



Circular

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION WOMEN'S SECTION

ISSUE 444

INSIDE

2014 Conference,
Llandudno

PLUS

Fundraiser, Member &
WW1 Aircraft Restorer

Meet an extraordinary
member of the Women's
Section



Summer Edition 2014

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Women's Section**

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From the Editor

Hoorah for summer! We are now well into my favourite time of year and I am particularly excited this summer to be your new Editor and Communications and Fundraising Officer. In February this year we sadly said goodbye to Rhian Spurrier, who left us for the south-coast. We wish her all the best in her new home!

Following Rhian's example, one of my goals is for the Women's Section to have a larger social media presence. It is a wonderful free tool that can reach into homes and lives across the world at the touch of a button. We are grateful to members such as Tracey Gilliland, who has been running the Northern Ireland Facebook page and Chrissie Cox, who is responsible for the Military Wives and Girlfriends page. They work hard updating their pages with content relevant to members and inspiring more to join. If anyone is interested in setting up a Facebook or Twitter account for their Branch – do get in touch.

As you all know, this year marks 100 years since the start of the First World War and so we have dedicated part of this edition to the Centenary, including a stirring poem by a friend of the Women's Section. Meet a member who restores WW1 aircraft and take a moment to read a letter from the National Chairman about a nation-wide Remembrance event on 4 August that we are all invited to join.

No summer edition would be complete without our Annual Conference feature and we also have a goodbye message from our past National Chairman, Wendy Bromwich. We take a closer look at how our first ever London Marathon runners got on and see what other members have been up to – raising funds for those serving and who have served our country.

Here is to a wonderful summer!

Rachael Bhebhe



Message from the National Chairman

Dear Members,
For those of you lucky enough to come to Llandudno, most of you would agree Conference 2014

was one of varied emotions. We said 'farewell' to Chairman Wendy with very mixed feelings. There is no doubt that she completely turned the Women's Section around. It is wonderful to see members smiling and willing to raise huge sums for our schemes. The FUN is back – so a very big 'THANK YOU WENDY', for everything you have achieved over the past 3 years. It was lovely to welcome some of Wendy's family to Conference: her son, Stephen and her brother Russell and his wife. Also Wendy's friends June and Adrienne, with whom she served in the Military Police and Peter and Gillian Girling, who are friends and great supporters of the Women's Section.

There was sadness also, when we learned of the death of Sheila Webster's husband, John. She was about to commence her duties as our newly appointed National Parade Marshal. I am sure you will all wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to Sheila and her family at this sad time.

Our speakers were all first class. L/Sgt Johnson Beharry VC captivated the hearts of all: sharing some of the most poignant memories of his life. Kim McCutcheon gave us a fascinating insight into the history of the FANYs and Allan Mallinson shared some interesting facts from his book on the First World War.

The entertainment night again proved popular. The Band of the King's Division concert was enjoyed by everyone and it was great to see both young and old bopping the night away at the disco that followed.

We are deeply indebted to our members of staff who helped in 101 ways and I would like to express our sincere thanks to them all.

How many of you noticed the two Scottish Standards on Parade? We were delighted that the past Chairman of Scotland, Annie Ogilvy and her daughter Lindsay Watson were able to join us with their Branch Standards.

Looking to the future, both Pat and I are looking forward to the challenges ahead. We have an excellent team and welcome 3 new Central Committee members: Sheila Thompson, Sandra Fishlock and Sandra Saban. Our thanks go to those who have left the Committee: Joanne Andrew-Steer MBE, Averil Rosser and Pat Scott, who have all done such sterling work over many years. Alison Tindale will be joining Sheila Webster as the new Deputy National Parade Marshal. I would also like to thank Helen Richardson, the past National Parade Marshal, for everything she has done over the past 6 years. She has been a credit to our organisation and has set the bar high for those who follow.

I know that Wendy always ended with a mention of the infamous Mr Squeaky. Well, the Humphry household no longer houses pets. In the past – 1 Goat, 2 Sheep, 2 Ducks and numerous stick insects have all resided here so we have done our bit! My husband Paul would like to join with me in wishing you all a very successful year.

Marilyn Humphry



Some years back at Annual Conference, a member said to me, "You will be on that platform one day". I commented, "You are joking"! Now you all know that for the past five years I have

been – as Conference Committee Chairman.

I now find myself in the position of your National Vice-Chairman and it is a great privilege and honour. I thank you all, most sincerely, for placing your trust in me. I look forward with enthusiasm to what lies ahead

and to meeting even more of you during the coming year. I wish you every success in your fundraising and recruiting efforts for our great organisation.

My very best wishes to you all.

Pat Chrimmes

National Vice-Chairman

Lest We Forget...

We regret to inform you that the following members have sadly passed away



Mrs Emily Whale – Women's Section Beneficiary

We regret to announce that Mrs Emily Whale, who was mentioned in the last Circular (issue 443) celebrating her 100th birthday, has recently passed away. Mrs Whale became a beneficiary in 1987. She had 8 children and at the last count – 23 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. In her younger days Mrs Whale was involved in the Poppy Collection. Our condolences to her family on their sad loss.

Mrs Daphne Spencer & Mrs Ann Thompson – Warwickshire

Warwickshire County are sad to announce the loss of Mrs Daphne Spencer and Mrs Ann Thompson. Daphne had been County Secretary for many years and subsequently a County Vice-President. Ann had been Standard Bearer for Knowle as well as being on the County Committee. They both gave long and much-valued service to the County Committee and are sorely missed by both Warwickshire County and Knowle Branch, of which they were both long-standing members.

