

Circular



ISSUE 448

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION WOMEN'S SECTION
WINTER 2015



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Circular

Issue 448
Winter 2015

**The Royal British Legion
Women's Section**

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Message from the National Chairman



Dear Members,
I hope you have all had a successful summer season of fundraising events and that the weather has been kind to you. I must admit that on the whole, summer 2015 will not go down in history as

being a particularly kind one and I can count on one hand the number of barbecues my family have had. But knowing our membership, you will have continued undaunted and I have enjoyed reading accounts of your events on Facebook.

We have had some new and exciting fundraising activities taking place this summer, including collections taken after a one-woman show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and a Non-Attendance Lunch on the Moon – not to mention a tandem bungee jump and 195-mile sponsored walk! The VE/VJ Day 70 Challenge is well underway and is proving to be an easy way to raise money from loose change, every penny really does add up.

I have had the privilege of attending a number of events since the last Circular, including the Westmorland County Conference. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with members from this county and was struck by the way in

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summer

which branches help and support each other. The comradeship between members was so evident and very inspiring. I learnt the technical definition of a ‘fell’ as I took in the incredibly beautiful Cumbrian scenery and also achieved a personal ambition of visiting Appleby: home of the famous Horse Fair!

By now I am sure you are fully engaged in your winter fundraisers and organising your Christmas events. We are so grateful for all your hard work raising money for our welfare schemes. A lot of what you do is probably behind the scenes but please know it is valued and makes such a difference to the lives of those we aim to support.

There has been a rise recently in requests for support from the Women's Section. Applications for assistance from the Children's Welfare Scheme have increased by 60% over

the last year, with items such as children's bedroom furniture being the highest in demand from military families who are going through difficult times. In October, applications for the President's Award Scheme more than doubled and a Facebook post on a military families page incurred an unprecedented 36 applications in one month.

The President's Award Scheme is a particularly unique area of funding, as there are not many charities that provide grants for veterans as well as their families. I am pleased to report that the Army Families Federation and Wolverhampton University are now promoting this scheme to their readers and students. As I write this, our Welfare Advisor has just given the good news to the wife of a Royal Marine that we are willing to help fund her course to get in to the police, as until recently she has been unemployed. Your fundraising really makes a difference!

You are probably now aware of some big changes occurring within the organisation of the Legion. Discussions are currently taking place as to what impact (if any) this will have on the running of the Women's Section and we will write to branch secretaries in due course with an update.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

Marilyn Humphry



At the time of writing this article I am still finalising the Women's Section Annual Accounts for 2014/15. It is already clear, however, that many of you heeded my plea to send monies

raised over the summer months to us by the end of September, rather than waiting until June next year. This has helped our financial situation and I am extremely grateful.

“
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Although our branch numbers are steadily declining, our member numbers are remaining fairly constant at 29,500 and over the last year approximately 3,095 new members joined our organisation.

There has been an assumption in some places that the Women's Section has changed its method of membership renewal, in-line with the Legion's adoption of its Comradeship Database. In fact, the Women's Section has not changed its method for local branches for the time being, which means you will be paying your membership fees to your Women's Section branch as you always have. The only change for this year is for the Military Wives Group and Pall Mall Branch members, who can now renew their membership online on our website if they wish.

This leaves me to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year!

Tony Wright

Message from the National Vice-Chairman



Dear Members,
I trust that each
and every one of
you has enjoyed
what was an
English summer!
In defiance of the
weather, as true
legionnaires, your
fundraising has
not gone un-

noticed. I also hope that you all had successful
County Conferences.

So what have I been up to – you may ask!
Earlier this year I attended the Legion Scotland
Women's Section Conference, which was held
at St Andrews. Sadly there was no time for a
round of golf, however, I felt privileged to
march behind a pipe band to lay a wreath on
your behalf at a Remembrance Service. In July,
I was honoured to attend the Royal Hospital
Chelsea as a guest of the Government of
Flanders for a solemn Drumhead Service
including television recording addresses, prior
to the live broadcasting of the 30,000th Last
Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate Ypres,

“
I would now like to
say a huge thank you
to you all for the
support you have
given throughout the
year

Belgium. I felt very humbled and proud to be
your representative at the end of this moving
ceremony. I must say thank you to Rita
Orange and Walter for the whistle stop tour of
the Hospital.

On behalf of the National Chairman, I also
attended an event in London to
commemorate the 100th anniversary of the
execution of Edith Cavell. Susan Parke, our
National Standard Bearer and Rita Orange

from the Metropolitan Region were also in
attendance representing the Women's Section:
as smart as ever – thank you ladies.

I would now like to say a huge 'thank you'
to you all for the support you have given
throughout the year at all levels, and to take
the opportunity to wish you and your families a
very Happy Peaceful Christmas with very best
wishes for 2016.

Pat Chrimes



Conference Committee Chairman

Southport is our Conference venue for 2016: a
good old-fashioned seaside resort just as I
remember from my childhood, although you
will be very lucky to see the sea as it goes out
for miles. This very pretty town has plenty of
opportunity for some retail therapy – so credit
cards at the ready girls!

Our annual National Standard Bearers'
Competition will start at 12 noon on Tuesday
19 April in the Floral Hall; refreshments will be
available in the Pavilion next door from
10.30am. On the Tuesday, you can take
advantage of early registration in the Theatre's
upper foyer from 11.00am.

