



The Legacy

The Newsletter of the
Shaftesbury & District Branch
Royal British Legion

Edition 1/2024

April 2024

Your 2024 Committee

President	Commodore R AY Bridges
Vice-President	Brigadier A G Hughes CBE
Chairman/Welfare	Robin Miller
Vice-Chairman	Vacant
Hon Secretary	Pam Curry
Hon Treasurer	Don Curry
Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO)	Robin Miller and small committee
Membership Secretary	Robin Miller
PR/Publicity	Robin Miller
Hall Bookings Officer	David Taylor
Standard Bearer	Patrick Sharpe
Branch Delegate	Vacant
Webmaster	Vacant
Branch Chaplain	Vacant
Committee Members	Mrs Sue Minshaw, Ms C.DiMarino, W.Sherriff, Mrs Jo Slade, Jenny Weston, Mrs E.Everson

Legion Welfare

Current trends and increases in financial costs which reduce monetary purchasing power include: rising inflation; soaring energy costs; salaries and pensions failing to match inflation levels; high taxes; supply chain difficulties; surging demand; higher production and transport costs; and reductions in relief funding.

The Legion sustains a remarkable programme of support to Servicemen and women, ex-Servicemen and women and their eligible dependants. It has seen a 35% increase in the number of beneficiaries and households supported during the last year. The increase has been across nearly all service areas, and has in the main been driven by the cost-of-living crisis. Main themes of support have been finances, housing, and mental wellbeing, with crisis and energy costs seeing radical increases. The Legion's grants to individuals programme far exceeded that of the previous year, with various initiatives awarding 29,000 grants totalling £18 million. Notable among those is the need for energy grants, which take up 27% of the total. The exceptional rise in energy costs has dominated and cost charities dear, and sadly affected their ability to support other needy areas of support. It is also noteworthy that 23% of all applicants were still serving in His Majesty's armed forces, and beneficiaries from Northern Ireland more than doubled. Up to the end of September 2023, grants in Dorset County totalled £141,000, with housing, energy and mobility top of the list. Thirty years ago, the paperwork for support took up to two weeks or more with local volunteers. Today, with a totally professional nation-wide infrastructure of case workers and digitisation, it now takes just two days. Anyone with a welfare or general query can always ring the Legion national helpline on 0808 802 8080 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. seven days a week. You would be advised to ring later in the day as the lines are swamped earlier.

Poppy Appeal 2023-2024

Thanks to a wonderful team of volunteer deliverers, we issued 180 poppy boxes and 40 wreaths for the appeal. At the time of writing we have raised £17,580, of which £635 was from donations for wreaths and £725 from Bingo. We received a special donation of £209 from the 12 ex-Service residents, and wardens of Guys Marsh Prison. Donations were 18% from cheques, 43% from notes and 39% from coin. Our annual total will continue to rise in the next few months, as the end of the appeal year is on 30 September, when the national total is hoped to be near the usual £50 million. There is always a need for more Poppy Appeal collectors, who do not need to be Legion members; if you wish to volunteer please contact (01747) 854765, or come to a coffee morning on Thursdays between 10:00 and 11:15.

Poppy Appeal Bingo

Evening sessions take place usually on the last Friday of each month in the Legion Hall, doors open 6.45 p.m. and eyes down at 7:30. Attendance is continuing to grow, and the effort is very worthwhile, as in addition to raising funds for the appeal everyone has an enjoyable evening out.

Christmas 2024 Honey Sales

Honeycomb and honey sales made £56 for the Poppy Appeal this year, and 40 members and friends were provided with Christmas honey and honeycomb. Our supplier in West Moors again kindly let us have the stock at wholesale prices and we sold it at retail prices, with proceeds forwarded to the Poppy Appeal. He has 140 hives, uses queens specially bred in Denmark (which are good-tempered and productive) and his bees cover a wide area with different crops, including heather, chestnut and wild flowers. Local farmers encourage him to keep his hives adjacent to their crops, with a planted border of wild flowers to promote crop pollination. This year's harvest in quality and quantity was excellent in spite of the excessive rains, with 4 tons of honey being produced. We should all remember that it takes 12 bees their lifetime work to produce one teaspoonful of honey.

ANZAC Day 2024

Allied casualties in this First World War campaign included 21,255 from the United Kingdom, an estimated 10,000 dead from France, 8,709 from Australia, 2,721 from New Zealand, and 1,358 from British India. This year we have again arranged a brief and informal ceremony at 11 a.m. on Thursday 25 April to commemorate the 109th anniversary of ANZAC Day at the Town Memorial on Park Walk, Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury Town Councillors, the Town Clerk and Town Hall Staff will be invited. There will be no parade or church service as at Remembrance, but anyone who wishes to attend, including members of local organisations and the public are invited to assemble at the Town Memorial on Park Walk at 10.50 a.m. for the exhortation, followed by a simple wreath-laying by the Mayor. Medals and decorations may be worn. Please bring a sprig of rosemary if you can - it is of particular traditional significance because it grows wild on the slopes of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

VE Day Wednesday 8 May 2024, and VJ Day Thursday 15 August 2024

Solemn ceremonies at the Town Memorial on Park Walk, Shaftesbury will take place on each day at 11 a.m. to commemorate the anniversaries of these two historic events. There will be no parade, but the Mayor, Shaftesbury Town Councillors, and Town Hall staff will be invited to join members of the public who wish to attend a solemn exhortation, followed by a simple wreath-laying by the Mayor and Royal British Legion. Medals and decorations may be worn. Watch the local Press and notice boards for information.