Mrs Ivy Evans – Oundle & District

Mrs Ivy Evans passed away on 2nd of February. She was a founder member of the Oundle & District Branch 71 years ago and attended their monthly meetings. Ivy was also the Branch Standard Bearer for 11 years. She was a talented lady and will be greatly missed.



Mrs Dizzy Moore MBE – Surrey

Surrey County are saddened to announce the death of Mrs Dizzy Moore MBE. Dizzy was known by many members and joined the County Committee before becoming County Chairman. She was presented with the Golden Award and was County Vice-President of both Surrey Women's Section and Surrey Royal British Legion. Dizzy was known for her fundraising activities for the Women's Section, the Poppy Appeal and many other organisations and will be greatly missed.



Mrs Stella Horton – Great Wyrley

It is with deep sadness members of Great Wyrley Branch announce the death of Mrs Stella Horton. She passed away on the 21st of February aged 86 years. Stella joined the Women's Section in 1951 and did a lot of fundraising including distributing poppies and house-to-house collections for the Poppy Appeal. A Legion funeral was held for her at Great Wyrley Wesley Chapel on 11th March 2014. Stella was a friend who will be missed and fondly remembered.

Mrs Lillian Tuffnell – Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire County is saddened to announce the death of Mrs Lillian Tuffnell. She was the former County Chairman and member of Gosberton Branch and latterly a member of Coningsby/Tattershall Branch. Lillian, who was a dedicated and active member of the Women's Section, passed away on the 24th February. She had a Legion Funeral on the 6th March and will be greatly missed and remembered by all.

Mrs Mary Peake – Surrey

Surrey County are deeply sad to announce the death of Mrs Mary Peake. She was the former County Vice-Chairman, County Treasurer and for many years, a Welfare Co-ordinator. Mary was presented with the Golden Award and was made a Life Member. Due to ill health, she had to retire and was living in a residential home.

Mrs Aileen Arnold – Birmingham

With deep regret we inform you of the passing of Mrs Aileen Arnold. She was Birmingham County Secretary and a member of Kings Heath Branch. Aileen was also a Welfare Officer from 1989 and represented the Women's Section on National level as a member of the Central Committee. She will be greatly missed.



Mrs Mary Middleton MBE – Derbyshire

It is with deep sadness we inform you of the death of our much loved and respected County President

Mrs Mary Middleton MBE. She was awarded an MBE for her 60 years of work for the Women's Section and the Royal British Legion. She knew the handbook inside-out and was always ready to give relevant advice. Mary had a wonderful sense of humour and was a good speaker and writer of poetry. She will be so sadly missed by all of us in Derbyshire.



Miss Cecily Pyle – Holmer Green

Holmer Green Branch is very sad to announce that Miss Cecily Pyle passed away in March at the age of 87. At the beginning of WW1, when she was growing up, her father joined the Royal Flying Corps so she helped on the family farm. Cissie, as she preferred to be called, joined the Women's Section at the age of 16 and after several years became County Secretary and was recently presented with The Rose Exton Cup for her services. She must have been the longest serving member of almost 70 years and her Poppy Wreath lies at the village memorial.



2014 Stick Pins

These have proved so popular that we have sold out. However, if we receive orders for another 500 we will be able to re-stock. Let Head Office know your order by the end of August and we will hopefully be able to get more.



Saturday 13 September – Women's Section Day!

Yes – we have our own special day! The theme for this year is FOOD!

We would like to invite you to hold an event to raise money and awareness of the Women's Section. It could be a coffee morning, cake-sale or BBQ on whatever scale you choose. You could have a few friends around for lunch and ask them to donate £5 each to our schemes or have a big dinner party at £10 a ticket. In this period of WW1 Remembrance, you could even have a WW1 themed event with food from that time. Northern Ireland's Facebook page has great recipe ideas.

Whatever you get up to, do let us know and send us your photos!

Dates for the diary: Annual Conference



Here are the dates for the next two Annual Conferences:

14-16 April 2015, Bournemouth

22-24 April 2016, Llandudno

Llandudno Raffle Prizes

There were a number of unclaimed prizes. If you have one of the following winning tickets please send it to Head Office with your name, address and telephone number and we will arrange for you to receive your prize: 501, 283, 418, 119, 181, 59, 30, 63, 12, 99, 102, 16, 345, 44, 284.

New National Award Forms

A new 2-page Award Form has been produced and can be used for all awards, so please discard any old forms you may have. The new form can be downloaded from our website under 'Members Area'.

Correction Notice

Our 2012 Donations Booklet should have made clear that £400 donated by Gillingham Branch in Dorset, represented £200 for the Widows' Christmas Fund and £200 for the Children's Welfare Scheme, in memory of *Mrs Stella Brooks*.

Our 2013 Donations Booklet should have acknowledged the £100 generously donated by Betty Underhill OBE.

Apologies to all concerned.

Welfare

Volunteering opportunities

As many of you know, the role of caseworker has recently undergone some major changes and is now centrally managed by the RBL. We want to take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked tirelessly as caseworkers and to let you know that if you are no longer continuing but would still like to help – there are opportunities available as volunteer visitors. This would involve offering a hand of friendship and a listening ear to those who have previously served in the Forces and would appreciate seeing a friendly face. If this interests you, please get in touch with the RBL on 0808 802 8080 for more information. You can also visit their website at

www.britishlegion.org.uk

Beneficiary Update



It's so nice when we hear back from our beneficiaries. This letter was sent by Miss V* from Belfast who received £500

towards a computer for her son from the President's Award Scheme. She also received £300 from the Children's Welfare Scheme for school uniforms and other essential clothes for her daughter. She writes:

“I can not tell you how crucial your assistance, especially in technology, has been as this seems to be the 'norm' for their homework. Without your aid, M's education I can definitely say would have been severely hindered.

