

We will remember them

To all whom we have lost this month. Our sincere condolences to family and friends.



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



Hampshire County Conference

The Hampshire County Conference was held on the 17th January 2026 at the Jubilee Hall in Bishops Waltham. Standards of County and various branches were paraded. The Mayor and Mayoress of Winchester, Cllr Sudhakar and Vivian Achwal were present. Cllr Sudhakar spoke about the importance of remembrance and community in his opening speech. He then thanked the RBL for what it does for the community.

The County President, Colonel A. King thanked the County Committee for all their hard work and welcomed everybody, giving a summary of the events of 2025 and explained that the focus for this year is to “recognise, remember and support” our armed forces and veterans.

Members from fourteen branches attended. The minutes of the last annual conference were accepted as a true reflection. The new County Chairman, Richard Moore gave his report and said that in order for branch officers to hold their positions, they must be qualified and need to complete the required RBL courses for their positions. The County Treasurer, presented his annual report and also reminded branches to get their financial reports to County within the allocated times.

The first guest speaker was Colonel David Kenny OBE, the commanding officer of the seven counties of the South East Area. Colonel Kenny thanked the RBL for its support to serving members of the armed forces in Hampshire and went on to talk about the very recent Defence Review. He mentioned the NATO First Support Plan as well as homeland security and defence. He explained the current threat to the UK and that there had been a big increase in incidents, without going into any detail (for security reasons). Colonel Kenny spoke about the importance of Cadets for the army and that it was a source of recruitment for the future. He mentioned the possibility of more government funding for Cadets. Colonel Kenny also spoke about the possibility of the establishment of a new unit to protect homeland infrastructure. All of these are in the very recent Armed Forces Bill that was passed in parliament in

the last week.

After the lunch break the second speaker, Trustee Steven Lee, addressed the meeting. He gave feedback on the way that the RBL has given help to its beneficiaries who live all over the world. He went on to mention that 1741 beneficiaries who suffer from dementia have been assisted at home in the last year. Mr Lee also spoke about the support given to veterans by the Battle Back Centre and it continues its important work. This also included physical training support for the Vancouver Invictus Games. He mentioned the successful Royal Albert Hall Remembrance Festival and reminded all that the Annual RBL national Conference is to take place in Brighton. He also mentioned that any member of the RBL can attend, either in person as a visitor or on-line. Further details of how to join on-line will be given later.



Mr Lee spoke of the requirement for the RBL to do more of its business on-line and this is covered in the 2025 Strategy which is available on-line from RBL HQ. He mentioned the need for making everyday business of the RBL branches easier so that they can operate more effectively. There is a refocus on RBL Clubs and HQ is looking into financial investment to encourage the local communities to engage in the spirit of “Connect - Remember - Support”.

A speaker from the South Central Ambulance also addressed the conference and spoke about welfare matters. Thereafter the next guest speaker, broadcaster Michael Kurn (a reserve Second Lieutenant in the RLC) spoke about service. His talk was very motivational and was based on family traditions of service, motivating him to volunteer to carry on the family tradition. He also spoke of military friends and that they continue to be so, for the rest of their lives.

The final part of the conference was the presentation of trophies and certificates. The following page has photos. DW



Operation Veritable, sometimes referred to as the Battle of the Reichswald was conducted in North East Europe from 8th February and 11th March 1945. The overall commander was Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery the commander of 21st Army Group. It comprised the First Canadian Army commanded by Lieutenant-General Harry Crerar and the British XXX Corps commanded by Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks.

The US Army was deployed as the southern pincer (Operateion Grenade). Its advance was delayed by German forces under command of General Alfret Schlemm, who deliberately flooded the Roer River in order to delay the US forces. This tactic was very effective.

The operation was part of a bigger plan to enter Germany and was the northern pincer movement of this plan. XXX Corps was tasked to advance through the Reichswald Forest and the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, was ordered to use amphibious vehicles to attack German positions in the flooded Rhine plain. XXX Corps completed their advance through the Reichswald by 22nd February and captured the towns of Kleve and Goch and then consolidated their positions. Thereafter the offensive was renewed (known as Operation Blockbuster). XXX Corps then linked up with the U.S. Ninth Army near Geldern on 4 March after the execution of Operation Grenade.

German forces on the ground needed to retain a bridgehead on the west bank of the Rhine at Wesel so as to allow them to evacuate as many men and as much equipment as possible. On 10 March the German withdrawal ended and the last bridges over the Rhine were destroyed. DW (Sources various)



Serving personnel often bought souvenirs when they had the chance, as a reminder of the places they were deployed to. Such items also included beer bottle labels, leather wallets, cigarette boxes, newspapers and more and were acquired from canteens or local bazaars and markets.

These things make good and long memories of times gone by, whether they be good or bad. They are a tangible reminder of old comrades and adversity.



4-11 February 1945. The leaders of the 'Big Three' powers (Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin) convened at Yalta in Crimea.
8 February – 11 March 1945. Operation Veritable launched in conjunction with US Operation Grenade to clear German forces west of the Rhine.
During February, British and Canadian forces advanced through the Reichswald in Germany, close to the border with the Netherlands.



After the forces from the UK, USA and Canada had arrived in the south of England for the preparations to deploy to mainland France a steady build up of logistics and training commenced. A large force of US forces established themselves at the RAF base at Greenham Common. The US 98th Engineer Regiment was based in Kingsclere at Camp Kingsclere (Park House, now the place of horse training) and travelled to Thatcham to work at the large US logistics base there. The 3247th Quartermaster Service Corps was based near Sydmonton Court. There was also a US Army Engineers unit based at the same place (the subject of last months article in the newsletter).

