



Issue 1.
May 2009

Welcome to the first issue of *Legion Knots* - the magazine about the branches and for the branches of Nottinghamshire Royal British Legion.

We, the editorial sub-committee, have lots of ideas of things we think you might like to see in your magazine. Please let us know what you do or don't like.

Can you name the places in the photographs above? Perhaps you have photos of Nottinghamshire which we could use in future issues of *Legion Knots*? What is your Branch up to? What are you planning?

In this issue we have part one of the war-time story of Denis Holmes

THE TORPEDO THAT STRUCK.

It was a cold dark December morning in 1942 when the troopship I had embarked set sail from Greenock, Scotland. The "Strathallan", 23,000 ton and ex pride of the P.O. line was now on active service and in battledress grey. This was to be my home for the next few days.

I was one of approximately 3,000 troops, consisting of the Army, R.A.F. and a small contingent of nurses who were now sailing for destination unknown. Our

County Chairman's Foreword

I must first congratulate the Editorial Committee for the production of this County Magazine.

The Committee need your help in the producing this Magazine - they need photographs and details of events held in your Branch area. This initiative is another way of bringing the Legion into the modern age in the County. The Magazine will be published quarterly to start with, with the aim of eventually going monthly to replace the current *County Newsletter*.

please support this venture with items for publication and constructive ideas for future editions.

PS. We are looking for a Company to Sponsor the costs of the Magazine, currently £500 per annum. Any contacts or ideas?

John Jackson

vessel was the flagship of the convoy and among the notable personnel on board were the Chief Radio Operator, name unknown but a relative of the late King George, and the personal secretary to General Eisenhower.

Like many other troops on board this was to be my first sea voyage. One of the first formalities was the issue of life jackets and immediately following came the routine drill for action stations and muster stations. This I am afraid was not taken seriously as it was regarded as more Army red tape. Little did we know that before the trip was over that drill would be useful to us all.

(Continued on page 3)

Meet Your Editorial Team

Sheila Addison



I am very keen to see a County Newsletter that is attractively presented as well as of interest to a wide range of current RBL members and those yet to become members and their families, young and old. I hope that, with **members' help** in contributing items, **Legion Knots** will stimulate as well as inform and entertain, tickle the grey cells as well as raise a smile.

Richard Dodge



This County magazine is the fruition of a dream, inspired by the **Legion Lincs.** newsletter produced by Steve Bonde of Stamford, that I have had since becoming County Secretary of the Nottinghamshire + Derbyshire RBL. **It's continued success** will depend on contributions from all County Branches in the years ahead, no matter how small.

Mal Greenberry



Joined Army Catering Corps aged 21 in Jan 1981. Served 22 years Regular service plus 2 years FTRS Achieved the rank of Warrant Officer Class One. Married to Michelle with 2 adult daughters, Rebecca and Elizabeth, both of whom I pay for to be members of the branch. Branch Secretary and serving on the County Conference Committee.

Pete Hopkins



I am Secretary for the Warsop, Meden Vale & District Branch and also serve on the County Conference Committee.

I became involved in the magazine as I thought it a good way of Branches and Members communicating with each other, sharing ideas, and publicising the work of the Royal British Legion in Nottinghamshire

'Fly A Flag For Our Armed Forces – Monday 22 June 2009'.

Free flags have been allocated to all the Borough, District, City and County Councils across the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Individuals wishing to participate by raising and flying the flag at 10.30am on **Monday 22 June 2009, honouring Britain's Armed Forces past, present and future**, will now be able to purchase one of these special flags direct from the manufacturer.

The design of the Armed Forces Day flag is based on the Union Jack (sic) and it measures 5ft by 3ft. Flags cost £10, which includes postage and packaging to UK addresses, VAT and a £1 donation to the **Forces Children's Trust, a charity devoted to helping dependent children that have lost a parent whilst serving with the Armed Forces.**

If you would like to order an Armed Forces Day Flag please visit www.piggotts.co.uk or email armedforcesdayflag@piggotts.co.uk.