Miss V”

(*Names have been omitted to protect confidentiality)

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Message from the past National Chairman

Well today I am enjoying the sunshine with intervals of hailstones. I keep putting my

washing out and then taking it back in again. I love our British weather when I am retraining myself to be domesticated again!

The flow of Women's Section emails and phone calls disappeared within a week after Conference. I am trying hard not to miss them but think I am really! I realised that I have been around for so long, since 1981 in fact.

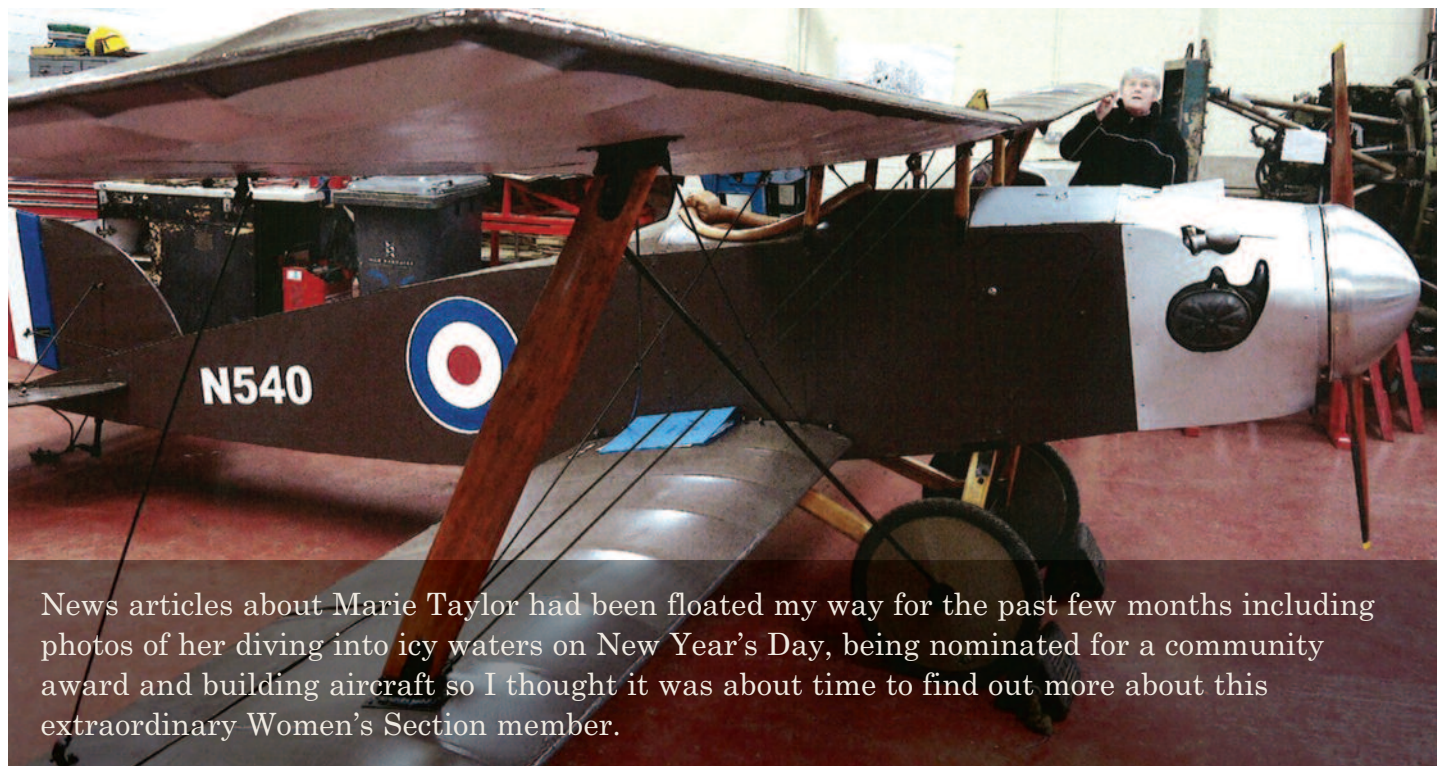
Once I have had a little while to sort through the boxes of papers, the clothes I can't get into any longer and the outdated shoes, I will put my hand to writing. A number of your well-known Women's Section ladies and I are thinking of going back in time within the Women's Section history to carry on where Betty Underhill OBE left off. We may be contacting you for advice about some event or happening you were involved with to make sure we have our facts right. We hope you will

not mind us getting in touch. I have put the idea to your new National Chairman, Marilyn Humphry, and the Central Committee. We want to ensure we have our colourful and interesting past on record so it is there with history forever. First stop, Betty Underhill and Central Committee. Meantime I think I shall learn to bake!

I shall truly miss you all – thank you for making my life so happy.

Wendy B (and Mr Squeaky)

Fundraiser, Member and WW1



News articles about Marie Taylor had been floated my way for the past few months including photos of her diving into icy waters on New Year's Day, being nominated for a community award and building aircraft so I thought it was about time to find out more about this extraordinary Women's Section member.

A born and bred Yorkshire lass, Marie left her hometown to join the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) at the age of 18. She was in charge of Pay, working alongside the Navy and the Royal Marines rising to the rank of Petty Officer. Although she thoroughly enjoyed her time as a Wren, she experienced the difficult times that can come as part of working for the Armed Forces. One of her postings was at HMS Heron during the Falklands War, to which she sadly lost some of her colleagues. When asked how she coped, Marie said "you just had to get on with it, not letting it affect you".

