

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



Yateley and Hawley Branch News

Yateley & Hawley branch has a veteran from Belgium (Rudy Peleman) who is a key player in the UK Belgian Association. He was made an 'Officer of Belgium' - the Belgian equivalent of the OBE last year. The following articles are from him.



"My great – grandfather and I – our place in Belgian military history". On 25 June 2026, the Yateley Branch of the Royal British Legion heard a fascinating presentation by Rudy Peleman, an ex-Belgian Para-Commando and long-standing member of the Branch. The talk was delivered in two parts: first, an account of Rudy's own life and military experiences, and second, a tribute to his great-grandfather, a First World War hero whose bravery went unrecognised by his country for more than half a century. Rudy began by recounting his early years in the Belgian Para-Commandos, describing the rigorous training and discipline that shaped his military career. Following his national service, he continued to push his limits by taking up skydiving for several years, a pursuit inspired by the skills and confidence he gained in the airborne forces. He then turned to a deeply personal chapter of his life: a severe workplace accident in 1992 that left him with 50% burns, a year in hospital, years of numerous operations and a forced career change. He guided the audience through his long recovery, emphasising the physical and emotional challenges he faced. His message was one of determination and hope — that even after profound tragedy, it is possible to "jump" back into life and rebuild a sense of normality.

Rudy has done a tremendous amount of work for Belgian veterans in the UK and recently was awarded the 'Officer of Belgium' by the King.

Those who play with fire.....are liable to drown!
Rudy's great-grandfather Kamiel Van Belle was born in 1879, a man of a generation hardened by work, duty, and the expectations of a young nation. He joined the Belgian Army in 1899 and served until 1902, completing his term like thousands of others who believed their soldiering days were

behind them. When war started in 1914, he was recalled to his old unit at the Antwerp fortifications — 35 years old, no longer a young recruit, once again standing in uniform as the German Army swept across Belgium. The Belgian Army, brave but vastly outmatched, could not hold the invaders around Liege, Brussels & Antwerp. As the German advance pushed westward, the Belgian forces withdrew and regrouped at Nieuwpoort, at the edge of a place called the "Westhoek". The Belgian Army dug in behind the embankment of the Nieuwpoort–Diksmuide railway line as the German advanced. But even there, the pressure was unbearable and the Germans were too strong. Something drastic had to be done.

Battle of River Yzer. The land in front of the railway line lay about nine feet below sea level, with the main river being the YZER. Only locals understood why the region was criss-crossed with drainage canals, and the Yzer supported with locks leading to the sea. If the lock sluices could be opened, the fields would turn into a vast, impassable swamp. Controlled flooding had saved the Nieuwpoort town in 1808 and the proposal was suggested to the Belgian high command who agreed. Kameil and



The original lock gates

Past events of the Month

1 September 1939. At 05h30 Germany invades Poland starting World War II in Europe.

2 September 1962. Soviet Russia agreed to send arms to Cuba, leading to the October Missile Crisis after the shipments were discovered by the U.S.

September 1972. South Vietnamese force recapture Quangtri.





Plaque at lock gates

his closest friend Frans Cob, volunteered for a task that demanded some courage: to flood the River Yser plain in front of the railway line by opening the locks of the River Yser every six hours. It was a desperate idea.

The first night Kamiel and Frans attempted the task they were met with overwhelming German machine-gun fire and forced to withdraw. From the second night onward, they worked in complete silence, slipping through the darkness to open the locks. The Germans initially believed the land was becoming “soggy” due to heavy rainfall — unaware of the deliberate flooding. The initial operation took less than two weeks. But the danger did not end there. The Germans realised what was happening and targeted the sluice gates &

locks forcing continuous repairs. Still, the flooding held. The German advance was halted for four long years. They were, quite literally, stuck in the mud and many Germans drowned.

Their selfless acts stopped the German Army but also saved King Albert I and his family, who had withdrawn from Brussels to De Panne, a small coastal town just 12 kilometres behind the front line. By the end of the war, Kamiel had received 7 ‘front’ stripes — one stripe for every 6 months spent on the front line. He also received many medals — two Cross Fire medals worn around the neck, the War Cross, the military medal for Courage and Self-Sacrifice, the Victory Medal, and several others.

However, he did not receive proper recognition for his decisive actions until 1964. That year, he was invited to Nieuwpoort by King Boudewijn and awarded the title Officer in the Order of Leopold II. In a 1964 interview, Kamiel summed up the experience with a stark warning: “Those who play with fire... are liable to drown.”



