

Royal British Legion

Falkland Islands Branch

AGM Minutes

(Held at the Chamber of Commerce and Online

12th December 2024

Agenda Item:	Actions:
<p>Present: Chris Locke, Nancy Locke, Keith Biles, Bob French, Mark Brook, John & Sarah Maskell Bott (online), Richard Hyslop (online), Hags Hegerty, Tamsin Harris (online), Keith Biles, Wendy PcPhee (online), Gavin Roberts (online), Jenny Clarke, Jeremy Clarke, Craig Chandler, Marion Chandler, Frank Hart, Andrew Leadbetter, Stuart Walker, Ian Barnes, Simon Browning, Sarah Browning, Andrew Brownlee and Lynn Brownlee.</p>	
<p>Apologies: Dave and Pam Lewis, Chris and Lesley Moorey, Stuart Barlow, Annie Bailey, Keith Taylor, Sharon Barnes, Marvin Clarke, Derek Clarke and Joy Hart.</p>	
<p>Act of Remembrance Chris led the Act of Remembrance. He then welcomed everyone to the AGM.</p>	
<p>Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the last AGM were reviewed page by page and then signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
<p>Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>Chairman's Report: Chris Locke started by acknowledging how good it was to see so many people at the AGM, in person and online. He confirmed it was the first time the Branch had used Conference technology for the AGM which enabling all members both local and overseas to be part of the proceedings. Please see below Appendix 1 – The Chairman's full report The report was followed with a discussion about a letter Chris Locke has written to MLAs regarding the future for the RBL Branch if a permanent home could not be found. He gave some</p>	

<p>background information for attendees and views and ideas were exchanged between the floor and the Chairman. As a result, the letter will be slightly amended before being sent to incorporate suggestions from Simon Browning, in particular documenting the Branch's achievements over the past 10 years.</p>	<p>Chris Locke</p>
<p>Vice-Chairman's report: Mark Brook reported that a few new ideas had been tried this year to engage more people, but said it had been a relatively quiet time.</p> <p>He said that earlier this year he took on the role of organising the Poppy Ball. It was a successful night, which illustrated the community spirit. The Poppy Ball profits amounted to £4,100, thanks to the raffle, bar and ticket sales. The Poppy Appeal had benefited from tins, the Cathedral collection on Remembrance Sunday and activities as the school.</p> <p>Mark Brook confirmed he had sorted around 80 wreaths for a range of outlets. All money made from these will eventually go to the Poppy Appeal. He is still waiting on the total raised from the BFAI tins. He thanked the Commander British Forces for their valuable support and the new Command Warrant Officer who helped.</p> <p>Mark Brook said the branch had helped with several overseas requests, laying wreaths on people's behalf. He confirmed he keeps spare wreaths in store for short notice requests.</p> <p>He finished by thanking all on the Committee for supporting activities this year.</p>	
<p>Secretary's report Tamsin Harris confirmed accurate minutes are kept for every meeting and thanked Bob French for ensuring they appear on the website. She was thanked for her support by Chris Locke.</p>	
<p>Treasurer's Report: Please see appendix 2 – end of year accounts</p> <p>The Year end statement was provided and Hogs Hegerty thanked the independent accountant Alison Baker for her help. He confirmed the financial year for the RBL is 1st July to 30 June. He then talked members through the accounts.</p> <p>Poppy Appeal money will be sent back to the RBL in the next few weeks.</p>	

<p>He said taking on the role had been a ‘baptism of fire’ and that he was now signed up for Online Treasurers Training.</p> <p>Queries from the floor included a request for clarification of Branch assets and a question about where the £10,000 the Branch had was. Confirmed to be in the current account.</p>	
<p>Welfare Report:</p> <p>John and Sarah Maskell-Bott said there had been one issue that had been resolved, with the support and help from both SAFA and RBL Central. They confirmed the lesson learned was to ensure everyone keeps talking to stop people ‘trying it on’ with charities. They confirmed there is always support for genuine claims.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the Branch has a push wheelchair and that it was recently loaned to a member of the community. Mark Brook ensures the equipment is working and serviceable.</p>	
<p>2024 conference:</p> <p>Chris Locke said it was unfortunate that the Branch couldn’t be represented this year, but the 2025 conference is in Harrogate in May and we can register for places in January. This can be either online or in person. Hags Hegerty said he may be able to attend in person</p>	
<p>Membership:</p> <p>Chris Locke confirmed the Branch doesn’t have a Membership Secretary. Because members now join on line and not through the branch the position of membership Secretary is somewhat limited particularly as we are not notified by RBL UK when a new member joins. There has been issues with members trying to renew their Falklands membership and unless undertaken through an annual Direct Debit it may be tricky to renew.</p>	
<p>Election of officers:</p> <p>Chris Locke and Mark Brook had indicated their intent to stand as Chair. Their nominations papers had been received by the Secretary earlier in the week.</p> <p>Proposer and Secunder for Chris Locke - Simon Browning and Stuart Walker.</p> <p>Proposer and Secunder for Mark Brook - Jenny Clarke and Jeremy Clarke.</p>	