Marie's journey with the Women's Section began at the hairdressers. It was a chance conversation under the hot-rollers, between her mother and the past National Chairman, Wendy Bromwich, which led to Marie finding out about our organisation. After 14 years of service, she had left the WRNS and was at a difficult time in her life. Marie was experiencing the culture shock of leaving the Armed Forces and was finding it hard to adjust to life on 'Civvy Street'. The language was different, the work-ethic was different – even the way people addressed each-other was different. The Forces provided Marie with a strong support network and so when she found out about the Women's Section she

decided to become a member to continue the sense of comradeship she had found there and did not want to lose.

Since joining the Women's Section in 1985, Marie held several roles within her Branch, such as Standard Bearer and Treasurer and then took on roles at County and National level. She is now the County Chairman of North Yorkshire and a Regional Standard Bearer Judge. Her work and dedication to the Women's Section earned her the highest honour – a Golden Award, presented to her at National Conference this year.

Marie's connection to the Armed Forces did not stop with the Women's Section: amongst many other things she now volunteers restoring military fighter aircraft. A few years ago, Marie attended the York Air Show and was introduced to the Yorkshire Helicopter Preservation Group by a friend. Not doing things by halves, it was not long before Marie became heavily involved in fundraising for the group, distributing their leaflets and showing children around the cock-pit at events. She said, "one year it bucketed down with rain so much that we all ended up in the back of a Whirlwind". Rather than being swept up in an extreme weather phenomenon, I was relieved to learn that the 'Whirlwind' is actually a post WW2 aircraft that formed a

large part of the RAF's search and rescue support during the 1960's. This helicopter housed the conversation of no return when Marie was asked by her friend, "You can clean can't ya?", to which Marie replied with a tentative, "Yes". "You can paint can't ya?" Another hesitant, "Yes". And finally, "You can take paint off can't ya?". "Yes". She describes that as being the moment she realised she had volunteered to start restoring and building planes!

Marie is pictured with an Eastchurch Kitten replica that she 'skinned' (this is the material that goes over the framework) the rear and wings of. This plane is one of two types of WW1 Fighters developed to shoot down enemy aircraft known as Zeppelins. They were to be launched from ships and were designed to be disposable so that once they had shot down the enemy aircraft they could be left at sea. Marie informed me the Kitten never actually got used in WW1 as the Zeppelins went out of service before it got used. She has been working on the Kitten for 3 years in preparation for the start of the WW1 Centenary this year. Other than the basic skills of cleaning, painting and removing paint, Marie now has an NVQ in Aircraft Restoration, which has aided her work. This plane went on display at York Armed Forces Day at the end

Aircraft Restorer

of June and is now to be found at the Yorkshire Air Museum. Marie has also worked on other WW1 fighter planes including the SE5 and the BE2.

As well as her roles within the Women's Section, Marie holds an incredible number of roles in York, including: committee member of the Royal Naval Association, Treasurer and Secretary of the Royal Marines Association, Chairman of the Association of Wrens, various committees of the Royal British Legion and volunteer guide of two National Trust properties. Marie told me with a cheeky tone in her voice that in her spare time she likes to teach lifesaving! So she is also Chairman of the Ebor Life Saving Club in York.

Marie has been nominated for the York Community Pride Award for 'Fundraiser of the Year' for her work for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. This included taking annual leave to collect money inside her local Tesco for up to 10 hours a day. Marie's fundraising activity extends to almost anything she lends her hand to, including raising funds for the Life Saving Club she teaches at by braving the icy waters off the coast of Scarborough for a sponsored swim on New Year's Day.

Marie's commitment to fundraising and

helping others is admirable and inspiring. When asked what motivates her to fundraise, she said "helping the people that are less fortunate than me". Of Women's Section beneficiaries, she says she wants "the people we look after to be able to have what they need". Marie describes herself as having enough to carry on with and that some people need an extra "gee-up". After receiving help at a difficult time in her life when she left the Forces, Marie says she can understand where they (beneficiaries) are coming from and how things can go wrong. What would she say to anyone wanting to fundraise for the Women's Section? "Go for it!". Marie concluded our conversation by saying, "Life is more worthwhile if you can help people. Even a smile can be a big help".



Update from The Old Bag Company

The Commemorative Poppy range was launched by the Old Bag Company to mark the Centenary of the First World War.

They are proud to be donating a percentage of sales to the Royal British Legion Women's Section. The feedback from these products has been fantastic and the fact that they are donating to the Women's Section has been a winner with customers.

"Designed by a woman, for a woman, supporting women, is something we are very proud of here at The Old Bag HQ so thank you for giving us the opportunity to give something back to such a worthwhile cause", Sally Hurst, Designer.

You can buy your poppy bag online at www.theoldbagcompany.com



WEAR YOUR OLD BAG WITH PRIDE
theoldbagcompany.com

THE GREAT WAR?



In the summer of nineteen hundred
and fourteen years

Began the war to end all wars,
and then

It found nine million homes awash
with tears,

Our world would never be the same again.

The sound of gunfire never dims

Red poppies lie in fields of blood,

Trench walls' steep sides tire worn out limbs

Can war ever be understood?

Soldiers' thoughts are far from here

As beneath the blackened cloud they lie

Among England's fields and wooded glades

Not here, just watching others die.

To think of home and country lanes

And dawn to hear the blackbirds' song,

Their family they had left behind

This is not the place where they belong.

As evening falls and the shadows cast

Across the trenches where they lay,

The cannons roar, the soft ground shakes,

They pray to see another day.

