

Newsletter

Issue 16 - May 2023

In this issue:

Page 1 – Chair’s Foreword

Page 3 – Secretary’s Report

Page 3 – Membership Secretary’s Report

Page 4 – Editor’s News

Page 4 – Newsround from Somerset RBL HQ

Page 5 - Welfare Provision for Veterans

Page 6 – RBL Media Office update

Page 7 - Branch Community Support

Page 7 – Disabled Veteran Scholarship Fund

Page 9 - Newsletter Quiz

Page 10 - Tales from 955 Sqn

Page 12 – 2023 Branch Meetings & Events Diary



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

BANWELL BRANCH

Chair’s Foreword



HM King Charles III

May sees a momentous event in the history of the United



Kingdom. The Coronation of our new King, Charles III. Most people in this country have never known any other Monarch than that of our late Queen, Elizabeth II. Banwell Branch sends its very best wishes and a vow of loyalty to King Charles III for a prosperous and long reign. As this event will be closely followed by most people either having the good fortune to be in London at the time or by watching the proceedings on television, your

Committee, having asked for support from our members to host an event, have decided not to arrange a celebration event locally. However, by the time this newsletter is released, we

Contact Us

RBL Website

[The Royal British Legion](#)

RBL Banwell Branch

[Website Link](#)

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would have had the opportunity to enjoy a coronation themed lunch at The Grand Atlantic Hotel, thereby enabling you to watch the screening of the Coronation live.

I have just returned from the Chair's County Conference where we were given a brief in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant – of which I hope you are all aware and the support that we can get and our families are able to link into – the link is here: [Armed Forces Covenant](#) Please also make sure your families are aware particularly if they are looking after your welfare.

In respect of the Poppy Appeal – Somerset raised £805k in total which was £5k over the target – and that's probably why the target this year is going to be £1m. The Community Fundraiser recognises the efforts of all that were involved in reaching this figure.

More locally I would like to thank The Bell for their generous donation of money raised from their quiz nights. Below is a photograph of the Branch presenting Carmino with a Certificate of Appreciation - we hope to arrange a rival quiz night with them in the future.



I and your Committee thank you for your continued support and look forward to seeing you at our planned events.

Penny Mottram
Chair

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From the Secretary

In support of increasing the membership I am working on a Recruitment leaflet, which when completed, will share with you as well as distribute in the Village to attract new members. I would also draw your attention to May's branch meeting. Colin Hornett will be talking about the Banwell Fire Station – Talk and Tales and it sounds fascinating so come along and take part. The committee are also trying to get a speaker for June and are looking at a talk on Birnbeck Pier if possible. Watch this space. The Committee are also looking for a new venue for the dinner in October. The favoured date is Saturday evening 21 October – Trafalgar night – so again watch this space and in the meantime put the date in your diaries please.

Gill Fawcitt
Secretary

From the Membership Secretary

Membership currently stands at 47 with no new members during this period. I and your Committee will be looking at ways in which we can increase membership to ensure that this Branch remains viable but, in the meantime, I would ask that you continue with your support and by spreading the word – sometimes our own people are the best recruiters.

Penny Mottram
Membership Secretary

Editor's News

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Quite a lot in this Newsletter I think you'll agree. The piece on Welfare Provision for Veterans is very interesting and gives a good indication of the direction of travel in which we will become involved. Again, I would welcome any input for publication from our members, this can be sent to Gill or myself for inclusion in the Newsletter.

The deadline for articles to go into the August issue will be 21st July.

Tony Lyndon
Newsletter Editor

Newsround from Somerset RBL HQ

Kohima – An offer has been received from Mr Mark Symons regarding a planned visit he has to Imphal & Kohima in October 2023. He has asked if there is anyone in the Somerset area that has a relative buried / named on a war memorial in either location that might like him to visit the grave and pay his respects on the members behalf. He is very happy to be contacted by the members and discuss what he could do for them. Marks contact details are: • E: midnightstar@blueyonder.co.uk • T: 07498 275287 Mark is planning his Pilgrimage for October and therefore would appreciate a call between now and early September from anybody who may wish to take him up on his offer.

****Save the Date**** - A memorial service will be held for all those we lost in Somerset RBL between January 2020 – January 2023 will be held at Taunton Minster on May 28th at 3pm. More details to follow, but please can all branches let me have a list of names of anyone who has died from their branch since January 2020. I do have some names as they were mentioned in the Bulletin.

Holiday Accommodation - Costa del Sol, Spain Torre Muelle,

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Benalmadena 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, beachside apartment in a quiet complex with kitchen, lounge-diner and L-shaped balcony Contact Darrell Holt 07939641163

Welfare Provision for Veterans

-
A major review into the veteran welfare services for veterans has been announced by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

- MOD and OVA have jointly launched a review into a range of welfare services, including those under the banner of Veterans UK.
- The review will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of welfare services and make recommendations for improvement.
- The review was commissioned following multiple changes and advances in veterans' care over the last decade.

The review has focused on examining the effectiveness and efficiency of the range of welfare services for veterans and identify any duplication, or gaps in support.

With the creation of the OVA and the developments and changes that have been brought about in veterans' care in the last ten years, it's important that we examine the current support systems in place to make sure there is clarity in the scope and capacity of current services.

Support which is being looked at includes services such as the Veterans Welfare Service, which comes under the banner of Veterans UK. It provides one-to-one support to veterans and their families through a network of welfare managers across the UK. The Defence Transition Service, which supports military personnel as they move into civilian life, is also part of the review.

