ST JAMES’S BRANCH

NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2016

www.rbl-stjames.org.uk
The Legion’s Annual Conference will be held on Saturday 21st – Sunday 22nd May 2016 at the Devonshire Park Centre, Eastbourne and at our branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2015 it was agreed that the branch would fund three delegates, including our Standard Bearer. The Delegates will be Mr Tod O’Brien (Branch Secretary), Mr John Robson (Standard Bearer) and Mrs Carole Organ. Mr Adrian deVilliers will also be attending as a delegate but on a self-funding basis.

At the AGM it was unanimously agreed that the branch should propose a Charter Motion for debate at the Annual Conference. The proposed motion concerned the Women’s Section and it’s relevance within the Royal British Legion. In accordance with the procedures the motion was submitted to the National Branches District Conference and again it was passed unanimously. The motion, which is reproduced below, will now appear on the agenda for the Legion’s Annual Conference and we look forward to a lively debate.

**CHARTER
MOTION 1**

Proposed by:

St James's

This Conference calls for the disbandment of the Women’s Section and the full integration of their members into the Royal British Legion; and resolves that the following related changes are made to the Royal Charter:

Page 6, Article 7, delete in entirety.
Page 10, Rule 2(a)(iii), delete in entirety.
Page 10, Rule 5, delete in entirety.
Page 11, Rule 7(d), delete in entirety.
Page 11, Rule 11, delete in entirety.
Page 12, Rule 12(d), delete “other than the Chairman of the Women’s Section,“.
Page 16, Rule 35, delete in entirety.

**Reason for Inclusion**

Full integration of the Women’s Section within the main body of the Legion is necessary to send a clear message about the equality that the Legion already embraces.

**Effect if passed**

The Women’s Section will no longer exist as a separate entity within the Royal British Legion.

**Main Argument**

The Women’s Section was formed in 1922 to acknowledge the role that women played in all aspects of Service life. It was a time when women were unfairly treated in society and didn’t even have the vote.

Society has now moved on and women are protected in law from discrimination in education and the workplace. The Army, The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have all disbanded their women’s only branches and women now serve alongside men on the front line. What message does the Royal British Legion send if we continue to have a separate women’s organisation within our organisation? Are people more or less likely to support a charity which appears to be gender biased and out of step with the rest of society?

Members of the Women’s Section have done a fantastic job over the last nearly 100 years particularly with their support to other women and children. But they are increasingly perceived as an outdated anachronism. It is time that the Royal British Legion affirms its support for the diversity and advancement of all people within its membership irrespective of gender. We must portray ourselves itself as a modern and welcoming reflection of the community we serve.

Additional background information on the reasons for the proposed motion is contained in the letter from the proposer, Mr T O’Brien
THE WOMEN'S SECTION

Introduction.

Over several years now, there have been many discussions in our committee and more informally within the St James Branch as to the need for a separate Women's Section. Some of the arguments put forward have been the excellent work that they do for our beneficiaries and that historically there was a need for a Women's Section to recognise all women and the role they have played in the fabric of Service life as both servicewomen and partners of service people.

I have personally, when attending Royal British Legion training courses and events when raising this issue, been told by Women's Section members, that the Legion does not have the authority to change the status of the Women's Section, as it would be "ultra vires" and beyond the authority of the Trustees to do so. I have also been told that it is a "private club" and therefore beyond the remit of the Equality Act which is the law responsible for equality and anti-discrimination in U.K.

This is clearly not the case either under the Royal Charter where the Trustees have full responsibility for the Policy and Administration of the Charity and under the Equality Act as interpreted by the Charity Commission.

Main Argument.

During these formal and informal discussions, it was recognised by all in the Branch that these arguments did not apply anymore and that society had moved on considerably from when the Women's Section was first formed. It was further felt that in order to integrate all women into the Royal British Legion and not keep them, as a separate silo, was of paramount importance in order to show the communities we serve that we are a fully integrated organisation that provides both internally and externally the same service to everyone.