If only lessons could be learned,

The hopes and dreams, agony and pain,

Instead we move on twenty years

And watch it happening again.

Now a hundred years have passed and gone

The world has changed from that distant war

But listen! Hark I can hear that sound,

Still gunfire echoes and cannons roar.

David Garrett 2014

David Garrett is a performance poet who lives in Kettering, Northamptonshire. David has published two books and five booklets of poetry. He has also released a single of his performance poetry with Harpist Nick Penny, called 'Poetry, Music and Birdsong', which has sold very well.

This poem was born out of his performance at the Northamptonshire Women's Section County Conference last Autumn, when the National Chairman at the time, Wendy Bromwich, suggested he write a poem to commemorate the anniversary of the start of World War One.

Annual Conference, Llandudno 2014

The shores of North Wales hosted our 93rd Annual Conference at Venue Cymru in Llandudno on the 30th April and 1st May.

Members and guests travelled from all over the UK, including Scotland and Northern Ireland, and as far as Germany to attend the 2-day conference. Around 800 came through the doors, including 226 delegates from Branch and County and 64 Standard Bearers.

On the evening before Conference the National Chairman held a short reception to thank the civic dignitaries, VIP guests and those from the Llandudno community for their assistance and interest in Conference.

After a service led by Rev Peter Hills, the Mayor of Llandudno, Councillor Gary Burchett, welcomed attendees to Llandudno, which he described as the Queen of Welsh resorts. It was then straight down to business with the appointment of 12 scrutineers, the approval of last year's minutes, reports from the Central and Finance Committee and voting on 5 motions.

Guest speakers included L/Sgt Johnson Beharry VC, the serviceman aptly described by the Mayor as "the epitome of a true British hero". We were awe-struck by the inspiring and challenging story of his upbringing in Barbados and heroic actions in Iraq that led to him being awarded the Victoria Cross.

We also heard from the Commandant of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Commandant Kim McCutcheon and the National President

of the Royal British Legion Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB CVO. Author Brigadier (Rtd) Allan Mallinson emphasised the unique and important role of women in the First World War, his talk titled 'The Girl behind the Man behind the Gun'.

The former Mayor of Llandudno, Cllr Myra Wigzell, delighted us with the presentation of a cheque for £1,378.75, as we were one of her chosen charities for her time in office. There were reports on our welfare work for the last year as well as the presentation of the National Awards by the Patron of Wales, Mrs Valerie Kerr-Wilson.

The Band of the King's Division gave a wonderful performance in the arena and lead the Standard Bearers' along the seafront promenade to the wreath-laying ceremony at the war memorial.

Among proceedings was the appointment of the new National Chairman and National Vice-Chairman. It was an emotional time as members waved farewell to Wendy Bromwich who had been the National Chairman for the past 3 years.

No Women's Section Conference would be complete without the evening entertainment and fancy-dress extravaganza. This year, attendees were treated to a wonderful performance by the Band of the King's Division who played not only military classics but also some beautiful Jazz numbers. The lights then dimmed and DJ Dave played the best of the 60's, 70's and 80's – giving party-goers the chance to get down in their 80's gear.





Message from Conference Committee Chairman



It wasn't long ago that we were all in Llandudno for our Annual Conference and it was one I can hardly forget!

For the first time in quite a few years we had some debate on the motions, which was wonderful to see. Out of five motions, three were carried and two were lost.

Our speakers were of a very high caliber. They were all interesting and very enjoyable. L/Sgt Johnson Beharry VC had us so spellbound you could have heard a pin drop. He gave his entire speech without notes, which is really amazing.

One or two issues have been brought to our attention and will be dealt with at our meeting in June, so please bear with us.

Helen Richardson once again gave members a double treat by marching the Standards around the arena before the parade. Did anyone notice the two Standard Bearers wearing a glengarry? We had two Royal British Legion Women's Section Scotland Standard Bearers on parade and hope they are able to join us next year in Bournemouth.

What a wonderful achievement of nearly £60,000 raised for the Purse Presentation. Last year, the National Chairman asked that you fundraise by having fun and you certainly did by the amount raised above your annual donations – thank you.

Regarding the entertainment, it was obvious from the numbers attending after the band concert that it is not everyone's cup of tea. We try to make the entertainment evening something for everyone and somehow we appear to have failed, so my apologies to you all.

This year we had a number of people

leaving prestigious posts including Helen Richardson, National Parade Marshal. I think the Marshals did a great job parading Helen from the conference arena led by her Regional Standard and Marshals. Thank you Helen for your dedication over the past five years.

The departure of our past National Chairman, Wendy Bromwich, was very emotional for all concerned. We were pleased to have her son, brother, sister-in-law and two of her military colleagues among us to lead the way as we said goodbye with the Gracie Fields song, 'Sing As We Go!'.

I would like to say a personal thank you to Mrs Doris Ingham OBE, Mrs Pat Valler OBE and Miss Paramjit Sangha for the in-depth and outstanding reports on all aspects of our Benevolent work. I want to thank Sara and all the staff at Venue Cymru for all they did for us. Also a huge thank you to our hardworking staff: Lisa, Avril, Debbie, Janet, Rachael, Sam, Rachel, Tony and of course our Colonel who works so hard before and during Conference. Thank you to the Conference Committee who worked hard to ensure everything went according to plan. To all my colleagues on Central Committee, thank you for your support and assistance throughout the year and at Conference.

Last but not least, a very big thank you to Wendy, for conducting your last Conference with the fairness and humour we have all come to know. Friends, this is my last report as Conference Committee Chairman: a role undertaken by me with two National Chairman and a role I have enjoyed and given the best I could. As I sign off I want to say thank you to everyone for the support. My very best wishes to you all in your endeavours over the next twelve months.

