



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Ballymoney Branch

The Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch by Linda Logan

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As the Ballymoney Branch of the Royal British Legion moves towards their centenary year in 2023, it was timely that a proposal was made to the Branch Committee suggesting a publication to record our history. To gather material for this book we have used newspaper archives, Branch minute books, members' photographs, and asked Branch members to contribute.

With such an extensive history it has not been possible to include every event Ballymoney Branch has been involved in, or mention every member by name. We hope that you will enjoy this book, and if you have any photographs or material relating to Ballymoney Royal British Legion then we would be very interested to see it.

The research process has also highlighted that there are names missing from Ballymoney War Memorial. Ballymoney Branch will be carrying out further research at a later date to uncover the missing names. If anyone has any information that can help us in this process, please get in touch.

Hugh Elliott, Vice Chairman, September 2019

Ballymoney Branch, The Royal British Legion,
Townhead Street, Ballymoney, BT53 6BE

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Linda Logan

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CHAPTER 1:

Formation of the British Legion

By 1918, after four long years of war, more than two million British households had been affected by the death or disability of a serviceman. The Ministry of Pensions was struggling with the volume of applications from war widows and injured ex-servicemen, causing long delays. Rules for claiming pension benefits were complex, and Local Committees often refused applications from the officer ranks, believing them able to survive on family money.¹ Demobilised soldiers faced multiple difficulties in the post-war economic situation. Employment opportunities were scarce. Civil Service vacancies had been taken by women, who now did not want to return to their traditional roles in the home. Trade Unions had been strengthened by increased membership, higher wages, and improved working conditions as a result of labour shortages during the war. However, unions were not sympathetic to the need of returning soldiers for employment, they were more concerned about the impact of labour availability on wages and working conditions. Despite Lloyd George's promise of '*homes fit for heroes*' there was a nationwide housing shortage, as construction of new homes had been on hold during the war years.

Even before the war was over, organisations to assist servicemen discharged through injury had sprung up. In 1916, the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers was formed in Blackburn, with close links to the Trade Unions and Labour Party. A year later, the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers was formed in London, led by Tom Lister, and allied to the Liberal Party.

1 Petter, M. (1994) 'Temporary Gentlemen' in the aftermath of the Great War: Rank, status and the ex-officer problem' *The Historical Journal* 37 (1), pp 127-152

Both organisations ignored the traditional service and regimental boundaries, a reflection of the camaraderie felt in the trenches. The government was concerned over potential political instability, particularly as soldiers and sailors had been involved in mutinies and revolutions in Russia.

As a result, a third non-political organisation was formed, the Comrades of the Great War, with the Boer War hero Captain Towse, as Chairman. The Comrades had powerful patronage from the Duke of Westminster, newspaper tycoons Lord Rothermere and Lord Northcliffe, along with Major Gavin Astor, whose family owned *The Times*. Having three ex-servicemen's organisations was very divisive and several unsuccessful attempts were made to unite them. The plans for a united Empire Services League, to decide on the distribution of profits from servicemen's canteens, failed due to the three ex-servicemen's organisations being suspicious of the government's motives. A new committee was then set up under General Lord Byng, to take forward plans for the distribution of the £7 million available. After Lord Byng insisted the committee should be free of government interference, the United Services Fund came to fruition, with the three organisations, along with other key representatives, working together. Local committees worked to distribute the funds to benefit households impacted by death and disability.

Field Marshal Earl Haig had been the British commander in France, and was considered a national hero. At the end of the War he testified at a Commons Select Commission to increase pensions for wounded soldiers and war widows. He then went on to lead a successful £570,000 fundraising campaign for the Officers' Association, a nationwide group of officers' organisations providing assistance for widows and injured officers. This demonstrated to the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers, and the Comrades of the Great War what uniting their efforts could achieve. In August 1920, the three organisations, along with the Officers' Association, held a joint conference, and agreed to form an entirely new organisation with a common goal to help ex-servicemen.

On Saturday 14th May 1921, at the Unity Conference in London, a draft constitution for the new organisation was approved. The Prince of Wales was elected as Patron, Earl Haig was elected President, and Tom Lister was nominated Chairman. The next morning at 9am, four men stood at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, waiting for the last chime of Big Ben. Each man laid a laurel wreath side by side at the base of the Cenotaph, then stood in silence as four buglers from the Grenadier Guards sounded the Last Post. This marked the agreement to form the British Legion.

By the time the British Legion was formed, remembrance of those who had given their lives in the First World War was already taking place regularly. On 19th July 1919, a Peace Day was held, with a Victory March ending at the Cenotaph, where flower wreaths were laid on a temporary structure, to commemorate the dead and wounded. However, there was still no announcement of an official commemoration of the anniversary of Armistice Day. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, whose son was killed in France in 1917, sent a letter to the Cabinet proposing a silence in honour of the dead. A few days later, on 7th November, King George V released a statement confirming a two-minute silence was to be held at 11am on 11th November, and *'all locomotion should cease, so that, in perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead.'*² Although the two-minute silence was established, it had not been integrated into the formal Armistice commemorations at this point.

On 11th November 1920, the King unveiled the stone Cenotaph, designed by Edwin Lutyens, to the crowds gathered to watch the royal procession taking the coffin of the Unknown Warrior to Westminster Abbey.

2 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/remembrance/how/silence.shtml> (accessed 18/04/2019)



Unveiling of the Cenotaph in London. Image courtesy of Horace Nicholls. Originally published in *The Graphic*, 20 November 1920.

Yet there was still no designated day to commemorate those lost or injured in the war. In August 1921, the British Legion sent a letter to Prime Minister David Lloyd George suggesting 11th November should be a national day of remembrance across the United Kingdom, with a two-minute silence at 11 am. The British Legion urged all branches to place poppy wreaths on their local War Memorials, and the tradition of Remembrance Day began.

CHAPTER 2:

Ballymoney Branch: From Formation to the Second World War

Formation of Ballymoney Branch

After the formation of the British Legion in May 1921, a number of ex-servicemen met in Ballymoney Y.M.C.A. on 3rd December 1923,³ and decided to form a branch in Ballymoney. A committee was elected with Captain R. A. Cramsie as President. The ex-servicemen of Ballymoney were enthusiastic about joining, *'the secretary, Mr. Charles Montgomery was kept busy for over an hour enrolling new members, the number joining the branch being most satisfactory.'*⁴ The Branch was registered with British Legion Headquarters on 1st January 1925, and given the Branch number BR1695.

THE BRITISH LEGION.

Branch Formed in Ballymoney

A well-attended meeting of ex-service men was held in the Y.M.C.A., Ballymoney, on Monday evening - Mr. W. R. Saunderson presiding - at which it was decided to form a branch of the British Legion.

The following appointments were made:- President, Captain R. A. Cramsie, J.P.; chairman, Mr. W. R. Saunderson; vice-chairman, Rev. Mr Charters; secretary, Mr. C. Montgomery; treasurer, Mr. Jackson Greene; committee, Messrs. A. Herd, J. Taggart, T. Montgomery, J. Doherty, P. J. M'Garry, A. Lusk, J. T. M'Master, James Kirkpatrick, and J. Lennox.

A large number of members were enrolled, and subsequently matters affecting the interests of ex-service men were discussed.

The Northern Whig and Belfast Post,
5 December 1923.

3 *Belfast Newsletter*, 6 December 1923

4 *Northern Constitution*, 8 December 1923

BALLYMONEY EX-SERVICEMEN.

A meeting of the Ballymoney Branch, British Legion, was held on Friday evening, Mr. W. R. Saunderson, M.C., presiding, referred to the generous gift to the branch by Lord Antrim, who had granted them a site for a hut with only a nominal rent. On the motion of Mr. W. Goodwin, seconded by Mr. John Millar, a vote of thanks was unanimously passed to Lord Antrim for his generous gift, and to Senator T.M. Greer, J.P., for his assistance in the matter. A large number of new members were enrolled, and ways and means discussed for the raising of funds to erect a hut for the service of the members of the British Legion.

Ballymena Weekly Telegraph, 9 February 1924.

Social events in the early years

Early social events held by the Branch focused on raising funds for a Hall. In December 1924, just before Christmas, an evening of entertainment was held with a variety of acts performing. Louis O'Connor was loudly applauded for his whistling solos, he also recited '*The Bold Unbiddable Child*', '*Scared*', and '*The Fair*' in his Irish dialect. Dan Derry, a well-known ventriloquist from Portrush, made his first appearance in Ballymoney and '*delighted the audience*'.⁵ The highlight of the evening was the renowned female impersonator Raymond Browne-Lecky, who always dressed in mauve and lavender, playing the violin and piano, and performing three short plays, '*The Brass Door Knob*', '*The Phantom Musician*', and '*The Touch of Truth*'.

Once the new Legion Hall was opened in Ballymoney at the end of 1927, regular social events were held, such as whist drives, billiards tournaments, and dances until the early hours. In March 1928, guests at a 'half-night'

5 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 27 December 1924

dance with *'exhilarating music'* continued dancing until 2am, and *'all were highly pleased with the night's enjoyment.'*⁶ It became tradition that every year, after the Armistice service, Ballymoney Branch would hold an evening dance. In 1929 the dance attracted over 150 people and the Town Hall was brightly decorated with bunting and flowers. The orchestra was lively, playing banjo, drums, saxophone, and piano, one young man declared *'he had never seen so many pretty girls! He had an eye to beauty or he would not have made the comment, and at any rate he was not wide of the mark.'*⁷

Assisting local ex-servicemen

Employment and relief sub-committees were quickly established in Ballymoney to co-ordinate the United Services Fund distribution locally and ensure that ex-servicemen were given priority in obtaining work. Families of men who had served were also assisted, children who showed *'exceptional ability'* were given financial support to attend university, and go into the professions.⁸ The funds distributed were a significant amount, between 1927 and 1928, a total of £114 7s 4d was spent from the benevolent fund by Ballymoney Branch. This is the equivalent of £7,120 today,⁹ used to provide clothing and assist ex-servicemen to gain employment. However, the majority of the recipients, 95%, did not belong to the Ballymoney Branch of the British Legion.¹⁰ At the annual meeting in October 1929, Ballymoney Branch membership numbered 50, although less than half of the members were ex-servicemen. During the year, ten relief cases had been assisted at a cost of £20 8s 8d, along with four small business loans totalling £60 (equivalent to £3,800 today¹¹),

6 Coleraine Chronicle, 3 March 1928

7 Coleraine Chronicle, 16 November 1929

8 Coleraine Chronicle, 29 October 1927

9 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

10 Belfast Newsletter, 29 October 1928

11 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

to help former servicemen establish themselves, and three emigration cases totalling £47.¹² In September 1930 a meeting of seven British Legion branches in North Antrim took place in Ballymoney. This is the first mention of the group of branches that was to become Group 10 in December 1943. Group 10 consists of Coleraine, Portstewart, Portrush, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Bushmills, Dervock, Upperlands, Macosquin (no longer in existence), Garvagh, and Dunboe (now Dunboe & Castlerock) Branches of the British Legion. This article from *The Northern Whig* records the discussion on Poppy Day fundraising, and how funds raised are used to assist ex-servicemen.

BRITISH LEGION AND REMEMBRANCE DAY.

North Antrim Branches Organising for Record Effort.

A meeting of British Legion Branches representing Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Dervock, Portstewart, Portrush and Bushmills was held in the Legion Hall, Ballymoney. Captain R. A. Cramsie, J.P., president of the local Branch presided.

Mr George Crowe of the British Legion Headquarters, London, gave an interesting address on the work accomplished by the Legion as a result of the funds acquired from the Poppy Day collections. He also gave many helpful hints for the organisation for next Poppy Day collection:

Captain Creighton, organising secretary of the Northern area, said that although they had raised £2,000 more in Northern Ireland last year than they did in 1928, he did not think they had yet reached anything like the limit.

The meeting was attended by a large number of ladies interested in the cause, and afterwards all were hospitably entertained in the High Street Cafe by Captain and Mrs. R. A. Cramsie, to whom a vote of thanks was passed, on the motion of T. R. Knox, Portrush.

The Northern Whig and Belfast Post, 10 September 1930.

12 Coleraine Chronicle, 7 December 1929

Billiards

There was also sporting success. In April 1931 the Branch won the Ballymoney Billiards League, beating eight other teams, and were presented with the Burroughes and Watts (known as Burwat) trophy. The Legion beat the Y.M.C.A. team in the final by 24 points. The Committee Chairman, Mr G. Ashe, commented *'the standard of play has improved very much from last year. The players are beginning to have more confidence in the shot and a better idea of how to play a shot so as to leave a good position.'*¹³



P. McKittrick, W. McClure, T. McClelland, R. McLean, and A. McAuley receiving the Burwat Shield from Mr G. Ashe. Photo courtesy of Ballymena Weekly Telegraph, 2 May 1931.

13 Coleraine Chronicle, 18 April 1931

BILLIARDS IN BALLYMONEY.

Dervock's Youthful Lindrum.

Ballymoney Legion "A" team were presented with the "Burwat" Shield at a meeting of the League in the Y.M.C.A. on Monday evening, when there was a good attendance of billiards enthusiasts.

Mr G. H. Lyle, president, occupied the chair.

Mr G. C. Ashe, chairman of committee, said nine teams had competed for the shield, and altogether 72 games were played. It was a matter for congratulation to see the orderly way the competitions had been played and to witness the sportsmanship on all sides. On behalf of the winners last season he congratulated the Legion, and said the better team had won (Applause).

The chairman congratulated the League on the very successful season which had just ended. The competitions proved exceptionally keen, this being shown by the fact that three teams had tied for first place. The contests promoted great interest in the game and provided much enjoyment, not only for the players but for the spectators. He was sure if the spectators enjoyed the games as much as he had enjoyed those he had witnessed they must have spent very many pleasant evenings during the long winter (Applause). He was glad to see the shield circulating, because so long as every club felt it had a sporting chance of winning the trophy interest would be maintained in the competition. He thought the standard of play had improved very much from last year. The players were beginning to have more confidence in the shot and a better idea of how to play a shot so as to leave a good position.

He was also struck with the sporting way in which the games were played. Very often in billiards tournaments one saw the competitors playing for safety. There was nothing of this in the present competition. Every man went for the shot, which many well up in billiards would tell them was not the thing to do. But it was the sporting thing to do, and he was glad it was the way in the Ballymoney League (Applause).

The Chairman then presented the shield to Mr P. McKittrick on behalf of the Ballymoney Legion, amid applause.

Article on Ballymoney Branch winning the Burwat trophy, *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 April 1931.

1930s

The following article from the *Belfast Newsletter* demonstrates how the Branch reorganisation, in March 1933, resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of ex-servicemen members, from 6 to 28. There had also been a doubling of the honorary members.

THE BRITISH LEGION

PROGRESS OF THE REORGANISED BRANCH

Captain R. A. Cramsie, J.P., speaking at the annual meeting of the Ballymoney branch of the British Legion, said the branch had been reorganised in March last, when there were six ex-servicemen and 25 honorary members on the roll. Now there were 27 ex-servicemen and 50 honorary members. The Benevolent Committee branch was in good working order. The branch had sustained loss through the death of the Rev. A. H. Dill, a great friend of the Legion.

Mr. R. McShane submitted the secretary's report, and Mr. H. Pringle Wilson the treasurer's, and both were adopted.

Appointments-President, Captain Cramsie; chairman, Major J. McGown; hon. secretary and treasurer, re-elected. Committee-Captain A. R. Booth, Messrs. Richard McLelland, W.V. McKee, J. S. Hudson, Thomas Owens, James McDowell and George Mulholland.

Captain G. H. Creighton, area organising secretary, made a special appeal on behalf of the Poppy Day Fund, and Capt. T. H. Mayes, area hon. treasurer, also addressed the meeting.

Belfast Newsletter, 4 October 1933.

This is likely to be a result of the economic and social issues in Northern Ireland, and possibly the changing political climate in Europe. Dawson Bates, Minister of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland, had commented the previous year that *'distress is now very acute in most parts of the Province and there is every indication that during the winter matters will become worse.'*¹⁴

14 Cabinet Secretariat, Unemployment, Northern Ireland, July 1932, CAB/9B/137/2

Due to the economic situation the Benevolent Committee in Ballymoney met five times between 1933 and 1934, and needed to help 25 people. Thirteen were assisted by the Branch, amounting to £27 10s (equivalent of £1,950 today¹⁵), and twelve people had been assisted with £22 (£1,560 today¹⁶) from the Area Special Fund.¹⁷ Ex-servicemen had also been supported with applications for the Prince of Wales pension fund.

King George V's Silver Jubilee Celebrations May 1935

Ballymoney British Legion played a key part in the Jubilee celebrations in the town, assisting with the children's sports day and fancy dress parade.¹⁸ After a Thanksgiving Service in Ballymoney Town Hall, over 200 competitors in nine classes took part in '*the largest fancy dress parade in the history of the town*¹⁹', starting at the Model School, and parading through the town to the Showgrounds. Thousands of people had assembled in the sunshine to watch the competition, Captain Cramsie, Branch President, was one of the judges. First place was awarded to the British Legion's entry, '*The Firing Station*', which represented an event from the First World War. Ballymoney Branch did exceedingly well, '*in the class for motor and horse-drawn vehicles the British Legion entries loomed large, capturing the first three places.*²⁰ Second place went to '*The Merrymakers*', who had been singing along to wartime songs during the parade.

15 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

16 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

17 *Belfast Telegraph*, 23 October 1934

18 *Ballymena Observer*, 10 May 1935

19 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 May 1935

20 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 May 1935

Afterwards, a children's sports day was held, with over 130 contests, including a relay race for the Jubilee Cup. Each child taking part was given a souvenir tin of toffees by Ballymoney Urban Council, and a souvenir medallion by North Antrim Regional Committee.²¹ Ballymoney Branch led the evening parade from the Legion Hall to Seacon Hill, where Mrs Cramsie lit the large bonfire. The day's celebrations concluded with a Jubilee Dance in the Legion Hall, with over 200 couples in attendance. The Hall was brightly decorated with bunting and streamers, music was provided by the OK Dance Band, and a dance competition was held.²²

Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, visited Northern Ireland for the Jubilee celebrations. He travelled to Derry by train, and on the return journey stopped at Ballymoney station. The Duke, along with Captain Cramsie and Captain Booth, inspected Ballymoney British Legion members, who formed a guard of honour along the station platform.



Photo courtesy of *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 May 1935.

21 *Northern Constitution*, 11 May 1935

22 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 May 1935

There were around 250 locals on the platform, with many thousands more gathered outside, where the Duke smiled and waved as the crowd cheered. Ballymoney station was decorated with bunting, and a huge arch that said 'Welcome' on one side and 'Safe Home' on the other.²³

Fundraising

Fundraising for the Branch continued in 1936, with a Sports Day held at Ballymoney Showgrounds in June. As well as sports, there was a carnival, pony race, and pet dog show. Categories included 'dog with the funniest face', 'dog who could wag tail the fastest', and 'pony or donkey dressed for comedy effect'.²⁴ In October, a concert was held with the Route Glee Singers (now the Ballymoney and District Male Voice Choir) as headline act, conducted by Mr James Moore. The tenor James Johnston of Belfast, known as the 'Singing Butcher of Sandy Row', sang many classics, such as 'You are my heart's delight', 'Bonny Mary of Argyle', and 'Kitty of Coleraine'. James Kealey, the violinist, played 'The Londonderry Air' and 'The Blackbird Reel', while mezzo-soprano, Robena McKay, sang the 'Ballynure Ballad' and 'The Blue Hills of Antrim'.²⁵ Conductor, James Moore, commented that 'it was a pleasure for them to be able to assist in any way such a good cause as the British Legion'.²⁶

Coronation of King George VI

Members of the British Legion attended the memorial service held at Ballymoney First Presbyterian Church for the death of George V in January 1936,²⁷ and then the coronation of George VI in May 1937.²⁸ Coronation Day started with a service led by Reverend Armstrong, then a parade under the leadership of Mr D. C. Quail. A town carnival was held with

23 *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 14 May 1935

24 *Belfast Telegraph*, 1 July 1936

25 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 24 October 1936

26 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 24 October 1936

27 *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 January 1936

28 *Belfast Newsletter*, 10 May 1937

over 600 competitors, with Ballymoney Branch winning the prize for most original motor lorry or van for *HMS Hood*, and coming second in the best decorated motor lorry or van category. Ballymoney Health & Strength League gave a gymnastic display, and there were sports for school children. Everyone in the town listened to the King's Speech together at the Model School grounds, afterwards the Legion paraded to Semicock Road to light the bonfire. Fourteen local bands performed together, then the bonfire was lit by Mrs Cramsie, resulting in a round of cheers for the British Legion for building the bonfire. A fireworks display led by Robert McShane, Branch Honorary Secretary, rounded off the evening. A carnival dance was then held in the Town Hall, *'being the most festive scene yet staged in the Town Hall'*, which raised £28 for the Poppy Appeal.²⁹

Governor's Visit

The Duke of Abercorn, Governor of Northern Ireland, visited Ballymoney in November 1937. He opened Dalriada School, and planted a commemorative oak tree, still there today, before stopping off at the Town Hall.