There is ample seating for all with excellent
views of the platform. Our Conference will be
held in the Theatre: this wonderful old-time
music hall with hundreds of steps, and I do
mean hundreds, so ladies and especially
Standard Bearers, you will need to be able to
cope with steps.

If you need any type of walking aid please
be aware that there is no place for them to be

“
...a good old-
fashioned seaside
resort just as I
remember from my
childhood

stored and I would recommend very
comfortable flat shoes. Access for those who
use wheelchairs will be from the rear of the
building via a narrow passage (not suitable for
most mobility scooters). There will be space
provided for positioning wheelchairs.

We will be having a tombola in the stalls
area to raise money for our welfare schemes
and ask, if you are able, to bring items that are

small and unwrapped. Another good
conference fundraiser that is taking place is
the County Raffle. If your county is donating a
prize, we ask that only vouchers are given.

Please do not forget to send your motions
in before Christmas – let's have some good
debates. I look forward to a very happy and
fruitful Conference.

Take care and see you all at Southport.
God bless.

Julia Walker





Accommodation for Annual Conference 2016

If you haven't already, don't forget you can book your accommodation via the Tourist Information centre on **01704 533 333** or online at **www.visitsouthport.com/rbl-womens-2016**. We are excited about going to a new venue and hope to see as many of you as possible there!

Membership changes online for National Branches

We are very pleased to announce that new Military Wives Group members and Pall Mall members can now join AND pay online via PayPal: a secure payment method service. Not only that but members of these groups can also renew and pay their membership fee online.

Please note, Local Branch membership will continue to be paid the usual way through the branch.



Battle of the Somme stories wanted!

1 July 2016 marks 100 years since the Battle of the Somme began. It was one of the most infamous battles of the First World War, resulting in over 420,000 British casualties. To mark this centenary, to honour those who lost their lives and those who were left bereaved, we have partnered with international artist Charron Pugsley-Hill to create an art installation telling the stories of not just the soldiers, but of the loved ones left behind. The Women's Section was originally formed in 1921 to care for the wives and children of those who lost their lives in the First World War and so this is a topic very close to our hearts. It is the stories of the wives, mothers and children left behind, that are often lost and not retold. We are therefore appealing to you – if you have relatives who were affected by this battle or poetry and diaries written at that time in your possession that you do not mind sharing, do get in touch so that we might be able to give a voice to these stories. You can email **wscomms@britishlegion.org.uk** or call us on **0203 207 2188**.

enduRings

Serving in southern Afghanistan, I saw a soldier lose his finger when he got his wedding ring caught in a humvee door. The condition is called 'de-gloving' or 'ring-avulsion'...and it wasn't a pleasant sight.

Then, when I was doing follow up security courses in the UK, participants would often lose or scratch their expensive jewellery in exercises or get upset when their valuables were stolen in 'kidnap' scenarios.

On top of all that, it often struck me how hard it hit my wife and my colleagues' wives when we followed security advice, and removed our wedding rings whilst on deployment. The wedding rings were a health and safety risk; they made you stand out; they made you a target. But an emotional bond was being broken for the sake of our jobs – and there had to be a better way.

It gave my family the idea to start a company to produce safe, stretchable, silicone replacement jewellery to overcome these difficulties. We called them 'enduRings' so

that wearers could always show their enduring commitment to a loved one or a cause, regardless of the environment they were operating in.

Given the success of wristbands as charity fundraising merchandise, we also thought that we could support great causes and be donating proceeds from each sale to charity. So far, we've partnered with the Pink Ribbon Foundation to help fight breast cancer and Combat Stress to help our veterans. Now, we're very proud to support the Women's Section to provide even more support to the entire Armed Forces community.

EnduRings come in five colours, in both men's and women's ranges. They're new, novel and safe and make the perfect gift for the soldier who has everything. EnduRings are not just for those who are married, you can wear one to support great causes, such as the Women's Section and there are also matching kids' rings available upon request.

We're looking forward to working closely

with the Women's Section and thank you for all the great work that you do.

Best wishes,

John (Founder of enduRings)

John worked as a Military Liaison Officer in Afghanistan and is going to donate a third of charitable donations from the sale of enduRings to the welfare work of the Women's Section. If you would like your own enduRing they are on special offer this Christmas for half price at £5.99. Visit www.endurings.com for details.





We provide three schemes to support Armed Forces families, veterans and widows, who are in financial difficulty or need of some extra support: the Women's Section Allowance, the President's Award Scheme and the Children's Welfare Scheme.

We currently have a total of 178 beneficiaries of the Women's Section Allowance and 12 families receiving the Children's Allowance.

The Women's Section Allowance is a quarterly payment of £325, which is made to ex-service personnel or widows of ex-service personnel, to help them with their daily living expenses. The total we awarded of this allowance in the last year (1 October 2014-30 September 2015) was £247,647.21.

The Women's Section Allowance also includes the following benefits:

- TV licence fee paid (under 75 years of age)
- A birthday card and voucher
- A Christmas card and £25 gift voucher
- an optional cold winter payment in times of extreme weather for heating bills.

During the last year, 38 TV licences have been renewed on behalf of beneficiaries, totalling £5,375.90.

The Children's Allowance is a quarterly payment of £260 for families with one child and £455 for those with two or more children. This allowance is no longer available to new applicants and will eventually be phased out completely in 2023, when the youngest child currently on the scheme turns 18. It is a

completely different scheme to the Children's Welfare Scheme. In the last year, we awarded allowances up to a total of £16,225.00.