The Women's Section was formed in 1922 to acknowledge the role that women played in all aspects of Service life and to further acknowledge the role of ex-servicewomen in the service of the country in the Armed Services. The Royal British legion blazed a trail in the emancipation and recognition of women's full role in society long before the eventual emancipation of women generally, which was only fully recognised in law when women over 21 years old received the vote in 1928, the same as men.

Society has now moved on and women are protected in law from discrimination in education, the workplace and particularly in all three services. They no longer are differentiated against in terms of pay, conditions, rank or service benefits and have recently been recognised into combatant roles in all three services. This is of course absolutely right and proper, however it now begs the question, why do we need a separate Women's Section?

If the Royal British legion, which is a community facing organisation and charity wishes to reflect women's role in our modern society, what questions does it raise in the minds of all men and women if there seems to be a need for a separate organisation within it, based purely on the gender of a member? Are young men and women more or less likely to join an organisation, which seems out of step with the rest of society, a society that has done so much within the last, nearly 100 years, to raise the profile of women across the whole of society?

The Women's Section shares exactly the same vision and mission in ensuring that all beneficiaries are served fairly and equally by the Royal British Legion and no other section within the organisation differentiates on gender or any other protected characteristic (Colour, Race, Disability, Religion and Belief, Age, Marriage, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy or Re-Assignment) under the Laws of the land. The Women's Section may now be an outdated anachronism.

If we wish to ensure that the skills and abilities of all our women members are reflected throughout the organisation right up to and including the Board of Trustees and that there is a proportionate reflection of women members throughout, then there is no need for the Women's Section anymore.

If the Royal British Legion wishes to affirm and support the diversity and advancement of all people within its membership irrespective of difference and portray itself as a modern and welcoming reflection of the community we serve, then one form of membership for all must be the clarion call for the future.

It is also significant that the Women's Section have several members of permanent staff at Haig House dedicated to work for the Section, staff who could be redeployed across all our important work for our beneficiaries and
that the progression of women in the Royal British legion seems to be hindered rather than helped by the presence of a Women's Section. This is substantiated by the fact that there have traditionally been very few women Trustees on the Board and this is reflected once again this year in the nominations for National Chairman, National Vice Chairman and The Board of Trustees where only four women have been nominated amongst a total of nineteen nominees. I wonder how many will eventually be selected? This does not reflect well given that 51% of the British population is female. How long shall we remain a male dominated organisation in the climate of today's society?

The Branch therefore decided to put forward a motion to conference in essence that states: -

All Women members become full members of the Legion removing the need for a separate Women's Section.

Conclusion.

We as a Branch believe strongly that this motion should succeed and this is reflected in the actions of the Board of Trustees, who a month after this motion was successful at the St James Branch Annual General Meeting, notified that they were setting up a working group to explore moving the Women's Section to a National District. This would in effect allow the Women's Section to continue, albeit in a modified way. This is felt by our Branch to be a halfway house and a compromise that does not address the issue fully.

Historically and seemingly against the odds the St James Branch motion was successfully debated at the National Branches District Conference on Saturday 23rd January 2016 and is to go forward to National Conference in May.

We would urge other Branches to support this motion for the benefit of all current and new members.

Tod O'Brien
Secretary
St James Branch
The National Memorial Arboretum is the UK’s year-round centre of Remembrance; a spiritually uplifting place which honours the fallen, recognises service and sacrifice, and fosters pride in our country and is part of The Royal British Legion family of charities. In 2010 a request was received from the National President and National Chairman encouraging Branches to support ‘remembrance’ at the NMA by helping to fund the construction of a new Remembrance Learning Centre that would enable the NMA to double its work with children of all ages. The St James’s Branch agreed to contribute £50,000.