The photo shows members of Ballymoney British Legion forming a guard of honour for the Duke to inspect them, accompanied by Captain Cramsie. Photo courtesy of *Belfast Newsletter*, 3 November 1937.

29 *Northern Constitution*, 15 May 1937

Benevolent Work

At the 1937 annual meeting there was a discussion over the increasing number of ex-servicemen passing through Ballymoney, searching for work wherever they could find a position. Some of these former servicemen were *'in dire plight'*,³⁰ and British Legion rules prevented assistance being provided centrally, as they were not resident in Ballymoney. Local Branch members had helped anyone needing assistance, but Thomas Owens, Secretary of the Benevolent Committee, commented that financial help *'had been given by members who could ill afford it.'*³¹ A further 22 cases of relief had been granted over the previous year, totalling £54 2s (the equivalent of £3,650 today³²), in addition to grants made directly from the United Services Fund.

Social Reunion

A social reunion was held in January 1938, with neighbouring branches invited to supper. There was a large attendance of both Ballymoney Branch members and visitors, with Albert Herd leading singing of wartime choruses, and singing from Mr Summerton of Luton. Mr Summerton was visiting Ballymoney and had been invited to the event by a stranger. He complimented the Legion members on their friendliness and welcoming nature. Captain Cramsie said that any event *'which brings ex-servicemen together is to be encouraged, I am glad to see such a splendid attendance.'*³³ In response to a remark that the members were getting old, William Knox, Secretary of Portrush Branch said that they should all remember *'old soldiers never die, they only fade away'*³⁴. This remark proved prophetic, when it was revealed at the 1938 annual meeting that many ex-servicemen were becoming incapacitated through

30 Coleraine Chronicle, 23 October 1937

31 Coleraine Chronicle, 23 October 1937

32 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

33 Coleraine Chronicle, 22 January 1938

34 Coleraine Chronicle, 22 January 1938

age, and medical evidence for pensions and assistance was increasing year on year. Assistance was also provided through the Red Cross and the Ulster Patriotic Fund; however the British Legion had provided £70 (£4,700 today³⁵) of grants to ex-servicemen over the last year.

Rumblings of War

With the increasing Nazi aggression in Europe the British government passed the Emergency Powers (Defence Act) in August 1938, calling up military reservists and mobilising Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) volunteers. The Military Training Act passed in April 1939, conscripted 20 and 21 year olds for six months military training. The British Legion had offered their services to the Ministry of Labour, as *'when they were faced with international questions of the greatest gravity, and when the fate not only of Europe but of the whole world was in the balance, it behoved the members of the Legion to stand shoulder to shoulder.'*³⁶ Since the Munich Agreement in September 1938, membership of the British Legion in Northern Ireland had significantly increased by 700 ex-servicemen. There was a general disappointment among members that the British Legion had not been given a specific role to assist the government, particularly as many members were not eligible to join the units involved in National Service. Most of the Ballymoney Branch members had served in the First World War, and were above the upper age limit of 38 for reserve units. This left them with the option of becoming an A.R.P. volunteer or joining the emergency reserve for the 'B' Specials.³⁷

35 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

36 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 8 April 1939

37 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 8 April 1939

Second World War

In August 1940 the war recruiting campaign came to Ballymoney, when a rally was held at the Town Hall.³⁸ British Legion members were inspected by John McDermott, Minister of Public Security. Members of the Ballymoney Branch called for men to follow the example of the Ballymoney men before them and sign up for service. Donations were made to the Governor's Spitfire Fund for the Spitfire 'Mountains o'Mourne'. Ballymoney Branch raised £3 6s in an unusual way, as the extract from the Governor's Fund list shows below.

£3 6s.
Sale of two budgerigars presented by
anonymous donor in Ballymoney and sold
at Ballymoney Branch British Legion Whist
Drive, per James M'Arthur 66

Belfast Telegraph, 27 September 1940.

During the Second World War, Ballymoney Branch took responsibility for several evacuees who requested assistance, and gave around £100 (£4,959 today³⁹) each year in support to families of ex-servicemen in the Ballymoney area. In the year 1940 to 1941, Ballymoney Branch had helped 26 families, some on more than one occasion.⁴⁰ As well as this, the ladies of Ballymoney were busy knitting socks, balaclavas, and gloves for men serving in the Forces. Regular whist drives and dances were held, Johnnie Owens and the 'Moderniques' were a regular fixture in the Legion Hall.⁴¹ In 1943, Ballymoney British Legion formed a platoon of the Home Guard, celebrating with a drumhead service at

38 *Belfast Newsletter*, 26 August 1940

39 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

40 *Northern Constitution*, 25 October 1941

41 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 7 January 1944

Ballymena Playing Fields involving other local platoons.⁴² Even during the war the Branch continued to provide social and sporting activities. In September 1943 Ballymoney Branch won the Ballymoney Charity Football Cup. The match drew a large crowd of 750 for the game against Dunaghy, with the Legion winning 2-0. Fundraising also continued with a collection raising £94 1s 1d for the Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Benevolent Fund.⁴³

FOOTBALL CUP-TIE

The final of the Ballymoney Charity Cup in the Cricket Park was attended by 750 when the Ballymoney British Legion and Dunaghy met on Friday evening. The match, which was closely contested throughout, was won by the Legion 2-0. Dunlop scored the opening goal in the first half, and Nesbitt was the marksman on the second occasion in the closing stages. The legion team was - Blair; McAlister, Cuddy; Beattie, O'Hara, Kirgan; Dunlop, Turtle, Shiels, McLaughlin and Nesbitt. Following the match the cup was presented by Mrs. McCleery, who congratulated the winners on their success.

Ballymena Weekly Telegraph, 10 September 1943.

42 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 28 May 1943

43 *Northern Constitution*, 25 October 1941

CHAPTER 3:

Ballymoney Branch: Post Second World War to Present Day

Group 10

In March 1945 Group 10 had met in Coleraine, and stated their focus was to '*ensure that Servicemen would come back to decent jobs and decent homes*'.⁴⁴ When the Group met again in September at Ballymoney, they discussed how demobilised soldiers could be reinstated into employment as quickly as possible. The Ministry of Labour had suggested that preference should be given to ex-servicemen when considering job applicants, but in reality this was not always the case.

In December 1945 Group 10 were campaigning for ex-servicemen to stand as candidates in local elections, as there was still concern over the lack of preference given to ex-servicemen in employment, particularly in Council positions. Joseph Donaghy of Ballymoney Branch said '*at the present time only lip-service was being given to the claims of the soldiers. A controlling interest in local councils was needed to ensure that justice was done.*'⁴⁵ The re-settlement grant scheme was also causing issues. So far one ex-serviceman from Coleraine had received a bank draft for £150 and was able to priority order £200 worth of materials. However, he had been in the building trade before signing up to serve. Another grant applicant, who had served in both World Wars, had spent £200 establishing a business in Coleraine. He had been refused a licence to trade, as he was not originally trading in the Coleraine area.⁴⁶

44 Coleraine Chronicle, 24 March 1945

45 Belfast Newsletter, 10 December 1945

46 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 December 1945

Pensions and training for ex-servicemen

Ballymoney Branch also raised their concerns over the level of war pensions being awarded to disabled ex-servicemen. Mr H. Crawford explained he had drafted a resolution after dealing with the case of a Ballymoney man who had lost the use of his arm, but was only awarded a weekly pension of 26 shillings (the equivalent of approximately £50 a week today).⁴⁷ The Branch were going to *'get a doctor to state in writing the extent of the man's incapacity and appeal on that basis.'*⁴⁸ Until 1943 there was a disparity between those injured in the First World War and the Second World War. First World War veterans who had lost a limb or suffered a disability received a pension of 40 shillings a week, whereas those injured since 1939 were only entitled to 32s 6d. The British Legion had campaigned, and this had been raised to 37s 6d.⁴⁹ Even more disturbing was that, after World War One, the rate for total disablement had been set at £2 a week, and had not changed over the years, despite inflation and a cost in the rise of living. At the Group 10 conference at Upperlands in December 1945, there was discussion over the low level of pensions, as Canada awarded ex-servicemen £5 a week, and Australia and New Zealand an even higher rate.⁵⁰

At the April 1946 conference in Macosquin, a resolution was proposed to canvass for a Re-Settlement Office in Coleraine. There were only three offices in Northern Ireland, in Belfast, Portadown, and Londonderry, so ex-servicemen in Ballymoney had to attend the Labour Exchange for assistance. Joseph Donaghy commented that in Ballymoney *'there was the same problem of large numbers of workless and increasing numbers of ex-soldiers returning to find nothing to do.'*⁵¹ A training centre had opened in Coleraine, to train men as bricklayers and skilled craftsmen in order to build houses, resolving the housing shortage which was particularly high amongst ex-servicemen.

47 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

48 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 29 September 1945

49 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 31 October 1942

50 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 December 1945

51 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 6 April 1946

However, house building schemes were progressing slowly, and as Commander D. C. Quail, Chairman of Ballymoney Branch said 'Good results were being obtained in the Training Centre in Coleraine, but unfortunately there was up to the present little work for those who had been trained.'⁵²

British Legion Silver Jubilee

For the British Legion's Jubilee in July 1946, a rally and drumhead service were held in Portrush, with over 500 Legion men and women from County Antrim and County Londonderry Legion branches attending. Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Knox, President of Portstewart Branch, led the parade, with the salute being taken by Brigadier General J. A. Sinton. Reverend J. G. McManaway, Chairman of Londonderry British Legion, spoke about the Legion and its role in the community, and that 'the record of the British Legion over the past 25 years was something of which they had good reason to feel proud.'⁵³

RECORD OF THE LEGION

As a Legion they were not concerned with Party politics, but it was their policy and desire that the whole ex-service community would play its part - and a most important part - in promoting the welfare of the nation and Empire as a whole. They understood, from their own experience, what discipline and self-sacrifice meant. They knew exactly where and what selfishness on the part of an individual or a set of individuals would lead to. The record of the British Legion over the past 25 years was something of which they had good reason to feel proud. It was an organisation which, above all others, had sought to promote the welfare of ex-Service men and women and their dependants. It had fought their battles and helped those in need. He had no doubt that those now coming back to them would play their part equally well with those who had held the pass in the years between the wars.

Extract from Rev. McManaway's speech, *Coleraine Chronicle*, 6 July 1946.

52 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 October 1946

53 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 6 July 1946

Assistance and housing

At the 1946 A.G.M., the Area Organiser, William Sutherland, sent his congratulations to the Ballymoney Branch as they had *'made history in the past year by getting a Parliamentary statute repealed, by no means an easy matter.'*⁵⁴ The Branch had informed Headquarters that the local Poor Law Relieving Officer had been given the extra responsibility of collecting cottage rents. When Headquarters had taken this up with the government of Northern Ireland, *'as a result of the action taken, the Order had been repealed.'*⁵⁵ A section of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1934 was replaced with the Housing (No. 2) Act (Northern Ireland) 1946, as a direct result of the intervention by the Ballymoney Branch.

Speaking at the 1949 annual meeting, the Assistant Area Secretary, Mr J. Cussick, stated that of the 10,000 new houses built in Northern Ireland since the end of the war, 8,000 had gone to ex-servicemen, due in part to the campaigning of local Legion branches.⁵⁶ Since the National Health Service had been introduced the previous year, the Service Committee's work had taken a different direction, away from providing assistance with medical costs. £41 5s (£1,440 today⁵⁷) in assistance was spent locally by Ballymoney Branch, with Robert McShane commenting *'Most of the cases assisted directly through the local committee were cases where applicants were up against temporary hardship.'*⁵⁸ The equivalent of £1,000 in today's money was spent on clothing and boots for former servicemen, to equip them for employment.

During the 1950 annual meeting, William Knox spoke about the employment situation for ex-servicemen, and *'praised the consideration*

54 Coleraine Chronicle, 16 October 1946

55 Coleraine Chronicle, 16 October 1946

56 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 October 1949

57 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

58 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 October 1949

*shown to ex-Service people by borough and urban authorities when making local appointments and selecting tenants for houses, but the same consideration, he said, was not shown as a rule by the rural authorities.*⁵⁹

The British Legion had been campaigning since the 1920s for ex-servicemen to get priority for housing and jobs, however in rural areas, where there was an even greater shortage of homes and work, this was proving impossible.

Annual Sports Day

The British Legion Annual Sports Day became a tradition in Ballymoney. In July 1952 it was held at the Y.M.C.A. on a Saturday, with a pet dog show, fancy dress parade, and gymnastic displays. Gymnasts from the Ulster Amateur Gymnastic Association showcased a '*vaulting and agility display*', while the Central Council for Physical Recreation performed '*rhythmic movement with music*'.⁶⁰ The pet dog show had unusual categories, such as '*best fancy dressed dog*', '*dog with the gloomiest face*', '*dog with the most tricks*', and '*dog that can beg longest*'. Louise Owens won the children's fancy dress with '*Salad*', while winner of the most amusing outfit was Margaret Hammond with '*Across the Border*'. Afterwards there was a concert held in the Town Hall with traditional fiddlers, Irish dancers, and the '*Old Stagers*' or Ballymoney and District Male Voice Choir as they were officially known.⁶¹

Queen Elizabeth II Visits Ballymoney

For the Queen's visit in July 1953, Mrs Eileen Loudon, Chairwoman of Ballymoney Women's Section, along with 13 other members of Ballymoney Branch, travelled to Balmoral Showgrounds in Belfast, where a parade and march past was held. There were thousands of former servicemen from all over Ireland, north and south, and the '*massed*

59 *Northern Constitution*, 14 October 1950

60 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 5 July 1952

61 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 5 July 1952

*standards, the gleaming sheen of the medals and the regimental bearing of the veterans...[was] the most impressive scene ever staged at Ulster's historic parade ground.*⁶² Captain Sir Norman Stronge presented several members of the British Legion to the Queen, including William Knox, Chairman of the British Legion in Northern Ireland, Captain J.L. Bennet, National Vice-President, and William Sutherland, Secretary.



Eileen Louden, shown third from left as the Queen inspects the British Legion Women's Standard Bearers. To the left of the Queen is Sir Norman Stronge, with William Knox on the right. Origin of photo unknown.

The following day the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh stopped briefly at Ballymoney railway station. Some local people had been waiting in position since the evening before to catch a glimpse of the Royal visitors.

62 *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 3 July 1953

When the Queen's train arrived a 'tumultuous, spontaneous riot of cheering broke from the crowd, its full throated volume drowning the last notes of the National Anthem.'⁶³ Lord Rathcavan, Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, presented the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Ballymoney Urban District Council, and other dignitaries were introduced to the Royal visitors. The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh then walked along the line of excited schoolchildren, and received a gift from Mrs Grace Leslie on behalf of the people of Ballymoney. The gift was a leather bound book, *History of the Descent of Her Majesty the Queen from the Kings of Dalriada* compiled by Reverend Canon J. T. Armstrong, and contained greetings and well wishes from Ballymoney.



The Queen greets schoolchildren at Ballymoney railway station, 3rd July 1953. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Museum Services.

63 Coleraine Chronicle, 11 July 1953



The Queen receiving her gift from Mrs Grace Leslie. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Museum Services.

Prime Minister Visits Ballymoney

As politics in Northern Ireland became more contentious, the British Legion felt it was appropriate to make its non-political stance more public. In December 1968, Group 10 made an announcement confirming the Legion was not involved in politics, and supported the government in their efforts to promote unity. The announcement closed with *'United as we were in war, so we are united in peace in caring for our countrymen irrespective of private beliefs.'*⁶⁴ In October 1969, Prime Minister James Chichester-Clark attended Ballymoney Branch annual meeting. He spoke on the subject of the British Army in Northern Ireland, just two months after troops



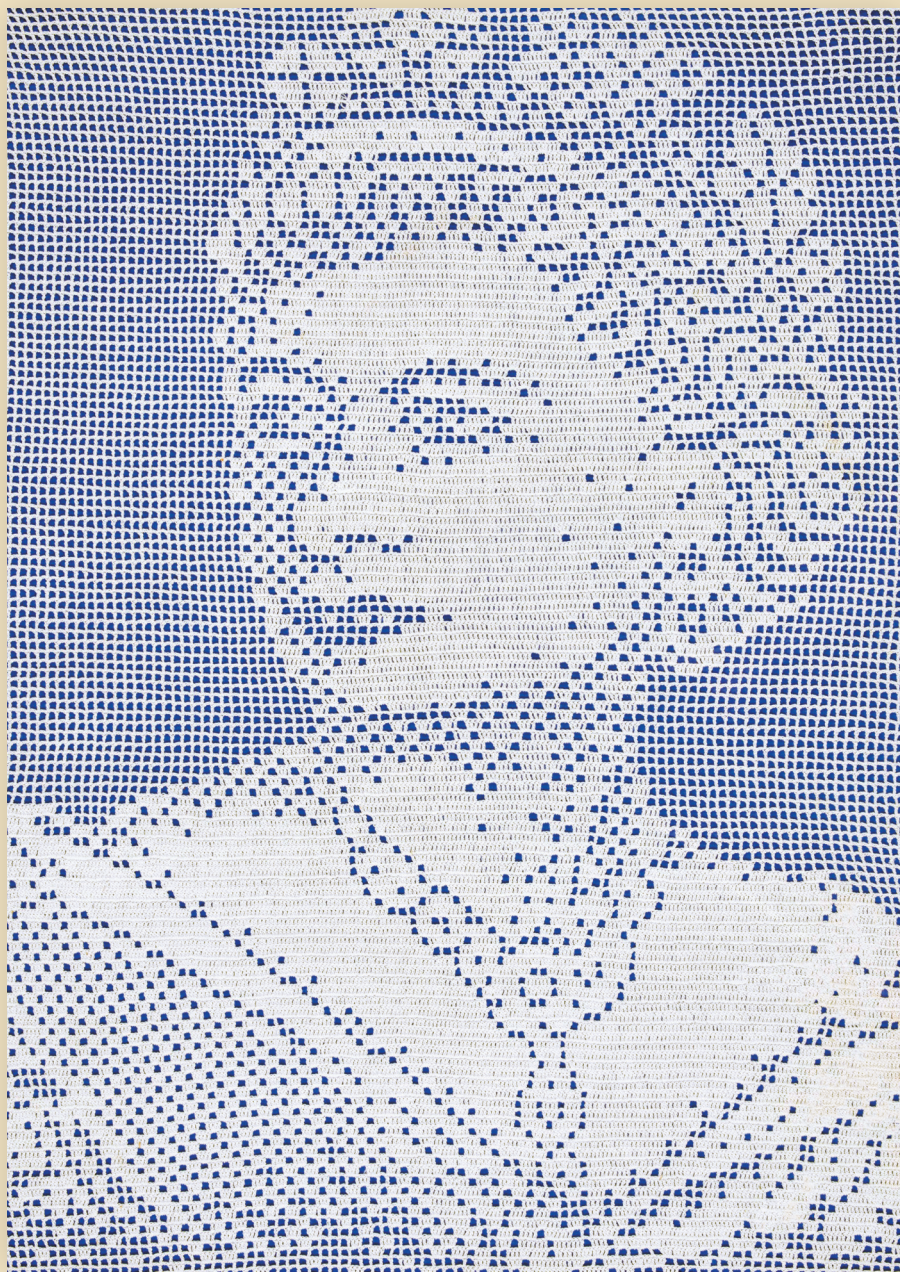
Mrs Mary Hunter presenting the crocheted portrait of the Queen to Colonel A. J. H. Cramsie, to pass on to James Chichester-Clark. Photo courtesy of the *Northern Constitution*, 23 October 1971.

had been deployed on the streets of the Province. Chichester-Clark commented that he preferred to use diplomacy, rather than military intervention, however *'there comes a time when there must be a restoration of normal order by whatever means are required.'*⁶⁵

Whilst at the Legion Hall, Chichester-Clark admired a crocheted portrait of the Queen made by Mrs Mary Hunter of the Women's Section, so Mrs Hunter made him a copy for his own home.