Through the Children's Welfare Scheme, we are able to help serving and ex-service families with the following in their time of need:

- children's bedroom furniture
- carpeting (for children's rooms)
- child care costs
- essential clothing
- school equipment
- school trips
- specialist medical equipment

For the year 2014-15, we received 408 requests for assistance from the Children's Welfare Scheme, and awarded 285 grants, totalling £59,103.06.

The President's Award Scheme is something that very few military charities provide, which is financial support for the educational needs of the Armed Forces community. The scheme is open to serving and ex-service personnel, as well as their dependants (including spouses and partners).

There are currently two strands to the scheme: scholarships and grants.

Scholarships:

- up to a maximum of £1500 per year
- accommodation fees/course fees
- first degrees only
- for dependants aged between 18 – 21 (for initial application)



Grants:

- up to a maximum of £500
- course fees, computer equipment, text books and public transport costs
- any academic course up to and including degree level
- for applicants of any age with a direct Service connection

Applications for this scheme are sent to a committee for assessment three times a year. Over the last year, we awarded 45 grants and scholarships up to the total value of £41,939.

The total expenditure on our welfare schemes for the year 2014-15 was £370,290.30, through which we were able to assist 556 individuals/families.

In the spring Circular (446), we featured Kerry Garaway and Anna Dorner, who received the President's Award Scheme. We are pleased to say that after completing their courses, they both now have jobs in their chosen field. Anna wrote to us recently saying:

"I want to once again send my sincere thanks for your support during my time at medical school. I have completed some mass spectrometry research and just commenced a job in the emergency department as a junior doctor. The team are wonderful and I feel I am applying my skills well. Warm regards," **Dr Anna Dorner**

Bah, Humbug! – Or the happiest time of the year?

I'd better start by saying that I absolutely LOVE Christmas.

I love the colour and lights – as long as they're not too 'in your face', if you know what I mean. Some people light up their houses like Christmas trees, and some councils do the same to their towns, and the end result can be quite unattractive, I have to say. I'm not a great shopper (apart from shirts, ties and books), and don't like it when the retail trade tries to move Christmas forward a few weeks, or even months, and then informs us that Christmas is over when it is, in fact, only just beginning. However, I do like the way that retailers and councils and communities treat Christmas as a special time, a time for celebration and laughter and getting together, and parties and Christmas lunches

and ridiculous paper hats. And – it goes without saying – I love the (best of the) Christmas music, though even my favourite carols begin to pall after five or six weeks' exposure.

But there are also the Scrooges amongst us, who say, "Bah, humbug!" and refuse to enter into the spirit of Christmas (though in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol Ebenezer Scrooge is finally brought face-to-face with his own unhappiness and learns again how to be generous and how to receive love). Perhaps that's the point.

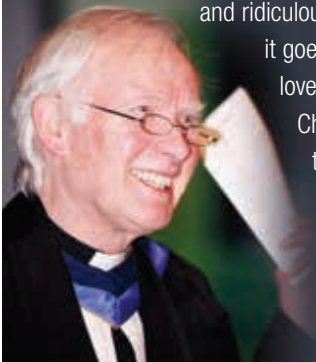
Christmas is at the same time the happiest and the saddest time of the year. It is when the empty chair most reminds us of one who has gone. It is when broken families most feel their brokenness. It is when the shallowness of much so-called Christmas festivity and jollity stand in stark contrast to the harsh reality of life, of poverty, homelessness and disease. Having said that, I have seen the happy smiles on the faces of patients, even very seriously ill patients, when hospitals and hospices and nursing homes have brought Christmas into their lives.

I know that many of you don't share my faith, but I celebrate Christmas most of all because there is a reason to celebrate, however dark the hour. It matters that in this



world we are loved, and that the birth of a particular child in a particular corner of the world at a particular moment in history has proved to be the unique human expression of the love of God for every single person. Christmas without the story of the birth of Jesus, without the reason for celebration, can indeed be little more than humbug. Whether you agree with me or not, you may agree on this: that it is what lies beyond the tinsel and Christmas trees and parties where the true spirit of Christmas is to be found – in what happens to the human heart, and to communities caught up in the joy of human love, even to strangers, if only for a season. Happy Christmas!

Peter



Head Office in the Spotlight: Janet Philips



We caught up with our lovely Membership & Accounts Clerk Janet Philips, who has been working with us for 7 years. Here is what she had to say when we quizzed her:

Where have you worked before the Women's Section?

The Civil Service in various departments – at one point being in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's private office. I have worked in the office of a family business for 36 years, been an RBL Club secretary for 12 years and then I came to the Women's Section.

What drew you to the Women's Section?

Having worked in an RBL Club I thought it would be nice to continue working for the charity.

What do you do to relax?

Read, watch television and I can sleep for England. My Mum always used to say if you pegged me on the line I would fall asleep!

Favourite time of year and why?

Spring – I love spring flowers, the weather is usually warming up and daylight hours are getting longer.

What do you like most about working for the Women's Section?

Seeing the enthusiasm of our hardworking members, meeting some of them at Conference and working with such a great team in Head Office (*we didn't pay her to say that – honest!*).

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A nurse.

How do you like to spend your spare time?

With my family, the theatre and cinema.

Favourite song?

I have so many but if pushed maybe 'From A Distance' by, it has to be, Cliff Richard.

Which super-power would you have and why?

