



Website <https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/rushden/>

RUSHDEN BRANCH - NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2024

COFFEE MORNING AND STALLS

The Happy Feet Line Dancing Club is hosting a Coffee Morning with Stalls at the Heritage Chapel Hall, Park Road, Rushden on Saturday 17th February 2024 from 9.30am to midday. Since October last year Happy Feet Line Dancing Club have been having their regular Line Dancing classes two or three times a week raising funds for our Branch along the way. They have already raised over £3,000. Let's help them help us so come along with friends, family and neighbours for a cuppa and natter and see what we can buy at the stalls. Remember, all monies raised is being kindly donated to us by Happy Feet Line Dancing Club. We'll see you there.

AWARD OF THE POPPY CUP 2023

The Poppy Cup is an annual reward for a school's commitment to Remembrance throughout the year, not just the period of Remembrancetide. World War history and conflicts beyond WW2 is part of all school's national curriculum. Alfred Lord Tennyson School (formerly Alfred Street Junior School) amalgamated with Tennyson Road Infant School and is now one school operating on two sites. Ruth Miller our PAO and two other RBL Rushden Branch Members (independent of the schools and branch committee) look at all of what Rushden's schools have achieved throughout the year; they are guided by Lynne Baker, our Branch Secretary and Schools Liaison; Lynne is a retired art teacher and along with her husband Branch Chairman Jake Baker they are both also School Governors to Alfred Lord Tennyson School, so have had to stand back during the voting process. They were understandably delighted when they were informed that Alfred Lord Tennyson School won the Poppy Cup for 2023 and proceeded to arrange for a special Assembly.

The Headteacher, Mrs Kelly O'Connor kindly invited Ruth, Lynne and Jake to present the Poppy Cup. Lynne led both presentations, praising the pupils for their fundraising, having collected £219.39. She told the pupils *"You did an excellent job; you have every reason to be proud. You have no idea how much this money does to help people; your money will go towards helping veterans and their families move on with their lives and we think this school is very special."* This is the third time the school has won the Poppy Cup but the first under their new name. The school was bombed on 3rd October 1940 during the Battle of Britain and is affiliated with our Branch bringing awareness to its history. During the bombing raids over Rushden, seven children were killed, and a memorial garden rests in the school premises to help current pupils to learn about how the Second World War effected their school and town. A short memorial service is held there every year and is attended by members of the Branch.



RBL COUNTY CONFERENCE 2024

The annual conference was held at the Council Chambers in Northampton; Branch President, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary (Branch Delegate for Conference) and Deputy Standard Bearer were present along with other Branch members. Lynne Baker presented the Motion to Conference on behalf of the Branch in a most informative fashion. The Motion to Conference from RBL Rushden Branch:

Implementation of a Modern Theme into School Assemblies that has relevance today to complement existing RBL school teaching material.

In presenting the motion to Conference, Mrs Lynne Baker (RBL Rushden Branch), described her background of teaching for the last 10 years and how she first saw the effect that having a veteran describe their experiences had on schoolchildren. Children can become totally engaged when selling poppies during Remembrance, but she has found that the RBL teaching resources available to schools may not always be appropriate and locally focussed.

When she first joined RBL Rushden Branch, she was asked to go into schools to talk about WW2 and started taking a veteran in to add context to the presentation. More recently, Mrs Baker has been talking about post-WW2 conflicts which included asking a Falklands veteran to talk to the children about his experiences including the effect of PTSD, which has never been covered before.

Besides assemblies and talks, there are opportunities to include school children in specifically pupil orientated memorial services at local war memorials, as Rushden Branch does in order to give pupils the chance to commemorate the fallen.

Mrs Baker has been asked by other local authorities if she would deliver presentation in other schools and feels that this is a missed opportunity. Children learn the history of conflicts as part of their national curriculum, but aspects such as the mental impact is not covered so they don't see the full picture.

In proposing the motion to Conference, Mrs Baker emphasised that better resources at all levels of children's education including the use of veterans wherever possible will vastly improve the quality of teaching for such an important subject.

The motion was seconded by RBL Finedon, Irthlingborough & District Branch. The Motion was passed by a unanimous vote of branch delegates present – CARRIED.



Above (left) is a photograph of Mark Taberner-Stokes, winner and recipient of the N.B. Wiffen Trophy which is for the best Novice Standard Bearer in the County Standard Bearers' Competition presented by RBL Trustee John Boisson and Lynne Baker presenting the Motion to conference at the Council Chambers, Northampton.

Let's hope National Conference will include this Motion for further discussion where Branch President David Hawker, elected as Branch Delegate to Conference, will speak and promote the Motion on our behalf.