64 *Northern Constitution*, 21 December 1968

65 *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 October 1969



Original crochet portrait of the Queen made for Ballymoney Branch by Mrs Hunter.

1970s

By 1971 membership levels were higher than ever, and Ballymoney Branch was flourishing with 179 members. For the previous two years they had won the W.R. Knox Cup for increased membership, and Joseph Donaghy had just received the Gold Badge for his dedicated service since joining Ballymoney Branch in 1945.⁶⁶ To celebrate the Legion's fiftieth anniversary the Queen granted a 'Royal' prefix, creating the Royal British Legion. The honour was announced at the Legion's National Conference held in the Royal Albert Hall in May 1971.⁶⁷ A service of rededication followed, where the Legion's national Standards were placed on the altar at Westminster Abbey, and then a parade of thousands of Legion members marched past the Cenotaph to the statue of Earl Haig in Whitehall.

Closer to home, Ballymoney was chosen to host the British Legion Conference in 1972, despite the political situation in the Province. The conference was addressed by Captain William Long, Minister of Education in Northern Ireland, who commented that it *'was so wonderful that they had so many dedicated workers inside the Legion and he was aware of the great work it was doing.'*⁶⁸ General Sir Harry Tuzo, the General Officer Commanding in Northern Ireland, spoke of how proud he was *'to be serving in the Province and represented some 22,000 Servicemen and women in the three Services here.'*⁶⁹ The Queen even sent a telegram wishing the conference success.

In July 1979 Sammy Patton received the Gold Badge for his service to the Royal British Legion, after joining Ballymoney Branch in 1951.⁷⁰

66 *Northern Constitution*, 23 October 1971

67 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p320

68 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 26 February 1972

69 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 26 February 1972

70 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 14 July 1979



Sammy Patton (third from right) receives his Gold Badge. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 14 July 1979.

Sports teams

Sporting successes continued with the Ballymoney Branch football team beating the Northern Star team 4-1 in the finals of the Publicans' Cup in August 1980 in Megaw Park.



Back row left to right: Peter Kelly; McNeill; Colin McCombe; unknown; Michael Mooney; unknown; Joe Rice. Front row left to right: Trevor Coulter; Raymond King; T McNeill; unknown; N Mooney; D McComb. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 30 August 1980.



*'Flights' darts team Left to right: W Skinner; T Kelly; W Steele; J Cunningham.
Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 13 April 1985.*

The Branch also had success in darts, with the *'Flights'* dart team winning the Ballymoney Publicans' Darts League in 1985, with 39 points from 24 matches. The *'Flights'* also made the semi-finals of the Bass Perpetual Trophy, unfortunately losing to Upperlands Royal British Legion team. John Cunningham and Alex Murphy, from Ballymoney Branch then went on to win the Northern Ireland Darts Double Championship, and went to England to represent Northern Ireland in a tournament.⁷¹

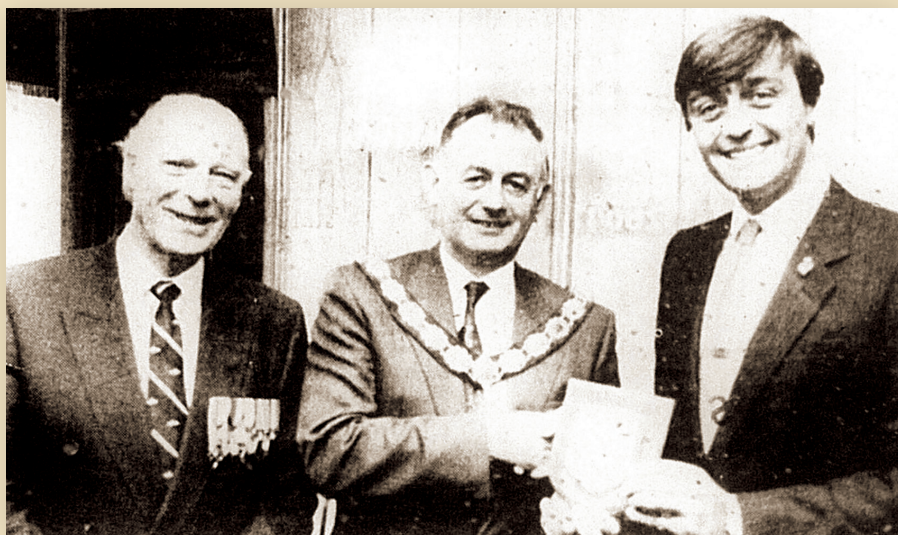


Ballymoney Branch darts team, possibly late 1980s.

71 Coleraine Chronicle, 12 April 1986

Cramsie Court

In February 1988, Miss McCarthy from the Royal British Legion Housing Association, attended the monthly meeting of the Branch to discuss the housing scheme due to be built in Townhead Street, opposite the back of the Legion Hall. Several names were suggested, but the agreed name was 'Cramsie Court', after the first President of the Ballymoney Branch. It was decided that Mrs Cramsie senior would be asked to lay the foundation stone of the seventeenth British Legion Housing Association development in Northern Ireland.⁷² Cramsie Court was opened by the Duke of Westminster on 8th October 1991, he commented *'I have toured around many such facilities, but this one in Ballymoney is by far the best.'*⁷³



Left to right: Jack Allen, Chairman of Royal British Legion Housing Association; Mayor of Ballymoney, Councillor Joe Gaston; Duke of Westminster, President of North East England Royal British Legion. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 12 October 1991.

72 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 21 April 1988

73 *Ballymoney Times*, 9 October 1991



Members of Ballymoney Branch greet the Duke of Westminster. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 12 October 1991.



Unveiling of the commemorative plaque, left to right: Jack Allen, Chairman of Royal British Legion Housing Association; Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE, Chair of the R.B.L. House Committee; Duke of Westminster; Ruth Stewart, Cramsie Court warden. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 12 October 1991.

The development provided 15 one bedroom flats, 8 one bedroom bungalows, 2 bungalows with two bedrooms, and a 3 bedroom house, for ex-service personnel and their families. The development was later taken over by Clanmil Housing Association, and now provides independent living for older adults.

Freedom of the Borough

At a meeting of Ballymoney Borough Council in October 1996, it was unanimously agreed the Ballymoney Branch of the Royal British Legion should be awarded the Freedom of the Borough, to commemorate the Legion's 75th anniversary, and their dedication to assisting ex-servicemen.⁷⁴ A ceremony was held on 22nd February 1997, with 300 ex-servicemen and 38 Standard bearers parading through the town. The salute was taken by Brigadier David Strudley, R.B.L. Vice-President in Northern Ireland, who commented *'Our thoughts are with those members who are not with us today, although I am sure they are with us in spirit.'*⁷⁵



Dan Daly and George Lockhart of Ballymoney Branch at the Freedom of the Borough ceremony. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 1 March 1997.

74 *Ballymoney Times*, 23 October 1996

75 *Ballymoney Times*, 26 February 1997



Members of Ballymoney Branch at the Freedom of the Borough ceremony. Left to right: Robert McMaster; Robert Hunter; Jim Johnston, Chairman; Tony Gilmour, Vice Chairman. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 1 March 1997.



R.B.L. Standard Bearers at the Freedom of the Borough ceremony. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 1 March 1997.



This is to certify
that on the
twenty-second day of February 1997
The Freedom
of the Borough of Ballymoney
was conferred upon
The
Royal British Legion
Northern Ireland

in recognition of the support given to
ex-service men and women,
their families and their dependants
since its establishment in 1921.



Joseph A. Gaston
Mayor

M. A. A.
Chief Executive & Town Clerk

Certificate presented to Ballymoney Branch on 22nd February 1997
granting the Freedom of the Borough of Ballymoney.

Army Cadet Force

The Ballymoney Detachment of the 1st (NI) Battalion Army Cadet Force became officially affiliated with Ballymoney Branch in September 2006. The following year the Northern Ireland Youth Officer presented the affiliation certificate to the Army Cadets, and Mark McLaughlin, Chairman of Ballymoney R.B.L., presented them with a trophy as well.⁷⁶



Ballymoney Branch Chairman Mark McLaughlin, Poppy Appeal Organiser Mrs Susan Pinkerton, and Treasurer Barry McKay thank the Army Cadets for helping with the Poppy Appeal, May 2016. Photo courtesy of Hugh Elliott.



President of Ballymoney Branch, John Pinkerton, with Trevor McCloskey and Army Cadets receiving badges for their affiliation with the R.B.L. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Chronicle*, 22 February 2013.

76 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 19 October 2006

Commemorations in Dublin

In July 2007, the Royal British Legion joined in with the Republic of Ireland's National Day of Commemoration ceremony at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens, near Islandbridge, Dublin. The ceremony is held on the Sunday nearest to 11th July, as this is the anniversary of the truce ending the Irish War of Independence in 1921. Ballymoney Branch attended to commemorate soldiers serving with the 16th Irish Division who fell at the Battle of the Somme, and attended both the service and parade.

Centenary of First World War

To commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War a 'Lights Out' candlelight vigil was held at the War Memorial in Ballymoney on 4th August 2014. Reverend Gareth McLean of First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church led prayers for those who died in the First World War. President of Ballymoney Branch, John Pinkerton, and Chairman, Mark McLaughlin, spoke at the event, and the crowd was silent as Mark said *'When you go home, tell them of us and say for your tomorrow, we gave our today.'*⁷⁷ The final candle was then extinguished by the only youth member of the Branch, Melissa Hargy.

Somme Battlefields Trip

During the summer of 2015, Ballymoney Branch led a tour of the Somme battlefields for Branch members and others interested in commemoration. Participants were aged 15 to 87, with both genders, Borough residents and those from further afield, and all sections of the community taking part. After travelling by coach and ferry the group visited Ypres, before attending the bugle ceremony at the Menin Gate. The Last Post is sounded beneath the Gate every evening at 8pm by the local Fire Brigade, to honour soldiers from the British Empire who fell in the War. The Menin Gate records soldiers who have no known grave.

77 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 16 August 2014

Mark McLaughlin, Ballymoney Branch Chairman, laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch during the ceremony. The next day the group visited the Thiepval Memorial, with a wreath being laid by Hugh Elliott, Branch Vice Chairman. Next stop was The Ulster Tower, a memorial to the 36th (Ulster) Division, where Jim Dobbin, the oldest member of the group at 87, laid a wreath.



The group at the Thiepval Memorial. Photo courtesy of Hugh Elliott.

The group then visited Lochnagar Mine, which was dug and blown up by the Royal Engineers, destroying around 400 feet of German trenches on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. On the third day of the trip there was a visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest Commonwealth military cemetery in the world, and Langemark Cemetery, where German soldiers are buried. At Lone Tree Cemetery three of the group visited their relation, Hugh Spence's grave, and read aloud the letter informing the family of his death.

Then the group visited Pond Farm Cemetery, where three of the Ballymoney dead are buried side by side, all killed on the same day in June 1917. The visit finished with a stop at the Island of Ireland Peace Park, opened by Queen Elizabeth II, President Mary McAleese of Ireland, and the King of Belgium, in 1998.

The Somme Remembered

In 2016 a joint programme between Ballymoney R.B.L., Ballymoney and District Cultural & Heritage Society, Building Communities Resource Centre, and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council was developed to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. The three day event, '*The Somme Remembered*' was held at Ballymoney Showgrounds from 30th June to 2nd July, and was the largest commemoration of the



Mark McLaughlin, Chairman of Ballymoney Branch, and Hugh Elliott, Vice-Chairman, with Jonny Gallagher, aged 102, at '*The Somme Remembered*'. Photo courtesy of Hugh Elliott.



Ballymoney Branch member John McLaughlin with the warhorse exhibit. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Battle of the Somme in Northern Ireland.⁷⁸ On the evening of June 30th there was a candlelit remembrance vigil at 9pm, with storytelling. The following morning a whistle was blown at 7.20am to replicate the whistle that blew in 1916 to start the battle. A cannon was fired at 7.30am, exactly 100 years after the Battle of the Somme began. Other displays at the Showgrounds included a World War One field kitchen, a recreated trench, and World War One military vehicles and artefacts.

The *War Years Remembered* history organisation brought a war horse exhibition, featuring mounted cavalymen from C Squadron 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards, who were the first soldiers to go into action during the First World War.⁷⁹

78 'The Somme Remembered, 100 Years On Official Launch' available at <https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/news/the-somme-remembered-100-years-on-official-launch> (accessed 17 May 2019)

79 'The Somme Remembered War Horse' available at <https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/news/the-somme-remembered-war-horse> (accessed 17 May 2019)

On the Saturday evening, a parade was held from the Legion Hall to First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church, with Ballymoney Branch and other ex-service associations, as well as the Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, Joan Christie OBE, taking part. After a remembrance service at First Ballymoney Church there was a World War One themed dance in Ballymoney Branch clubrooms, with dance lessons, and music from Three's Country. On the Sunday there were more re-enactment displays of soldiers in the trenches, and nurses in the field hospital, along with Bushvalley Amateur Radio Club, a wartime kitchen, and a World War One recruiting station.



'The Somme Remembered' launch event, left to right: Davy McCallion, War Years Remembered; Councillor Trevor Clarke, Chair of Somme Working Group; Lyn Moffett, Ballymoney Community Resource Centre; Councillor Michelle McKnight-McQuillan, Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; Hugh Elliott, Vice-Chairman, Ballymoney R.B.L.; Sammy McClements, Ballymoney District Cultural Heritage Society and member of Ballymoney R.B.L. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.



Billy Davenport and Hugh Elliott in Ypres, Ballymoney Branch wreath, and the wreaths laid at Menin Gate. Photos courtesy of Hugh Elliott.

Great Pilgrimage

For the 90th anniversary of the Great Pilgrimage the Royal British Legion recreated the pilgrimage. In 1928, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Armistice Day, the British Legion arranged for war widows and veterans to visit the Somme battlefields, and then march to Ypres and the Menin Gate. In 2018 the GP90 visit was part of a week of remembrance, with two members from each Branch attending. Vice-Chairman of Ballymoney Branch, Hugh Elliott attended with Billy Davenport, the Branch Standard Bearer. The march of around 2,000 ex-servicemen paraded through Ypres, ending at the Menin Gate to lay wreaths to commemorate the Centenary of the Armistice.





Certificate presented to Ballymoney Branch to commemorate their role in the Great Pilgrimage 90.

Community projects

In early 2019, Ballymoney Branch Vice Chairman, Hugh Elliott, was selected to attend an international conflict resolution study visit to Croatia and Bosnia, as part of the Peace IV funded Community Integration Programme and Key Institutions Programme. Twenty participants took part from organisations across the Borough, including: Royal British Legion; Apprentice Boys of Derry; Ulster Covenant Historical Society; Carey Historical Society; republican bands and prisoner welfare groups; Gaelic Athletic Association; Ancient Order of Hibernians, and Comhaltas. Three workshops were held before the trip, covering conflict and peacebuilding, and religion and ethnicity in the Balkan region during the twentieth century. While visiting Croatia the group met the Irish and British ambassadors, and toured the historic sites of the ancient city of Sisak.

Then the group travelled to Prijedor in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they visited a mosque, Catholic church, and Eastern Orthodox church, the World War Two memorial at Mrakovica, and the Battle of Kozara Museum. A workshop on *'The challenge of peace-building and building civil society in a post conflict situation'* was held, then participants visited the Donja Gradina and Jasenovac former concentration camp sites. The next day former combatants from the 1990s civil war took part in a workshop with the group, and on the final day participants toured Petrinja. At the end of the programme an evaluation workshop discussed what the group had learned about dealing with the past, commemoration and remembrance, and how to implement this learning back in Northern Ireland.



Members of the group in discussion. Photo courtesy of Building Communities Resource Centre.

CHAPTER 4:

Remembrance

After the adoption of 11 th November as a day of remembrance, it was named 'Armistice Day'. The British Legion Council decided it should be 'Remembrance Day', to remember those who had served in other conflicts, not just the First World War.⁸⁰ At the 1924 Legion Conference a proposal was passed to celebrate remembrance nationally on 'Remembrance Sunday', the Sunday nearest 11 th November, usually the second Sunday. This would allow everyone to attend a church service on a day they were not at work or school.

Between the World Wars

In 1924, the first Armistice Day after Ballymoney Branch was formed, two services were held. In the morning Reverend Dill and Reverend Wilson led a service in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. Afterwards a wreath was placed on the Roll of Honour at the Diamond by W. R. Saunderson, and the 'Last Post' sounded while Branch members stood in silence saluting. In the afternoon a service was held in the Town Hall, with many of the new Branch members present, a two minute silence was also observed in the streets of Ballymoney, with the traffic stopping as well.⁸¹

The following year a parade was held in the morning, with Stanley Hudson playing the 'Last Post', then Lieutenant R. A. Saunderson placed a wreath on the Roll of Honour on behalf of the British Legion. The message on the wreath read 'British Legion. Lest we forget. To the memory of our fallen comrades.'⁸²

80 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p14

81 *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1924

82 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 14 November 1925

That afternoon the Branch paraded from the Town Hall to First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. Music was provided by Ballymoney Brass Band, and the parade was extremely well attended, the *Northern Constitution* commented *'in front were the ex-servicemen, wearing their decorations, the turn-out being thoroughly representative of all grades of the community and all creeds and classes.'*⁸³ At least 1,200 people followed, and many simply couldn't fit into the church.⁸⁴ Reverend Dill led the service, telling the congregation of The Unknown Warrior being laid to rest, and how the warrior was representative of all the ex-servicemen. He represented the 36th Ulster Division, and their great advance into the woods at Thiepval in 1916. He also represented the 16th and the 10th Irish Divisions, and the Irish Guards at Gouzeaucourt in 1917. Reverend Dill also mentioned the colonial armies, the Air Force, naval fleet, nurses and doctors, and everyone who served in the war.

The unity between churches in commemorating Armistice Day was shown in 1926, when the *'praise service was led by a united choir of the several Protestant churches in town'*, and the collection for Ballymoney British Legion raised over £50.⁸⁵ Ballymoney Branch continued the remembrance tradition in 1927, placing a number of wreaths on a cenotaph. This was *'erected by the local branch of the British Legion, in an open space at the Diamond'*, and *'was surrounded by members of the British Legion and ex-servicemen under Capt. R. A Cramsie J.P., and Mr. R. A Saunderson, M.C.'*⁸⁶ At the afternoon service the visiting preacher, Reverend W. H. Hutchinson of Cullybackey, spoke of the importance of remembrance, *'and illustrated an impressive sermon with many personal incidents and poems of the men who fought, and in many instances fell, on the battlefield.'*⁸⁷ *Coleraine Chronicle* listed the locals who donated to the Legion after the service.