To be invisible so when in crowded places, i.e. concerts and train stations, I could go down the front and actually see what is going on without straining my neck!!

Favourite saying?

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

What 3 items would you take to a desert island (other than food and water)?

A picture of my grandchildren, a piano and some hyacinths (I love the smell!).

What do most people not know about you?

Tell me not to do something and I will dig my heels in even further to do it!

VE Day 70 Challenge



Aylsham and District Branch in Norfolk took the challenge to Old Buckenham Air Show at the beginning of August and used the Union Jack flag to attract the pennies. The aim was to cover the red cross with 5ps and the other colours with any other coins people wished to donate. They managed to raise £100.19 from peoples coins and loose change!

At Annual Conference in April, we launched this year's national fundraising initiative: the 'VE Day 70 Challenge'. This was to mark the 70th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day that took place on 8 May 1945: the official end of the Second World War in Europe, before Victory in Japan Day.

Similar to the successful '2p Mile Challenge', which raised over £15,000, we tasked branches and counties with raising 5p for every day from 8 May 1945 to 8 May 2015 (excluding leap year days). Branches have taken this challenge by the horns and sent us photos of the creative ways they have been collecting 5ps. If each county were able to raise 70 years' worth of 5ps, the total amount raised would be £65,152.50! Money is still coming in and there is still 4 months left to reach the target – so watch this space!



Can you find the treasure? **Yaxley Branch** in Huntingdonshire came up with this very creative way to raise 5p's for the challenge. At their meeting in October they ran a mini competition to find the pirate treasure and raised just over £11. They have been carrying out ingenious ways to raise 5ps throughout the year and at each branch meeting they have been selling something different. In July it was the turn of their little 5p cake bites – which raised £9 and in August they held a mini surprise tombola, raising £12 for their ever-growing total!



Knowle Branch in Warwickshire collected their 5ps over the summer and brought them along to their meeting on 15 September. As you can see they laid them out on a table to spell 'VE' and 'VJ', totalling £61.05. They celebrated VE and VJ Day with a party on 14 July with bunting, a lovely spread of food, sparkling wine, a raffle and wonderful singing.



Non-Attendance Lunch on the Moon

This summer our Military Wives Group organised the first in an annual series of 'Non-Attendance' lunches.

The novel idea is to buy tickets for a lunch at a special venue you commit to not attending! The location they chose for this year's lunch was the moon and they didn't attend on 31 July.

Tickets were £5, and for each one sold, the guest received a beautiful handmade charm bracelet, made by none-other than the Group Vice-Chairman herself – Elly Jackson. For each year there will be a special charm to add to the bracelet to represent each event that guests don't attend. thirty seven people took part, raising £148 for our welfare schemes.

The group are currently researching a venue to not attend next year and they would love as many branches across the Women's Section as possible to get involved.

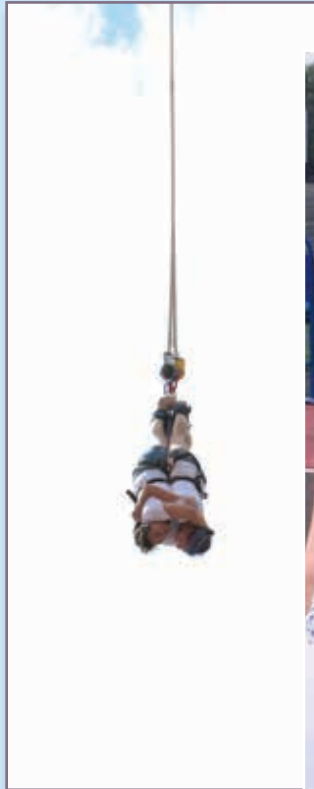


1, 2, 3 ... JUMP!!

Heights are not for everyone – apart from certain members of our Military Wives Group who don't seem to mind!

Group Vice-Chairman Elly Jackson and her best friend and member, Donna Perraton, took on what they called the 'Elastic Besties Challenge' on 27 June. This feat was a sponsored tandem bungee jump at the O2 Arena in London to raise money for our welfare schemes, as well as celebrate Elly's Birthday. When

asked how they found it, Elly said, "We loved it! So much so we were talking about doing one next year which is twice the height! Had an amazing day, can't think of a better way to spend my birthday!"



Whisky Tango Foxtrot – The play!

This comic and also moving play about former servicewoman, Rebecca Crookshank's time in the Royal Air Force premiered at Edinburgh Fringe Festival this summer from 6 to 30 August. Rebecca wrote and performed this one-woman show, with the direction of Dr Jessica Beck and production by Rebecca's husband Oliver Taheri.

The play was met with rave reviews by theatre critics and nominated for 4 international Broadway awards: Best

Direction, Best Leading Actress, Best New Play and Best New Production.

After every performance of the show, Rebecca spoke to the audience about the work



As a result of some of the connections made at Annual Conference this year, the team were able to visit the bunker at RAF Neatishead, where Rebecca

served as an Aerospace Systems Operator, thanks to Hazel Kingswood of Aylesham Branch in Norfolk.

The team will continue to take collections as the play goes on tour next year. As well as their support through the play, we are very proud to have both Rebecca and Jessica as members of the Women's Section.

that we do, supporting military families and box office staff kindly took collections for our welfare schemes as people left the theatre. Rebecca said, "I was overwhelmed by people's generosity. I encouraged those I met in the bar afterwards to join and shared (WS) lanyards with other artists at the Fringe who were really impressed by the work that the Women's Section continues to do."