Idea for boosting RBL Membership

For several years we have been told at various conferences and subsequent Branch Meetings, that membership is down, we are in possible danger of being **amalgamated with another County if we don't improve, and other such quotes.** I am a Branch Secretary and looked at how I could improve our small numbers. Simple. Most of us have children, grand children, nephews and nieces and so on. **How often do we find ourselves asking the question "what do you want for your birthday?"** Often we end up with a £10 book token or gift voucher. Well instead of that, do what I did. I signed my 2 daughters up and pay their Legion Membership annually by direct debit. Mine are both in their early 20's and always come along to help and support the branch activities. They bring their mates, which raises the event income and also spreads the word and gains interest from their generation. **Lets face it, if we don't get the following generations interested in long term interest and support, there will soon be no Legion to be a member of and no support to our Servicemen and women. It's just one idea that will help to raise our profile to younger people, and we need them badly.**

M.R. Greenberry - Ruddington and District

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP AWARD



Photograph courtesy of CHAD

Rev. David Addison (Mansfield Bellamy Branch Chairman & Chaplain) receives his award from Bill Parkin National Executive member, watched by Gordon Horsewood

PAPPLEWICK & LINBY PRESENTATION



Mr H C (Bill) Bailey receiving his Branch Certificate for 30 years as Branch Standard Bearer and also Branch fundraiser (County Draw). Shown beside past Chairman Colin Tinker and current Chairman Councillor Joe Lonergan.

Continued from page 1 - The Torpedo That Struck

Two days of sailing and many troops were getting their sea legs and settling down to the voyage. Organised parades and routine jobs occupied most of the day, but occasional practice alerts were thrown in for good measure. But, in spite of all it was something new and life appeared fine.

It was not long before Mother Nature had to interfere with our pleasure. A violent storm broke and with a heavy sea running our ship was tossed about like a cork.

The whole ship shivered under the mighty onslaught. As the driving propeller was lifted out of the water it glistened, as it returned it struck the water with a thunderous roar. The sea washed over the deck and the water ran down the hatchways flowing to the lower decks in a deluge. The lower decks as you will imagine were housing the other ranks. At the sight of the water faces were turned to each other showing an expression of bewilderment. Very little was said but many thoughts

passed through the minds of us all. However the storm continued and slowly we became acclimatized to the noise and rocking about the ship. Four days and nights the storm raged, it seemed four years to us. During that time several of the troops out on deck for an airing had been thrown against the superstructure, resulting in broken limbs. Believe me, our impression of the Atlantic was not very good. It was made known to us afterwards that the storm was the worst that the Atlantic had known for 51 years.

Our escort of corvettes had heavy damage caused through the heavy seas. The aircraft carrier never had the chance to show us its aircraft.

But what a gallant sight to see, a convoy of ships battling against the heavy seas. Four troopships in line with an escort of eight corvettes, four to port and four to starboard with an aircraft alternating its position.

At dawn on the sixth day we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, the sea was now calm. The remainder of the convoy left us and we were now lone voyagers.

In view of the rough sea that we had and it now being calm, we were once again enjoying life. None of us gave a thought that we were nearing the battle zone.

It was now known that our destination was Algiers and in another 48 hours we should dock. With a warm sunshine and the smooth sea we thought that this was the life. No wonder people talked so much of the Mediterranean cruises. But alas, we were at war, and we had the enemy to think about not knowing when or where he would strike.

We retired to our sleeping quarters that night feeling quite happy after the lovely day. I did not appear to have been asleep long before I was awakened by the sound of the alarm bells ringing. There was only a dim light on our deck. There was activity all around as troops in almost darkness tried to get dressed at the same time in such a confined space. I looked at my watch, 2.20 am. What an un-earthly hour to practice 'Action Stations' I thought. It was then realized that this was no practice as the ship had a list to port of about 45 degrees. We hurried to our Muster Stations in an orderly manner. I had not heard the sound of the torpedo, which had scored a direct hit on our engine room. I guess the crew of the German submarine were very happy at another hit.

