman, on behalf of herself and the Central Committee, congratulated both Heather and Jan and welcomed them aboard.*

**12. Welfare Report by Edd Robinson**

*The Acting Chairman welcomed Edd Robinson, to give the Women’s Section Welfare Report.*

2019 – 2020

Total spend £258,243.00

£103,658.04 INGs

£19,500.00 Presidents Award Scheme

No External Grants were funded and the function has closed pending a review.

 2019 -2020 after Q1

TD Spend £74,998.00

PAS £7,000.00

Children Welfare Fund – Exceptional Grants can now be considered by the Central Grants Team and will be reported on at the next AGM.

*The Acting Chairman thanked Edd for his report and alsofor all his hard work and commitment he provides working with the Women’s Section.*

**COFFEE BREAK 11:00 – 11:30PM**

**Session 2: 11:30am**

*The National Chairman was welcomed by the Acting Chairman.*

**13. Address given by the Royal British Legion National Chairman Mrs Una Cleminson**

*Una Cleminson welcomed everyone and thanked them for asking her to speak, she noted it had not been a good year and paid tribute to the past National Chairman, Liz Harrison.*

*Una thanked Pat Chrimes for standing in and congratulations was given to Pat for receiving an OBE in theQueens Birthday Honours List.*

*Last year brought much needed innovation and the Branch Community Support (BCS) rose to the challenge, recruiting thousands of telephone buddies, picking up prescriptions and distributing food parcels.*

*Admiral nursing teams went online to look after Dementia Patients, it also enabled them to cover the whole country and the 31 Branches the Legion support worldwide. Una understood, as an ex-nurse herself, how much the Care Homes had gone above and beyond and worked so hard during this time and thanks was given to them.*

*After the first Lockdown, gifts were given to the RBL Care Homes, poppy shops items and donated chocolates, they were extremely well received by the Care Homes and it goes to show how a little goes a long way.*

*Unfortunately, the Poppy Appeal took a big hit last year and is about £20million down from the previous year, the fundraising team had tried many ways to engage the public last year, if they hadn’t done this it would have been a lot worse.*

*The RBL have reserves to see them through and it is hoped they can make up the shortfall this year, justification for the savings made by the break centres and handy man service.*

*The Women’s Section have transitioned well into the RBL and more will be said by Emma Cox, Membership Council Rep. and Jason Coward, Chairman of Membership Council in their presentations.*

*Una hoped by this summer, with the vaccine being delivered, they can celebrate their 100-year anniversary and she looked forward to seeing everyone at the NMA on July 24th 2021. Annual Conference is to be held in London in May, fingers crossed!*

*Congratulations were given to Heather and Jan, and Una said she looked forward to working with them.*

*The Acting Chairman thanked Una for her presentation.*

**14. Results of online voting**

*MSO, Jamila Hussain, reads out the results of the online voting for the Motions.*

We held an online vote for motions which opened a week before the AGM and closed on Monday, 25th January 2021. A link was sent to all the eligible delegates who had registered for the AGM.

**Motion 1**

**Branch Name:** Central Committee

**Proposal:** A one-year period whereby children’s cases that have an identified need that falls outside of the Welfare Fund’s categories for assistance, could be considered and approved by the Grants team.

**Reason for Inclusion:** Given COVID 19 and the difficulties that have arisen, it is important that exceptional children’s cases which fall outside of the Welfare Fund’s categories be considered.

**Effect if Passed:** The Welfare Fund can react to the exceptional children’s cases which fall outside of the Welfare Fund’s categories.

**The Main Argument:** This motion would allow the TRBLWS Welfare Fund to support the most Vulnerable Children in exceptional urgent/ crisis instances and ensure that developing needs due to COVID 19 can be dealt with through out.

**Proposed**: Sandra Saban

**Seconded**: Horley Branch

**The Motion was carried.**

**Motion 2**

**Branch Name:** Appleby & District

**Proposal:** This Conference recommends that the ability to abstain when placing a vote at National Conference to be removed from the ballot.