The Royal Federation of Belgian Veterans UK Branch

This very active Veterans organisation is an important part of expanding Veteran fellowship and remembrance.

In February 1919, a group of Belgian veterans of the 1914–1918 war gathered in the Brasserie La Rose Blanche (“The White Rose”), located at Grote Markt 11 in Brussels. It was here that they laid the foundations for what would become The Royal Federation of Belgian Veterans. From its inception, the Federation launched a quarterly publication: *Journal des Combattants* (French speaking Belgians) and *Het Strijdersblad* (Flemish speaking Belgians)

Both achieved remarkable success and helped unify veterans across the country. At the Federation's conference on 15 August 1921, membership had already reached 198,000 affiliated veterans, prompting the formal establishment of a non-profit organisation. In 1928, the Federation created a national Armistice commemoration centred on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Brussels. Torches were lit at the furthest points of Belgium's borders and carried by veterans, day and night, through villages and towns. Passed from branch to branch, the torches were finally extinguished at nightfall on 11 November, in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This became the annual Torchlight Run, a tradition that endured for decades.

Expansion and Recognition (1945–1969)

During the 1945 National Congress, officially recognised combatants from the 1940–1945 war were admitted as members. By 1950, the Federation counted 190,000 members, reaffirming its role as the principal organisation representing Belgian veterans. Throughout its congresses, the Federation consistently upheld its core values:

Preservation of national unity
Loyalty to the Belgian Dynasty
Respect for the National Flag

On 28 October 1969, the organisation was formally recognised as the Royal Federation of Belgian Veterans.

The UK Branch: Past, Present, and Mission. The UK Branch, originally active until the mid-1980s, was resurrected in 2021. Today, it plays a vital role in remembrance and heritage preservation. Across the UK and Ireland, 97 known sites contain 386 Belgian graves. The UK Branch maintains a long-term programme to visit every grave, conducting ceremonies, laying remembrance crosses, and placing wreaths at monuments. To date, the Branch has visited around 30 cemeteries in the UK and has participated in numerous remembrance events in Belgium, as well as the annual Belgian Cenotaph Ceremony in London each July.

Peace Monuments Initiative. The UK Branch has recently become instrumental—through close cooperation with the Presidency of the Belgian Federation—in the inauguration of Peace Monuments featuring the symbolic peace dove. These monuments highlight the cost of peace and the sacrifices required to maintain it. As of 2026, there are:

180 Peace Monuments in Belgium

1 in the Netherlands

1 in Ethiopia

2 in Cameroon

2 in the United Kingdom

These monuments also serve as a reminder that since World War Two, the UK Armed Forces have been involved in 84 military operations, many resulting in fatalities and physical or psychological injuries. Each wreath laid honours those who gave their lives — past, present, and future.

Membership. Membership of the UK Branch is open to serving and ex-serving military personnel, anyone who supports the importance of remembrance, whether in the UK or Belgium By Rudy Peleman. Ex-3 Para Commando Belgium, Board member “Royal Federation of Belgian Veterans - UK Branch” and member of Yately and Hawley RBL branch.



Connection between Brookwood and Ieper Last Post

The relationship between the Brookwood Last Post Association and the Ieper (Ypres) Last Post Association goes back nearly a century, rooted in remembrance, resilience, and a determination to honour the fallen every single day. The Menin Gate in Ieper was built shortly after the First World War. Its purpose was simple: to commemorate the Allied soldiers who have no known grave. The site was chosen deliberately — during the war, this gap in the old defensive ramparts was where countless soldiers marched out toward the battlefields, many never to return. Since 1927, every evening, the “Last Post” and the “Reveille” have been sounded beneath the arch. The ceremony began through the efforts of the local fire brigade, whose chief provided bugles for the daily act of remembrance. The Last Post Association was formally established in 1928, and from that moment the ritual continued without fail.

Until 1940.....