Through these collections, the Whisky Tango Foxtrot team managed to raise over £450 to help us continue our work with those in need in the Armed Forces community.



Edith Cavell – Remembered



October 2015 marked 100 years since the execution of British World War One nurse and heroine, Edith Cavell. She was known for her bravery and ultimate sacrifice, in treating injured and wounded soldiers, regardless of what side they were fighting on.

She was based in German-occupied Belgium and found guilty of treason, for treating British allies and helping them escape to neutral land. Edith refused to hand over Allied soldiers to German Forces and was arrested and imprisoned for 10 weeks. Despite protests from Britain and the USA, Edith Cavell was executed on 12 October 1915 by a German firing squad.

To mark the centenary of this incredible woman's execution, commemorative events have been taking place across the country and abroad. International artist Charron Pugsley-Hill was inspired to create a collaborative and unique piece of artwork: The Blanket of Poppies, to honour Edith Cavell's life.

There would have been little comfort for Edith during her confinement and subsequent execution; as a blanket is often used as a form of security in times of distress, Charron thought it was appropriate to "comfort and wrap the

memory of Edith Cavell and her bravery in a blanket 100 years on."

The Blanket of Poppies is made up of 49 felt poppies, made by 49 different women, to represent each year of Edith's life; set around a centrepiece shape of Britain and Belgium, and surrounded by words and quotes associated with Edith's incredible life. Women volunteered to take part from across the country, from different backgrounds, and with different reasons for wanting to be involved in the project. They met together over the summer to make the poppies in workshops reminiscent of WW1 knitting circles. Charron also enlisted the support of artisan felter, Eve Marsall, to demonstrate how to do the felting which made up the poppies.

One of the women who took part, was Brenda Tibbles of Peterborough Branch. "As it was a lovely day we all sat outside to make our poppy. This included lots of talking, laughter, and cups of tea – then we began." The women made one large poppy and leaf for the blanket, and two smaller poppies: one for Charron to wear on a special dress and another for the women to wear as a brooch – both for a commemorative event in Peterborough in



October. The whole process took about two hours and after the poppies had dried on the washing line, the women let their creative flair loose by sewing their chosen design on the poppy they had made, using beads and sequins as well.

They all got together to view the completed piece on 9 October, "This was a very moving time and I have just had chills run through me just thinking about it," said Brenda.

"I learnt a great deal and am very proud to have taken part in the making of this blanket. It will be something I will always remember and talk about."

The workshops were not just about creating the blanket, but also about connecting lives and sharing stories.

On 12 October, Charron laid the Blanket of Poppies at a war memorial in Peterborough, during a commemorative service for Edith Cavell that took place at dawn: exactly one hundred



“

Any wounded soldier must be treated, friend or foe. Each man is a father, husband or son. As nurses you must take no part in the quarrel. Our work is for humanity. The profession of nursing knows no frontiers.”

years from when she was executed. Edith had connections with Peterborough as she attended school there, where she learnt fluent French that enabled her to work in Belgium as a nurse.

On the same day, our National Vice-Chairman Pat Chrimmes, National Standard Bearer, Susan Parke, Regional Standard Bearer, Rita Orange and Legion National Chairman, John Crisford attended a commemorative service and wreath-laying ceremony at Edith Cavell's memorial in London, organised by the Cavell Nurses' Trust.

Edith Cavell's bravery will always be remembered by what she said to the chaplain who visited her the night before her execution:

“Patriotism is not enough, I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.”



The last Letter from the Trench



Having contracted malaria in Greece and giving his family a scare when they received War Office Communication of his condition, Philip recovered but was not sent back to the French lines. Instead, he was posted to Macedonia and this is the last letter his parents received from the front line.



Philip (far left) with colleagues.

11th November 1917

Field Post Office - Macedonia

My dear Father and Mother

Many thanks for your letter of 20th October to hand last night. The W.O. were somewhat late in sending you notification of my sickness. I am returning herewith the document as you may like to keep it. I can quite imagine the shock Mother received upon receiving an official envelope. Well, I am thankful it was nothing else. Sorry to hear Emily has the flu and hope long since she is feeling well again.

You seem to be having fairly frequent visits from the Hun in the air. London is such a large place to attempt to defend with anti-aircraft guns that really I am surprised we can cope with the problem as well as we are doing. It is a simple matter to drop a bomb anywhere in such a large area and be sure of hitting something so it is not such wonderfully brilliant work they (the enemy) are doing. Yes, I suppose B.G's etc. are nearly all employing women. All those houses (merchant warehouses?) should have done so in 1914 and cleared out all their male staff of military age. I have no sympathy for the people who came up late by force. I am getting the 'Observer' and the 'Universe' regularly. Many many thanks for them all. I saw FriHarrod (our Padre) yesterday and handed him five copies of the 'Universe' I had finished with. He was very pleased as he had not seen them. I have another for him when I see him. I shall always pass them on to him so please continue to send.

I went to Mass this morning. I have not been for a fortnight as we have been in the line. We are out now, resting. We have plenty of work to do all the same. We are in a very pretty part of Macedonia now. Of course, we are way up in the hills. The ravines are simply wonderful. My letters of May last spoke of the same spot. The cold season has set in now. We have had quite a lot of rain and night and morning, very cold. Some days are quite grey with cloudy skies which seems so strange to me after continuous sunshine since I landed in April last. One thing we have not a long winter to look forward to and I should say infinitely better than Flanders for comfort. When I hear them talk of winter out there my mind always goes back to 1915-16. I really do not think I could stand those conditions again.