**Reason for Inclusion:** To ensure a fairer and more representative vote on important Motions at National Conference.

**Effect if Passed:** A fairer vote outcome will exist if Delegates only have a ‘For’ or ‘Against’ option

**The Main Argument:** Branch delegates should have been instructed by their branch on how to vote, the Branch should not have told their Delegates to abstain. Delegates are paid expenses to allow them the privilege to attend Conference and represent their Branch, if they abstain than their expenses should be denied them. Perhaps with only a ‘For’ or ‘Against’ option it will ensure some Delegates (who don’t already) actually read the motions to their Branches. Then a fairer and larger, therefore more representative vote will be recorded. There I urge Delegates to vote in favour of this Motion.

**Proposed**: Patricia Holden, Treasurer

**Seconded**: Wallasey Branch

**The Motion was carried.**

**Motion 3**

**Branch Name:** Sandiway&Cuddington

**Proposal:** This Conference urges the Board of Trustees to investigate how we can support those children of ex-servicemen and women who are suffering hard times due to the Coronavirus.

**Reason for Inclusion:** There are many families who have lost jobs and are suffering great hardship, now living under the breadline. We could look at maybe giving out food vouchers or bringing back the Children’s Allowance for a short time to help these families until things get back to normal.

**Effect if Passed:** This would help those families and ensure that their children are not suffering through something that is out of our control.

**The Main Argument:** If we re-introduced the Children’s Allowance for a period of twelve months and issued food vouchers, ex-service men and women would be more able to look after their children. It may be a long time before we can get back to normal and these children are suffering through lack of supplies. There are food banks which help, but if we assisted with the ex-service community this would free up more supplies for the non-service community.

**Proposed**: S. Littleford, Secretary

**Seconded**: Appleby

**The Motion was carried.**

**15. Membership Council update by Women’s Section representative Emma Cox**

*The Acting Chairman thanks Jamila for reading out the Motions and introduces the WS Membership Council Representative Emma Cox.*

Good morning ladies, gentlemen and honoured guests.

The pandemic has impacted all aspects of our lives and many branches and Counties have not been able to meet in person for nearly a year now. We all know and understand why the Government rules and guidelines are necessary. It is very much the case that we all seek to ensure people’s safety remains top priority. Our beneficiaries are still out there needing our help and support and many members have responded to this in a variety of ways such as setting up telephone buddies calls or arranging door-step deliveries for those who may be isolating at home.

Both the Central Committee and the Membership Council have been holding virtual meetings via the video platforms of Zoom or Teams. In the past 12 months since the last time we met in Winchester, I have attended all of the Central Committee meetings and all 10 of the Membership Council meetings.

I took part in the Royal British Legion’s first ever live stream conference - broadcast from the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 19th September as the replacement format for the cancelled national conference which was due to take place at Southport last May. I know many of you took part in that event. Thank you for the questions you raised during the Membership Forum.

I am pleased to report that the Women’s Section Modernisation working group has now completed its aim which was to establish a way forward for the Women’s Section as part of the Royal British Legion whilst retaining our identity. I believe we have succeeded in that.

I would like to record my thanks to Pat Chrimes, Jason Coward, Sandra Fruish and especially remembering Liz Harrison for their contribution in this. Pandemic permitting, one of the first benefits of this will be our involvement with the Royal British Legion’s National Annual Conference each May. More details to follow.

Last year has been difficult for all of us and has curtailed our daily lives considerably. I know many of you have found other ways to keep in touch or carry out some fundraising activity. We didn’t know what impact on numbers would be. Knowing more than 3500 members have renewed their membership with 237 branches still open is great news.

It is fantastic to see the donations received last year as reported by our Treasurer Sandra Fishlock earlier. Well done and thank you to all of you trying to carry on regardless. It is greatly appreciated.

We are now in the centenary year of the Royal British Legion and the Women’s Section. There has been a lot of planning by many people to celebrate our One Hundred. Let’s hope this can happen. This has included a project called ‘Telling Our Story’ where the idea is we will be able to look back on the tremendous history of the charity and be proud of what has been achieved. Despite the pandemic restrictions members of the Women’s Section found ways to obtain archive material. I then collated this making digital copies, drafted brief summaries and submitted them on behalf of the Women’s Section. There are more details about Women’s Section 100 to follow and I don’t wish to pre-empt Margaret’s information for you.