On the 5th October 1944 ten soldiers went to the Crown Inn for a drink. US Army regimental policemen by the names of Pte Coates, Pte Brown and Pte Anderson saw the soldiers drinking at the Inn and approached them in the pub saying that the Inn was off limits to them and ordered them to return to base. The ten soldiers returned to their base where they took a number of M1 carbines and 100 rounds of ammunition from the armoury and returned to Kingsclere. As Brown and Anderson were leaving the Inn they were confronted by the returning armed soldiers. The returning soldiers also saw from the front of the Inn (through the window) that a military policeman was inside, recognising him because he was wearing a white painted MPs' helmet and opened fire. US Pte Brown (Regimental Policeman) took cover and remained inside the pub.

US Army Pte Coates (Regimental Policeman) was shot in the neck / throat and killed instantly while sitting on a chair in the pub under the window facing North Street. US Army Pte Anderson (Regimental Policeman) took cover and managed to get out of the front of the Inn and returned fire. The soldiers opened fire on him from the cover of some tombstones in the church yard. He was mortally wounded and within a short distance collapsed and died in the runner bean patch of the next door garden of a Mr Digweed in North Street.

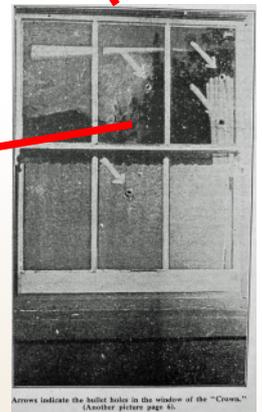
The landlady was Mrs Napper aged 64 and was also shot and died of her wounds. Mrs Napper was taken to Newbury Hospital by ambulance and died there. Sergeant Dudman of the Hampshire Constabulary was first to arrive with some other officers and they spoke to several people who were eye witnesses to the incident. Thereafter Detective Superintendent R Gill arrived from HQ Hampshire Constabulary in Winchester and Superintendent Liddiard from Andover Division assisted him in taking statements from the witnesses. As this was taking place the US Army Military Police conducted a search for the US Army



1950 newspaper photo of the Crown Inn



The Crown Inn today



1944 photo of the window with bullet holes in it.

personnel involved and 10 were eventually arrested and detained.

All were arrested and underwent a Court Martial. Nine men were convicted of murder and jailed for life - the other got 10 years' hard labour - and all were given dishonourable discharges. The sentence of the tenth man was later reviewed and he was also given a life sentence. Thereafter a local Home Guard army unit was raised to conduct foot patrols in the village to provide security.



US Quartermaster Service Corps collar badge

US Army generic cap badge

Generic collar badge

The term "Taking the King's / Queen's Shilling" is a term derived from the times that a shilling was paid to a recruit of the army or Royal Navy dating from the end of the English Civil War.

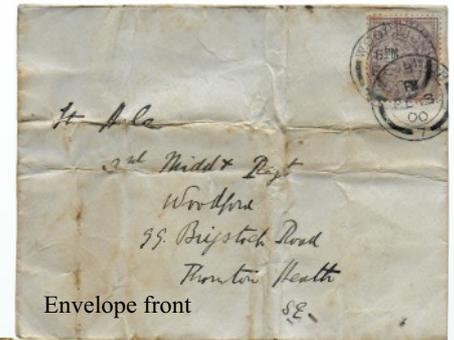
If a person "took the King's / Queen's Shilling" it was a formal agreement that the recipient agreed to serve in the armed forces. The official practice of paying a shilling stopped in 1879 but it continued as a symbolic gesture into the early 20th Century.

Once the Shilling had been received the recruit still had the choice of returning it up to the point that they formally attested before a Justice of the Peace into the armed forces. On attestation the recruit was subject to military law. Thereafter the recruit was paid a more substantial amount that was then used to pay for a variety of things. In the early days this second amount was approximately the equivalent of half a years wages and was very attractive in persuading people to sign up. At the time the custom was introduced the daily pay for a soldier was a shilling a day but he was expected to pay for his uniform and food out of this amount. In 1847 a limit was placed on deductions. This made sure that a soldier was paid at least one penny (a twelfth of a shilling) a day, after deductions.

In the Royal Navy press gangs had the power to force men to join up. If a man was forced in this way to join he was given the King's shilling. However there was also the opportunity to join willingly. The incentive for this was an offer of two months wages up front.

Today a person who joins is unofficially described as "taking the Queen's shilling". This includes non-British and Commonwealth soldiers who join the British Army. There is evidence of an airman being given the King's shilling upon attestation into the Royal Air Force in 1948.

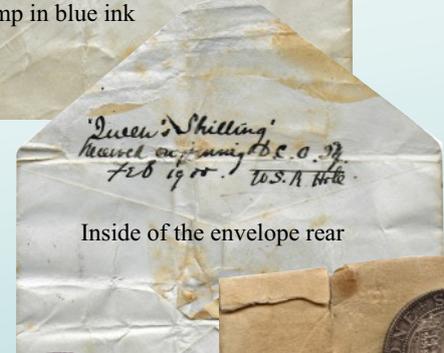
The envelope and Shilling at right were paid to an officer by the name of Lt Hale, who volunteered to serve with the 3rd Middlesex Regt during the Anglo Boer War 1899 - 1902. He accepted the Shilling and posted it home in the envelope to himself as a keepsake of the practice.



Envelope front



Envelope rear with regiments stamp in blue ink



Inside of the envelope rear



Obverse



Coin with its Royal Mint envelope



Reverse



The Memorial at Sherfield on Lodden

We remember them.



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

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

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrb/

Facebook Email address - Hampshire.web@rbl.community

Poppy Appeal - www.facebook.com.poppy.HampshireRBL

ALL LEGION ENQUIRIES (including Welfare requests) should be directed to the national call centre - **0808
802 8080**

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Errors and Omissions Excepted