Pat Chrimes





Annual Conference Photos

You can view and order photos from Conference from Williams Photo Agency at www.williams-photography.co.uk Go to the 'Client Area' and enter the password Llandudno14 Prices (including postage and packaging) are as follows:

£5 x 1	£10 x 3	£20 x 6
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Once you have decided which photos you want, please send a cheque payable to 'S Williams' together with the photo reference number, quantity and your name, address and telephone number to S Williams, Sunnyside, Town Lane, Mobberley, Cheshire, WA16 7HR and they will be sent to you. Happy viewing!



Message from retiring National Parade Marshal



Having been born into a Legion family, my father for many years being a Chairman in the British Legion, as it was known then, and my mother a Chairman in the Women's Section, I joined the Women's Section at the age of 16. I

immediately became a Branch Standard Bearer and in my first year I competed in South Lancashire County Standard Bearer's Competition and was shocked and delighted when announced the winner. I retained the position of County Standard Bearer for 25 years, making me eligible to compete at Area/Regional and National level for many years. During that period I met some incredible people and attended many memorable events.

In 2005 I qualified as a Judge and Marshal and was invited to become Deputy National Parade Marshal for the Women's Section. I was delighted and accepted, working alongside past National Parade Marshal, Pam Whitehead MBE, as Deputy National Parade Marshal for three years. In 2008 I became National Parade Marshal.

As my six year appointment as National Parade Marshal has come to an end I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you who have so kindly sent cards, flowers, gifts and good wishes to both myself and Ian, my husband. We have been totally overwhelmed by your generosity. During the past six years I have had the opportunity to work with some lovely people, Parade Marshals and Standard Bearers, who have now become personal friends of ours. I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to work alongside four past National Chairmen, all of whom supported me 100% in every way possible. I would like to thank them for their friendship, support and the happy times we have shared over the years.

I have very special memories from Llandudno when we sadly said 'farewell' to our National Chairman, and three of our most dedicated Standard Bearer Judges/Parade Marshals: Pam Whitehead MBE and Julia Walker, both past National Parade Marshals and Mary Coleman. These ladies have given me guidance, tremendous support and help during my term of office.

To our Regional Standard Bearers, thank you all for the lovely gift and your kind and thoughtful words. Each of you are a credit to our organisation and I have been, and always will be proud of

you all! Congratulations to our National Standard Bearer 2014, Mrs Rachel Perkins, to our Deputy National Standard Bearer, Mrs Susan Parke and 2nd Deputy National Standard Bearers Mrs Sonia Beale and Mrs Amanda Barryman. Well done!

I sincerely thank our team of Parade Marshals for the gift they presented to me at Conference. I thank them also for their help, support and friendship over the past six years. Having the support of a hard working team has contributed to the success of my term in office as National Parade Marshal. I wish you all good health and happiness for the future.

My thanks also to the new National Parade Marshal, Sheila Webster, for her kind words. She was sadly unable to attend National Conference. Sheila and I have competed as Standard Bearers for many years in the North West Area/Regional Standard Bearers Competition, watched and supported proudly by our mothers, and now Sheila will follow in my footsteps as National Parade Marshal. I wish Sheila 'Good luck' in her new role!

To those Parade Marshals who celebrated with me at the close of Conference thank you for the fun, laughter and surprises. We all had a wonderful afternoon and you gave me a wonderful send off - a day to remember!

My thanks would not be complete without saying a big 'Thank you' to my husband Ian, my family and my personal friends who have supported me throughout my journey for many years. They have all been by my side every step of the way and have been proud of my success.

My sincere thanks to you all. I will always remember the happy, fun times I have shared with so many for so long!

Helen Richardson



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED...

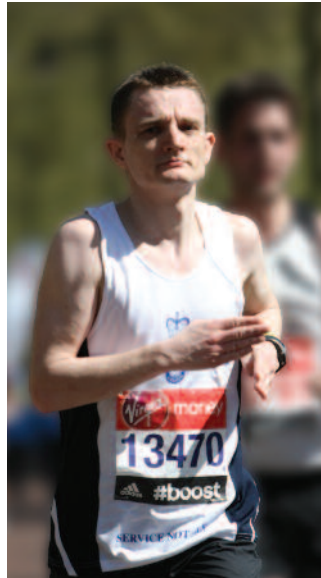
Women's Section's first London Marathon runners cross the line!

On a bright and sunny morning, Chrissie Cox and Daryl Williams pulled on their Women's Section running vests, laced up their well-worn trainers and made their way to the start-zone: armed with determination and focus.

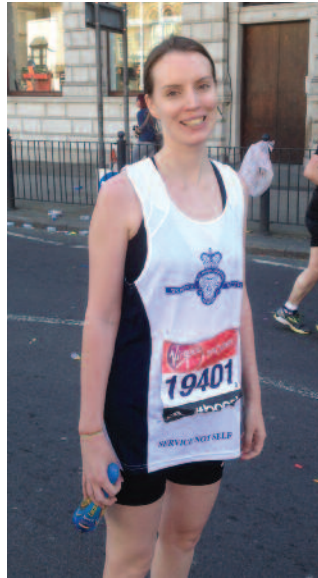
As excited as they were, they also admitted to feeling a bit nervous on their way to the start-line at Blackheath. Faced with the challenge of running a whopping 26.2 miles at the second largest running event in the UK, it is no wonder their stomachs were churning! Chrissie, Chairman of the Military Wives & Girlfriends Branch of the Women's Section, and Daryl, former Women's Section Head Office employee, were joined by around 36,000 runners taking part in the largest fundraising event in the world. Since the race began in 1981, runners have raised more than £600million for charity. We felt privileged that Daryl and Chrissie chose to run for the Women's Section, our first London Marathon runners.