I hope we will be able to meet in person soon and look forward to seeing you again.

Thank you,

I’ll now hand back to you Madam Chairwoman.

*The Acting Chairman thanks for her address and for all that she does for the WS and the RBL.*

**16. Women’s Section Centenary to be held at the Arboretum Mrs M Cook**

*The Acting Chairman introduces Margaret Cook, Conference Chairman to read her report.*

Madam Chairman, distinguished guests and members.

As you will appreciate whilst we are all coping with lockdown because of COVID, it is very difficult to make hard and firm plans, but we are working on being able to go ahead with our Celebration at the NMA. At present NMA are working to the Government restrictions, the grounds are open to local visitors by appointment, but the conference facilities are closed. I am keeping in touch by e-mail. However, I can confirm the following: -

Central Committee have agreed to purchase a new supply of Women's Section Centenary Pens together with Tote Bags — all very useful.

We will also have a Women's Section Centenary Pin. We could do with more ideas. At present we only have two proposals

Our former National Vice-Chairman, Jennie Bailey, is compiling a Centenary Booklet and Sandra Saban has sorted photographs for her.

As soon as we have had a meeting with NMA and confirmed arrangements, we will advise members.

We were invited to submit a bid for our National President HRH The

Princess Royal to attend a meeting although the date of the Centenary Celebration is outside her diary, we were advised that due to COVID the situation might change.

Finally, please all take care.

**17. National Parade Marshall Laura Hayworth – Date and details of National Standard Bearers competition 2021**

*The Acting Chairman welcomed Laura Hayworth, National Parade Marshall to give her report and also commented on how smart Laura looked in her uniform.*

*Laura explained that the plans for a joint Standard Bearers Competition with the RBL had already being talked about the previous year, and financially it would help to have a joint competition. It had initially been decided that it would be looked at after the WS100 Celebrations in July this year, but COVID had forced them to rethink everything and Laura thanked the RBL for changing their plans to accommodate the WS and allowing them to hold their National Standard Bearer Competition on the same day. The proposed date is 14th May 2021 at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, near Westminster, London, and it will also be part of the RBL’s Centenary Event. The WS will still have their own Judges and Parade Marshals and their competition will be held first followed by the RBLs. This is, of course, entirely dependent on the COVID situation, which is being monitored by the RBL conference-committee on a weekly basis.*

*The exact timing of the start of the competition will be advised nearer the time, but both the WS and RBL Competitions must be finished by 6pm. As yet, no-one has been able to do a recce of the venue.*

*All Standard Bearers are remaining in post until they are able to hold a competition again and Laura wanted to thank all the Standard Bearers and Parade Marshals for their patience in what has been an extraordinary year and for complying with all the seemingly endless email guidelines, especially with regards to attending funerals. These are all issued with one purpose in mind - to keep you all safe."*

**18. Jason Coward membership Council Chairman/ NMA**

*The Acting Chairman gives a warm welcome to Jason Coward.*

*Jason thanked Madam Chairwomen for the welcome and for the opportunity to join the WS AGM and gave a brief explanation of who the Membership Council was and what they do, that they were the only subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, tasked with focusing on the interests and concerns of its RBL members.*

*Jason contemplated the year just gone, the frustrations of plans cancelled and the switch to virtual meetings. Thanks went out to Laura Hayworth, National Parade Marshall and her team for managing the constant change of information and to everyone for taking it on board and maintaining the duty of care to all members. The MC Chairman went on to say how delighted he was that the clouds were clearing and that they could start focusing on the year ahead. The Membership Council is looking at how they can make things easier and better for their members to volunteer, to be compliant and how they solve problems through a better, faster complaints process and they are very much looking forward to welcoming the new Director of Membership who joins on March 8th.*