It was an eerie scene in the darkness of that December night, frightening even to the man with nerves of steel. But, we were Englishmen and many covered the fright that was with us all. The lifeboats were lowered for the female nurses. One of these lifeboats had only pulled away from the grief stricken ship a few yards away when it sank. These nurses lost their lives. There were 29 of them. Whilst this was taking place men were still gathering at their Muster Stations. I stood there upon the upper deck, I was frightened, my mouth was dry. The officer in charge of our Muster Station then gave the order to go overboard. It was made known afterwards that the Captain of the ship had not given orders to abandon ship. However, I stood there with my life-jacket tied to my chest, trying to make a grave decision, should I go overboard as ordered or should I disobey and remain on board. The sea looked black and oily and I could not swim, and there were no ships in sight. My brow was wet with perspiration.

The second part of this story will appear in the next issue.



Women's Section, Wollaton Branch-Rededication of Standard 7th March 2009



Doreen Smith, Branch Secretary had this to say about this special day, "We are privileged to have had this opportunity on our 50th Anniversary to honour our Standard, our guests, The Royal British Legion and the Women's Section. We also pay tribute to founder members who did the ground work, but sadly none of whom are still alive. We think the day went well and hope all enjoyed it."

Book Review - *Home From War* by Martyn and Michelle Compton. (Courtesy Farnsfield Branch)

Martyn suffered 75% burns plus he was shot through the leg whilst in action in 2006. The book tells the story of his recovery and eventual marriage to Michelle and is written from both perspectives.

Published by Mainstream and available from Libraries I would recommend it to anyone wanting to gain greater understanding of what our service personnel are going through but also what support, help and guidance they are receiving.

LAUNCH OF HEROES RETURN 2

To mark the 60th Anniversary of D-Day in 2004, The Heroes Return scheme was launched to enable WW2 veterans to make commemorative visits to places where they saw action. £16.6 million of lottery funds made it possible for 39,000 veterans, spouses and carers to travel overseas.

Now in 2009 The Big Lottery Fund is again pledging funding for veterans, spouses, widows and carers wishing to mark overseas anniversaries throughout 2009 and 2010.

'The generation of men and women who served this country during WW2 gave so much to protect the freedoms we enjoy today As they get older, pilgrimages to the areas where they saw service become ever more poignant and precious to our veterans. This is why I am personally delighted today to announce the launch of Heroes Return 2, making a further offer to fund the trips for those veterans who would like our support to attend anniversary events across the world. In this way, we hope to do our bit on behalf of the whole nation to honour the service and sacrifice so many of our veterans made.'

Sir Clive Booth, Chair of The Big Lottery Fund.

We are delighted that The Big Lottery Fund have given us another opportunity for more of our veterans, some who have not had a chance to visit their areas of combat, to return and bury their nightmares. The first time I entered a Commonwealth war grave cemetery it felt as if I was entering a different world, so calm and peaceful. When you walk in peaceful lanes so green, remember them and think what might have been. We will remember them.

Pat White, National Chair of the Italy Star Association.

**For further info WW2 veterans can ring the
Heroes Return 2 Helpline : 0845 00 00 121**

National Conference 2009



Can you name the person in the photograph? If not you missed this year's National Conference in Eastbourne. Peter Cleminson is our National Chairman.

Some lively debates took place with the Board of Trustees being taken to task over several points.

Chris Simpkin, Director General gave an excellent speech on both where we (The Royal British Legion) are now, and where we need to be going in the next few years if we are to survive.

Two motions that received full support related to increasing the public profile of the Royal British Legion. A delegate described the Legion as, "the best kept secret since 1921".

Market Warsop Supporting the Troops in Afghanistan

Following on from the talk given by Farnsfield Branch at the Management Seminar at Skegby, I was looking forward to putting some of their ideas into action when one of our members suggested that the Branch send out some 'Comfort Boxes' to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I saw this as a perfect vehicle for achieving some of Farnsfield's suggestions, i.e. increasing membership/exposure by Community Involvement and publicising RBL events, as well as it being a worthwhile project in its own right.