Well, I am indeed sorry to hear how Italy has shown up during these last few weeks. No doubt it is a serious affair but I trust she will pull herself together and not prove another addition to Russia. If we had only had the spirit in some of our Allied one finds on the Western Front, things would have ended long ago. We can only hope for unity next Spring when I sincerely trust we shall have a smashing victory and an end to this confounded war. I am sure we shall be glad to have it over and return home.

Would you mind sending me a small pocket diary for 1918. I thought I might like to jot one or two things down. Also will you enclose in a letter or - some khaki wool to mend my socks with. I think I am all right for socks for a bit but will write when I want any. If you like, you can send me out one pair and the khaki shirt which you should have in the drawer in my room. I am in no hurry for these and it does not matter if you cannot find them as I have plenty to carry on with.

Well, my dears, I think I will close so with my fondest love to you,

Believe me, your ever affectionate son,

Philip

As he predicted, the conflict ended in 1918 and Philip returned to England and the Cunard Steamship Company where he spent the rest of his working life travelling around the world on board ship with the big liners.



Our Armed Forces have made so many sacrifices over the years to ensure the freedom that we enjoy today.

It is important to take the time to reflect on the grave price that they, and their families, have paid. Members across the country have held events over the summer to mark 70 years since the end of the Second World War, and there have also been national events hosted by the Legion to honour those who survived and those who fell. As well as the great loss of life during this war, we also this year remember the sacrifice of those who were still fighting during the First World War, 100 years ago.

This Remembrancetide began with the opening of the Garden of Remembrance at St Paul's Cathedral, in London on 2 November, attended by our National Officers. On 5 November Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and Prince Harry of Wales officially opened the Field of Remembrance at Westminster and toured the Field, speaking with the various regiments represented. The sight of all the crosses, representing lives lost and remembered is quite overwhelming, especially the vast area dedicated to the unknown soldiers. As well as attending this moving event, our National Officers laid a wreath at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday and took part in acts of Remembrance on Armistice Day on 11 November, as the nation remembered.

The sacrifices made during war are well encapsulated in one evening: at the Legion's annual Festival of Remembrance. This year it took place at the Royal Albert Hall on 7 November, the day before Remembrance Sunday. The Festival commemorates and honours all those who have lost their lives in conflicts, both past and present. This year's

programme included special guest artists, Rod Stewart, Pixie Lott, Andrea Bocelli and Gregory Porter, who performed alongside the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, the Queen's Colour Squadron, the Band of HM Royal Marines, and the Band and Pipes of the Brigade of Gurkhas. The Hall was host to members of the Royal family, HRH the Queen, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, as well as Government Ministers, members and National Officers of the Women's Section, the Legion and the public.

The festival is an incredibly moving event, as stories are told of the impact of war in changing the lives of injured soldiers and bereaved families forever. A video clip was shown of Rifleman Paul Jacobs, who was awarded a George Medal for his bravery and courage after being involved in a life-changing blast in Afghanistan in 2009 that left him blind and two men dead. He said, "For me, being a foster child, I was always very very conscious that if anything should happen, I wanted it to be me. These chaps had wives, they had

children. I had nothing." Paul received a standing ovation as he entered the hall to read the Festival citation he had written, accompanied by the torch of Remembrance.

Other stories included that of Bob Hucklesby, who survived a Japanese prisoner of war camp during World War Two. He told of how he was taken to what was called the 'Death Hut', where it was not thought likely he would last the night. Bob tried to keep his eyes open all night and in the morning the 20 men around him were all dead. "I felt from then on, if I lived, I was obliged to make sure that those I had left behind, were not forgotten."

There was also not a dry eye in the house when a short film was played of a group of women who had lost their husbands in Iraq when the 'Hercules' they were flying in was shot down in 2005. On hearing the tragic news, one of the ladies said, "The hardest thing for me was having to tell my three boys that their Dad had been killed, their Daddy was never coming home." The women told of how they and their children have formed a close bond through their grief; they know exactly how each other is feeling. "I remember putting the children to bed that night and looking at them both and thinking, you can't not have a Daddy, it's not right."

We will Remember Them.



The story of Winnie & Sheila

We love a good inspiring fundraising story. Anne Wells, Vice-Chairman of Chatteris Branch in Cambridgeshire, stopped at nothing to get some new items for her branch.

"The gazebo that we have been using as a shelter and stall at events we attend to fundraise, is past it's sell by date and leaks when it rains. Bearing in mind that the average age of the ladies manning our stall is 82-years-young, I had this 'somewhat stupid idea' that we needed a new free gazebo, so I googled 'commercial pop-up gazebos' and up came a long list of suppliers. I don't know why I chose the one I did, it just seemed to jump out at me: Nicoll Industries. I sent them an email and had a reply back the next day. After a couple of phone conversations discussing size, weight etc. (the one we had been using was 3x3m), I had decided we needed a 3x4.5m but was told it would be too heavy for me to move, as it's mostly just me putting it up. "Rubbish!", I thought, "I can move that!". So I made an appointment for 9.30am the following Monday to go and look at them and booked half a day's holiday from work. Monday came. I left home at 5.30am to drive 110 miles to Burton-on-Trent; stopped at the services off the M1 at 7.30am for a coffee and a bacon buttie; pulled into their car park at 8.30am; set the alarm on my mobile and had a snooze until 9.30am.