Work began on the construction of the new Centre in September 2015 and on 15 March 2016 the Branch Chairman was invited to the "topping out" ceremony to mark the completion of the highest point of the building. In front of an audience of major supporters, trustees and the project team the final stone was laid by Sarah Montgomery (Managing Director of the Arboretum), Lt Col Whimpenny (Board of Trustees and a member of the St James’s Branch) together with Major General Patrick Cordingley (Chair of the Appeal Council).
007 GOES TO KENYA

‘Spectre’, the 24th Bond film, opened in the UK on Monday 26 October 2015. Just like millions of others I booked tickets to see Daniel Craig’s fourth appearance in the title role. After the success of ‘Skyfall’, the new Bond movie was hotly anticipated, and everyone in my office, bar none, had been talking about it for weeks on end. It did not disappoint and was all it promised to be, and more.

Leaving the cinema, my thoughts turned to my son, 4,500 miles away in Kenya, training with British Army, 2 Mercian Battle Group. It occurred to me that for most of us, popping into the cinema is an affordable pleasure, and the shared experience of seeing and gossiping about the latest blockbuster an everyday joy.

But not so for our armed forces. Just one small example of the impact which comes with serving your country. So, I decided to see if I could get the new Bond movie shown to 1,200 British troops in Nanyuki, Kenya on Friday 20 November, the day they were due back from a 7-week training exercise.

Just by chance, a colleague at work had served with Col Tom Vallings, Commanding Officer of the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK) and agreed to sound him out.

One phone call later, Col Vallings was fully engaged, and sworn to secrecy. This, he said, would be a welcomed surprise for the troops after their magnificent hard work during training exercises in the searing heat at Archers Post.

Time was short, so I set about contacting everyone I knew in film distribution, cinema and advertising world who might give me a steer. Everyone was supportive – and along came many generous offers, including Land Rover who agreed to set up a free showing in a 500 seater cinema in Nakuru.

But, the scale of the challenge mounted when we discovered that the movie was not due to open States-side until 6 November. There was understandable reluctance to release the movie before then.

In the end, the breakthrough came from the redoubtable Nicky Ness at SSVC (Services Sound and Vision Corporation). After weeks of negotiation with MGM, who hold worldwide rights to ‘Spectre’, the good news emerged that the Bond movie had finally been reformatted and loaded onto SSVC’s Cinelink box along with a number of other movies.

The bad news: we had run out of time to get the box delivered by DHL to meet our target date. Step forward Capt. Paul Kelly, Unit Welfare Officer BATUK. With calm efficiency, he arranged for a hand carry from London to Nairobi and transport across the 200 miles to Nanyuki in the foothills of Mount Kenya.

The result? The iconic 007’s latest outing ‘Spectre’ was unveiled to our troops in Nanyuki before it hit the screens in America. The cinema? Where else but the cook house where the screen consisted of a set of sheets joined together. But we pulled it off! Going forward, a decent screen and sound system would be much appreciated please…

With the Cinelink box in place, there is now the permanent facility to show films to British troops in 4 locations in Kenya; in Kifaru, in Nanyuki at the main BATUK location, at the airfield base for 9 Regt AAC and at a new camp for the exercising troops. The British Government has recently signed a new 5-year agreement with the Kenyan Government for British troops to train in Kenya. Each year there are between 10,000 to 12,000 British troops training there, supported by a permanent BATUK staff and their families. BATUK have very limited welfare resources and soldiers and their families face a number of challenges living in Kenya. Restriction of movement means that troops spend nearly all of their off duty time in camp, where entertainment is thin on the ground.

There was another unexpected bonus. SSVC also managed to get ‘Spectre’ out to British Army personnel in Afghanistan. The double whammy of Kabul and Kenya requests helped to fire the imagination of MGM to give clearances.

Cinema has always played an important role in raising morale, and providing an escape from life’s concerns. Col Vallings commented ‘The 2 Mercian Battle Group all watched the film on their last night before flying back to UK and it made a huge impression on them all after a most demanding exercise for the last 7 weeks. It really made them feel valued’
QDG troops about to watch the Bond movie in Kifaru

Follow this link to find out more about the recent Battle Group training exercise in Kenya
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35051685

Supporting cast: Peter Cowie and William Parry, Oystercatchers; Peter Buckingham, Sampomedia; Phil Clapp, UK Cinema Association; Jerry Murdoch, Ymagis; Mark Cann, British Forces Foundation; Bob Gamble, Royal British Legion; George Bryant, Brooklyn Brothers.