83 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 14 November 1925

84 *Northern Constitution*, 14 November 1925

85 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 13 November 1926

86 *Ballymena Observer*, 18 November 1927

87 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 12 November 1927

Subscriptions were received from the following:- Mrs. A. Megaw, £5; W.J. Megaw (Ballyboyland) and W.V. McCleery, J.P., W. Redpath, Thomas Luke, A. D. McLean, W. B. Thomson (Dunaverney), W. G. Finley, and A. Connolly (Drumdollagh), 10s each. The collection amounted to £44 17s.

Coleraine Chronicle, 12 November 1927.

THE WREATHS.

There were many beautiful floral tributes in memory of those who made the great sacrifice laid on Sunday last at the temporary cenotaph at the Diamond. Owing to the gale on Sunday night the cards which had not been attached to the wreaths were blown away. Many of these were recovered by little children who reverently placed them on the cenotaph again.

The wreaths on the Cenotaph on Monday morning included the following:— From Captain R. A. Cramsie, J.P. (card gone); "In loving memory of my brothers, Vic and Bill, 1914-1915—Ian and Mrs. L. P. Cameron"; The officers, soldiers and friends of the Salvation Army"; "In loving memory of W. Beckett—From his sons"; "In loving memory of my son, Private Matthew Keers—From his mother, Ellen Keers, Castle Street"; "In fond and loving memory of Rifleman Alex. Cairns, 17390, 12th Battalion R. Irish Rifles—Fondly remembered by his brothers and sisters"; "In loving memory of David M'Lelland—From his mother"; "In loving remembrance of our dear father, Lance-Corporal J. M'Coubrey—From Jim, John, Bella and Jean"; "In memory of Alex. Cairns—From his aunt, uncle and cousin"; "In loving memory of Private William M'Cormick, 12th R. Irish Rifles—From his loving aunt, Elizabeth Murphy"; "From Poppy Day Women's Committee"; "In loving memory of Private Daniel Nevin—Ever remembered by his father, mother, sisters and brothers, Church Street, Ballymoney"; "In loving memory of our fallen comrades—British Legion"; "In loving memory of Rifleman William Wade, 12th R. Irish Rifles—From his father and mother, Edward Street."

In 1928, on the first Armistice Day after the opening of Ballymoney Legion Hall, the annual parade began from the Hall. The British Legion were led by Drumahiskey Flute Band down High Street, to lay wreaths at the cenotaph, then continue to First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church.⁸⁸ Reverend Wilson took the sermon, and after the collection Mr Dill announced that the Legion Hall would now be debt free for the ex-servicemen. Many of the messages on wreaths at the Cenotaph were listed in the *Northern Constitution*.

Northern Constitution, 17 November 1928.

88 *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1928

In the years that followed it became tradition that a service was held outside the Legion Hall in the morning, then the parade to the Diamond to lay wreaths, followed by a united service in the afternoon at First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. Armistice Day in 1929 brought another large attendance for remembrance, after the 'Last Post' the whole town '*became quiet, work in the neighbourhood ceased, traffic stopped, and all heads were bowed for two minutes of solemn contemplation.*'⁸⁹ After the morning service the Legion, and other local organisations laid wreaths '*in the Garden of Remembrance – a little grass plot in front of the Legion Hall, where a plain wooden cross had been erected.*'⁹⁰ The afternoon service was led by Reverend R. C. Elliott of Duneane, who had been Chaplain to the Forces, he spoke of how men had fought to make a nation for heroes, and despite industrial unrest and economic difficulties, the strong character of the people would triumph. The *Coleraine Chronicle* commented that the '*immense attendance showed the profound respect in which the memory of those who sacrificed all is still venerated, and proved that in Ballymoney their memory and deeds remain as fresh and inspiring as they did eleven years ago.*'⁹¹

On Armistice Day 1930, Reverend J. G. Paton of Belfast gave an '*inspiring address*' on '*the indomitable spirit which characterised the Ulster Division.*'⁹² He told the story of a local ex-serviceman, who had been captured in 1914 aged 21. The officer had made four unsuccessful attempts at escape, and on the fifth attempt he made a rubber stamp for his passport out of an old tennis shoe, which finally got him home. He then insisted on being sent back to the front line in France to continue fighting.⁹³ Rev. Paton said another soldier he knew from the Ballymoney area was '*one of the bravest men that he ever came across.*'⁹⁴

89 *Northern Constitution*, 16 November 1929

90 *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 12 November 1929

91 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1929

92 *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 10 November 1930

93 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 November 1930

94 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 November 1930

Orders were given for the soldier to go through woods to shoot a Lewis gun at Germans, but he was the only man from his unit to make it through. *'Though he was left all alone, and although the trees were crashing to the right and left of him, he went on with his Lewis gun, planted it down on the far side of the wood, and fired into the enemy as he had been told to do.'*⁹⁵ Rev. Paton told the congregation that a debt was owed to all those who had served, and people *'could pay it partly by buying poppies the next day or two. They could pay it by helping the ex-servicemen whom they know personally and who required a helping hand.'*⁹⁶

The Very Reverend King, the Dean of Derry, came to preach at Ballymoney in 1931, which meant a large crowd of around 800 attended the afternoon service.⁹⁷ For Reverend F. Dixon of Portstewart in 1933,⁹⁸ *'the turn-out of ex-servicemen was exceptionally large.'*⁹⁹ The following year Rev. Wilson's sermon in St James' Presbyterian Church encouraged the congregation to join together to remember the dead, and *'commit ourselves to the eager, determined pursuit of peace'*.¹⁰⁰ Ballymoney Branch *'wearing their decorations, paraded at the Legion Hall, under Major McGown, M.C., and Captain R. A. Cramsie, J.P., and marched to the church, headed by the Salvation Army Brass Band and Drumahiskey Flute Band.'*¹⁰¹

In 1936 pupils from two local secondary schools joined in the morning service at the Legion Hall for the first time, giving a record Armistice Day attendance.

95 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 November 1930

96 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 November 1930

97 The Northern Whig and Belfast Post, 9 November 1931

98 Belfast Telegraph, 6 November 1933

99 Coleraine Chronicle, 11 November 1933

100 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1934

101 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1934

The article below appeared in *The Northern Whig*.

BALLYMONEY.

There was a good record of attendance at the service, which was held in front of the Legion Hall. The pupils of the Model School, under Mr. R. J. Templeton, and the students of the High School, under Mr. R. Ross, were present. Rev. J. T. Armstrong, M.A., Rev. H. C. Winddell, M.A., and Rev. Charles Orr, B.A., L.L.B., took part. The "Last Post" and "Reveille" were sounded by Bugler F. M'Ilreavey. The singing was led by a united choir under Mr. Stevenson Howie, A.I.C.M.

A large number of wreaths were placed in the Garden of Remembrance.

The Northern Whig and Belfast Post, 12 November 1936.

Reverend W. Hutchison of Ballywillan led the 1938 service in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church, the British Legion parade, under Dr H. H. McClelland, marched from the Legion Hall to the church, led by the Henderson Memorial Pipe Band. During the service Reverend Orr 'read a statement he had received from the executive of the Ballymoney Branch of the British Legion, requesting that the public should give generously for poppies this year. It was mentioned that there was particular distress among ex-Servicemen suffering from the effects of gas. These men, it was pointed out, suffered more as they grew older, and it was hoped that the public would enable the work of assisting disabled men to be carried on and extended'.¹⁰² Albert McAuley, a Branch member, decorated the First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church for the 1946 service, the *Coleraine Chronicle* commented that the church 'was impressively decorated with poppies'.¹⁰³

102 *Northern Constitution*, 12 November 1938

103 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1946

After the Second World War

After the formation of Ballymoney Branch Women's Section in 1946, the members joined in with remembrance each year. In 1947 the parade to and from the church 'was very well supported by members of the men's and women's sections of the Legion'.¹⁰⁴ 1953 brought a 'most impressive parade' to Ballymoney, 'composed of all the units represented at the morning service, with the addition of contingents from the R.A.F. and Royal Naval Associations (Coleraine), with standards'.¹⁰⁵ The Henderson Memorial Pipe Band led the parade, under the command of Major A. J. H. Cramsie, to a special service in St James' Presbyterian Church. Reverend Mulree unveiled two War Memorial tablets, in tribute to the members of the congregation who fought in both World Wars.¹⁰⁶ In the 1950s attendance at Remembrance Day was considerable, in 1955 the parade from the Legion Hall in the afternoon was the most significant for many years, with Major Cramsie thanking 'all who had attended and who had helped to make the Remembrance Day services a success'.¹⁰⁷

For the first time a Remembrance Day service was held in the local Roman Catholic church in 1956, to allow the whole community to commemorate those who had given their lives. Father G. Clenaghan, the parish priest of Loughgiel, had been Chaplain to the Forces in the First World War. He led the service in the Church of Our Lady and St Patrick, with the parade going past both churches, 'At the Church of Our Lady and St. Patrick the large contingent of the Catholic ex-Servicemen detached from the parade and the remainder proceeded to First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church'.¹⁰⁸ The two services proved very popular, with 'very large numbers of the public joining in both services'.¹⁰⁹

104 Coleraine Chronicle, 18 November 1947

105 Coleraine Chronicle, 14 November 1953

106 Coleraine Chronicle, 14 November 1953

107 Coleraine Chronicle, 19 November 1955

108 Northern Constitution, 17 November 1956

109 Northern Constitution, 17 November 1956

After the church services the ex-servicemen all came together again for a united parade back to the Legion Hall.

In 1958 an 82 year old joined in the parade, Mr Keogh of Rasharkin had served with the Connaught Rangers in the First World War. He was accompanied by his wife, who had served in the Women's Nursing Services. The Branch were *'highly honoured to have Mr. and Mrs. Keogh taking part, and very flattered that, despite the inclement weather, they made the journey from their home near Rasharkin specially to join with the branch in the day's acts of remembrance.'*¹¹⁰

Other organisations joined in with the parade to the Remembrance Day services. In 1962 there were not only adults parading, but also young children sharing in the commemoration as well. The *Coleraine Chronicle* reported on *'an impressive parade to the church of British Legion members and other ex-Servicemen and members of Territorial Army, the Army Cadet Force, Ulster Special Constabulary, Boys' Brigade, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.'*¹¹¹

A memorial to the eleven men of Ballymoney who gave their lives during the Second World War was dedicated in January 1963. The memorial tablet, along with a Roll of Honour of 100 men and women who served in the Second World War, was unveiled by Colonel A. J. H. Cramsie in the ceremony at St Patrick's Church. A parade to the church was led by the band of the North Irish Horse of the Territorial Army, with the four Ballymoney Branch Standard bearers; R. Abernethy, S. Patton, Mrs E. Loudon, and Mrs A. Green. The memorial and Roll of Honour were dedicated by the Lord Bishop of Connor, and Reverend W. McCappin, former Chaplain to the Forces, was the preacher for the ceremony. Rev. McCappin spoke of the people of Ballymoney who served in the War, *Coleraine Chronicle* published an extract from his sermon.

110 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 November 1958

111 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 17 November 1962

In the course of his sermon Mr. McCappin said, "At this very solemn service today we think of the men and women whose bodies lie in war graves in many parts of the world.

"Today, with gratitude there is recorded on the Roll of Honour in this parish the names of those who gave their services during the war, and on the memorial we have the names of eleven men who, in the service of their country, made the supreme sacrifice by laying down their lives for their friends.

"With respect and honour we salute them today."

Coleraine Chronicle, 19 January 1963.



Members of Ballymoney Branch of the British Legion on parade, arriving at St Patrick's Church.
Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 19 January 1963.



Members of Ballymoney Branch of the British Legion on parade, arriving at St Patrick's Church. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 19 January 1963.

Regimental Drum and Commemorative Window

During the 1966 Remembrance Day service, Jackson Greene and five other members of Ballymoney Branch, presented a regimental drum from the 12th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles to Reverend Orr to be laid up in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. The 12th (Service) Battalion was part of the 36th (Ulster) Division, having served at the Battle of the Somme. The late Captain S. J. Lyle of Ballycastle had arranged for the drum to be restored to its original condition before being laid up in the church, where it remains today.

REGIMENTAL DRUM

During the service a regimental drum of the 12th (Service) Battalion the Royal Irish Rifles, was laid up in the church, being received by Mr. Orr, from ex-Servicemen who had served with the Battalion, which was formed after the outbreak of the 1914-1918 War as a unit of the 36th (Ulster) Division.

The Battalion was raised and commanded by Major R. C. A. McCalmont, Member of Parliament for East Antrim, in September, 1914, and was recruited from the Ulster Volunteer Force in North East and Central Antrim.

The Battalion landed in France in October, 1915, and took part in most of the important engagements, including the Battle of the Somme. It was also chosen to enter the Rhineland - as part of the occupation forces - following the surrender of the German armies.

The drum was subsequently presented to Ballymoney Branch, British Legion, by the late Captain S. J. Lyle, M.C., of Ballycastle, having been repainted and lettered in its original colours by the late Colonel K. A. Shooter, secretary of the Royal Ulster Rifles' Association.

After the service, the parade, under the command of Colonel A. J. H. Cramsie, O.B.E., D.L., marched to the Legion Hall, where the ex-Service personnel were entertained to tea.

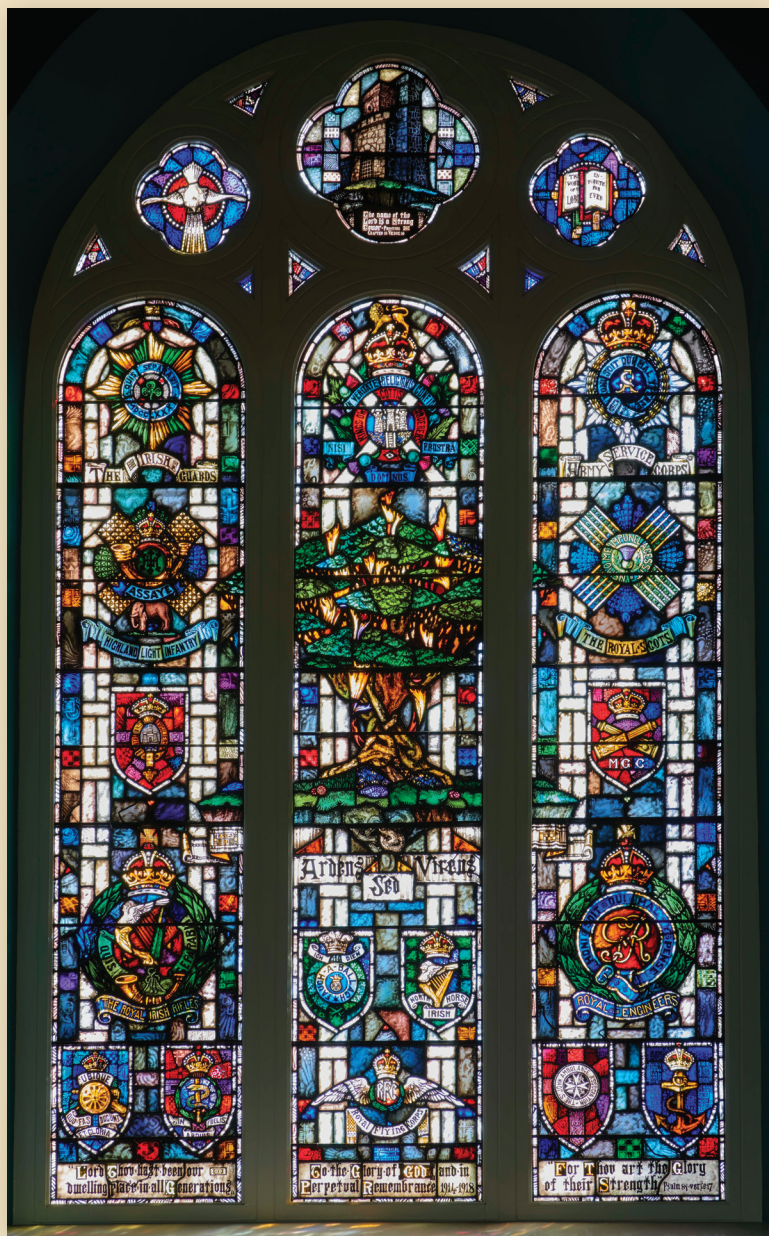
Dr. W. Tempest was organist, and bugler. Mr Thomas Rock, sounded Last Post and Reveille.



Jackson Greene with the regimental drum.
Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle,
19 November 1966



The regimental drum on display in
First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church.



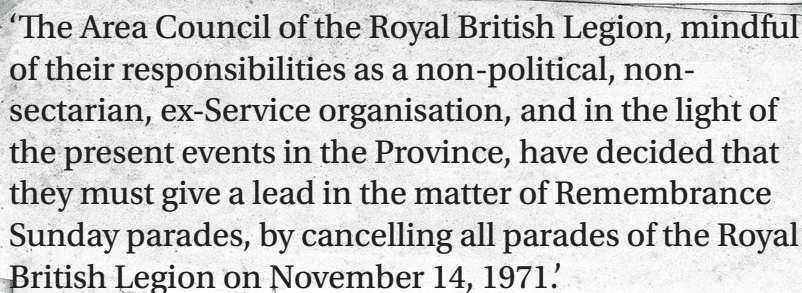
Commemorative stained glass window in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. The window has the regimental crest badges of men from Ballymoney who fell in the First World War.



World War Two commemorative window in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church.

Remembrance during the Troubles

During the early years of the Troubles there were issues with Remembrance Day parades. In 1969 the government issued a ban on public parades, except for Salvation Army parades. President of the Northern Ireland Council of the British Legion, Sir Norman Stronge, stated that the Legion would conform to the law saying, *'although it is unfortunately not possible for us to hold Remembrance Parades this year, this should not deter us from paying our tribute to the fallen in two world wars.'*¹¹² There were still opportunities to lay wreaths on war memorials, and the Festival of Remembrance at the Ulster Hall in Belfast continued, along with church services across the Province. The afternoon service in Ballymoney was led by Reverend R. R. Davey M.B.E. of Queen's University of Belfast, who was taken prisoner at Tobruk, in Libya, during the Second World War. When the parades were re-instated the following year there were *'extremely large crowds'*, and the *'largest contingent of ex-Servicemen for many years.'*¹¹³ By November 1971 parades were again cancelled, due to the Army being deployed in the Province. The Area Council made the following statement:¹¹⁴



'The Area Council of the Royal British Legion, mindful of their responsibilities as a non-political, non-sectarian, ex-Service organisation, and in the light of the present events in the Province, have decided that they must give a lead in the matter of Remembrance Sunday parades, by cancelling all parades of the Royal British Legion on November 14, 1971.'