The work will complement the Quinquennial Review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, which is already underway.

The joint OVA and MOD review has been conducted by an independent civil servant, who was supported by a joint secretariat from the MOD and Cabinet Office. The review

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focused on examining each organisation's performance and practices, identifying areas for improvement, and enhancing efficiency.

Engaging extensively with stakeholders, including other government departments, the charity sector and independent veterans' advisors will be an important part of the work.

The review is expected to take three months and will report back to the Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, with recommendations for the future role of welfare support and provision of services. Following the completion of the review, MOD and OVA will develop an action plan to address the findings and recommendations, with a focus on implementing meaningful changes that will enhance service effectiveness and delivery.

RBL Media Office update

Throughout the past meetings we have been able to achieve our goal on getting our branch onto the Royal British Legion website which you can access from the link provided.

Website Link:

<https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/banwell/>

As this is in the early stages there is still a bunch of information to be added as well as photos so I ask for your patience. The Facebook page unfortunately, due to this, has taken a back seat. However, it has still achieved fourteen members and now we will be taking equal focus of both media outlets. You can even join us on the Facebook page following the link below.

Facebook page:

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/271228214973698/>

Media Officer

Lizzie Hayes

Branch Community Support Reporting for 1st

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September to 31st December 2022

Activity	Home & Hospital Visits	Home & Hospital Clients visited	Telephone Buddy Calls Made
National	2525	1294	26055
Somerset	231	133	1896
Banwell	6	6	72
Activity	Telephone Buddy Clients Contacted	Funerals Attended	Touchpoints
National	10562	372	187
Somerset	861	34	0
Banwell	57	1	0
Activity	Events		
National	560		
Somerset	87		
Banwell	0		

Dennis Cruze

Branch Community Support

Disabled Veteran Scholarship Fund (DVSF) - Open University

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In 2017 The OU launched the DVSF. The first of its kind in the UK, this pioneering scheme provides both free education (up to the value of £20,000) and tailored support to the ex-military population who have been injured in or during military service. So far, the OU has awarded 261 scholarships and has now committed a further 50 scholarships in 2023.

Further details of the scheme including how to apply can be found and the following link:

<https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding/disabled-veterans-scholarship-fund>

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February 2023 Newsletter Quiz

Here are the answers for the February Quiz.

1. Which country is hosting the 2023 Rugby World Cup? **France**
2. Where is the Eurovision Song Contest being held in 2023?
Liverpool
3. 2023 is the 50th Anniversary of which iconic moment?
Opening of Sydney Opera House
4. Where will King Charles III be coronated? **Westminster Abbey**
5. How old will King Charles III be when he is coronated? **74**
6. Which singer is doing his last ever tour in 2023? **Elton John**
7. "Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning, Part One" is being released this year. How old will Tom Cruise be when it is released? **61**
8. Who are the current Women's Netball World Champions? **New Zealand**
9. Who is not turning 30 in 2023 – Sam Smith; Stormzy; Niall Horan or Zayn Malik? **Sam Smith**
10. India is projected to pass China as the world's most populated country in 2023. What will the estimated population be? **1,419,660,000**

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Tales from 955 Sqn



955 Squadron (Royal Auxiliary Air Force) were headquartered at Banwell Castle between 1941-44. They fell under the command of No.11 Balloon Centre at RAF Pucklechurch. They flew barrage balloons at the Bristol Aeroplane Company's "shadow" aircraft factory sites at Oldmixon and Elborough. Bristol Beaufighters and Beauforts were produced at these locations. The Command motto was "VI ET ICTU" which translates as "By Force and Impact".

From the National Archives AIR 27/2304, 955 Operations Diary, the first reference to Banwell Castle is made on 19 Feb 1941. The advance party from RAF Cardington (Bedfordshire) had reached RAF Pucklechurch and started the first survey of potential headquarters locations:

19 Feb 1941 – Commanding Officer and Flight Lieutenant Lightfoot proceeded to Weston-super-Mare to inspect Banwell Castle, the future Squadron Headquarters, and "A" Flight HQ at St Maur's Hotel, Weston-super-Mare.

They wasted no time in commencing the building of balloon tether sites, with hut accommodation, in the vicinity of the shadow aircraft factories.



Barrage Balloon Site Hut

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Typical Balloon Site with Winch

955 Sqn HQ did not take long to establish control:

19 Apr 1941 – Squadron Headquarters established at Banwell Castle by the transfer from Centre of Squadron Commander, Adjutant, Medical Officer together with 2 Warrant Officers and 28 Airmen.

The speed at which the necessary infrastructure was put in place is very impressive, in 2 months the majority of tether sites were in place and flying of the barrage had commenced.

To be continued.

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2023 Branch Meetings and Events Diary

Please note that guests are welcome at all meetings but if there is to be food the Secretary would appreciate advanced notice so that she knows the numbers attending and can order enough food.

18 May	Speaker – Colin Hornett - Banwell Fire Station Talk and Tales
15 June	Formal Branch Meeting possibly with speaker or some other fun and social addition (possible speaker on Birnbeck pier)
21 September	Social/Fun meeting
19 October	AGM with food
21 October (Provisional Date)	Dinner – to be decided but will be at a new venue – theme of Trafalgar Night
11 November	Remembrance Day
12 November	Remembrance Sunday
16 November	Formal Branch Meeting with Speaker.

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Registered Charity: The Royal British Legion, 199 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1AA
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