Helen Owen
St James’s Branch
MORE FLEXIBLE COMPENSATION FOR VETERANS WITH CANCER CAUSED BY ASBESTOS

The Royal British Legion asked the MOD to consider offering lump sums - the MOD has listened and is correcting the disadvantage faced by some veterans when compared to their civilian counterparts.

Veterans with diffuse mesothelioma can now choose whether to receive lump sum payments of £140,000, or regular smaller payments, giving them more control of their finances. The changes to the scheme give it similar features to one for civilians, underlining the government’s commitment the Armed Forces Covenant. The Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve and have served are treated fairly.

Mesothelioma is a cancer mainly caused by exposure to asbestos some 40 years or more before diagnosis and there is a short life expectancy afterwards. As such, it is important to ensure the MOD offers the right support to those affected by this disease.

The War Pensions Scheme provides weekly or monthly payments and also benefits for dependents. However, comparisons have been made with the recently introduced Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme, which provides lump sums for eligible civilians.

Veterans diagnosed from today with mesothelioma as a result of their military service prior to 6 April 2005 will have the option of receiving a one-off payment of £140,000 under the War Pensions Scheme. Claimants who prefer the current arrangements can opt to receive weekly or monthly payments.

Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans, Mark Lancaster MP, said:

I have decided that a policy change is required to introduce enhanced arrangements for mesothelioma sufferers. These veterans protected the nation with honour, courage and commitment, and we have listened to their concerns to ensure they are treated with the fairness and respect they deserve.

Legislative provisions will be made to enable lump sums to be paid from 11 April 2016. Those choosing a lump sum whose claim is accepted prior to this date will receive the current allowances in the interim, until the lump sum is paid. The MOD’s Veterans Welfare Service will be on hand to help claimants with understanding the details and choices available.

For those currently in receipt of weekly or monthly payments, the MOD is considering whether any further assistance by way of a lump sum can be provided to them.
Armed Forces personnel posted overseas will now be able to rent out their homes without facing higher mortgage costs or having to change their mortgage. The commitment from the UK’s biggest high street banks will benefit almost 265,000 people in the UK and abroad, including Forces families. The move came ahead of an Armed Forces Covenant roundtable meeting of banking chiefs and Ministers at No.10 Downing Street on Thursday 14 January where a range of further measures to help service personnel and their families were discussed.

Currently, members of Armed Forces who rent out their homes during deployment have to change their residential mortgage to a buy-to-let mortgage, often incurring new product charges and an increased rate of interest. Under the new agreement they will no longer have to change their mortgage product, saving them time and money.

Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group, Santander UK, Royal Bank of Scotland and Nationwide - the UK’s biggest building society – will all offer the support.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

Looking after your home and your money can be more of a challenge when deployed on operations or serving abroad. This is a welcome first step from the major banks and financial institutions to help our servicemen and women get a better mortgage deal.

I look forward to further pledges from across the financial services sector to support the Armed Forces Covenant.

Anthony Browne, Chief Executive Officer of the British Banking Association said: “Members of our Armed Forces work all over the world to look after us, so it’s only right that we look after them. The extra support proposed by the banks and the Ministry of Defence will make sure service personnel and their families are not disadvantaged for working aboard and make their mortgages and credit history fairer.”

Of the nearly 800 business signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant, 29 are from the financial services sector.

Other measures discussed at the roundtable were aimed at meeting the unique pressures of service personnel and their families, whose jobs require them to relocate and move more often than in civilian life. Problems can arise because the financial services sector has difficulty recognising the postcodes of UK military bases abroad - the British Forces Postal Order index provided for free by the Royal Mail - as UK addresses. Time spent serving their country from UK military bases abroad can affect the Forces community’s credit history, and cause difficulties when applying for products that civilians take for granted, for example mortgages and bank accounts. The Forces can also lose out on benefits and cost savings, like no claims bonuses and discounts, which is being discussed with the insurance industry.
HAVE YOU SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES SINCE 1975?