112 *Northern Constitution*, 11 October 1969

113 *Northern Constitution*, 14 November 1970

114 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 6 November 1971

In 1973 there was more controversy. Two of the Boys' Brigade companies, 1st Ballymoney Boys' Brigade Company, and 2nd Ballymoney Boys' Brigade Company took an '*unprecedented step*'¹¹⁵, and withdrew from the Remembrance Day parade. The week before Remembrance Day, Secretary of Ballymoney Branch, Joseph Donaghy, received a letter from Reverend Dr Hugh Blair, Honorary Chaplain of 2nd Ballymoney Boys' Brigade Company. Rev. Blair stated that the Boys' Brigade were not taking part in the parade as '*a protest against the playing of bingo in the British Legion Club and the taking of drink there.*'¹¹⁶ Mr Donaghy was shocked at this sudden withdrawal, and when he checked with Legion Headquarters this was '*the first time that any organisation has ever pulled out of a Remembrance Day parade as a protest.*'¹¹⁷ The Branch were in disbelief, as any funds raised on Remembrance Day go to the Poppy Appeal, which is not for the benefit of the Branch or Clubhouse. Rev. Blair justified the withdrawal of the Boys' Brigade companies as a protest about drinking alcohol because, he said, '*it is going to harm a lot of young people.*'¹¹⁸

Even many years after the end of the Second World War attendance at Remembrance Day remained strong. In 1984, guest speaker at the church service, Reverend Houston McKelvey, Chaplain to Coleraine Territorial Army Unit commented on the united service '*that it said much about Ballymoney, and about Remembrance Sunday, and that there were no denominations in the celebration of the sacrifice of lives*'¹¹⁹ Rev. McKelvey felt it was the duty of the older generation, such as Ballymoney Branch members, to ask young people to '*think closely when they saw their elders wearing their medals and honouring the dead of the two world wars.*'¹²⁰ More than 50 wreaths were placed at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday 1986, with the parade '*the largest seen in*

115 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1973

116 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1973

117 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1973

118 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1973

119 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1984

120 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1984

*the town for many years.*¹²¹ Ballymoney saw a 'record number of ex-service men and women on parade, as well as a large turnout of youth organisations and also a record turnout of members of the public to watch the ceremonies.'¹²²

1990s onwards

Remembrance Day was commemorated in towns and villages around Ballymoney, such as Dervock, Kilrea, and Coleraine, yet the attendance in Ballymoney remained consistently high. The 1990 parade and church service were particularly popular, with the streets *'lined continuously, sometimes three and four deep, from the Royal British Legion Clubhouse right to the door of the Church on Meetinghouse Street. Inside the Church every pew was filled to overflowing.*'¹²³ Branch President, Major Pinkerton, laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch, escorted by Branch Chairman Bill Balmer. At the service in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church, the minister Reverend Noble McNeely said that *'by remembering the dead, the congregation was not glorifying war, but reminding itself of the atrocities of conflict.*'¹²⁴ Ex-servicemen joined the parade every year, in 1998, Branch Chairman, Jim Johnston commented *'I am delighted that well over 1,000 people paraded in the afternoon from the Cenotaph to First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. It was a proud and dignified occasion and it was pleasing to see how well turned out all the participants were.*'¹²⁵

Lord O'Neill attends Remembrance Day

For the first time on Remembrance Day 2000, Colonel the Lord O'Neill, the Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, attended the Ballymoney parade. As the parade marched back through the town to the Cenotaph, the salute

121 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 November 1986

122 Coleraine Chronicle, 15 November 1986

123 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1990

124 Coleraine Chronicle, 17 November 1990

125 Northern Constitution, 14 November 1998

was taken at the march past by Lord O'Neill, accompanied by Branch President, Colonel Leslie. Colonel Leslie was pleased with the attendance, saying that there was *'a very good turnout both at the cenotaph and the parade, which was remarkable in view of the weather on the day.'*¹²⁶ He continued, *'The service which took place on Armistice Day itself on Saturday commemorating the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, was also well attended. It is good to see that this particular service, which has been revived in recent years, seems to be supported by growing numbers of people.'*¹²⁷ The Northern Constitution newspaper commented that *'Although over half a century has passed since the World War ended, an exceptionally large number of wreaths laid at the cenotaph this year indicated that the traditional act of remembrance is observed as keenly as ever.'*¹²⁸

Somme Commemorations

To commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in 2006 Ballymoney Branch sent a representative to France for Remembrance Day. Stuart McDonald placed a wreath at the Ulster Tower, near Thiepval, to commemorate those from the 36th (Ulster) Division who gave their lives in the First World War. Stuart commented *'I felt very proud to be at the Remembrance Day service in France and to be able to lay a wreath and represent Ballymoney British Legion.'*¹²⁹

Armed Forces Day

Armed Forces Day takes place on the last Saturday in June each year. It began in the UK as Veterans Day in 2006, and was renamed Armed Forces Day in 2009. The focus is on celebrating current and former ex-servicemen still living, rather than honouring the fallen on Remembrance

126 Northern Constitution, 18 November 2000

127 Northern Constitution, 18 November 2000

128 Northern Constitution, 18 November 2000

129 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 15 November 2006

Day. Every year there are local celebrations, and a larger national event held in a different city across the UK. Ballymoney Branch celebrate Armed Forces Day by having a short service of thanks and appreciation for currently serving members, veterans and cadets. at the War Memorial, where the Armed Forces flag is raised.



Ballymoney Branch on Armed Forces Day 2012.



Armed Forces Day 2016. Photo courtesy of Hugh Elliott.



Armed Forces Day, 22nd June 2019. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Remembrance



The scene at the War Memorial, Remembrance Day 1974. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 16 November 1974.



Laying a wreath on the War Memorial, Remembrance Day 1991. Left to right: Bill Balmer, Chairman; Sammy Anderson, Secretary; John Pinkerton, Vice-President. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1991.



James Stewart and William Elder lowering the flags, Remembrance Day 1992. Also included Rev. Robin Lavery and Rev. Trevor McGowan. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 14 November 1992.



The scene at the War Memorial, Remembrance Day 1996. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 16 November 1996.



The scene at the War Memorial, Remembrance Day 1996. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 16 November 1996.



Pipe Major William Wade at Remembrance Day 1996. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1996.



The crowd at Remembrance Day 1999. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 20 November 1999.



Ballymoney Branch members at Remembrance Day. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 13 November 2002.



Bill Balmer with members of the Royal Marines, laying a wreath for the first time in Ballymoney.
Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 12 November 2003.



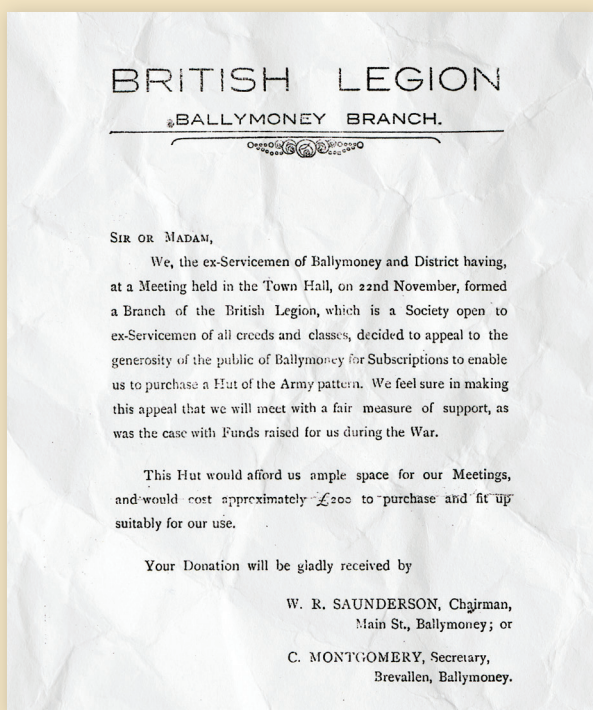
Ballymoney Branch members parading on Remembrance Day 2004.
Left to right: John McLaughlin; Barry McKay; Freddie Baird; Billy Wade; Liam McCurdy.
Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 17 November 2004.

CHAPTER 5:

The Building

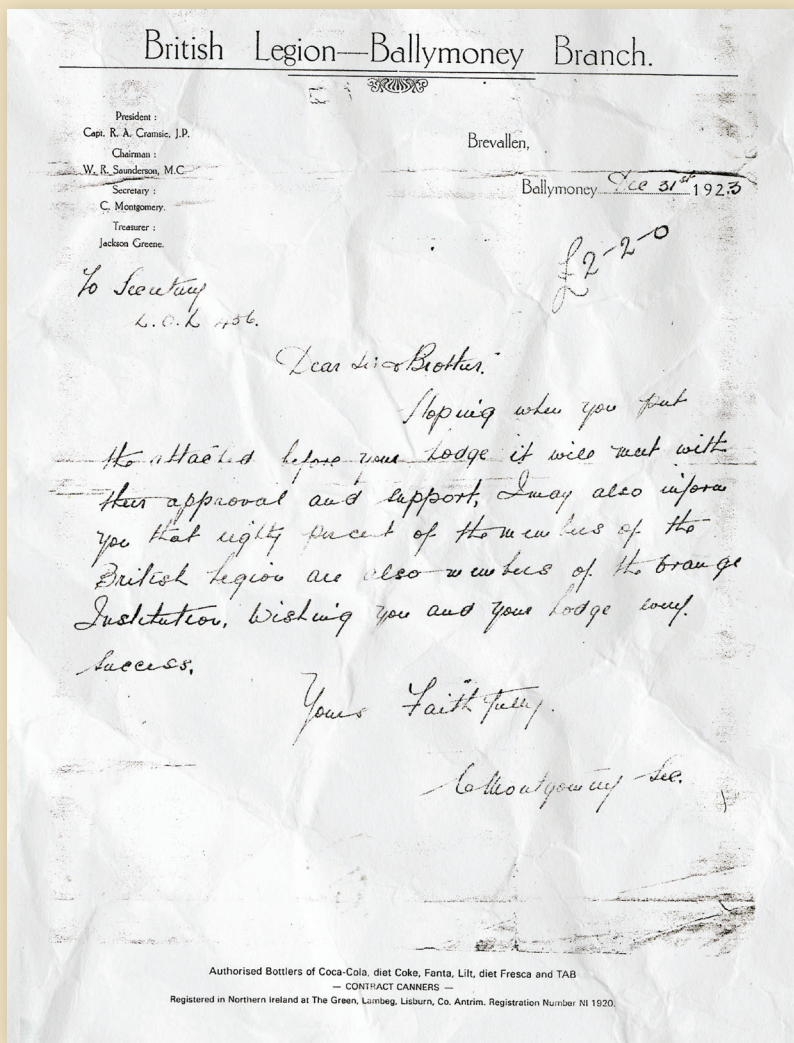
Fundraising for a Hall

Lord Antrim granted a small plot of land, next to the Town Hall in High Street, to the Ballymoney Branch for a hut to be built. The rent was set at a nominal 1s per year during his lifetime, whilst the Legion were using the building. The Branch launched a public appeal for funds, asking the people of Ballymoney to contribute to the building of the Hall.



Letter from Ballymoney Branch requesting donations for the building of a Hut, November 1925.
Letter courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.

The letter was sent to Ballymoney Purple Star Loyal Orange Lodge 456 acknowledging an overlap in membership, which appears to have worked as a donation of £2 2s was received.



Letter from Ballymoney Branch to Ballymoney Purple Star Loyal Orange Lodge 456 acknowledging an overlap in membership and requesting donations for the building of a Hut, December 1925. In response the Branch received a donation of £2 2s.
Letter courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.

Original estimates had put the cost of a building at £200, however, by November 1924 this had risen to £450, including furnishings.¹³⁰ In the few months since the Branch had been established fundraising efforts had already collected £160. In March 1924 the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Special Constabulary held a uniform dance to raise funds, where the Ballymoney Y.M.C.A. brass band, conducted by Stanley Hudson, played until the midnight supper.¹³¹ Later that month, a whist drive was held, then in October a well-attended concert.

On 3rd November, Reverend Dill, Minister of First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church, and Captain R. A. Cramsie, Ballymoney Branch President, led a deputation to Ballymoney Urban Council. Reverend Dill explained that the Branch wanted to provide a hut for ex-servicemen, to preserve the sense of comradeship they had developed during their war service. The deputation felt this was an issue at the heart of the local community, and asked the Council to approve plans to gift the hut to the Legion, as a memorial to the bravery of those who had served. The Council agreed that, although they could not offer public funds for the project, a public meeting should be called. James Anderson, Chairman of the Urban Council, convened a meeting on 11th November to request assistance with fundraising for a hut so *'the members of the local branch of the British Legion could meet for mutual improvement and recreation.'*¹³²

Over £170 was raised that same evening from donations. It was decided that a subscription list would be opened, which was published in the *Coleraine Chronicle* the following week, to further publicise the need for funds towards the hut.

130 *Northern Constitution*, 8 November 1924

131 *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 3 March 1924

132 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 November 1924

WAR MEMORIALS

Ballymoney Ex-Service Men Want a Hut.

At Monday's meeting of Ballymoney Urban Council - Mr. James Anderson presiding - a deputation, consisting of Mrs. Leslie, Miss McNeill, the Rev. A. H. Dill and Captain R. A. Cramsie, J. P. appeared before the Council.

The Rev. A. H. Dill said that at a meeting held recently in that hall to find out the best means of helping forward the scheme for providing a hut for the ex-service men of Ballymoney it was decided to appoint a deputation to wait upon the Council to lay before them the facts of the case and the progress that had been made in the scheme.

The ex-service men in Ballymoney desired to have a hut provided under their own control and under their own management, and it was only right and natural, he thought, that ex-service men should desire to preserve the comradeships that had been formed in the experience they had passed through under the common trials and common dangers in which they had engaged. The ex-Service men had he understood, by public subscriptions and other efforts raised the sum of £160. At first it was thought that £200 would have been sufficient, but it was now found that they would require at least £450 to complete the erection and furnishing of the hut.

The deputation appeared before them as a Council because they represented the whole community of Ballymoney, and this if he might be allowed to say so was a matter which concerned the whole community.

All that was done in the great war by these men was done for the whole community and for the whole country. They must remember the price that was paid for victory - the price of human lives, of wounds, of blindness, of shattered health, of toil that could not be described and almost beyond endurance, and the illustrious bravery of our men - that was the price. They could not repay and they could not recompense that, but there was one thing they could remember and not forget.

The deputation wanted the impetus and impulse which would come from the Council's approval of making this hut a gift from the townspeople of Ballymoney as a memorial to the services of our brave men in the war. He hoped that when the hut was completed that they would be able to put on the walls that this hut was presented to the British Legion in Ballymoney by their grateful fellow-citizens.

Mrs. Leslie concurred and said that seeing the ex-service men had asked for the hut it would be a very gracious thing for Ballymoney if they gave one. It would be received with great gratification and pleasure and would show the men that they did not forget what they did for those at home in the great war.

Mr. John Knox (clerk) pointed out that the Council had no statutory powers to financially help the project.

The Rev. Dill said the deputation was only for the purpose of getting the Council's approval and benediction, and in order that the Council might take some steps to enable the ex-service men to complete the hut.

Other members of the Council having spoken favourably in reward to the project, Captain R. A. Cramsie, J. P., on behalf of the deputation thanked the Council for the sympathetic manner in which they had been received.

The deputation then withdrew.

The Northern Whig and Belfast Post, 5 November 1924

On Armistice Day 1925, a further collection was made after the service in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church, raising £171 3s 3d from over 1,200 attendees. There are some different opinions over how the balance of the collection was brought up to £200.¹³³ The *Northern Constitution* states that Senator Thomas Greer, a retired Ballymoney solicitor, agreed to bring the fund up to £200. However, the *Coleraine Chronicle* states that the Legion 'owed a debt of gratitude to the Rev. A. H. Dill for the kind interest he took to have this debt removed'.¹³⁴ The renowned Ballymoney historian Alex Blair also wrote 'and Mr. Dill made it [the collection] up to £200',¹³⁵ so it is still open to debate who paid the final few pounds for the Hall. By February 1926, £665 had been raised for the Hall and furniture, Mrs Greer had donated over one hundred books for the reading room library, and it was announced construction would start in April to be completed by July 1927. The Hall would have a billiards and recreation room, reading room, toilet, cloakroom, and outside there would be a rifle range.¹³⁶

The official opening of the Hall took place on 11th November 1927, with the ceremony held in the Town Hall due to the inclement weather. Mrs Greer, wife of Senator Greer, was presented with a silver key to open the Hall. Captain Cramsie thanked the people of Ballymoney for their generosity in providing funds for the Hall. As part of the celebrations it was decided to start the Ballymoney Branch afresh.¹³⁷

133 *Northern Constitution*, 14 November 1925

134 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 13 December 1930

135 Blair, S. A (1996) *The Big Meetinghouse: 1st Presbyterian Church Ballymoney 350th Anniversary 1646-1996*, First Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney, p140

136 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 20 February 1926

137 *Ballymena Observer*, 18 November 1927



Opening ceremony of the new British Legion Hall in November 1927. Photo courtesy of *Belfast Telegraph*, 1 December 1927.

In February 1928, Ballymoney Branch Secretary, William Cairns, requested the use of a private room in the Town Hall for Legion relief hearings every other Tuesday, as there was nowhere suitably private in the new Legion Hall. During the Armistice Day service in November 1928, Reverend Dill announced that the remaining £100 debt on the Legion Hall could be repaid, as the collection had amounted to £76, and Mrs Greer was covering the additional £24.¹³⁸ At the start of 1933, Mr W. Saunderson confirmed a total of £840 had been raised for the Hall, and thanked Reverend Dill as *'deserving of their very best thanks for the assistance he had given in raising the money.'*¹³⁹ In July, Reverend Dill's obituary in the *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph* commented that his *'interest in the welfare of ex-Servicemen was untiring. It was largely due to his initiative and enthusiasm that the present British Legion Hall in Ballymoney was erected and cleared of debt.'*¹⁴⁰

138 *Northern Constitution*, 17 November 1928

139 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 March 1933

140 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 15 July 1933

Repairs and Fundraising

Just six months later, *Coleraine Chronicle* ran an article about repairs being required to the Hall, with roof slates alone costing £50, and appealed for the people of Ballymoney to give their financial support generously.¹⁴¹ A series of events, including whist drives and a dance at the Town Hall were planned, which reduced the Branch bank overdraft by £60.

For some time the state of the Legion Hall building has been far from satisfactory and called for improvement. A sum of money was expended on necessary repairs, and in order to meet the expenditure it is proposed to hold a series of entertainments in the hall during the coming winter. A small committee has been formed with Major M'Gown as chairman, Miss M'Neill, hon. secretary, and Mr. J. R. Love, hon. treasurer. During the dark years of 1914-1918 Ballymoney people spared neither time nor money in their efforts for the welfare of the men who were facing danger and enduring untold hardships for their country. From 1918 to 1933 is a long time; but the memories of the Ballymoney people are not short, nor should their gratitude be any less. As the Legion Hall is the tangible expression of that gratitude, it should not be allowed to fall into disrepair for lack of financial support, and it is confidently expected that the people of the town will—as they have so often done before—assist to make any effort in this direction a success.

Coleraine Chronicle, 23 September 1933.

141 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 23 September 1933



Stranocum Protestant Flute Band on the original steps of Ballymoney British Legion Hall, late 1940s. Photo courtesy of Liam McCurdy.

The Hall was heavily used for meetings and social activities, particularly once the Women's Section was formed, providing more bookings for the rooms. At a meeting of the Women's Section in 1950 Joseph Donaghy urged the ladies to consider participating in a joint committee to extend the Hall, and provide them with a meeting space and facilities. He commented that there was plenty of space to extend the Hall, and the people of Ballymoney had fundraised so much during the Second World War that a small amount more should not be an issue. The Legion felt that since Ballymoney had no War Memorial an extended Hall would be a fitting tribute to those who had given their lives. By the annual meeting in 1953 the Branch was appealing for better use to be made of the Hall. Records showed that St Patrick's Drama Club and Aghadowey Players had performed in the Hall during the annual Ballymoney Drama Festival, and there were regular billiards tournaments.

However, there was great concern over the lack of activity, and discussion over whether the Hall could afford to keep its doors open for recreational activities.

At a joint committee meeting that December, committee member James McArthur explained plans were being drawn up for an extension to the Hall, providing a billiards room, committee room, and a kitchen to cater for social events. The plans also included installing a ladies toilet, rewiring, and a full repaint. These improvements were expected to cost over £300, a public fundraising appeal was proposed as the Branch had not asked for public support since the original Hall construction in 1927. Funds were raised by members asking friends for donations, and by the end of 1955 the appeal had been so successful additional funds were left over after the works. A Cross of Remembrance, surrounded by a Garden of Remembrance in front of the Legion Hall was suggested, and arrangements made for a house to house collection around the town.

Extension and Cramsie Rooms

It was announced in October 1974 that the extension awaited since 1971 would begin in the spring of 1975, costing £35,000. Colonel A. J. H. Cramsie commented that once the extension was complete *'the new building would be one of the finest halls in Ballymoney.'*¹⁴² By June 1976 the work was complete, and the reopening was celebrated with many other branches from across the Province. Over two hundred Legion members were led in a parade through Ballymoney by Branch members, with musical accompaniment from the Vow Accordion Band. Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Hezlet, R.B.L. Area President for Northern Ireland, took the salute at the march past.

142 Coleraine Chronicle, 1 November 1975



Standard Bearers leading the parade. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 19 June 1976.