When the German army invaded Belgium and occupied Ieper. The Nazi authorities banned the ceremony and attempted to seize the bugles. They failed — the instruments had already been hidden, buried to protect them from confiscation. News of the halted ceremony reached a British businessman, Edgar A. Cook (MBE), himself a veteran of WWI. Determined that the act of Remembrance should not die, he and several colleagues formed a UK-based organisation to replicate the Ieper service. Thus, the Last Post Association at Brookwood was born, and the first ceremony took place in January 1941. For the next four years, the service was held as often as circumstances allowed. In September 1944, Polish forces liberated Ieper. The buried bugles were recovered, and the nightly ceremony at the Menin Gate resumed immediately. The Brookwood service eventually came to an end, but the bond between the two associations endured. Visits from the Ieper and Brookwood Last Post Association have continued over the decades, and they returned again on the first weekend of August 2026. Today, on the first Sunday of every month at 15:00hrs a short service is held at the RAF Pavilion in Brookwood beside the Belgian war graves. Standards are paraded in honour of the fallen of both World Wars. Anyone is welcome to attend, and special requests from families of fallen service personnel are considered. It is a ceremony well worth witnessing, especially as the Association faces increasing challenges in keeping this tradition alive. Rudy Peleman, ex-Belgian Para-Commando Yately and Hawley Branch



The Belgian Cenotaph Parade in London 2026

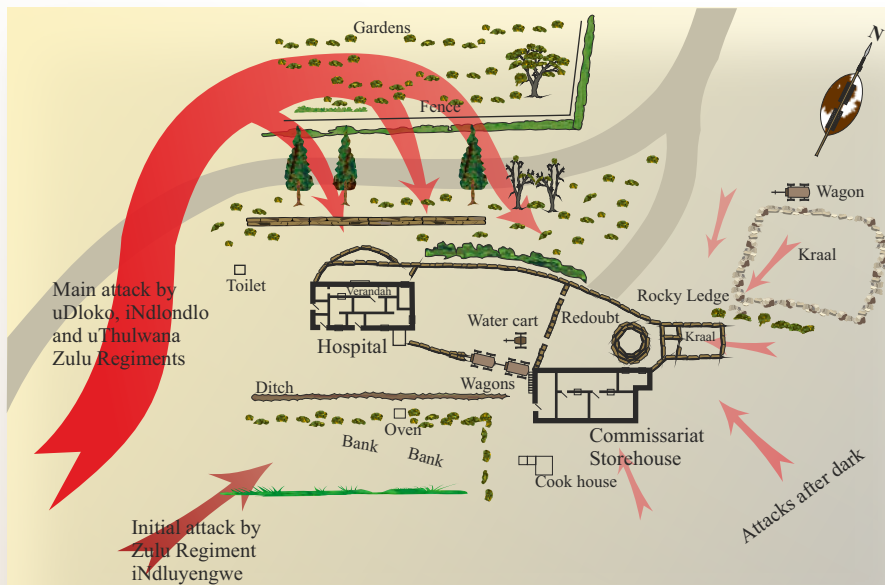
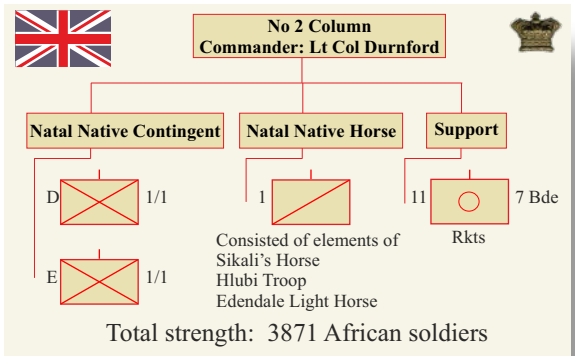
On 16 July 2026, the annual Belgian Parade took place at the Cenotaph in London. This ceremony is a significant honour for Belgium, as it remains the only non-Commonwealth nation permitted to march armed soldiers in uniform through the British capital. The parade is traditionally held on the Saturday preceding Belgian National Day on 21 July and is attended by government ministers, dignitaries, serving personnel, cadets, and military veterans from both countries. The Belgian Parade was established in 1934 by King George V following the death of King Albert I of Belgium, known as the “King-Soldier.” Albert I, a relative of George V, died in a climbing accident earlier that year. The parade was conceived as a tribute to Belgian courage and resistance during the First World War, and to honour those who lost their lives in the conflict. Both monarchs had visited frontline troops together and met several times during the war, forging a bond that would later be reflected in this commemorative tradition.