<p>Voting papers were provided in the room and those online were asked to vote via the chat box when instructed. All votes were counted with the following result:</p> <p>Mark Brook - 6 votes Chris Locke - 15 votes</p> <p>Chris Locke appointed Branch Chairman</p> <p>No other positions were contested.</p> <p>There was a show hands in favour of all committee officials remaining.</p> <p>There was a show of hands in favour of all other committee members remaining.</p>	
<p>Any Other Business:</p> <p>It was suggested the Branch needs a list of current Falkland members and to review how we communicate with them. It was agreed it's important to let members know what's going on, when there's events, etc. Chris Locke confirmed this was undertaken before the Chairman's RBL account became unusable earlier in the year. Once the new account has been set up updates will follow. It was agreed to investigate the use of various communications channels, including WhatsApp that's a secure channel. A discussion about this followed. Facebook remained a useful medium to promulgate information.</p> <p>Chris Locke referred to the Branch website also being a useful source of information.</p> <p>There was a proposal to launch the Falkland Poppy Appeal ahead of the Remembrance period, similar to the ways it's launched in the UK each year.</p> <p>Mark Brook confirmed that no-one has been elected to the Poppy Inn Bar Committee as it's not clear what's happening at the moment. He said once the future is clearer he can reassess and if necessary, put the committee back in place.</p> <p>Chris Locke closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their support and attendance, including those in the UK.</p>	<p>Chris Locke</p> <p>Committee</p> <p>Mark Brook</p>

Appendix 1 – Chairman’s Report

Chairman’s Report RBL AGM

Thursday 12 December 2024

Great to see so many of you able to attend tonight both in person and from overseas. This is the first time we have used conferencing technology for an AGM but so vital as it enables all members to be part of the Branch and join in whenever possible. I do believe the FI Branch is somewhat unique in it’s membership due to the high number of overseas contractors and some veterans who join the Branch during their time in the Islands and then on leaving want to remain connected in some way to the Bench. This is so important and why using zoom conferencing is such a great asset.

This year has been dominated by the question over the loss of our home, the Poppy Inn and the future of the Branch. However, before I address this issue I would like to look back over the past 12 months with a review of our achievements.

A year ago yesterday on 11th December we held our dinner at the Waterfront for Branch members in lieu of the Poppy Ball. It was a wonderful evening and pleased that so many could attend. This was complemented by being joined by Ian Carmichael a 1982 veteran. My thanks to Wendy McPhee for organising what was a very special evening. Whatever the future holds, this would be a social event we should aim to keep in the Branch calendar – possibly early May coinciding with RBL anniversary formation.

The Branch has been represented at all major Remembrance events and 1982 memorials. In particular those at San Carlos, Fitzroy and at the Liberation memorial on Liberation Day. In addition, I have represented the Branch at the early morning service for Anzac Day at the Cross of Sacrifice on 25th April and Battle Day at the 1914 memorial. Our Branch Standard was paraded at a number of these events and would like to thank Jenny, our Standard Bearer, for attending.

Pleased that the Branch had the opportunity to meet Sir David Cameron during his visit in February and Mr Luke Pollard MP, the Armed forces Minister, who visited last month. Both of these were informal but never the less important. In particular it was a privilege for me to be able to discuss the work of the Branch with MP Luke Pollard. He was most supportive.

We have held a number of social events in the Poppy Inn and although for various reasons we did not manage a bingo or quiz night Mark organised a music night at the end of last month at the Poppy Inn and for me confirmed the Community Support of the RBL and the future potential of the Branch if we could retain a dedicated headquarters and home.

Moving on to the Poppy Inn. You may have read or heard my recent interviews with Penguin News or Falkland Radio. You may have also read Lisa Watson’s editorial supporting the Branch and a letter from Bryan Wharson MBE the Chairman of the Bristall Branch in Leicester. I have also had a number of supportive conversations and messages from Branch members, friends and members of the public. It is clear to me we have the support of our community, it is our job and indeed our duty to convince MLA’s and Government of the Branch vital position in the Community and our inherent need for a dedicated space for its home.

There are a few copies of a letter to MLA's in front of you. You will note PWD offered the Old Synergy building for our use, however it is my understanding that MLA's refused this request. In my letter I am asking them to reconsider or allow us to remain in the existing Poppy Inn with some conversion to its entrance. A lot is riding on their change of heart and ever hopeful this will be the outcome.

Moving on to Branch elections; we are facing uncertain times with the Branch, now more than ever we need to stand together and not become fragmented if we are to ensure the future success of the Branch.

This morning while preparing this report I looked back over the monthly minutes during the past 9 years of my Chairmanship and amazed at what the Branch has achieved; the headline of which has to be an estimated £100,000 returned for the Poppy Appeal alongside the supply of numerous Poppy Wreaths and associated Crosses. This has been down to everybody's hard work and I am sincerely grateful to my Committee in supporting me over this period but most importantly, to you all the Members of The Falkland Islands Branch of the RBL without whom there would not be a branch.

All our minutes can be found on the Branches Website, it is worth taking a look back to reflect back on them but if not here are some highlights:

Branch Standard paraded at Menin Gate for Great Pilgrimage 90 and a year later at the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall, Ex Atlantic Legacy, Army of Angles, Armed Forces Day, Their but not There Project, Standing with Giants Project including the installation of 258 silhouettes on the Common and hosting of Dan Barton the creator of the project, 8 Poppy Balls, 7 Government House thank you receptions, Curry nights pasty nights, Town Hall Community Tea Dance celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the RBL and local 'frank' for stamps, Poppy Inn monthly socials, Local welfare involvement, meeting and hosting veterans and overseas RBL visitors including the US Legion, 35th and 40th Anniversary involvement. Noel Rodgers Shield Award. Quite a list we should all be proud of!

For the future, I believe we must progress a space for our dedicated use and with it a link to developing an RBL Community Hub to provide a meeting facility operated by the RBL for Community use. It is possible but needs collective support and a will to succeed. It is possible.....In the words of Shackleton 'Find a Way or Make a Way'.

Thank you.