



Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion
199 Borough High Street
London SE1 1AA

britishlegion.org.uk

Legion Contact Centre

0808 802 8080

Registered Charity Number: 219279

02 February 2016

Dear Sir or Madam

The Cenotaph Ceremony 2016

The Royal British Legion remains hugely grateful for the enthusiastic participation of all Regimental Associations and Veterans' Groups and their participating members each year at the National Service of Remembrance at The Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. The Legion very much recognises that it is the poignant act of military veterans marching past the Cenotaph and paying their respects to those that went before, which guarantees that the event endures and makes it so compelling to the watching public.

In light of this, I regret that it falls to me to highlight a discernible reduction in the standard of turnout and bearing of some of those participating in the parade. Both suggest a lack of respect for either the occasion or the senior guests attending, and neither, as I am sure you agree, are acceptable. Whilst I am sure that there has been no commission behind this decline, and that no one participating wishes to appear anything less than impressive or professional in the eyes of their contemporaries or the watching public, the fact remains that educated observers who witnessed the various components of the parade in November have raised concerns that need to be addressed. In terms of dress, a collar and tie should be the agreed minimum standard for male participants. Moreover, some formed bodies need perhaps to reflect on the solemnity of the occasion as they march and the recent innovation of taking photographs whilst saluting the dais is entirely unacceptable.

Please accept that these comments do not apply to all; it is the exceptions that catch the eye. Furthermore, whilst the Remembrance Sunday event falls within the organisational bailiwick of the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), to the watching public and those around the world watching on television, it is the Serving, the Veterans and The Royal British Legion whose reputations are most at stake. I therefore ask for your support in recalibrating standards to a level we would all recognise and with which we would all be more content

I very much accept that last minute plans emanating from Haig House make life administratively difficult for Associations needing to coordinate the complex movement plans of their members. Over the coming weeks, The Royal British Legion will be finalising plans for this year's event with the intent of providing you with timely and accurate information. We will also seek the guidance of the Garrison Sergeant Major regarding the forming up process to reduce both confusion and time-delay as the parade sets off. Arrangements will also be made for additional wheelchairs to be on hand so that our more venerable Veterans can continue to participate fully in the March Past without feeling under strain to maintain the pace of the March Past alongside their younger contemporaries. This year, Remembrance Sunday is on 13 November.



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The challenge of an increased demand for representative space on the parade by Regimental and ex-Service Associations that may not have not participated on the parade in recent times will need to be addressed; our aim must be to have as broad a church of ex-Service organisations on parade as is possible. Conversely, as demand for participation increases, so the need for careful scrutiny increases to ensure that the composition of the parade is appropriate. The Legion will seek the advice of COBSEO in that regard. I will keep you informed of developments once I have sought the direction of DCMS and the counsel of HQ London District.

The National Service of Remembrance ensures that no-one is forgotten as the nation unites to honour all who have suffered or died in war. It falls to The Royal British Legion and the veteran community representing the Armed Forces, Fishing Fleets and Merchant Air and Navy to maintain the standards that the nation expects. I trust that I can count on your support in this endeavour.

Bob Gamble OBE
Assistant Director of Engagement