During the ceremony, the Band of the Grenadier Guards lead Belgian soldiers and veterans as they marched past the Cenotaph, continuing along Whitehall and Horse Guards Parade to the Guards Memorial, where wreaths were laid at both monuments. Approximately 250 Standard bearers, veterans and soldiers take part each year. Belgian Standard bearers and veterans also have a ceremony at the Flanders Field Memorial inside Wellington barracks to remember those who served in the 1st World War and are joined there by a British bugler. Today, the parade stands as a powerful symbol of the enduring ties between British and Belgian forces, forged in the world wars and strengthened in the decades since. Ninety-two years after the first Belgian Parade in London, the United Kingdom and Belgium remain united as NATO partners, supporting Ukraine in its defence against Russian aggression and continuing the legacy of military cooperation that began over a century ago. Rudy Peleman, ex-Belgian Para-Commando Yately and Hawley Branch



Christian Ferdinand Schiess was born in Burgdorf, Switzerland on 7 April 1856 and died on 14 December 1884. His parents died young and he spent time in an orphanage. In 1870 he joined the French Army and fought in the Franco-Prussian War. Schiess later served in the Armée de l'Est and was interned in his home country when it surrendered there. He went to South Africa in 1877 and was a volunteer in the last Frontier / Xhosa War. When the Anglo-Zulu War began in 1879 Schiess was 22 years old and was promoted to corporal in the Natal Native Contingent under command of the British Army in South Africa.

The Battle at Isandlwana took place on the 21st January when a column entered Zululand looking for the Zulu force who attacked the undefended position. This resulted in a defeat for the British force there. The few



survivors retreated to Rorkes Drift a few miles away and the Zulu reserve at Isandlwana disobeyed orders and advanced on Rorkes Drift to attack the small hospital and supply base there. On 22 January 1879, at Rorke's Drift, Natal, Corporal Schiess, in spite of suffering from an injury to his foot, displayed great gallantry when the garrison had retired to the inner line of defence and the Zulus had occupied the wall of mealie bags which had been abandoned. He crept along the wall in order to dislodge one of the enemy and succeeded in killing him and two others before returning to the inner defences. See separate card on the battle. The British losses amounted to 17 killed and 8 wounded out of 35 all ranks. The Zulus lost between 300 to 500 killed. Approximately 300 Zulu bodies were left at the site of the battle. In total 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded for

the battle at Rorkes Drift. Seven to the 2nd Battalion, 24th (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment of Foot, one to the Army Medical Department, one to the Royal Engineers, one to the Commissariat and Transport Department and one to the Natal Native Contingent. In 1880 Schiess was awarded the Victoria Cross by General Sir Garnet Wolseley for his gallantry at Rorke's Drift. Schiess was the first man serving with a locally raised native unit to receive the Victoria Cross, the "British-only" rule being broken under political pressure, also being the first Swiss national to do so.

After the volunteer forces were disbanded Schiess could not find employment and briefly went to India before returning to South Africa. In 1884, he was found on the streets of Cape Town suffering from exposure and malnutrition by the Royal Navy who gave him food, and offered him a passage to England on board the Serapis. He accepted, but became ill during the voyage and died. His remains were buried at sea at approximately 13°00'S 07°24'W.

Citation. For conspicuous gallantry in the defence of Rorke's Drift Post on the night of the 22nd January, 1879, when, in spite of his having been wounded in the foot a few days previously, he greatly distinguished himself when the Garrison were repulsing, with the

bayonet, a series of desperate assaults made by the Zulus, and displayed great activity and devoted gallantry throughout the defence. On one occasion when the Garrison had retired to the inner line of defence, and the Zulus occupied the wall of mealie bags which had been abandoned, he crept along the wall, without any order, to dislodge a Zulu who was shooting better than usual and succeeded in killing him, and two others, before he, (the Corporal), returned to the inner defence. DW

His Victoria Cross is displayed at the National Army Museum.



Detail from Alphonse de Neuville's 1880 "The Defence of Rorke's Drift" reputedly depicting Ferdinand Schiess.



This year's East Hampshire's Veteran's Festival will take place on Saturday 19 September 2026 from 10h00 to 15h00, at the Festival Hall, Heath Road, Petersfield GU31 4EA. East Hampshire Veterans Festival is organised by Petersfield Town Council (PTC) and East Hampshire District Council (EHDC). This year the event takes place on a Saturday and it is hoped that even more veterans, families, and local residents will participate. The festival brings together organisations offering information, advice, and support to our armed forces community. The organisers would be delighted for as many organisations as possible to host a stall and help make the event valuable and engaging for all who attend. If you would like a stall at this year's festival, please complete a booking form available at community@easthants.gov.uk. Please help to promote the festival. We can provide promotional materials on request. We hope you will be part of this year's event and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Below you will find some useful information for stall holders. The Festival will consist of the following - a main 'market place' with stalls and information stands, a safe space for private conversations, light entertainment and refreshments for purchase (free teas and coffees will be provided for stallholders).

