



# HISTORY & MISSION OF THE BRITISH LEGION-BAHAMAS BRANCH

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**Question:** (1) When was The British Legion International Headquarters Formed?

**Ans:** **British Legion-International Headquarters**- was formed in 1921, two years after World War I at a Representative Conference held in London, England. It was at this Conference, which included a “combination” of four(4) National Ex-Servicemen Organizations. It was during the above-mentioned year that The British Legion International became an *official* Non-profit International Organization of Ex-Servicemen throughout London and The British Empire.

**Question:** (2) What is the British Legion-Bahamas Branch & When was it Formed?

**Ans:** **British Legion-Bahamas Branch(BLBB)** – Formerly known as The Bahamas Ex-Servicemen Association, is a non-profit military organization that was formed by Black Bahamian World War II Ex-Servicemen after World War II in 1945 in order to “preserve” their experiences and legacies for future Bahamian generations.

The British Legion-Bahamas Branch, is an official Non-Profit Organization registered under the 2019 Non-Profit Organization Companies Act of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas. Its Headquarters is located in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. In 1966, The Royal Canadian Legion(RCL) accepted the administrative responsibility from its London Headquarters to provide and to distribute financial assistance to fifteen (15) Caribbean Member State Branches, which included The Bahamas.

The above-mentioned annual financial assistance would provide a monthly *Ex-Serviceman Grant* for needy Ex-Servicemen who served in World War II and upon their demise, a small Widow’s Grant for their surviving spouses. The Government of The Bahamas also provides a small annual stipend to the local Bahamian Branch, whose responsibility is to distribute these grants to its *registered surviving* Bahamian Ex-Servicemen and Widows.

**Question: (3) What are the Main Goals of The British Legion-Bahamas Branch?**

**Ans: Some of the main goals of The British Legion-Bahamas Branch are:**

- (a) To perpetuate the Memory of those Bahamians who died during World Wars I & II;
- (b) To raise and co-ordinate funds for the purpose of financially assisting our elderly **registered** World War II Ex- Servicemen and Widows;
- (c) To provide a monthly **pension** to assist in the domestic needs of **ALL** our **registered** elderly WWII Ex-Servicemen and Ex-Servicewomen who had served under “*the British Crown*” in World War II;
- (d) To provide a small **monthly pension** to assist with the daily living needs of all surviving Widows of our **registered** deceased Ex-Servicemen.
- (e) To **educate** the general public, through the vehicles of multimedia presentations, a website, publications, television, and radio programs displaying and showing the important contribution that all Bahamian Veterans of World Wars I and II made towards Worldwide freedom.
- (f) To **provide a “Safe Recreational Activity Center”** for the social and administrative activities for all Bahamian Veterans and Widows under the care of the British Legion-Bahamas Branch.
- (g) To **engage in programs, exercises, and activities that** are specifically geared and designed to **promote the British Legion-Bahamas Branch** in the local community through media presentations via the local radio, cable, and television.
- (h) To **involve and encourage as many people and organizations** as possible throughout The Bahamas with the goals and objectives of the British Legion-Bahamas Branch’s Community Welfare Programs through volunteering their time.

**Question:** (4) What is the Main Role/Mission of The British Legion-Bahamas Branch?

**Ans:** The **main role** or Mission of The British Legion-Bahamas Branch is to ensure that its “registered” Ex-Servicemen and Widows of World War II (WWII) receive, on a monthly basis, the small grants provided by both its Canadian Headquarters and The Government of The Bahamas. Our Registered Members are verified annually in order to continue to receive their international and local grants.

**Eligibility to Apply for Membership & Monthly Grant:** In order to be “eligible” to receive a monthly grant, one must be in financial need and would have served in World War II between 1939-1945 or one must provide proof of being the Widow of an Ex-Serviceman who has served in World War II who could be verified by the British Legion-Bahamas as serving in WWII.



# REMEMBERANCE DAY INFORMATION

## **THE POPPY**

The **Poppy** is also associated with a poem known as “*Flanders Fields*,” which describes some of the worst battlefields in France during World War I. Its author, the Late Colonel John McCrae, a former well-known Professor of Medicine, who served as a gunner in the South African War and in the Great War known as World War I, describes in this poem the site of the field where he landed in France with the first Canadian Contingent as a Medical Officer. It was during a lull in battle, in 1915, he wrote this popular poem.

In May, 1918, Colonel McCrae passed away after being brought in on a stretcher into a French Hospital and his Poem became popular Worldwide after his death.

After World War I, **paper poppies** were sold to help assist wounded soldiers and their families. The Legion, since 1921 made and distributed millions of poppies each year and sold them to care for their sick-and-shut-in Veterans worldwide.

The British Legion-Bahamas Branch receives poppies from its Headquarters located in Ottawa, Canada each year so that the legacy of Remembrance Day could remain intact throughout The Bahamas and that the care of our elderly World War II Veterans and Widows could remain a constant move of saving this legacy. At present we have twenty(20) WWII Veterans and thirty(30) WWII Widows registered with the Legion-Bahamas Branch.





## ***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT REMEMBRANCE DAY***

1. **Question: When did World War II begin and how did The Bahamas become involved in this War?**

**Ans:** World War II began in September, 1939 when Germany led by Adolf Hitler attacked Poland. Great Britain inducted a call to all men between the ages of 20-40 to enlist into the military services, which included some 3 million volunteers from its Empire and Commonwealth Countries, thus, the Bahamas was affected as our young men and women answered the call to fight for the Crown.

2. **Question: When was the First Remembrance Day Observed?**

**Ans:** The Royal British Legion instigated the 1<sup>st</sup> Remembrance Day on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1921.

3. **Question: Why is there an Act of Two-Minute Silence at Remembrance Day Services Worldwide?**

**Ans:** An Act of 2-Minute Silence began on the anniversary of Armistice or Veterans Day in 1919 in memory of the millions killed during World War I and this act of respect continues even today. It really was a suggestion that was made by an Australian journalist, the late Edward George Honey, who wrote a letter to the London Times in May of 1919 made this suggestion to pause for a period of silence reflecting the gesture of respect for all those men who sacrificed their lives for freedom. The suggestion was accepted by King George V. and was introduced in military ceremonies throughout the British Empire ever since.