Sir Arthur Hezlet taking the salute. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 19 June 1976.

The opening ceremony was fittingly performed by Mrs Cramsie, wife of the Branch President, and daughter-in-law of the original President. The extension more than doubled the size of the Hall from the original 1927 building, with a new lounge and dancing area, along with additional toilets, and larger kitchen facilities.



Colonel Cramsie speaking at the opening ceremony. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 19 June 1976.

Eight years later, a further addition was made, to give a separate space for snooker and darts, along with a new bar area. The Branch decided to name the extension the 'Cramsie Rooms' in honour of the Cramsie family's contribution to Ballymoney British Legion. Colonel Cramsie unveiled the commemorative plaque, and said he was very proud his family had such a long association with the club, and it was *'an honour to have the rooms called by his family name.'*¹⁴³

143 Coleraine Chronicle, 11 August 1984



Unveiling the plaque. Left to right: Mrs Leslie, Kenny Doherty, Colonel Cramsie, Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 August 1984.

1995 Refurbishment

In October 1995 the Hall was refurbished to the present-day layout, by the architects Dalzell and Campbell of Coleraine, and builders Hugh Taggart & Sons of Ballymoney. The original central part of the building dating from 1927 was maintained, and during refurbishment work the original round British Legion window was uncovered and restored.



The window is believed to be the only surviving original decorative window dating from the 1920s in Northern Ireland. It is unusual because the logo on it dates from before the 'Royal' title was awarded to the Legion in 1971.

The extension provided a new lounge bar and Committee room upstairs, along with a snooker and darts room. The new Clubrooms were opened by Sir Dennis Faulkner, President of the Royal British Legion in Northern Ireland. He commented that the members of Ballymoney Branch *'all deserve great credit for having the courage to go ahead and create*

a splendid place like this. I offer my congratulations to all of you in producing this magnificent building.'¹⁴⁴



Left to right: Ann Park, Standard Bearer; Sir Dennis Faulkner; Ann Johnston; Liz Balmer; George Henry, Standard Bearer. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 1 November 1995.



Left to right: Sir Dennis Faulkner; Col. Sandy Cramsie; Col. James Leslie; Bill Balmer; Jim Johnston; Eileen Loudon; Councillor Cecil Cousley; Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 1 November 1995.

144 *Ballymoney Times*, 1 November 1995



Committee members and guests. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 1 November 1995.



Members of the Women's Section. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 1 November 1995.

CHAPTER 6:

War Memorial

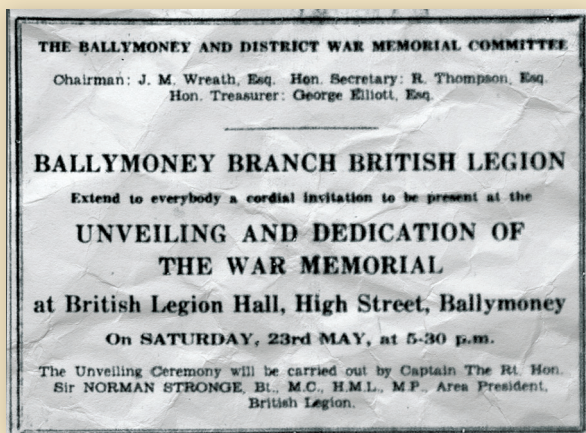
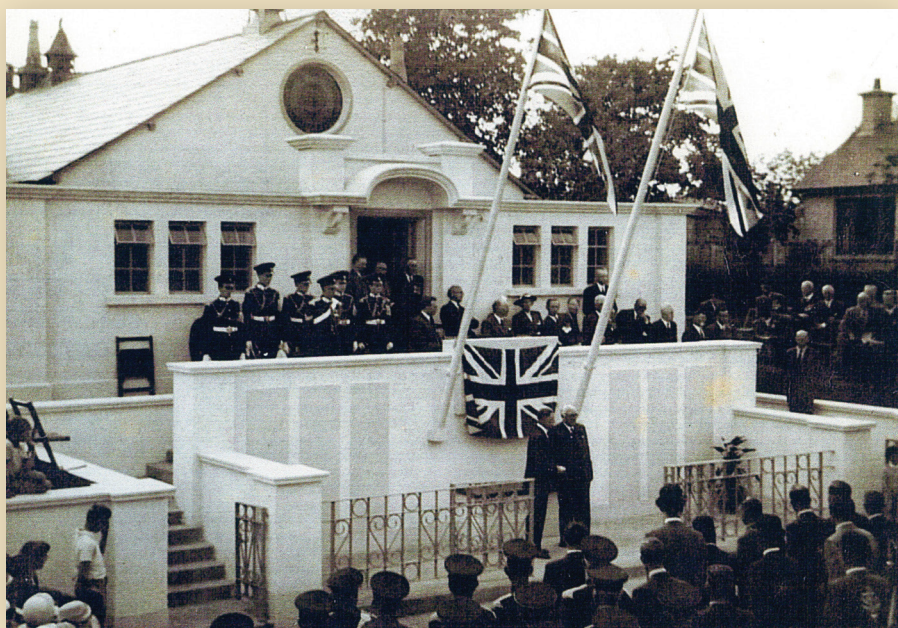
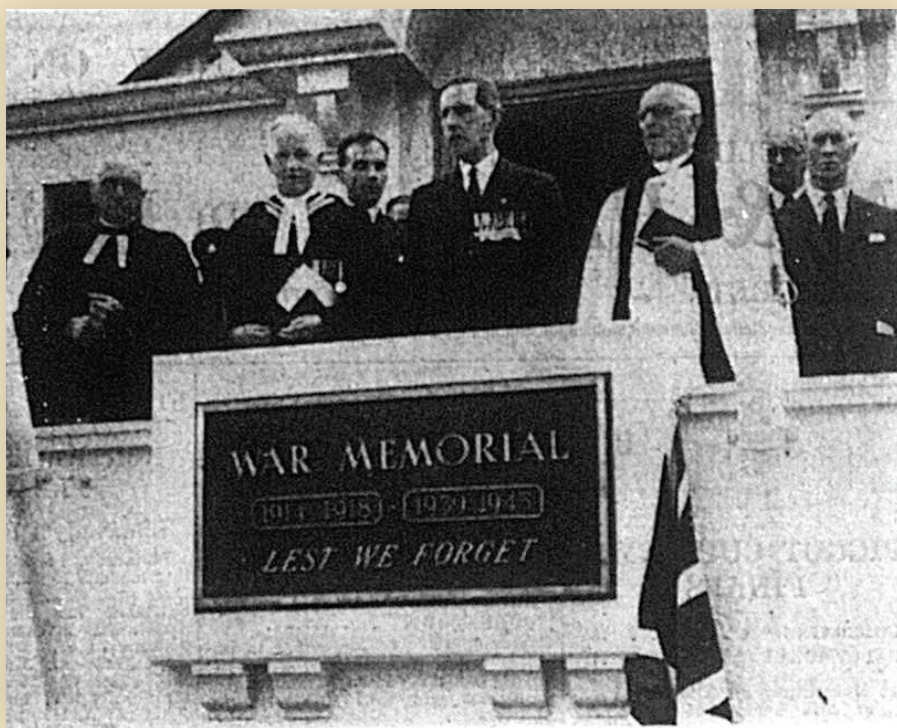


Photo left - Invitation to attend War Memorial opening ceremony from *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 May 1959.

Photo Below - Ballymoney British Legion Hall before the unveiling of the War Memorial plaque. Photo courtesy of Liam McCurdy.



On 23rd May 1959 the new War Memorial was unveiled by Sir Norman Stronge, Area President of the R.B.L. It consisted of 'an enclosed area with, on one side, tablets for the names of those who have fallen and a bronze plaque. In front there is a decorative iron railing with a small gateway by which those wishing to lay wreaths may enter.'¹⁴⁵



Unveiling of the War Memorial, left to right: Rev. H. C. Waddell; Rev. Charles Orr; Sir Norman Stronge; Rev. Chancellor J. T. Armstrong. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 30 May 1959.

A parade was led by the band of the North Irish Horse, with Lieutenant-Colonel A. J. H. Cramsie commanding the parade, and Sir Norman Stronge taking the salute at the march past. Mr J. Wreath,

Chairman of the War Memorial Committee, spoke of the generosity of the people of Ballymoney in raising over £1,000 to support the new memorial, saying he 'felt very proud of the friends who subscribed, and once again he would like to express to them warmest thanks and appreciation.'¹⁴⁶ The memorial was dedicated by Reverend Charles Orr, Chaplain to the Forces.

PLANNING OFFICER'S ASSISTANCE

But for a War Memorial such as was envisaged, they required a designer and builders. These were forthcoming in men whose work was second to none. He referred first of all to Mr. Camblin, County Planning Officer, Belfast, who came specially to Ballymoney to help them to decide where this memorial should be placed, and not only did he decide this but he drafted for them a beautiful coloured plan which they had done their best to carry out under the guidance of their good friend Mr. David Robinson, who went to no end of trouble in working out details and procuring prices. Mr. Taggart, contractor, Portrush, did the work for them at cost price, while Mr. Glass, his manager, was most attentive during all the work. Mr. McKay, of Ballymoney, made and erected the gates and railing. So to all these gentlemen they wished to give sincere thanks.

How the War Memorial plans came together, *Coleraine Chronicle*, 30 May 1959.

A public fundraising appeal to add the names of the fallen to Ballymoney War Memorial was launched by Ballymoney Branch, in partnership with Ballymoney Borough Council, on 14th June 1999.¹⁴⁷ The names of those

146 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 30 May 1959

147 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 15 April 1999

who died in the First and Second World Wars, and the Korean War, were added to the memorial in 2000, after extensive research by local historian Robert Thompson. Colonel Leslie, President of Ballymoney Branch, commented *'A proper war memorial recording the names of the fallen is something which we have lacked in Ballymoney, and I think the project to record the names on the memorial is an excellent one.'*¹⁴⁸



Ballymoney Branch members at the launch of the public appeal. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 16 June 1999.



Members of Ballymoney Branch after the re-dedication of the War Memorial on Remembrance Day 2000. Standing left to right: David Stewart, Parade Commander; Sammy Kerr; Liam McCurdy; Tony Gilmour; Noel Black; Sammy Anderson; Bill Balmer; Jim Johnston, Branch Chairman; Roland Adams; Uel Hargy; Mark McLaughlin; Robert Pollock; Hughie McKeown. Seated left to right: Meta Cunningham; Ann Parke, Women's Section Standard Bearer; Beatrice Lavery.

A bronze sculpture of a First World War soldier was added to the War Memorial on 1st November 2014. The Mayor, Alderman Bill Kennedy, commented, *'This is a fine and lasting memorial to those who tragically lost their lives in the great war 1914-1918 and subsequent conflicts.'*¹⁴⁹ Reverend Frances Bach, the Mayor's Chaplain, dedicated the statue, and said *'this statue may stand as a symbol of the history we share, and all that binds us together in our community today.'*¹⁵⁰ The inscription on the plaque reads 'In memory of the men and women from Ballymoney and District who answered their country's call.'

149 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 4 November 2014

150 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 4 November 2014

Sammy McClements of Ballymoney Branch, who co-ordinated the project, commented that the statue was a great tribute to those who fell, and said 'I hope future generations will look at this memorial and ask themselves about these men who gave their all.'¹⁵¹



Sammy McClements and Noel Anderson of Ballymoney Branch pictured with the statue. Photo courtesy of Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 4 November 2014.

Another name was added to the War Memorial for the dedication. Francis McCluskey, known as Frankie, had joined the Royal Air Force aged 16, in 1938. In October 1942 Flight Sergeant McCluskey was the air gunner in the top turret of a Halifax bomber, when his plane was shot down on the way back from an air raid in Germany. The plane came down over Holland, and sadly his parachute was caught on a tree, and he died. He was found near Rhenen by a local girl and her father. The girl, 14 year old Jannie van Beek Pol, grabbed the airman's cap from

¹⁵¹ Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 4 November 2014

the ground as she fled from a German patrol, keeping it safe until after the War. Even though he was considered the enemy, the Germans gave Frankie a funeral with full military honours. A Dutch researcher, Toon Blokland, came across the grave a few years ago, and was intrigued by the story, so got in touch with Ballymoney Museum. After a radio appeal two of Frankie's cousins, Patricia McCluskey and Alice O'Brien, were found and Toon brought Frankie's cap to Ballymoney, returning it to his family. Sammy McClements of Ballymoney Branch commented *'Remembrance transcends all boundaries. This event marking a significant period in our shared history will create interest and memories and greater understanding in our community.'*¹⁵²



The Mayor of Rhenen, Hans van der Pas, with Joan Christie CVO OBE, Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, and Councillor Joan Baird OBE, Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, pictured at the War Memorial in 2018. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, 4 June 2018.

CHAPTER 7:

Women's Section

Formation and early years

The Women's Section of the British Legion was formed on 24th July 1921, just three weeks after the Unity Conference in London. Women who had served in the nursing services, auxiliary services, and in the Land Army and Voluntary Aid Detachment were eligible to join. Membership was also open to the wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of men who had served. Princess Mary, daughter of King George V, became Patroness. She had served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment, and was well known for her 1914 fundraising campaign for the '*Princess Mary Christmas Gift Fund*' to provide those serving with a Christmas gift box. Initially, the President was Countess Haig, but in 1923 Princess Alice, granddaughter of Queen Victoria, took over the Presidency. Then in 1924, the Duchess of York, later the Queen Mother, took over as President for her lifetime. In the early years the Women's Section focused on campaigning for government provision of training for women in nursing and office work, as well as the traditional training in domestic work. Due to insufficient war widow pensions thousands of women needed to work to support their families, so the Women's Section also lobbied Parliament for a weekly pension for war widows and children.

Ballymoney Branch formed a Women's Section on 19th September 1945, to enable women with male relations who had served to give their support to Legion activities. The first social event was held in August 1946 when a day trip by bus took members along the Coast Road from Bushmills to Larne, with a lunch at the Glens of Antrim hotel.¹⁵³ The Women's Section

153 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 9 August 1946

took responsibility for the care of local war graves, visiting the cemetery weekly to replace flowers. Two members, Mrs Wreath and Miss Holmes, visited the Route District Hospital and the Robinson Memorial Hospital every week, visiting ex-servicemen in hospital, bringing them gifts and news. In December 1946 a Christmas party was organised for the children of ex-servicemen and serving men and women. The *'party was a real treat for the children, and all concerned agreed it was worth the hard work entailed to see their happy faces.'*¹⁵⁴

The Ballymoney ladies were quick to establish friendly relations with neighbouring Women's Sections in the area. Coleraine Women's Section had visited, and an invite to a social event at Ballymena Women's Section had been reciprocated in April 1947. Monthly meetings were held, with guest speakers invited to give talks on current topics. Captain Craig of Belfast had visited in May to speak about the hospital work of Women's Sections, and in June, Miss McCullough of the Northern Ireland Housing Trust had spoken on housing in the Province.¹⁵⁵ One function of the Women's Section was fundraising for ex-servicemen's assistance charities. A bring and buy sale in April 1947 had raised £40 15s 5d (£1,575 today¹⁵⁶), for donation to the Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Help Society. A Pound Day sale later that year raised £16 10s (£640 today¹⁵⁷) for the Poppy Day appeal,¹⁵⁸ and for *'Battle of Britain'* commemoration week £41 (£1,600¹⁵⁹) was raised for the R.A.F. Association. The Women's Section also assisted with the Poppy Day appeal each year, in 1948 they

154 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 November 1947

155 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 November 1947

156 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

157 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

158 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 11 November 1947

159 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

raised a record £308 (the equivalent of £12,800 today¹⁶⁰).¹⁶¹ In addition, they donated to the children's home at Lancaster House in Richmond, where sixteen orphans were being cared for, and the Area Holiday Fund, which provided ex-servicewomen with a break when their health was suffering.

In October 1947 a new Standard was gifted to the Women's Section by the Chair, Mrs A Getty. The dedication service was held at First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church by Reverend Charles Orr. Mrs Jeanette McIlroy was the Standard bearer, with Mrs Eileen Loudon and Miss Monty McClelland as the escorts. Rev. Orr spoke of the important role women had played during the recent War, with their contribution to the services and the local community, particularly the thousands of evacuees.¹⁶²

Within just two years the Women's Section had enrolled 75 members, and Branch Chair, Mrs Getty appealed for more local women to join. The campaign was so successful, that in 1948 Ballymoney Women's Section won the Certificate of Merit in the Churchill Cup competition for increased membership.¹⁶³ The regular social events continued, in February 1949 Dr Cecil Burns gave a talk on the National Health Service, congratulating *'the people of Ballymoney and district on their wonderful commonsense and their consideration for the man of medicine; only twice since the new Act came into force had he received what might have been considered unnecessary night calls.'*¹⁶⁴ He went on to give the ladies tips on how to work with doctors to ensure the NHS ran smoothly as it expanded. The 1949 annual outing to Newtownards and Bangor provided a chance to see HMS *Theseus* fire a gun salute to welcome HMS *Illustrious* to Belfast Lough.¹⁶⁵

160 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

161 Coleraine Chronicle, 23 October 1948

162 Coleraine Chronicle, 4 October 1947

163 Coleraine Chronicle, 23 October 1948

164 Coleraine Chronicle, 12 February 1949

165 Coleraine Chronicle, 9 July 1949

By 1950 membership of the Women's Section had dropped to 52, although war grave and hospital visiting still continued. The fundraising efforts were also significant, in May 1951 a tea to raise funds for the Widows' Allowance Fund collected £20 in Ballymoney, of the £32 raised in total in Northern Ireland.¹⁶⁶ That December a Poppy Appeal concert with a performance by the Belfast Girl Singers, along with Irish dancing with a violin accompaniment by William O'Connor, and short dramas, raised £34 (£1,060 today¹⁶⁷).¹⁶⁸ This meant the Poppy Day total for the Ballymoney Branch was a substantial £328 (£10,215 today¹⁶⁹), an increase of £59 on the previous year.¹⁷⁰ Such a strong increase in the Poppy Day collection resulted in the Ballymoney Women's Section winning the Shield for 'Service, not Self' for 1950-1. The award was presented by National Vice President, Lady Stronge OBE, at the Northern Ireland Area Conference in February 1952.¹⁷¹

Princess Royal Visit

Mrs Eileen Loudon, the Women's Section Standard Bearer, travelled to Londonderry for the visit of the Princess Royal on 26 June 1952. The Princess attended Brooke Park, where she planted a plum tree alongside the trees planted by her grandfather King Edward VII in 1903, and her brother King George VI in 1945. Mrs Loudon was the representative of Ballymoney Branch Women's Section in a parade of St. John Ambulance Brigade Nurses, Girl Guides and Brownies, and Women's Sections. The *Londonderry Sentinel* described the colour of the parade as '*their blue and gold standards flying proudly in the breeze*'.¹⁷²

166 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 8 June 1951

167 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

168 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 14 December 1951

169 Bank of England Inflation Calculator at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

170 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 October 1952

171 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 October 1952

172 *Londonderry Sentinel*, 26 June 1952

Benevolent Work

Women's Section members were very interested in improving their knowledge of welfare work, and how they could assist ex-servicemen. Guest speakers continued to attend monthly meetings; in January 1954 Mrs J McElderry spoke about how the Northern Ireland Health Services Act 1948 related to the welfare work of the Women's Section, adding further focus to Legion campaigning.¹⁷³ During this period there was an emphasis on the inadequacy of pensions for disabled ex-servicemen. The County Antrim Hospitals Visitation Committee of the Women's Section met in October 1954 to discuss how to lobby for an increase in the basic rate of War Disablement Pensions. The British Legion had proposed that fully disabled ex-servicemen should receive a basic pension rate of 90s a week, and that the same pro rata increases should apply to the lesser disabled, and war victims.¹⁷⁴ Money raised by the Ballymoney Branch and contributed to the Area Fund was spent on benevolent work. During 1953 children orphaned by the Second World War were given outings, and a Christmas party was held for 100 children. In addition, hospital visits were made to children in the Royal Victoria Orthopaedic Hospital in Belfast. Orphans living in children's homes were provided with clothing, and war widows in financial difficulty were given support to pay their rent and buy coal to heat their homes.¹⁷⁵

173 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 5 January 1954

174 *Belfast Telegraph*, 30 October 1954

175 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 30 October 1954

Awards and Successes

Ballymoney Women Legionaires

Outstanding Success at Area Conference

BALLYMONEY WOMEN'S SECTION of the British Legion had outstanding success at the Northern Ireland Area Conference which was held at Belfast on Friday.