A link regarding the Annual County Conference 2024, which includes a report and photographs was sent to members a few days ago and is also available on the County website and here:

<https://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/northamptonshire/county-conference-2024/>

If any member wishes to have a printed copy of the County Newsletter or Annual County Conference 2024 Report, then please email Lynne on rushden.secretary@rbl.community or contact Jake on **07525 441267**.

D-DAY 80



To commemorate D Day 80, The Royal Society of St George wants to get all local communities involved. The President of the Federation of Fish Friers has discovered an interesting fact, which has sparked an excellent idea for communities to take part. During the Normandy campaign, when a soldier was aware of others in the vicinity but unaware whether they were friend or foe he'd call out "**FISH**". If the response was "**CHIPS**" he could be nigh on certain that this unseen person was a friend. If there was no response, then it would be highly likely that there was a foe nearby and extreme caution was essential. As a result of this fact being discovered, the National Federation of Fish Friers are encouraging all fish and chip outlets to get involved to show their appreciation for what these brave souls did to protect our freedom and our thanks for the continued protection provided by our Armed Forces. Therefore the 2024 National Fish and Chip Day has been moved to 6th June 2024.

DID YOU ATTEND THE MEMBERSHIP TOWN HALL? – by Editor

I did! Purely out of curiosity, to be frank! Membership Townhall is a virtual meeting of the RBL membership across the UK; some call it a Webinar, Teams Meeting, Zoom Meeting, Skype ie a meeting online, whatever you fancy. I learnt more about facts and listened to some questions being put to and answered by some of the big wigs within the RBL such as National Chairman Jason Coward and Executive Director Marketing Gary Ryan who leads on fundraising and remembrance. Some facts: **1)** 3,363 PAOs in the UK and £8.5m was raised via Contactless donations **2)** Average donation per person was £6.63 **3)** 4.2m people watched on TV the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall **4)** 10,000 people marched past London's Cenotaph watched on TV by 3.6m people **5)** Over 5,000 people attended Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph watched on TV by 3.6m people **6)** The Invictus Games 2025 takes place in Vancouver.

ROY CAVE

It is with regret to inform members that we have only recently learnt the passing of Branch Member Roy Cave. Roy was a long serving member of the Branch for 34 years. A former National Serviceman, Roy was an accomplished sportsman for many years and a bowls player too. Our condolences have been passed to his wife Margaret and family. His funeral will be held at the Nene Valley Crematorium at 12pm on Thursday 15th February 2024.

APPLICATIONS FOR HM ARMED FORCES VETERAN CARDS

Veterans who left their service before December 2018 can now apply for the Veteran Card. An HM Armed Forces Veteran Card is a way to prove that you served in the UK Armed Forces. The card can make it quicker and easier to apply for support as a veteran.

It's free to apply. All you have to do is visit the government website at www.gov.uk/veteran-card

You can currently only apply for a Veteran Card if you have a UK address. Veterans who do not have a UK address will be able to apply later this year.

You can apply if you were in the regulars or reserves for the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force or Royal Marines.

If you served in another group in the UK Armed Forces, you may still be able to get a card. You can check when you apply online or when you call to request a postal form.

You cannot apply if you served in the Armed Forces of another country or alongside the UK Armed Forces, for example in the Canadian Navy or Royal Australian Air Force.

When you apply, you'll be asked for:

- your service number for your last period of service
- your National Insurance number
- the year you started and ended your service – it does not have to be exact dates
- a recent digital passport style photo, showing your head and shoulders

APPLY ONLINE - You'll need to prove your identity using GOV.UK One Login. You'll be able to create a GOV.UK One Login if you do not already have one. Visit www.sign-in.service.gov.uk/ To do this, you'll need an email address and a photo ID – for example, a UK passport or driving licence. Contact the Veterans UK Helpline if you cannot apply online. They'll send you a form that you can return by post.

Veterans UK Helpline: veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk Telephone: 0808 1914 218 Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm

RBL ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2024

Registration to attend the RBL Annual Conference 2024 as a visitor in person or online is now open and closes on 28th March 2024. The link for registration is below and is also available via the RBL website during the registration period. Unfortunately, applications cannot be sent by email or post. Late applications may not be accepted. If you require support with the registration process, please contact our Branch Secretary, Lynne Baker rushden.secretary@rbl.community or Branch Chairman Jake Baker on 07525 441267 and either of us will be happy to help. Here is the link [Annual Conference 2024 \(allow.me\)](#)

Visitors in person are welcome to attend and take part in the Membership Forum by submitting questions. Or you can send in your questions to AnnualConference@britishlegion.org.uk before the event. Please note as a visitor you won't be able to vote – this includes proposing or seconding motions. All registered online visitors will receive details on how to watch the event and a copy of the agenda by email in the run up to the Annual Conference.