They were shuttled through their coloured start-zone, crossed the line and they were off! The route took them through the streets of London, lined with supporters cheering them on. The atmosphere was incredible with a "street party sort of vibe" and an amazing sense of camaraderie between the runners.

As well as the great atmosphere was the inescapable pain. Chrissie's run was a particularly painful experience as she injured her knee at mile 10 after tripping on a water bottle left by another runner. What is amazing about her race is that she was not only running for those the Women's Section aims to help but that she helped other runners along the way. At mile 8 a lady fell in front of her so rather than focus on her own race, Chrissie waited with the runner until a medic appeared. The pain from her injury, which we have since learned needs surgery, was so great that at miles 15 and 18, Chrissie thought she was going to have to give up. What



Picture by Marathonfoto



kept her going was the knowledge of how much money had been raised to sponsor her. She worked out it was around £170 per mile and the thought of that, pushed her through. Despite the pain, the highlights for Chrissie were going over Tower Bridge and seeing Chelsea Pensioners at mile 25. One of the best feelings was definitely crossing the finish line after such a dramatic course. "I was in absolute agony but it was an amazing feeling"! Proud for getting herself to the end, she picked up her medal and marathon goody bag and met her husband. They sat down and she burst into tears (of relief), "then I nearly cried when I tried to stand up again!" she said laughing.

Having never run a marathon before, or any length of race, this was something Chrissie had wanted to do this since the age of 15 – she fancied the challenge. Why the Women's Section? "I wanted to fundraise for a charity who I knew would use wisely any money raised. I also wanted to be able to help other military wives". Chrissie raised an incredible £4.5 thousand in total for the Women's Section. A truly remarkable achievement.

Daryl described the race as being psychological as well as physical. Every inch of your body is telling you stop and it is all down to what goes on in your head as to whether you pull-out or keep going. He said he had to choose

to not think about the pain and concentrate on his pace. Highlights for Daryl were seeing his family en route and when children came out of the crowds to tap hands with him as he ran along. Other than his training, it was the support, sponsorship and comments on Facebook that kept him going. "You think of all those who have supported you and that carries you to the line". Daryl completed the marathon in his fastest time yet – 3 hours and 39 minutes. Not satisfied with a personal best, he was disappointed he missed his target by 9 minutes! What was the first thing Daryl did after collecting his medal? Go for a pizza and mint tea – he said he wasn't

up to beer at that stage!

Having previously run 3 marathons, Daryl is not stopping at this his fourth. He has places for the Berlin Marathon in September and Chicago in October. Daryl will continue to run for the Women's Section and chose us as his charity because of his time at Head Office. Having seen the work we do and the commitment of our volunteers, Daryl said he wanted to support us in some way.

Why is Daryl doing this? It is a physical and mental test for him. Such extremes challenge your character, "you come out stronger when you put yourself through such a tough process, you feel sharper". It's of course not just about the race itself but the training involved to get him there. Here at Head Office we witnessed Daryl's commitment first-hand. At 5pm he would regularly swap his work clothes for 'training gear' and run from our office in London Bridge to his home in Essex!

If you would like to sponsor Daryl, you can do so by visiting his Virgin Money Giving Fundraising Page at uk.virginmoneygiving.com/DarylWilliams. He has currently raised nearly £600 – so another £400 and he will reach his target of £1000.

We are truly inspired by Chrissie and Daryl's achievement and watch this space for whoever takes the baton next!



2p Mile Challenge on the Runway

Members of Norfolk County have been busy collecting 2p's for the challenge of collecting enough to cover a mile – that's 63,360 coins! On 16th July, with the help of local schools and other organisations, members will lay out coins on Coltishall airfield and will have an aerial photo taken to record their attempt. They have been putting posters around their towns and placing collecting boxes in as many outlets as possible. A local Barclays have allowed them to put two stalls in the bank and have promised to match the amount raised.



Carrying the Standard

Well done to Handforth's Deputy Standard Bearer who paraded for the first time at a recent event in Chester. The Branch's Standard Bearer has been unwell for over two years and we wish her a speedy recovery.



Edinburgh Half Marathon

Elizabeth Wood, 20, from County Durham, ran the Edinburgh Half Marathon on 25th May, to raise money for the Women's Section. She was joined by around 300,000 runners at the Edinburgh Marathon Festival and completed the race in 1 hour 36 minutes – a personal best! Elizabeth has been a long-distance runner since the age of 9 and is a 5th generation Women's Section member.



Generous Birthday Spirit

Doreen Smith, Chairman of Minster & Monkton Branch, recently celebrated her 80th Birthday with a party for friends and family. She requested that instead of presents, donations be split between the Women's Section and Great Ormond's Street Paediatric Care Research. Guests raised an amazing £220 for our welfare work.



Merit for Keynsham Member

Congratulations to Mrs Mary Buck who was presented with a Merit Award in recognition of her outstanding dedication and service over many years to Keynsham Branch. She was presented with the award by County Chairman Mrs Monica Summers.



A Guard's Reward

Ex-Grenadier Guard and Wiltshire County RBL Ceremonial Officer, Mr B Mitchell, took Mrs Amanda Barryman, to Buckingham Palace for HM The Queen's presentation of new colours to the Grenadier Guards. He did this as a reward for Amanda's hard work leading to her success as winner of the South-West Standard Bearer's Competition. She since went on to gain joint-third place in the National Standard Bearer's Competition.