The Ballymoney Section received the Churchill Cup and certificate (given for increased membership in the year 1954-55); the runner-up certificate of the Shield for "Service, Not Self," and the runner-up certificate (won by Mrs. F. O. Loudon) in the standardbearers' competition. Two special prizes were won by Mrs. McClelland and Mrs. Hunter in the needlework competition.

The first two trophies were received on behalf of the Section by Mrs. Brown (the Section delegate). The prizes were presented by Lady Wakehurst who congratulated the members on their success in competitions open to all branches in the Northern Ireland Area. In presenting the award

to Mrs. Loudon, Lady Wakehurst remarked that Ballymoney was doing well.

The same view will be taken by the public in general. To attain such awards in competition with Sections in much larger centres is a most creditable performance for Ballymoney. The Section is to be congratulated on the initiative and drive which must have gone into the winning of the Churchill Cup. Since the early days of the Section, there have been repeated occasions when officials from Headquarters have offered the officers and members very warm congratulations on the amount of benevolent work being carried out, and it is pleasing to note that the Section's efforts in this connection have earned it the "Service, Not Self" award.

Mrs. Loudon's praiseworthy success in the standardbearers' contest, in which the Area competition is always at its keenest, comes at the end of what has been for her a particularly busy year in Legion affairs. As well as being standardbearer for her branch, she acts as its hon. secretary, and is also hon. Poppy Day organiser for the Ballymoney area.

The standard set in the needlework competition was naturally very high, and it is a fine distinction for the Section to have two of its members, Mrs. McClelland and Mrs. Hunter, figuring among the prizewinners.

Coleraine Chronicle, 18 February 1956.

The article above highlights the many successes of Ballymoney Women's Section at the Area Conference in 1956. They won the Churchill Cup for increased membership again, for gaining 19 new members between 1954 and 1955, and the runner up position in the Shield for 'Service, not Self'. The *Coleraine Chronicle* commented that since 'there have been repeated occasions when officials from Headquarters have offered the officers and members very warm congratulations on the amount of benevolent work being carried out'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 February 1956

Mrs Louden took the runner up certificate in the Standard bearing competition, and both Mrs McClelland and Mrs Hunter won special prizes in the needlework competition in aid of children's homes. Prizes were presented by Lady Wakehurst, the Governor of Northern Ireland's wife, who congratulated the Branch on their success.

The Women's Section enjoyed hosting visitors. In March 1956 Portstewart Drama Group put on a charity production of George Shiels' *'The Tame Drudge'*,¹⁷⁷ and in June the Section treated 21 war orphans to tea on their annual outing to Buncrana.¹⁷⁸ In 1959 over 80 local children were invited to the annual Christmas party, with Mrs Valerie Louden playing piano for party games. A talent contest was held, and Santa Claus made an appearance, giving out gifts to all the children.¹⁷⁹ The Ballymoney Branch was able to send a delegate, Standard bearer, and four visitors to the National Conference in May 1964. It was held in Douglas, on the Isle of Man, and the two Ballymoney representatives had flown over. They attended a civic reception in the Palace Ballroom for 4,000 delegates, and participated in a parade of 500 Standard bearers from across the United Kingdom.

As well as holding their own fundraisers, the Women's Section helped out at British Legion events. When Ballymoney Branch hosted the National Conference in February 1972 the Women's Section provided lunch for over 200 delegates in the Town Hall.

177 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 30 March 1956

178 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 9 June 1956

179 *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 1 November 1959



Women's Section volunteers after the National Conference. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 26 February 1972.

Competition success continued with Mrs Louden and Mrs Williams winning the top five prizes in the 1972 Area Handicrafts Competition.¹⁸⁰ After fundraising for the Poppy Appeal collection for over 25 years, Mrs Margaret Norris was the first recipient in Northern Ireland of a certificate and poppy brooch for her long service, awarded by Mrs Cromie, the Area Chair.



Mrs Cromie, Mrs Regan, and Mrs Norris. Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 25 November 1972.

180 Coleraine Chronicle, 4 November 1972

New Standard

In February 1976 a new Women's Section Standard was dedicated as a memorial to the late Mrs Elizabeth (Lily) Patton.



Women's Section of Ballymoney Royal British Legion, from left: Mrs Mary Holmes, President; Mrs Margaret McDowell, deputy Standard bearer; Mrs Eileen Loudon, Standard bearer; Mrs J Mackey, escort; Mrs N McGilligan, Chairman. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 7 February 1976.

The original Standard had been used since 1947, so it was laid up in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church, and the new Standard was dedicated by former Minister, Reverend Charles Orr. Both Standards were taken to the church in a parade from the Legion Hall.¹⁸¹

181 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 7 February 1976



Photo courtesy of Coleraine Chronicle, 7 February 1976.

1980s to present day

In November 1981 Mrs McCurry, a founder member of the Women's Section, was remembered with a silver rose bowl dedicated to her memory. Her son was in attendance at the dedication, and *'thanked the members for their gesture of remembrance of his mother.'*¹⁸² The Women's Section continued to fundraise with regular events alongside the annual Poppy Appeal. At the A.G.M. in 1989 the Area Secretary, Pat Patterson, thanked the Ballymoney Women's Section for *'their generous support of Area and National funds, especially the Area Benevolent Fund which helped over 100 war widows in the Province.'*¹⁸³ In 1991 Ballymoney won first place in Northern Ireland for *'progress and efficiency'*, and in 1995 the Women's Section celebrated 50 years, receiving a certificate from the National Chairman.

182 Coleraine Chronicle, 7 November 1981

183 Ballymoney Times & Ballymena Observer, 25 October 1989



*This Certificate
is awarded to*

Ballymoney

Branch which was formed on

19th September 1945

*in recognition of 50 years
continuous good work for
The Royal British Legion
Women's Section*

Margaret Arnold

National Chairman

Judith Allen

National Secretary

Certificate celebrating 50 years of Ballymoney Women's Section.

The Women's Section also celebrated several members achieving their long service certificates in November 2008. Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE, Mrs Liz Balmer, and Mrs Margaret Anderson accomplished 120 years of service between them. Mrs Annie Dobbin was also awarded a certificate of long service, by Women's Section Chair, Mrs Mary Henry.



Mrs Mary Henry, Chairperson, presenting a certificate of achievement to Mrs Annie Dobbin. Also included in photo is Agnes McVicker, NI Area Honorary Treasurer. Photo courtesy of Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 5 November 2008.

In recent years the Women's Section has amalgamated with the rest of the Ballymoney Branch, to combine efforts, rather than having a separate section.

CHAPTER 8:

The Standard

The British Legion Standard has a gold band on a blue background, with a Union Flag in the upper left corner. The blue stands for loyalty and fidelity, and the gold signifies service 'as gold is tried by fire', and reminds us of those who gave their lives in service. This design was first used at the Crystal Palace Sports Rally in June 1922,¹⁸⁴ and was incorporated as a nationwide Standard design in 1924. The first National Standard Bearer competition was held in 1952, when it was announced that Standard bearers would wear black berets rather than the traditional bowler hat, so the Standard could be lowered without removing a hat.



Ballymoney Branch Standards laid up in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church.

184 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p41

The text below explains what each part of the design of the Standard means.¹⁸⁵

The **Standard** represents the ideals of service to God, Queen and Country.

The **Spirehead** at the top of the standard pole should remind us of the pillar of flames or the finger pointing to Heaven, which is generally represented by the spire of a church.

The **Union Flag** bears the crosses of St George, the Patron Saint of Fighting Men, St Andrew, a Disciple of Christ, and St Patrick, the first Christian Missionary to this Country.

Added to these crosses are the **Royal British Legion Colours**; blue to remind us of the gallant souls who have passed on beneath the deep waters and in the air, and old gold to represent those shining warriors who, sanctified by service, have passed unsullied to the Throne of Grace.

The **Tassels** are to remind us of the beginning and ending of life.

The **Cord** represents the golden line along which all good Legionnaires should pass during their brief sojourn on earth.

The **Golden Fringe or Frame** binds us together in one great Brotherhood.

185 Standish Branch Royal British Legion 'Meaning of the Standard' available at <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/standish/branch-information/the-branch-standard> (accessed 16/05/2019)

Standards are dedicated before use, and are laid-up in sacred or public buildings after service. Former Standards belonging to Ballymoney Branch are laid up in First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church. When a Standard is dedicated the following declaration is made.¹⁸⁶

I would remind you that these Standards are no mere flags of silk or bunting, but rather are sacred emblems which have been solemnly dedicated in ample form.

Beneath the folds all poor and distressed brothers-in-arms may seek solace and relief from their afflictions.

Our Standards are all of like design as emblems of brotherhood and equality.

Many of these Standards have lain in the sacred dust of the Battlefields of the Empire.

So remembering these things and the high ideals for which they stand disgrace them not.

At the opening of Branch meetings the Chairman requests Branch members to stand to receive the Standard. The Standard Bearer enters the room, and dips the Standard in homage while the Chairman says the Exhortation:

*'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them'*

The Branch members then respond *'We will remember them.'*¹⁸⁷

186 Standish Branch Royal British Legion 'Meaning of the Standard' available at <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/standish/branch-information/the-branch-standard> (accessed 16/05/2019)

187 The Royal British Legion (2018) Ceremonial Handbook version 1.4, p9

Laurence Binyon had published this in a collection of poems called *'The Four Years'* shortly after the First World War ended. In 1930 it was spoken as the *'Exhortation'* at the start of every British Legion Council meeting,¹⁸⁸ which then became tradition in every Legion Branch.¹⁸⁹ At the closing of the meeting the Chairman says:

*'The business of the meeting being concluded, let us, before we leave, remember our duty to our Queen and country, to our comrades, and to our branch. Let us be ready at all times to foster the spirit of brotherhood and mutual helpfulness to which we are dedicated, never forgetting our solemn obligations as members of The Royal British Legion.'*¹⁹⁰

The first verse of the National Anthem may then usually be sung, while the Standard is dipped in homage. Then the Chairman says *'When you go home, tell them of us and say for your tomorrow, we gave our today.'*¹⁹¹ This is known as the Kohima Epitaph, and is attributed to John Maxwell Edmonds. It is on the memorial to the 2nd British Division in Kohima Cemetery, north-east India.

188 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p19

189 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p19

190 The Royal British Legion (2018) Ceremonial Handbook version 1.4, p10

191 The Royal British Legion (2018) Ceremonial Handbook version 1.4, p10



Mr and Mrs Samuel Patton, Standard bearers for Ballymoney Branch, shown here on Remembrance Sunday 1972. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 November 1972

Standards also play an important part in the Remembrance Day parade, for example in 1940 *'The service commenced with the reception of the British Legion Standard, which was carried by Mr. Preston Abernethy, who was accompanied by Messrs. R. McShane and A. Herd. The Standard was received by Captain Rev. A. J. Partridge, C.F.'*¹⁹² Since 1952 there have been County and Area Standard bearing competitions, and nationally Standard bearers compete to win the Ashwanden Cup.¹⁹³

192 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1940

193 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p235



The Order: Heels together, with feet at a 30 degree angle, Standard pole beside right little toe, fingers curled, and pole in line with trouser or skirt seam.



The Carry: Right wrist and forearm horizontal to ground, right thumb opposite centre of mouth. This is combined with either a slow march, 65 steps per minute, or a quick march with 116 steps per minute.



The Dip: The Standard is dipped with the right arm kept close to the body, so the spike touches the ground in line with the right foot. The Standard should be spread out, and kept in position for 20 seconds.



If the ground is wet or muddy then the Standard is held out without touching the ground to avoid damage.



Dedication of new Women's Section Standard 11 August 1997 with a parade through Ballymoney.

In 1998, and again in 2004 Ballymoney Branch Standard bearer, George Henry, was invited to the Festival of Remembrance, held at the Royal Albert Hall in London.¹⁹⁴ His second invitation was noted in Ballymoney Branch meeting minutes, *'The Vice Chairman and Committee congratulated our Standard Bearer George Henry, who has been selected to attend the National Festival of Remembrance in the Albert Hall in London.'*¹⁹⁵ In 2006 George was selected to make the trip to London for a third time, and commented that it was a *'marvellous but emotional experience'*¹⁹⁶, and that Standard bearing *'is a skilled operation, and it can be a bit dodgy. So you have to be extra careful that you don't do anything wrong.'*¹⁹⁷

194 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 3 November 2004

195 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 22 October 2004

196 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 15 November 2006

197 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 15 November 2006

A new Branch Standard was dedicated on 26th April 2008, with the parade to First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church being led by Dunloy Accordion Band. Other branches, such as Garvagh and Enniskillen joined the parade, and Colonel Leslie laid a wreath at the War Memorial.



Ballymoney Branch members with the new Branch Standard.



Uel Hargy, George Henry, and Liam McCurdy at the parade with the new Standard.
Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Chronicle*, 8 May 2008.



Ballymoney Branch parading with the new Standard. Photos courtesy of *Ballymoney Chronicle*, 8 May 2008.

CHAPTER 9:

How We Help

James Ramsey

7,885-1061, 250m. 8/15, J.T. & R. Form B. 2505

Army Form B. 2505.

SHORT SERVICE.
(For the Duration of the War.)

W.R. 29990

ATTESTATION OF

29990 Name James Ramsey Corps Quarry, Co. R. E.

Questions to be put to the Recruit before enlistment.

1. What is your name? James Ramsey
2. What is your full Address? 2, Lowerhead St. Ballymoney Co. Antrim.
3. Are you a British Subject? Yes
4. What is your Age? 38 Years 12 Months
5. What is your Trade or Calling? Quarry man
6. Are you Married? Yes
7. Have you ever served in any branch of His Majesty's Force, naval or military, if so, state particulars? No
- 7a. Have you truly stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? Yes
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? Yes
9. Are you willing to be enlisted for General Service? Yes
10. Did you receive a Notice, and do you understand its meaning, and who gave it to you? Yes (Name R. Ramsey) (Corps R. Quarry)
11. Are you willing to serve upon the following conditions provided His Majesty shall so long require your services? Yes

For the duration of the War, at the end of which you will be discharged with all convenient speed. If employed with Hospitals, depots of Mounted Units, and in China, etc. you may be retained after the termination of hostilities until your services can be spared, but such retention shall in no case exceed six months.

I, James Ramsey, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

James Ramsey SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
John R. 2nd R.I.R. Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

I, James Ramsey, swear by Almighty God, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown, and dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRAR OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

The Recruit above named was examined by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered, as replied to, and the said Recruit has signed and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at Quarry on this 29th day of April 1917.

Signature of the Registrar or Attesting Officer.

I certify that this Attestation of the above-named Recruit is correct, and properly filled up, and that the required forms appear to have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him to the 1st.

If enlisted by special authority, Army Form B. 25 (or other authority for the enlistment) will be attached to the original attestation.

Date 29th April 1917 Place Quarry Appointing Officer.

† The signature of the Appointing Officer is to be affixed in the presence of the Recruit.
† Here insert the "Corps" in which the Recruit has been enlisted.

The Recruit is to be asked the particulars of his former service, and to produce, if possible, his Certificate of Discharge and Certificate, which should be returned to him compulsorily ordered in and in, as follows, viz.-(Name)
- (Name) - on the (Date) -

James Ramsey's Short Service Record. Courtesy of the National Archives.

James Ramsey served with the Royal Irish Rifles from April 1917, until he was gassed in 1918. He was medically discharged, and sent home to Ballymoney to recover, with a small Army pension. By January 1921 he was certified as fully recovered, but struggled to find employment, so turned to the Ballymoney Branch for help. The Branch provided assistance so he could emigrate to Canada with his wife Susan and their three children in July 1928. The Ramsey family settled in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where James worked at the Victoria Hospital as a steam engineer and orderly. Unfortunately, the steam caused his lung problems to return, and on 26th May 1930 James was admitted to Prince Albert sanatorium. As he'd been living in Canada for less than five years the Deportation Officer was called, and James was deported back to Ballymoney, along with his wife and now four children. When the Ramsey family arrived in Ballymoney they had to move in with Susan's mother, as they were penniless. James tried to obtain medical treatment, without success, so the family were in a desperate situation. Luckily the Ballymoney Branch was able to offer them assistance, so James could provide for his wife and children.¹⁹⁸

Thomas Carmichael

In August 1932 an inquest was held for Thomas Carmichael, an ex-serviceman aged 31, who died from a brain haemorrhage after a bicycle accident in Ballymoney. He was a general dealer from Castle Street, and was cycling home along the Milltown Road, around 6pm on July 30th. There were two conflicting newspaper reports on the circumstances of the accident. *The Northern Whig* stated he 'had swerved to avoid a dog, and collided with a pedestrian, the bicycle then skidding. The cyclist was thrown heavily, and his death occurred several days afterwards.'¹⁹⁹ *The Belfast Telegraph* had a totally different story that Thomas 'seemed to get too near the bunker on the road, and swerved to the right to get out of the bunker.

198 Coleraine Chronicle, 29 November 1930

199 The Northern Whig and Belfast Post, 11 August 1931

*His front wheel turned round to the right and he made an attempt to straighten the machine. He fell to the left side of the road.*²⁰⁰ Whichever version is correct, he died on Saturday August 9th in the Route District Hospital, leaving a widow and two small children. Ballymoney Branch was able to provide assistance to his widow, and *'in addition the Legion saw to it that the young man had a respectable funeral.'*²⁰¹ Without the relief Thomas' widow would have been responsible for the cost of his burial, as well as all the medical costs from his hospital stay, as there was no National Health Service at this time. It was certainly true during this interwar period that *'sad happenings such as this bring home the necessity for an organisation such as the British Legion in our midst.'*²⁰²

Assistance for ex-servicemen

In the period between the First and Second World Wars, Ballymoney Branch provided large numbers of ex-servicemen with assistance. In 1930 alone *'There were 75 cases dealt with under the local relief fund, grocery vouchers amounting to £37 10s being issued'*²⁰³ (equivalent to £2,400 today). Grants of £5 were made to provide ex-servicemen's children with clothes and boots, and all the applicants for assistance with emigration costs over the last few years *'had been doing exceptionally well in Canada'*.²⁰⁴ From October 1944 Relief Committees became known as Service Committees, and dealt with employment and war pensions in addition to providing financial assistance.²⁰⁵ During times of conflict funds are raised to send care packages to serving troops. In 2003 Ballymoney Branch sent packages of toiletries, food, and clothing to soldiers involved in the Gulf War.²⁰⁶

200 *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 August 1931

201 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 August 1931

202 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 15 August 1931

203 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 13 December 1930

204 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 13 December 1930

205 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p114

206 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 20 March 2003

War grave and hospital visiting

Ballymoney Women's Section took responsibility for visiting the war graves in Ballymoney, which is still carried out today. Every Remembrance Sunday wreaths are laid on the grave of the four unknown sailors who lost their lives during the Second World War, and were buried in Ballymoney cemetery on 15th August 1940.



Mrs Regan and Mrs Anderson placing wreaths on the grave of the unknown sailors. Photo courtesy of *Coleraine Chronicle*, 20 November 1971.



Laurence Dobbin and Roland Adams of Ballymoney Branch placing wreaths on the grave of the unknown sailors. Photo courtesy of Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 15 November 2006.