If so, it's possible that you have an unclaimed preserved pension, that is payable at age 60 or 65. If you think you may be entitled to a preserved pension, the following information may help you to understand if you may qualify. The two Armed Forces Pension Schemes that you may qualify under are AFPS 75 and AFPS 05.

AFPS 75 pension benefits are based on rank and length of Service. This scheme was in place for individuals who joined between 6 April 1975 and 5 April 2005. Pensions are payable at age 60 for service prior to 6 April 2006 and at age 65 for service after this date under this scheme. Benefits payable at age 65 under this scheme can be paid at age 60, with a deduction made for early payment.

AFPS 05 pension benefits are based on length of Service and the best 365 days of Final Pensionable Earnings in the last three years of service. This scheme was in place for those who joined on or after 6 April 2005. However, personnel who were in service on this date who were members of AFPS 75, were given the option to transfer to AFPS 05. Pensions are normally paid at age 65 under this scheme unless an application is made to have them paid early at an actuarially reduced rate.

There are some differences between the schemes that cover both retired benefits and dependents benefits. To find out more about the benefits please visit GOV.UK and search for Armed Forces and Reserve Forces pension schemes guidance booklets.

Before 6 April 1975 there was no provision for the payment of preserved pensions and Service personnel who left the Armed Forces had to have either:

- completed 16 years service from age 21 if they were an Officer or;
- completed 22 years service from age 18 if they were Other ranks.

before they qualified for pension benefits, unless they left the Services on invaliding terms, for which separate rules apply. Those who left before that date without completing the above criteria lost all pension entitlement.

From 6 April 1975 pensions could be preserved for payment at age 60 for all those who left the service and at the time were over the age of 26 with a minimum of five years service.

On 31 March 1978 the age criteria was removed and on 6 April 1988, the qualifying period was reduced from five to two years.

Preserved pensions have to be claimed at age 60 (or at age 65 for service after 6 April 2006). However, you can claim your preserved pension sooner if you become permanently incapable of any form of full time employment before reaching your preserved pension age.

If you think you are entitled to an Armed Forces Pension that you have not yet claimed, you can do so by completing and returning a paper copy of form AFPS 8 which can be found by visiting GOV.UK and searching for AFPS Preserved Pension Claim form. Details of where to return it to are included on the form.
"Did you get a badge? I got a Badge!" This little exchange, between our Treasurer and Standard Bearer, came at the end of a recent meeting as a result of an earlier debate on what the Royal British Legion offers potential members. More specifically, a debate on the offer made by Royal British Legion St James's Central Branch to any potential new members; in essence, what do they get for their money and should they bother? So, what do we get for our 31p a week annual subscription and is it worth the bother? Food for thought indeed!

I was given my badge in mid-December 1974 by my Father (left), along with a tie, a fully paid up year's subs and my first (legal!) pint on the occasion of my 18th birthday. The enamel badge wasn't the current style, available to all of us, but the one marking me an associate member as I had not served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. Forty-one years on I still wear it, out of respect to the man who gave it to me and because, back when the world wasn't in colour, HM Forces liked their recruits to be able to breathe in and out on a consistent basis without turning blue. They wisely decided they could do without my help and shocked as I was by this miscarriage of justice, I still dream there is an empty Buccaneer on a flight-deck somewhere with my name on the side, ready to scramble! Her Majesty's loss was the British Legion's gain (Many would dispute this, ask our Secretary?) and a different type of service ensued with British Legion (No Royal in those days.) Member No: 15503957 was generated.

In actual fact truth be told this service that had commenced many years before; on countless Sunday afternoons at the Branch watching rehearsals for concert parties, with my Mom, or in early Autumn assembling thousands of Poppies from foil, wire, plastic and paper with my Dad (Branch Chairman). These halcyon days included my Father's branch being awarded the Haig Cup and cold November days in the centre of town running between the RBL members dispensing hot tea whilst they were selling poppies. On the night of my birthday I was also asked to join the Old Aged Pensioners Amenities Fund Committee and support the Welfare Officer on some home visits. I still remember the pride of being thanked by our members for a small job well done when all I seemed to do was sit and listen. Years later that's all I seem to do these days; only in the surroundings of one of our award winning retirement homes.