Lest we Forget: A Harley-Davidson Fan

Chairman of Badsey, Aldington & Wickhamford Branch, Mrs Bet Westmacott passed away on 31st March after a short illness. Members were unaware of how ill she was and she had chaired her last meeting just four days before. Bet was a Harley-Davidson motorbike fanatic and at the dedication of a new Branch Standard in June last year, the Legion Riders made sure she had a memorable day. It was also a day that all who attended will remember Bet by.



May Day Spectacular

Croxley Green's fundraising coffee morning fell on May Day this year, so they couldn't resist entering into the spirit by dressing up as May Queens and Morris Dancers. To the amusement of many, some even skipped around the tables to the tunes of Floral Dance and English Country Garden. One Branch member had fresh lily of the valley in her headdress, as it is the flower associated with May. The sound of Morris dancers' bells jingled throughout the morning and a good time was had by all.



65 Years for Puddletown

Earlier this year, Puddletown Branch in Dorset, celebrated 65 years with a Thanksgiving Service and Anniversary Tea. They were delighted to welcome past National Vice-Chairman Marilyn Humphry; Dorset County President, Sophie Digby; County Vice President, Marianne Moores; County Chairman, Sue Freeborough and County Treasurer, Geri Rufus. Despite the rain and power cuts, they had a lovely day!



Proud Parents

Past National Parade Marshal, Helen Richardson and her husband Ian, travelled with 85 guests to their son's wedding in Spain at the Hotel Cortijo Bravo. The venue was exclusive to family and friends who had made the journey for the happy occasion. Ian proudly took on the role of Best Man and guests watched as Lee and Charlotte married in a beautiful setting overlooking the hills near Velez Malaga. Several days of celebrations were enjoyed by all.



Merit Award in Lincolnshire

Congratulations to the Lincolnshire County Chairman who received a Merit Award for her work for the Women's Section. It was presented to her at the County Conference last year by the Vice-Chairman at the time, Marilyn Humphry, and Margaret Earley, Central Committee.



Strike a Pose

Cirencester Branch held a Fashion Show in October last year, raising £1,700 for the Women's Section. Local shops supported the event and showed off their Autumn Collection on the catwalk. The show was a complete sell-out and they have been asked to put on another one next year!



A Special Birthday

Happy 100th Birthday to Dorothy Baxter from Horsted Keynes Branch! Dorothy celebrated 100 years in April with a party of 80 friends and relatives who enjoyed a delicious lunch with her. She has been a member of the Women's Section since 1962 when the Branch was founded. Dorothy is a remarkable lady and full of fun!



£1000 Charity Concert

Swaffham Branch, in Norfolk, presented a cheque for £1000 at their County Conference last year. They raised this incredible amount at a concert they organised with performances from Marham Bluebells (a military wives choir) and Suffolk Constabulary Police Choir. From left to right: Branch Chairman, Iris Reeve; Branch Secretary/ Standard Bearer, Frances Barker; County Treasurer, Bridget Mayes and Branch Treasurer, Irene Gibbons.

50 Years and counting...

Mrs Vera Cox of Stamford Bridge Branch, was presented with a certificate and badge to mark 50 years of collecting for the RBL annual Poppy Appeal. Vera, whose father was badly injured during the First World War, was a founder member of the Branch in 1950. She was first asked to help with the poppy collection in 1964. Mr Gordon Peel (pictured right), the local Poppy Appeal organiser who presented the award, said that Vera must have collected a huge amount over the years, which will have made a significant difference to the lives of countless ex-service men and their families. The County Coordinator of the appeal Mr Ernie Oldfield (left), said that Vera's dedication was a prime example of the Legion's motto "Service Not Self".



Thank You!

At a special lunch last year, members of Walsingham & District Branch presented their retiring Chairman and Treasurer with gifts as a thank you for all their hard work over the years. Miss Joan Sheaf (pictured right), served for 38 years as their Chairman and Miss Betty Howe (left) was Treasurer for 42 years.



Belper in Bloom for WW1 Centenary

Belper Branch has joined forces with their local RBL Branch to commemorate 100 years since WW1. After receiving the farmer's permission, they ploughed an enormous WW1 on the hillside of Belper and sowed it with poppy seeds that will bloom in summer. They have also strategically placed jam-jars around the town to collect money for an oak tree to be planted in the Belper Memorial Garden.



Fundraising



Sponsored Scuba Dive

Janet Moyse, 66, from Saltash Branch, Cornwall, dived into the shores off Tenerife in April to raise money for the Women's Section.

A discussion between members of Janet's Branch about different ways they could fundraise culminated in her volunteering to do a sponsored scuba dive on her holiday in Tenerife.

Janet felt in safe hands as she took the plunge with ex-Services diving instructor Geoff Bidwell's company: the Atlantic Divers of Costa del Silencio. She was taken down 20 metres into the sea by Zeke, who took a photo of her holding the Saltash Branch banner with pride.

Residents of Greenwich Place (sheltered accommodation for ex-Royal Navy and ex-Royal Marines), Saltash Bowling Club (of which Janet is a member) and local RBL members include those who sponsored her to raise over £150.

Janet's fundraising activities are not stopping here, she is thinking of doing a sponsored abseil next year if she can find a friendly Royal Marine to help!

Stomach for Heights

On 3 May, the very brave and courageous Military Wife & Girlfriend Branch member, Michelle Thomas, abseiled an incredible 100 metres down the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth. The tower is taller than Big Ben, the London Eye and Blackpool Tower. It was a huge challenge and she managed to raise over £200.