Hospital visiting is still carried out, in 2008 the Branch meeting minutes record that Mrs Pinkerton and Chancellor Lavery were visiting Branch members in hospital on a regular basis.²⁰⁷ Convalescence breaks are also provided at Bennet House in Portrush. During 1985 there were 17 members of Ballymoney Branch able to visit for a stay and recuperate.²⁰⁸

Advice Service

Another aspect of the welfare service of the Royal British Legion is providing advice on issues such as housing, debt management, and lifestyle support. In April 2014 Ballymoney Branch launched an advice and outreach service, with an Advice and Information Officer visiting the Branch every Friday to assist anyone currently serving, veterans, and their families. At the opening of the new outreach service Kate Cowan, Advice

207 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 4 December 2008

208 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 1 November 1986

and Information Team Leader, said 'we are looking forward to starting our outreach work in Ballymoney, which is part of the Legion's mission to bring our services closer to those who need it most.'²⁰⁹ Brian Maguire, the R.B.L. Area Manager commented 'My team is totally committed to providing the best possible service for the Service community, past and present, in Northern Ireland.'²¹⁰



Launch of the Ballymoney Branch Advice and Outreach Service, Left to right: Mark McLaughlin, Branch Chairman; Dale Carton; Zoe Parker, Advice and Information Officer; Liam McCurdy, Branch Secretary; Roland Adams; Martha Barkley. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney and Moyle Times*, 27 April 2014.

Modern day welfare

Ballymoney Branch also assist ex-service personnel with specific needs, in 2014 an elderly veteran was given assistance to purchase oil for heating his home.²¹¹

209 *Ballymoney and Moyle Times*, 27 April 2014

210 *Ballymoney and Moyle Times*, 27 April 2014

211 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 20 April 2014

Another recent veteran suffering from combat stress was provided with support to attend a gym as part of his rehabilitation programme.²¹² As Branch Chairman Mark McLaughlin stated at a 2016 Branch meeting, *'it is imperative that we retain the welfare services of the branch, as the needs are greater than ever, and we should put an editorial in the local papers regarding the welfare services available in the R.B.L. to the ex-service community.'*²¹³ As Ballymoney Branch has such a strong commitment to welfare in the local community, it was chosen to represent Northern Ireland in a recent review of welfare services in branches throughout the UK.²¹⁴ Nowadays Branch community focuses on ensuring members don't become socially isolated, making telephone calls and home visits to check on older members, and holding functions, such as dances and barbeques, to bring members together. The Branch pledges to *'provide financial, social and emotional care and support to all members of the British Armed Forces - past and present and their families.'*²¹⁵

Appeal for information

In 2018 Andrew Barrett of Brookeborough, County Fermanagh contacted Ballymoney Branch about items found in the attic of his late uncle, Tom McIlroy. Andrew had found a First World War Memorial Plaque, also known as a Death Penny, and Pond Farm Cemetery burial certificate for Private John Hanna, who was from Drumaheglis, Ballymoney. John Hanna joined the 12th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles, and was killed at the Battle of Messines, along with two other soldiers from Ballymoney, Lance Corporal James McCoubrey, and Rifleman William Wade.

212 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 16 December 2016

213 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 21 June 2016

214 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 20 April 2014

215 The Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch available at <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/ballymoney> (accessed 17/05/2019)



John's brother, Dan, had received the plaque and certificate, and given them to his neighbour, Jane Elliot, who married Tom McIlroy.²¹⁶ Ballymoney Branch helped to secure the Death Penny and burial certificate for display in Ballymoney Museum. As a result of the public appeal several people got in touch offering assistance with research and information. To date three great nieces and nephews of John Hanna have been traced.

Death Penny and burial certificate for Private John Hanna, courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.

216 Ballymoney and Moyle Times, 24 July 2018

CHAPTER 10:

Poppy Appeal

The poppy became the symbol of remembrance after John McCrae wrote the famous poem '*In Flanders Fields*'.²¹⁷ Major John McCrae was a Canadian medical officer, and while serving in the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, was inspired by the poppies that continued to grow on the battlefields of northern France and Belgium, despite the death and destruction around them.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

The poem inspired Moina Michael, an American who trained Y.M.C.A. war workers. She bought \$10 worth of artificial poppies from a New York department store in memory of the fallen, and wore them at a conference for YMCA overseas workers in November 1918, sharing them with other delegates. The conference adopted the poppy as a symbol of remembrance.²¹⁸

217 First published in *Punch* magazine, 8 December 1915

218 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p 121

Meanwhile Madame Anna Guerin, originally from France, but teaching in the United States, was also inspired by McCrae's poem. Madame Guerin returned to her native France, and to raise funds for the '*American and French Children's League*' she had poppies made by orphans and widows. The funds raised would be for the restoration of areas in France devastated by the war. Anna spent 1919 and 1920 travelling around the United States on a Poppy Drive, selling poppies and setting up branches of the American and French Children's League'.²¹⁹ In September 1920 she achieved success when the National American Legion agreed to have the poppy as their emblem of remembrance during their annual convention. In August 1921 Madame Guerin visited the British Legion headquarters in London, and met with Earl Haig, to try to sell her idea to him. After Sir Herbert Brown, Chairman of the Appeals Department



Original Guerin French made cotton Poppy from 1921. Photo courtesy of Heather Anne Johnson.

visited Paris to explore the idea, 9 million silk poppies were ordered from Madame Guerin. Despite concerns, all the poppies sold and raised £106,000 on the first Poppy Day in 1921.²²⁰ In Belfast the Mayor, Lady Coates, organised the Poppy Day sale on behalf of the Belfast Branch of the British Legion.²²¹ The following year a Poppy workshop was set up in London, providing jobs for 41 disabled ex-servicemen to make 30 million poppies for sale, raising £205,000.²²²

219 <https://poppyladymadameguerin.wordpress.com/remembrance-poppy-timeline/>

220 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p123

221 *Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 10 November 1921

222 Harding, B. (2001) *Keeping Faith: The History of the Royal British Legion*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, p124

Poppy Day in Ballymoney

POPPY DAY COLLECTORS.

The Poppy Day collection was carried out thoroughly in Ballymoney, the arrangements being in the capable hands of Mrs. J. B. Hamilton and Mrs. Boyd, Church Street. A word of praise is due to the collectors, who braved the elements in such stormy and inclement weather to do their bit on behalf of the British Legion. The collectors were:—Mrs. Pollock and Miss Pollock, Miss D. M'Master and Miss J. Knox, Miss A. Anderson and Miss Henry, Mrs. Pettigrew and Mrs. Christie, Miss M'Kenna and Miss M'Cormick, Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Belford, Miss J. B. Hamilton and Miss E. Lyle, Mrs. W. Hanna and Miss A. M'Elderry, Miss Wallace and Miss Janet Hamilton, Mrs. R. H. Wilson and Mrs. A'iken, Mrs. Armstrong and Miss Biddulph, Mrs. Greene and Miss Stinson, Miss M. M'Afee, Miss Shaw, and Miss Wales, Miss Maconaghie and Miss Jean Thomson, Mrs. J. Hanna and Mrs. M'Iroy, Miss C. MacMaster and Miss E. MacMaster, Miss N. Taggart and Miss Corscadden, Miss Campbell and Mrs. H. P. Wilson, Mrs. H. M'C. Hamilton and Mrs. Lyle, Mrs. Wreath and Miss L. Hunter, Miss M'Williams and Miss Higgins, Mrs. Redpath and Mrs. M'Cracken, Miss J. Patterson and Mrs. M'Clure, Mrs. M'Gugan, Mr. G. C. Ashe, and Miss Anderson (Balmamore), Miss M'Neill and Miss Crawford (Newhill).

List of 1929 Poppy Day collectors, *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1929.

The first major Poppy Day collection in Ballymoney appears to be 1929, when *Coleraine Chronicle* listed the names of the 54 Poppy Day collectors, only one of whom was male. This demonstrates the strong support for the British Legion in Ballymoney, as the collection raised £48 7s 6d (the equivalent of £3,000 today).²²³

The following year, after laying their wreaths, some relatives and friends attending the Remembrance service took their poppies out of their buttonholes and placed them in the grass of the Garden of Remembrance.²²⁴ However, 'in connection with Poppy Day they had a little

trouble', that caused a complaint to be sent to the Belfast Headquarters of the British Legion.²²⁵ As Jackson Greene explained;²²⁶

223 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 16 November 1929

224 *Northern Constitution*, 15 November 1930

225 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 13 December 1930

226 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 13 December 1930

‘Some ladies came here when we had all arrangements made for a successful Poppy Day sale and would not allow poppies to be sold at the coursing meeting. I approached the Coursing Club and asked them for permission to get into the field, and they gave it and promised to give us all the help they could. These ladies objected to it, and said it was a sin to sell poppies there. They admitted it was right to sell them on the road to the field.’

Ballymoney Branch suggested a compromise of ex-servicemen going to the field and selling the poppies, but the ladies refused to consider this. Some of the ladies had written a letter to Headquarters, who in response wrote to Captain Cramsie as President, rather than Mr Cairns as Secretary. This resulted in a smaller than expected collection of £52, when the Branch was hoping for £70, and the resignation of William Cairns as secretary.

By 1933 the Poppy Day collection had raised £67 16s 4d,²²⁷ in comparison 10 years later, in 1943, this was £295, with a ‘greater amount received from church collections.’²²⁸ For the 1936 collection, Branch members William Morrison and James McDowell, both drove Poppy Day collectors out to the villages surrounding Ballymoney. The Appeal raised a record £118, with Captain Cramsie commenting that this ‘was a tribute to the kindness and generosity of the people of the town and district.’²²⁹

227 Coleraine Chronicle, 27 October 1934

228 Coleraine Chronicle, 28 October 1944

229 Coleraine Chronicle, 23 October 1937

BALLYMONEY BRITISH LEGION

A report submitted at the annual meeting of Ballymoney branch of the British Legion showed that last year's Poppy Day collections, amounting to £110 15s 9d, had exceeded the previous highest total by £16. The election of officers resulted:- President, Capt. R. A. Cramsie, J.P.; chairman of committee, Mr. W. V. McKee; secretary, Mr. D. C. Quail; committee, Messrs. James McDowell, Wm. McComb, Thos. Owens, James McArthur, S. J. Harcourt, R. McLelland, and Geo. Mulholland.

Belfast Newsletter, 17 October 1936.

At the annual meeting in 1947 it was stated that over £1 million was collected for the Earl Haig Poppy Appeal Fund in the UK each year, but with expenditure on benevolent work so high, ideally the Legion needed £2 million.²³⁰ In Ballymoney £248 3s 6d was spent on supporting ex-servicemen and their families in 1946-7.

230 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 October 1947



Austerity Poppy from 1942, with cardboard stalk instead of wire, painted paper centre instead of metal, and smaller than in previous years. Photo courtesy of Heather Anne Johnson.

The 1951 Poppy Day collection showed a large increase in the schools' contribution, particularly in rural areas. This meant an extra £59 was raised over the previous year. Jackson Greene *'returned the thanks of the branch to the hon. Secretary of the Women's Section (Mrs F. O. Louden), who is also the Poppy Day organiser, on the outstanding success she and her staff had obtained in Poppy sales last year.'*²³¹ Every few years a new record in Poppy Day fundraising would occur, in 1968 £575 17s 10d was raised²³², then Mrs Regan led the Women's Section Poppy Day Appeal to raise £916 in 1972.²³³ When the Ballymoney collectors raised over £2,000 in 1977, the organiser of North Antrim and North Derry Poppy Day, Flight Lieutenant Frank Belfitt, commented that *'the average donation per head of the population in Northern Ireland to the Poppy Appeal was higher than any other area of the United Kingdom.'*²³⁴

231 *Northern Constitution*, 18 October 1952

232 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 October 1969

233 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 20 October 1973

234 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 22 October 1977

Poppy Appeal

By 1981, with Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE as organiser, the Poppy Appeal raised £4,108.70.²³⁵ For the 1986 Appeal, 14 members of Ballymoney Branch completed a sponsored walk from the Legion Hall to Dervock and Stranocum, then back again. The walk received £750 in donations on top of the usual Poppy Appeal donations. Mayor, Councillor Joe Gaston, commented 'Poppy Day comes round every year to remind us of the great debt which we owe to our Ex-Servicemen and to give us some small opportunity to repay them.'²³⁶



Councillor Joe Gaston, Mayor of Ballymoney, starting off the sponsored walk. Also in the photo: Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE, Poppy Appeal Organiser; Major Leslie, Branch President; Sam Anderson, Branch Chairman. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 1 November 1986.

Minutes of the meetings of Ballymoney Branch show that in 1987, of the £10,000 raised for the Poppy Fund, £5,050 was spent on assisting people locally in the Ballymoney area, with the remainder being spent in Northern Ireland.²³⁷

235 *Coleraine Chronicle*, 23 October 1982

236 *Northern Constitution*, 1 November 1986

237 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 18 February 1988



Launching the 1992 Poppy Appeal, Left to right: Councillor Joe Gaston, Mayor of Ballymoney; Mrs Mollie Holmes OBE, Poppy Day organiser; W. J. Williamson, Chief Executive of Ballymoney Borough Council. Photo courtesy of *Northern Constitution*, 31 October 1992.



Dr Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, stops to chat with poppy seller Sammy Kerr on her visit to Ballymoney. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Times*, 12 November 1997.

Poppy Appeal funds go towards helping 'those disabled in the service of their country and into practical assistance for their widows and orphans and the disadvantaged.'²³⁸ During 2002 and 2003 more than 30 million paper poppies were being produced for the Appeal each year.²³⁹ In Ballymoney for the launch of the Poppy Appeal, Mayor, Councillor Frank Campbell, said 'Last year alone the Royal British Legion spent £48m on their benevolent work for an eligible 5.5 million ex-service men and their 7.5 million dependants.'²⁴⁰ Ballymoney Branch member and Standard Bearer, George Henry, did a sponsored parachute jump in 2007 to raise funds, collecting over £8,000 in contributions 'which all agreed was a magnificent effort on behalf of the Poppy appeal.'²⁴¹ In February 2013, at the annual Poppy Sellers dinner, several collectors were awarded long service certificates by Mrs Sue Pinkerton, Poppy Appeal Organiser.



Left to right, back row: Stephen Clyde, John McLaughlin on behalf of Alex and Janice Ingram; Jim Dobbin, Robert McMaster. Front row: Sheila McMaster; Sue Pinkerton, Poppy Appeal Organiser; Sue McKay. Photo courtesy of Ballymoney Chronicle.

238 *Northern Constitution*, 30 October 1992

239 *Ballymoney and Moyle Times*, 5 November 2003

240 *Ballymoney and Moyle Times*, 5 November 2003

241 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 11 October 2007

Recent figures from Ballymoney Branch 2016 collection show a total of £21,202.92 in donations to the Poppy Appeal from the Ballymoney area,²⁴² and last year Ballymoney Branch collected £21,000. In November 2018 the Branch celebrated James Dobbin being the oldest Poppy Appeal collector in Ballymoney. He had just celebrated his 91st birthday and had been collecting for 37 years, as his father-in-law had fought at the Battle of the Somme.²⁴³ Collectors are all volunteers, with 100% of the profits from the Appeal going to the Royal British Legion to fund the ongoing work in the ex-service and Forces community.



James Dobbin, the oldest Poppy Appeal collector (seated) with Ballymoney Branch members. Photo courtesy of *Ballymoney Chronicle*, 13 November 2018.

Modern day environmentally friendly Poppy with paper leaf and petals, and recyclable plastic stem and centre.

242 Royal British Legion Ballymoney Branch, unpublished minutes of monthly meeting, 20 September 2016

243 *Ballymoney Chronicle*, 13 November 2018

For nearly 100 years the Royal British Legion has provided support to members of the Armed Forces, their families and ex-service personnel. Today, with over 235,000 members and 110,000 volunteers, it is the largest Armed Forces charity in the United Kingdom and continues to deliver support whenever and wherever needed. Whilst some of the issues impacting the lives of serving personnel and veterans may have changed over the years, the need for support remains, and the Royal British Legion continues to give the Armed Forces community a voice by championing their interests. Support is provided after only seven days of service and continues long after service is over in a range of areas, including care and independent living, physical and mental wellbeing and financial and employment support.

The Royal British Legion, including Ballymoney Branch, will continue to evolve and adapt to best meet the needs of serving personnel, veterans and their families, and would welcome your help in providing that support in the future.

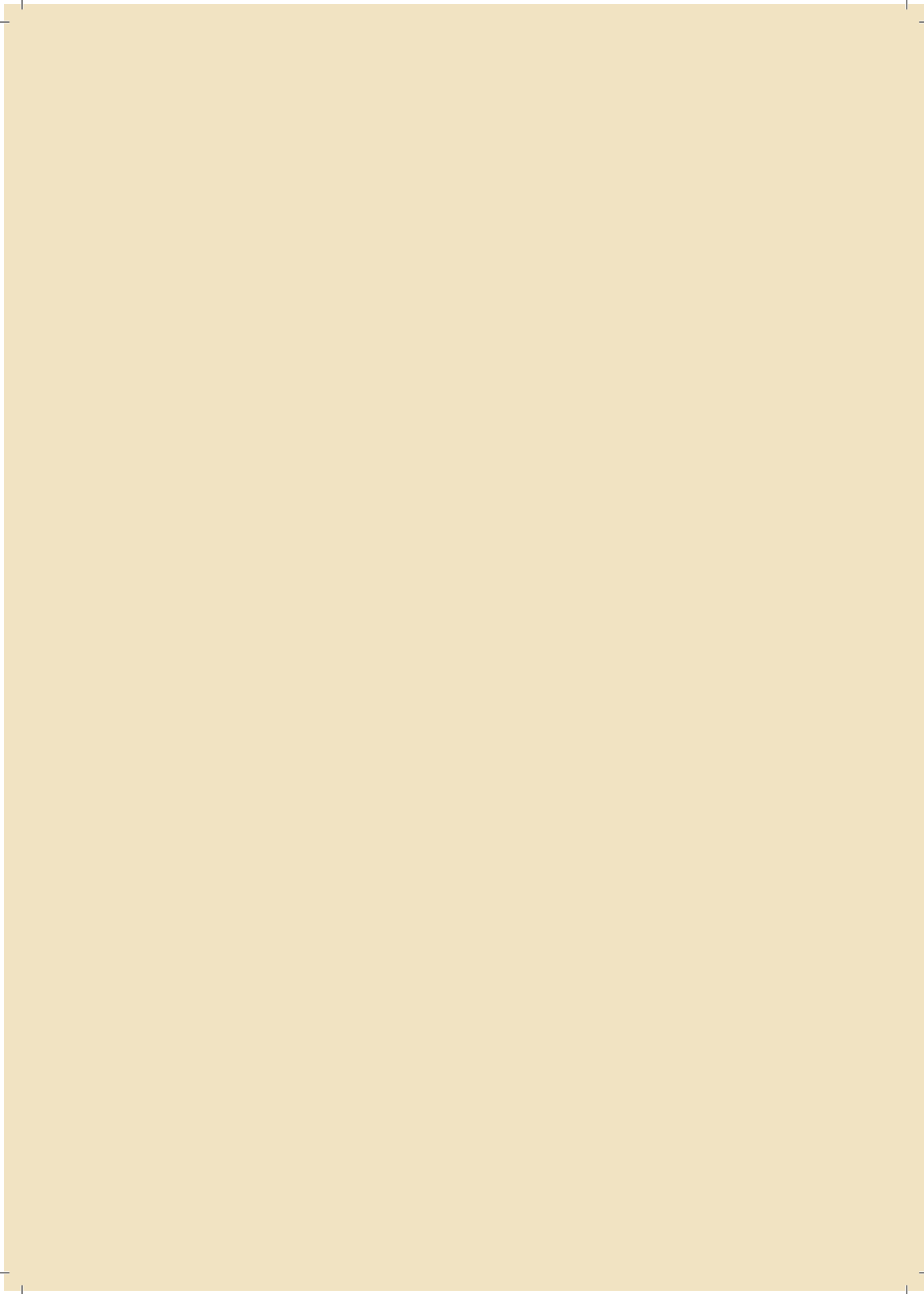




Ballymoney RBL Branch Committee, 2019. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.



Ballymoney RBL Club Committee, 2019. Photo courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.





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