Membership of The Royal British Legion joins you to an organisation that is constantly evolving to maintain its relevance in a fast moving world. It lends support and volume to its campaigning voice for more comprehensive support to our Armed Forces past and present. You will join the formation of new branches to widen its appeal and support existing members as we evolve to become a leaner organisation. Our work in Dementia care through our specialist units and Admiral Nurses will gain more momentum. The award winning retirement homes will have your support in making even bigger strides towards the future in the care of our elderly population. People you will never meet, who don't even know they will need us yet, will be grateful you joined the other 360,000 members in continuing its 95-year history of excellence in supporting our Servicemen, Servicewomen, their families and dependants. Joining us will ensure remembrance, welfare, campaigning and support carries on into our next century of operations.

So for 31p a week, you will be doing a small job very well indeed, in the knowledge that my Father and I thank you enormously on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of people we have and will be supporting.

By the way, if you do join and you want a badge, I have one going spare!

Warmest regards,

MEMBER 15503957
DID YOU KNOW?

The Royal British Legion Poppy Factory Ltd based in Richmond, London employs approximately 40 full-time workers, most of whom are disabled, making remembrance poppies.

It was established in 1922 and makes approximately 36 million poppies each year.

Since 1922, the Poppy Factory (originally called 'The Disabled Society') has been employing wounded, sick and injured ex-Service personnel in its factory where it makes poppies, crosses and wreaths for the Royal British Legion.

Major George Howson MC, who served on the Western Front, set up The Disabled Society in 1922 with a grant of £2,000 from the British Legion in the Old Kent Road in London with the sole purpose of providing work for severely wounded veterans from the First World War.

In November 1924, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) visited the Poppy Factory, which made 27 million poppies that year. In 1925, the Poppy Factory moved to Richmond-upon-Thames in Surrey and continues to make poppies, remembrance crosses, sprays and wreaths for the Royal British Legion's annual appeal and Remembrance Day. Total production is approximately 36 million poppies each year, although it has been as high as 45 million. It also makes approximately 80,000 poppy wreaths each year, including the wreaths laid by HM The Queen, other members of the Royal Family, and politicians at the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. Wooden tokens of remembrance, originally remembrance crosses but now a variety of shapes for different religions, including for 'no faith' are produced for the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey and other locations throughout the country.

The Royal British Legion Poppy Factory Ltd also assists wounded, injured and sick ex-service men and women to find employment outside the factory and is the country's leading employment charity for veterans with health conditions or impairments.

By providing free, ongoing employment support and bespoke opportunities within businesses across the country, they have helped hundreds of disabled ex-Service men and women to restore their financial independence through sustainable and rewarding careers.

Looking For Work?

It can be difficult when looking for work, but if you are ex-Forces with an injury, illness or medical condition and you are no longer being supported by the Career Transition Partnership as part of your resettlement, The Poppy Factory may be the right people to talk to. The Poppy Factory helps find work for wounded, injured and sick ex-Service personnel with employers across the country. More information and the registration form can be found at http://www.poppyfactory.org/looking-for-work-2.html
FROM THE EDITOR

Now that the Newsletter is only available in electronic format it will enable topical items to be included promptly. Members can send in details of any forthcoming events such as fund raising projects and these can be publicised in advance for a wider awareness. We would also like to include photographs where possible and a follow up item with the result of the amount raised (no amount will be too small for publication).

We would welcome items about visits to Legion ceremonies e.g. Festival of Remembrance, Battlefield visits etc.

If anyone has used any of the Legion facilities e.g. Welfare assistance, Poppy Van, Poppy Breaks, etc it would be helpful if you could share your experiences with our members. Names will not be included without the writer’s express permission.

All articles should be sent to StJames.Committee3@RBL_Community and must contain the sender’s full name and membership number. Articles may be edited and the decision to publish will be the Editor’s. We are looking for positive, constructive and informative articles.