The meeting with Fay at Nicoll Industries was great, and she was so generous to us. She had already agreed £200 discount on the 3x4.5m but when I found I couldn't move it



(okay, I was wrong for once!), I decided we needed two of the 3x3m ones and she discounted them both – saving us a whopping £400! The cost of each was £635 less £100 discount, less an extra discount as they were for the Women's Section so a total of £435 each. I said I would confirm by Wednesday but it was definitely the two we needed, in blue and yellow of course, with our name on the front too. Fay also agreed to do all the printing for a discounted price of £90. Business was concluded in 15 minutes and we then spent the next 45 mins talking Women's Section, fundraising ideas, members, etc. Fay is a member of Burntwood Branch with 11 members.

So, it's now nearly 11.00am and I am driving back the 100 odd miles to work, thinking, "where the flipping heck am I going to get £870 from?" (I had already paid the £90 for the printing).

Well, during the afternoon whilst I was working, I had another 'somewhat stupid idea' – why not email a few of our companies and businesses in Chatteris and ask for sponsorship. There is a valance around the top of the gazebo, and they could have their name printed on there, say for £200. That seemed reasonable at the time, but having then sent off five emails I began to think that I was being over ambitious stating £200 a time. Also, I thought about my own Managing Director, and was about to email him when I realised it was only 4.30pm and I don't finish work until 5.30pm (close call!). So at 5.31pm I hit the send key! By the Wednesday I had

emails agreeing sponsorship of £600. So 'Winnie & Sheila', as they have now become named, were ordered (named after the Women's Section initials). By the Friday it had risen to £850!

They were used for the first time at the end of August at the Ramsey 1940's event; put up next to the big top that is used for the band concert and dance, standing there proud in the middle of a field for 4 days, defying all the elements. No leaks! Ah, I nearly forgot, we raised £661 at this event, which incidentally was matched by our local Barclays staff. This resulted in an incredible £1,322 for the Benevolent Fund. Whilst we were there, we had so many comments regarding Winnie & Sheila.

Apologies for going on so much, but as you have no doubt gathered by now, I'm just so excited at what we have achieved in obtaining Winnie & Sheila, and the ladies will now be warm and dry when out fundraising for many years to come."



Children's Welfare Scheme

The Royal British Legion Women's Section was formed in 1921, to care for the widows and children of those who had been injured or killed during the First World War. The welfare work at that time was funded by the fundraising activities of members, as it is now, and the schemes of the Women's Section have adapted over the years, to suite the changing needs of the Armed Forces Community.

Today we offer grants to Armed Forces families and single parents, who are in need, towards the cost of essential items for children, through the Children's Welfare Scheme.

Small grants are provided for items such as winter clothing, bedroom furniture and school uniforms.

We also assist with payment for children's clubs such as Guides and Scouts as well as essential school trips and child care costs.

Families can apply for one grant a year, up to a maximum of £500. During the last year (1 October 2014 – 30 September 2015), we received 408 requests for assistance from the Children's Welfare Scheme, out of which 285 grants were awarded. The largest area of need was for children's furniture (167 grants awarded), followed by essential clothing (79) and carpets for children's rooms (23). The



a double buggy, which helped reduce their worry about the impending birth of their second child and has now made their daily lives more manageable.

We love hearing back from our beneficiaries, and the Gillies kindly wrote to us saying:

"Thank you for the recent help you provided us with for baby equipment. The girls are already enjoying the safety and comfort of adventures in their lovely pram. Your kindness and generosity are very much appreciated and will not be forgotten."

Adam & Kathryn Gillie

grants given during this year totalled £59,103.06. Last year we received an additional 161 requests for assistance compared to the year 2013-14, which is an increase of 60%.

Thanks to the hard work of our members, holding fundraising events to fund this scheme, we have been able to support families such as the Gillie family from County Durham.

They were at a time of financial difficulty with one young child and they were also expecting a baby in a few months when they applied for assistance to purchase a double buggy. Mr Gillie was previously a private in the Light Infantry, and now works full-time for a local manufacturing company. His income was relatively low and with young children, Mrs Gillie needed to stay at home to care for them. They were living on a tight budget and only just managing to pay for essential items each week. Mrs Gillie was going to be on her own for most of the time during the day and so a double buggy was going to be essential as she would have no help with a second pushchair. We were able to provide assistance for the Gillies to purchase



All off to the Poppy Factory

Woburn Sands Branch in Buckinghamshire enjoyed a day out together with a tour of the Poppy Factory in Richmond on 3 August.



Sale for soldiers

Two is better than one – that's what Harpsden and Kidmore End Branches thought when they held their joint table-top sale fundraiser on 6 June and managed to raise over £500! Tea and cake was served for parched shoppers by Harpsden Branch Chairman Gill Spiers (pictured) and other members from these Oxfordshire branches.



VJ Day Anniversary

Lacey & District Branch held a concert on 15 July to commemorate the anniversary of VJ Day. Members performed 60's and 70's songs as 'Kevin's Legionnaires' and they all enjoyed a fish and chip supper. The evening ended with a rousing sing-along of old favourites, almost frenzied flag waving and not a small amount of emotion.



Happy 85th Birthday!

Burton Latimer Branch in Northamptonshire were joined by members from throughout the country to celebrate their 85th anniversary in July. They enjoyed spending time together over a delicious lunch at the local bowls club.