I started by contacting the Town Hall and getting a list of Community Groups in the Warsop Area. (One word of warning - this list was grossly out of date so some groups had folded or management had changed.)



By coincidence, I was then contacted by Welbeck Estates Brass Band who play for us at Remembrance, offering a concert, but this had to be within the next six weeks to fit in with their concert timetable.

I sent out 35 letters to community groups asking them to join us in supporting the troops by either donating items, making up completed boxes or giving a donation to the initiative. I also invited

members, families and friends from the groups to come to the concert.

I had also invited our local Army Cadet contingent at a reduced rate, and about 30 turned up. They brought with them several bags of items for the boxes, as well as a donation that one of the leaders had raised at work.

It was a superb concert with the band playing much rousing music including classics like *Land of Hope and Glory*. With the donation we made over £200 towards the appeal on the night.

Since the concert we have received further donations from local groups including Warsop Parish Council, Warsop Rotary, Warsop Metal Detecting Society, Warsop Water Colour Group, Spion Kop Ladies Group, Warsop Bridge Club, Meden Vale Bridge Club, and Oaklands Volunteers group. These donations have included £500 cash, 65 completed boxes and several bags of items for other boxes



I am eternally grateful to all those who have supported this community venture by attending the concert, buying raffle tickets, and to all those who donated.

We are working in partnership with a Charity called Support Our Soldiers, who have the contacts for distributing the boxes in Afghanistan.



We are also looking for names and addresses of local soldiers, male and female in whatever service, currently serving in Afghanistan to send boxes directly to them!

Pete Hopkins - Warsop, Meden Vale and District

Future Events

14 June 2009

Re-Dedication of the Jacksdale War Memorial - Soldier Day.

Assembly at 13:00 for the Parade (if marching) 13:15 for people finding their seats. A number of Regiments and Services will be represented.

Please notify the County Secretary of numbers and if Standard attending ASAP.

24 June 2009

Chesterfield Armed Forces Day 1pm - 4pm. Eastwood Hall, Rose Hill, Chesterfield. displays and memorabilia from Local Veterans Associations, Chesterfield Museum, Land Army and Armed Forces.

Representatives from War Pensions, Welfare Rights and SSAFA will be in attendance.

26 June 2009

The Heroes Festival - Newark & Nottinghamshire Showground. Everything military. Open 10am - 9pm. Show Starts 6.30pm. Car Parking £5 per car

28 June 2009

County Parade and Service of Rededication. Southwell Minster 6.30pm.

Parade assembles at the Burgage War Memorial 5.50pm when wreath will be laid.

18 July 2009

Farnsfield Village Garden Party, The Acres Sports Ground, Cotton Mill lane, Farnsfield. 11am.

HELP US HELP *(Article Courtesy of Farnsfield Branch)*

Notts is now operating the POPPY MAN SERVICE. They can help with a range of small household repairs and adaptations ranging from putting up shelves and fitting door and window locks, to maintaining gardens, structures and sheds. You are eligible for this free service if you have served in HM Forces for at least 7 days or are the dependant of someone who has served. If you know of anyone who qualifies and needs help then the contact number is 01480 478035 or 01480 478031. All calls will be treated in the strictest confidence and applications are considered carefully and with sympathy.

Stamp Collecting

The Legion is not really into philately but they do collect used postage stamps – British stamps and foreign stamps – for the Poppy Appeal. So, please do not just throw that envelope away but carefully cut or tear the stamps off, leaving about ½” of paper around them. Please send them to the editor who will process them on your behalf.

Would you like to become a Welfare Visitor for RBL Notts?

Notts. and Derby are trying to get a bank of people who are willing to “adopt” and visit an ex-service man/woman on a regular basis. This would involve setting aside an hour once a week or even once a month to visit someone who is vulnerable and lonely, to have a cup of tea and a chat, or occasionally to help with small items of shopping or similar requests. The County Welfare Office receives many calls asking if we can arrange for such a visitor. If you feel able to help, please contact Jan Lindsey on 01332 296299