PENSIONS NEWS – INFORMATION FROM THE FORCES PENSION SOCIETY

State Pension 2024/25 - The government is legally required to increase the State Pension each year at least in line with average earnings. The 'triple lock' is a political commitment to increase State Pensions by whichever is the highest of average earnings growth, Consumer Price Inflation (CPI), or 2.5%. State Pensions will increase in April 2024 by 8.5%, in line with average earnings growth between May and July 2023. Basic state pension payments will rise by £691.60 taking them to £8,814 a year, and new state pension payments will rise by £902.20 taking it to £11,502 a year.

Pension Increases - The government statement concerning the CPI due to be applied in April 2024 has not yet been published, however, in line with statute we expect Armed Forces pensions in payment to increase in April at the 2023 CPI rate of 6.7%. The Forces Pension Society will confirm this once the statement has been issued.

NHS OP COURAGE

After serving in the Armed Forces, some people find it hard to adjust to civvy street. If you're struggling with your mental health and wellbeing, Op COURAGE, the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is here to help.

Op COURAGE is an NHS service in England that's been developed with people who've served in the Armed Forces and experienced mental ill-health. Every member of staff within the service is either from the Armed Forces or has experience of working with the military community. In partnership with Armed Forces charities and NHS services, the staff at Op COURAGE provide specialist care, support and treatment for those due to leave the military, reservists and those who've served. Since its launch in 2017, the service has helped nearly 30,000 veterans.

What does Op COURAGE offer?

Op COURAGE provides a range of specialist support and treatment, depending on the needs of the individual – there's no 'one size fits all'. This might include helping you to recognise and treat early signs of mental ill health, as well as providing care and support for more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma.

In addition, the service provides support and treatment for a range of addictions, such as alcohol and drug misuse and gambling, and can refer you to other NHS services if needed. Op COURAGE also works with charities and local organisations to provide support for your wider health and wellbeing needs, which may include help with housing, relationships, finances and employment.

We know that when someone is unwell it may affect the rest of the family, so Op COURAGE can support them access help and care too.

Who can Op COURAGE help?

Op COURAGE supports UK Armed Forces veterans living in England, as long as they have served a minimum of one full day, and regardless of how long ago they left the military.

Op COURAGE also provides support to serving personnel due to leave the Armed Forces and reservists.

How do you access Op COURAGE?

You can contact Op COURAGE directly to make an appointment or ask someone else, such as a family member, friend, charity or health professional to make it for you. You can also ask your GP to refer you, but you don't have to go through your GP to get an appointment.

For help and details of your local service, visit <https://www.mhm.org.uk/op-courage-midlands>

You can also call **0300 323 0137** or for the emotional support line call **0300 323 0139**

WHO'S WHO IN OUR BRANCH AND HOW CAN WE CONTACT THEM?

President – David Hawker – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Chairman – Jake Baker – rushden.chairman@rbl.community or **07525 441267**

Vice Chairman – Paul McKay – rushden.vicechairman@rbl.community

Secretary – Lynne Baker – rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Treasurer – Janet Flowers – rushden.treasurer@rbl.community

Branch Chaplain Rev Linnet Smith – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Committee Member – Heather Phillip – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Committee Member – Sally Morton – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Committee Member – Steve Miller – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Branch Community Support – Peter Armstrong – rushden.bcs@rbl.community or **07498 243683**

Poppy Appeal Organiser – Ruth Miller – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Media Representative – Chloe Duggan Jones – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Branch Standard Bearer – Phil Blanchard - via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Branch Deputy Standard Bearer – Mark Taberner-Stokes via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Branch Bugler – Bob Crick – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

WHAT'S ON IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

Wednesdays & Saturdays (9am) – Veteran's Breakfast Club at The Needle & Awl

12th February – Branch Monthly Meeting followed by presentation from Helen Frost: *"The Women's Land Army During WW1"*

17th February (9.30am -12pm) – Happy Feet Line Dancing Club Coffee Morning & Stalls at the Heritage Chapel Hall on Park Road, Rushden.

24th February – Pause for Thought – 2nd Anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine

7th March – Friendship Group at the Athletic Club (10am – 12pm) with BCS

11th March - Branch Monthly Meeting followed by presentation from Richard Chancellor: *"The 313th TCG and the C-46 Commando on Op VARSITY"*.