D-Day 80th Anniversary

This year, Thursday 6 June is the 80th anniversary of D-Day, which opened the Normandy Campaign and the eventual relief of Paris. A seaborne landing on a heavily defended enemy coast is about the most hazardous operation of all. Yet in the largest, most complex and ambitious operation of its type ever attempted, on 6 June 1944, 3 million Allied soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines from 30 different countries co-operated to storm the French coastline at what was then perceived to be a weak point in the 2,000 mile long Atlantic Wall. Six divisions landed on five beaches, and three more airborne divisions were dropped to protect the flanks in the biggest sea-borne invasion in history. By nightfall on D-Day, 176,000 troops were

ashore and establishing hard-fought-for beachheads. During Operation Overlord the Allies destroyed forty German divisions, including many elite and battle-hardened panzer formations, two-thirds of those arrayed against them.

Shaftesbury Town Council has arranged a wreath laying ceremony at the Town Memorial on Park Walk at 1100 on 6 June 2024, and later an illustrated presentation in the Town Hall to commemorate the event. Watch the local Press, posters, and the ever-helpful “This is Alfred” podcast for full details.

The Legion will be marking the 80th anniversary with events arranged in UK and Normandy on 5th and 6th June as follows:-

Landings:

Date and time: 5th June 2024 at 5 p.m.

Location: Bayeux War Cemetery, France

British National Event to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings:

Date and time: 6th June 2024, daytime (time to be confirmed)

Location: British Normandy Memorial, Ver-sur-Mer, France

National Memorial Arboretum D-Day 80 Service:

Date and time: 6th June 2024 at 2 p.m.

Location: National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire UK

In addition to D-Day, 2024 also marks the 80th anniversary of other momentous battles of the Second World War:

18th May 2024 - End of the Battle of Monte Cassino.

22nd June 2024 - End of the Battle of Kohima.

18th July 2024 - End of the Battle of Imphal.

25th September 2024 - End of Operation Market Garden.

8th November 2024 - End of the Battle of the Scheldt.

Membership

The annual membership subscription is £18. Serving or retired Servicemen and women, and their dependants are eligible to join, as is anyone (even with no Service connections) who subscribes to the aims and objectives of the Legion. Anyone wishing to join should contact the Chairman on (01747) 854765, or visit the regular Thursday morning coffee sessions at the Legion Hall, Coppice Street, from 10 a.m. to 11:15. We presently have 121 members, 20 of whom live away from Shaftesbury. Every existing member is asked to support the permanent recruitment drive.

New members may join:

Online at <britishlegion.org.uk/membership>.

By telephone and credit or debit card on 0808 802 8080, but ring p.m., as earlier lines are usually very busy.

Or with a paper application provided by the branch.

By far the simplest way to pay is by Direct Debit, and the membership department will send you a DD form to fill in if you request it by telephone on the 0808 number above. Currently 72% of our membership pays by DD, well above the national average.

Affiliated Organisations

Our group has five youth and five adult organisations affiliated to the branch. We still await the Legion adoption of the adult scheme nationally, something we have been trying to achieve since 2018. Any charitable or volunteer organisation wishing to join the mutually supporting members of the affiliation group should contact the Chairman on (01747) 854765.

Branch Social Events

Thursday coffee mornings, presentations, lunches and monthly bingo sessions are in full swing. See the full diary date list below.

Legion Hall Bookings

The Hall is open for the use of other organisations. It has facilities for 60 seated and 70 standing, and has warm heating, a fully equipped kitchen, a committee room, and disabled access. For all booking enquiries please contact David Taylor on 07720 443319 or email djtdjt1@djtdjt1.plus.com.

Branch History

Shaftesbury and District Branch RBL was formed on 18 November 1922. To commemorate that occasion the Mayor and Councillors presented the branch with a fine framed scroll at the 2022 AGM, which now proudly adorns our main hall wall for all to see. Originally formed on 15 May 1921 to bring together four national organisations of ex-Service personnel established after the Great War of 1914-1918, the Legion as a whole celebrated its centenary in 1921. Its purpose was to care for those who had suffered as a result of service in the Armed Forces in the Great War, whether through their own service or through that of a husband, father or son. It was granted "Royal" status in 29 May 1971, on its 50th anniversary, after when membership included serving members of HM Forces.

Diary Dates (watch notice boards outside the Post Office and Jean's Sweetshop, This is Alfred podcast, and the local Press). The Christmas 2024 programme is to follow in the October edition of "Legacy".

Thursday 11 April 2024 - presentation on Napoleon by Commodore Richard Bridges, followed by quiche and coleslaw.

Thursday 25 April 2024 - 109th anniversary of ANZAC Day.

Friday 26 April 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.

Wednesday 8 May 2024 - VE Day.

Friday 31 May 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.

Thursday 6 June 2024 - 80th anniversary of D Day.

Friday 28 June 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.

Saturday 29 June 2024 - Armed Forces Day.

June - August Holidays.

Thursday 15 August 2024 - VJ Day.

Thursday 12 September 2024 - presentation by Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Graham CB CBE on the Mesopotamia Campaign 1916/17, followed by fish or chicken and chips.

Sunday 15 September 2024 – Battle of Britain Sunday.

Friday 27 September 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.

Friday 25 October 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.

Sunday 10 November - Remembrance Day.

Monday 11 November 2024 - 11/11/11 ceremony outside the Town Hall.

Thursday 14 November 2024 - Branch AGM 10:30.

Friday 29 November 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.

Friday 13 December 2024 - Poppy Appeal Bingo. Doors open 6.45 p.m.