*The MC Chairman felt it was the Membership Council’s responsibility to make sure all voices are heard and encouraged everyone to take part in the membership forum at this year’s conference and the ongoing town hall events to express their views whether they be supportive or critical, as the Legion was for everyone. The last few months had helped to establish a new relationship between the RBL and the WS, after some years of difficult conversations and Jason wanted to pay a personal tribute and thanks to Liz, the WS Late Chairman whose common sense, straight talking and humour made conversations easier to construct and conclusions achievable. Pat Chrimes, Emma Cox and Sandra Fruishwere also mentioned as doing a fantastic job of working out an integration plan for the WS to move forward with the RBL. Recognising the WS’s needs and identity, the agreement includes the WS maintaining its own seminar/forum during the National Conference weekend, its own National Standard and Standard Bearer competition and some budget amendments which will ultimately bring in more money for the member’s that need it.*

*The MC Chairman looked forward to meeting members face to face, in July at the NMA for the RBL centenary, thanked everyone in the WS for the work they do and handed back to Madam Chairman.*

*Acting Chairman thanked Jason for his presentation.*

**19. Response to questions sent in**

There were no questions.

**20. Vote of thanks – Conference Chairman**

*The Acting Chairman welcome the Conference Chairman, Margaret Cook, to read her presentation.*

Madam Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Delegates, Members, all our helpers.

Before I carry out my duties as Conference Chairman, as retiring caretaker National Vice-Chairman for the past four months, a position I was honoured and proud to hold, albeit under sad circumstances. Also working from the beginning of the Women's Section Working Group - an interesting time with Liz. I wish to propose a sincere Vote of Thanks to all who have worked in the background to enable the Women's Section to hold their first Virtual Annual General Meeting in our Special Centenary Year.

It has been a difficult year for everybody but especially for our MSO, Jamila and Administrator, Katy but with the assistance of the RBL l.T we have succeeded, after many hours of tests! We have continued Central Committee meetings on Zoom but hope sometime in 2021 to meet again in person. Now as Conference Chairman it is my great pleasure to propose a sincere Vote of Thanks to our Chairman for guiding us through the meeting today. Thank you, Pat, for stepping back as National Chairman. Your leadership and experience at Central Committee meetings during the past months has been invaluable and welcomed by our Central Committee Members and especially me. Normally I would have asked Conference to join me to-day in wishing you well for the future and show their appreciation to you as our outgoing Chairman, but this cannot be — still Pat you know you have our best wishes.

**Final vote of thanks – Acting Chairman, Patricia Chrimes**

I wish to thank Margaret Leahy for allowing her name to go forward as National Chairman. Maybe Margaret you would consider at some point being elected to Central Committee sometime in the future.

Once more with pleasure my sincere best wishes to both our new National Officers Heather and Jan, hoping you both enjoy your term of office I know that you will have the support from Central Committee.

Now under normal circumstances the badges of office would be handed over, as this cannot happen, we will speak to arrange this with you.

Central Committee Sandra F Sandra S Jan Pat H Pat A Margaret Tracey Emma what a year it has been although we have been unable to meet face to face, we have kept hold of the ethos of what we stand for and what we are about. Holding meetings via ZOOM there is that CANNON again. All meetings have been constructive, not all harmonious but we have pulled together. I wish you all well for the coming year.

Jamila and Katy it has been a tough old year for you both, working from home has not been easy with not being able to go into the office to organise our Conference which is difficult enough under normal circumstances, a virtual one along with ballots for National Chairman and Vice Chairman, we had one or two hiccups which we got over the constraints have been very difficult. I therefore say a huge thank you to you both for all you have managed to get through in this very challenging year.

National Chairman, Jason and Edd thank you again for being with us and addressing our meeting.

Delegates members, vice Presidents, you are the WOMEN’S SECTION THE ROOTS OF OUR TREE with spreading arms supporting as always those less fortunate than ourselves LONG may it continue.

Never in a million years did I expect to be in this position again for the last four months, as always I have done my best, I hope you all feel that I have. Thank you to the Board of Trustees for having me back for a short time to represent the Women’s Section.

Thank you for attending today.

STAY SAFE, STAY WELL, WE WILL MEET AGAIN.

PLEASE STAND FOR THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

*The National Anthem was sung.*

CLOSE OF MEETING