General information. Community organisations and stall holders are requested to fully co-operate with PTC and EHDC at all times. It is the participant's responsibility to ensure that everything brought into the Festival Hall is safe, fit for purpose or use, and where appropriate, have supporting safety documentation. All vehicles and equipment are brought to the event at their owner's risk. PTC and EHDC cannot accept any responsibility for any loss or damage that may occur. Parking is available adjacent to the Festival Hall in the Festival Hall Carpark. Please note this is a Pay & Display car park and you will be required to purchase a ticket to park on site to cover the duration of your stay. There are also various other car parks available in Petersfield.

Health and Safety. A risk assessment will be completed for the event, this will be available and included in the H&S briefing on the day. It is important that you comply with the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) as well as other regulations and laws as required by your employing charity or organisation. We may ask for copies of your safety documentation. A list of documents required is listed at the end of these terms and conditions. Please email any required documentation, along with your stallholder application form.

Insurance. All attending organisations must have up-to-

date Public Liability Insurance for an amount not less than £5,000,000, whether this is through your own organisation or overarching charity. If you have non-paid volunteer staff you should ensure that either your Public Liability Insurance or your Employers' Liability Insurance covers volunteers. By accepting these terms and conditions you acknowledge that, PTC and EHDC are not responsible or liable for any of the following:

Financial losses you may incur.

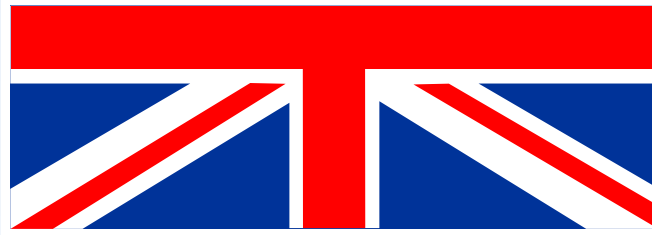
The loss of or damage to your equipment, goods or personal belongings.

Injury of employees or staff working for or connected to you.

Your Stall and Equipment. Charities and organisations must be set up and be ready to go for 09:30am, 19th September.

You must be in place and ready for H&S briefing and induction by 09:40am. PTC and EHDC reserves the right to reallocate stalls. We will allocate you a stall number and map beforehand. Stall holders are required to stay fully set-up and remain at their site until at least 3pm, when the event closes. If you need to leave before this time, please make us aware in advance. The event will be open to the public at 10:00am. Stalls may be active from this time until 3pm when the event will come to an end.

EAST HAMPSHIRE VETERANS FESTIVAL



In the unlikely event that we may experience extremes in weather or an extreme situation or circumstance outside our control. The event will be postponed. We will provide each stall holder with a bare table and two chairs. You will be allocated space for one pull-up banner only, any additional banners you may wish to use, will be used at other parts of the Festival to avoid the main Market Place area becoming too cluttered and confusing to visitors. You are responsible for the safety of your stall equipment and please make sure anything of value at your stall is secure. If you use an electrical equipment, please ensure that these have the relevant PAT test certificates and electrical systems test certificates (if you have anything electric at your stall). Please maintain good housekeeping throughout the event. Please leave your stall the way you found it when you leave the event, please take any rubbish away with you.

First Aid. Whilst First Aid will be available on site, you are responsible for providing primary first aid for your staff. If you have five or more staff including yourself, you are obliged to keep an accident report book for your stall.

Lisa Clements. Community Development Officer (covering Petersfield, Buriton, East Meon, Steep, Sheet, Liss, Stroud, Langrish and Froxfield & Privett)



Petersfield Branch VJ Day Remembrance



Other Notices

HAMPSHIRE

FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE



THE
ROYAL MARINES ASSOCIATION
CONCERT BAND



THE WORLD FAMOUS
TREORCHY MALE CHOIR

O2 Guildhall, Southampton
Saturday 7 November 2026, 7.30pm

Tickets from:
[ticketmaster.co.uk](https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)

SCAN FOR TICKETS



ROYAL
BRITISH
LEGION

A charity fundraising event for RMA - The Royal Marines Charity and the Poppy Appeal



Silchester Memorial



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/hantscountyrb1/

Facebook Email address - Hampshire.web@rbl.community

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

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

2026-27 HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COMMITTEE

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County Youth Standard Bearer. A Neal

County Padre Reverend. D Roche

County Golf Organiser. R J Bourne

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Errors and Omissions Excepted