HMS Sultan Open Day

Hampshire County representatives Sandra Fishlock and Pauline Keane (Chairman) ran a stall at the HMS Sultan open day on 20 June to fundraise and raise awareness of the Women's Section.



VJ Day Anniversary – Chelsea style

Kemble & District Branch in Gloucestershire marked the VJ Day anniversary on 15 August with a special event in their village hall. With prayers from the parish vicar, a ploughman's lunch, and an entertaining talk from Chelsea Pensioner Brian Cumming MBE – the afternoon was rounded off very nicely with some delicious Chelsea Buns. Secretary Pat Ayres MBE is pictured serving buns to Brian.



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Land Girls raising funds

St Ives Branch in Cambridgeshire joined in local Armed Forces Day celebrations on 27 June by running a tombola stall dressed as Land Girls at the market square. They managed to raise a total of £209.



Hats on for Ascot!

Members in the North East Metropolitan County got together for an Ascot-themed coffee morning this summer. They had lots of fun playing games, eating cake and wearing wonderful hats – and also raised money for our welfare schemes with a raffle and auction.



New branch launches in Pangbourne!

Film producer Gareth Ellis-Unwin, most commonly known for 'The King's Speech', and National Life-Vice President Pat Valler OBE, supported members of the newly-formed Pangbourne Branch at Pangbourne Village Fete on 20 June in Berkshire. The branch had a stall promoting the work of the Women's Section and signing-up new members. Gareth sold signed copies of war-film 'Kajaki' to raise money for our welfare schemes. Pictured are members of the branch with Pat (front row, second from the right).



'Down on the Farm'

Our Girlings Retirement Rentals Branch love a good dress-down (or dressing-up!) day at the office! Their latest theme was 'Down on the Farm'. They had lots of fun and raised £206. Pictured are some of the raffle prizes including a wheatsheaf loaf donated by Barry the Baker!



National Day of Remembrance

Members of our Northern Ireland District took part events to mark the National Day of Remembrance in Dublin on 11 July and are pictured at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens in Islandbridge, dedicated to the memory of 49,400 Irish Soldiers who gave their lives in the Great War and also all other Irish men and women who at that time served in the Irish Regiments of the Allied Armies. First row left to right: District Central Committee Representative Sheila Thompson, District Vice-Chairman, Liz Bateman, District Chairman, Noell Crawford, National and District Standard Bearer Susan Parke and District President and National Vice President Joanne Andrew Steer MBE. The second row features Standard Bearers from the District.



Tombola in Farnborough

Members of Farnborough Branch in Hampshire held a tombola stall on 1 August at their local community centre to raise money for the Women's Section. A fun day was had meeting the visitors to the busy car boot sale and craft stalls whilst raising money and awareness of the Women's Section. Pictured left to right: Sue Findley, Jill Moyle, Pat Elkerton, Chairman Rosemary Possee and Nora Oakley.



If you go down to the woods today....

Members of Sandiway & Cuddington Branch in Cheshire, brought out their teddies for a Teddy Bears Picnic on 12 August. They enjoyed beautiful weather and raised £90 for our welfare schemes. There was one special teddy that even had it's own knitted picnic!

BRANCH AND COUNTY NEWS



Royal Tea Party

The Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon invited residents to a Royal Tea Party on 9 September to mark HM The Queen's longest reign. Branch Chairman Tracey Gilliland (left) and member Olivia Hampton (right) of the newly formed Lurgan & Brownlow Branch in Northern Ireland, attended and are pictured with Lord Mayor Darryn Causby.



VJ 70 Celebrations in Norfolk

Aylsham & District Branch marked the anniversary of VJ Day with a service at their local church on 15 August. They are pictured lining up in preparation to serve food to a full congregation, including some veterans and also chatting to 92-year-old Dorothy Mann, a former FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) volunteer.



Conga for VE Day

Little Common Branch in Bexhill can't resist a good knees-up and got together to celebrate the anniversary of VE Day for a lunch and dance on 21 July. Sussex County Chairman, Denise Carr joined the party where there was lots of dancing and laughter too – raising £315 for our welfare schemes!



Double Birthday celebration

Wroxham Hoveton & District Branch in Norfolk celebrated their 57th birthday and the 90th birthday of the late Joan Newey (pictured) with a special lunch at a hotel and a cake decorated with feathers. Joan was a past Branch Chairman and Life Member and sadly passed away suddenly this year.

BRANCH AND COUNTY NEWS



Military Wives day-trip

Members of the Military Wives Group got together on 6 July to visit the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London. They had a really lovely tour guide and enjoyed the chance to meet other members of the group. They said they will definitely be going back!



Women's Section Day!

Chatteris Branch in Cambridgeshire enjoyed a wonderful lunch together to celebrate Women's Section Day on 13 September. Members were joined by their husbands and had a lovely afternoon together.



A new Standard

Northern Ireland dedicated their new Standard on 7 June at Derryloran Parish Church, Cookstown..



VE Day celebrations in Sussex

Horsted Keynes Branch joined in local celebrations of Victory in Europe Day, including a parade and village fete on Lindfield Common. The branch held an incredible cake stall and there was entertainment from a band playing period music and a trio of female singers. It was such an incredibly windy day that several awnings collapsed but spirits kept high!



70th Anniversary in Wiltshire

East Knoyle, Semley & Sedgemoor Branch celebrated 70 years on 27 September with a church service and reception at the local village hall. They were joined by National Chairman Marilyn Humphry – who helped cut the cake!