



The Editor Writes

THE SEASON of goodwill, a.k.a. the festive season or the Christmas holiday, is over so you don't have to worry about being pleasant and cheerful for another twelve months! What a shame, it was so nice while it lasted.

I have long advocated the extension of the season of goodwill until at least March, by which time we may have become so accustomed to being nice to each other that we will do it naturally. Some hopes, you say, and all my efforts have so far come to nothing.

I think I first thought of the campaign back in the 1950s when we had a newsagent shop. The lead-in to Christmas was great, but when we re-opened afterwards, the colourful decorations and Christmassy-packaged stock looked dull and jaded - and, incidentally, so did the customers!

Just about the only breakthrough I have achieved is moderate success with my suggestion for postponing Christmas meals with friends and colleagues until January. This avoids all the crowds, ensures better-cooked food and more attentive service. And you don't have to spend half the evening at the bar trying to get a drink.

If you would like to support this admirable campaign, please send a ten-pound note to the address on the cover.

There was, however, one aspect of the post-festive period which really used to annoy me. It is polite to ask customers if they had a nice Christmas and the amazing thing was that nine out of ten people gave the same reply - "Yes, thank you," they'd say, "quiet, you know". It was as if they had been taught it at school.

Mind you we are all a bit like that in other respects. When someone tells us they are going on holiday, what do we say? "Where are you going, somewhere nice?" And, of course, the response to that should be, "No, I've just found something atrocious in my favourite brochure, Horrible Holidays in Horrendous Places!"

Happy New Year!

entering a chaung, a cutting in a narrow riverside. The corvette was grounded but not too deeply so that its engines could pull away at short notice. The initial wave of British Tommies was about to land on Burmese soil for the umpteenth time. Some of us had completed many beach-head landings by this time. I rather enjoyed the element of surprise. There was always more to come when Jap really found out he was being gradually cut off from supplies and his limited communications. Hundreds of Japanese died, but we must not minimise our own losses. Our boys were going down like nine-pins with dysentery and malaria.

The assault was on and there was one thought - we must get away from the beach-head as soon as physically possible. It was hard graft cutting our way through the already steamy jungle as the sun was beginning to rise. Occasionally I stopped to think what a wonderful sight it would be if only we could enjoy life without the enemy.

The larding was completed without incident. We used Indian Sappers to put down chestnut palling for the advancing troops to follow.

Our task was nearing the end. Advance we did and glad of it. By now the second wave of Indian soldiers was beginning to land and, at first, we really thought Jap did not know about this one. However, we were soon under heavy shell fire. The noise was terrible, sparks began to fly and bombs were raining down on the beach-head..

Rations were limited and our precious lifeline was disintegrating before our very eyes. But we advanced further and further away from the sea. A lonely little platoon of British soldiers almost lost in the deep, deep jungle of Burma. The Royal Indian Navy had given us bearings which became rougher and rougher as we progressed until we only had a vague idea of our position. That night we dug in with the pioneer miniature shovels we had learned to use. It was a dark night. however the shell fire had petered out at dusk and our thought were such that Jap knew the British and

Indian Army had ceased to follow-up the initial assault. We were relying on my compass as the only guide, which was a great comfort to me as I had developed absolute faith in the compass in jungle warfare. Water was running out and we were much too active to sleep. The following day we learnt that casualties were light and. we were joined by our own Battalion but it was regretted water supplies were non-existent. Another 24 hours went by before our own Pioneer Platoon struck a weak supply of infected water. Jap was good at poisoning the streams which trickled on some of the dried-up rivers. However after the elementary tests had been carried out we discovered that limited treated matter was available for boiling. A small amount of

In World War Two, the 2nd Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment went from the Sudan to Palestine, then Crete and Egypt. After fighting against the Vichy French in Syria and North Africa, the Battalion moved to India. In 1944 it was reformed into two Chindit columns for the re-occupation of Burma. The 2nd Battalion was disbanded in 1947, but was subsequently amalgamated with the 1st in 1948. The regiment was finally disbanded in 1968.

tea was produced from nowhere and, typical of Tommy it was share and share alike. But there were no cigarettes. An air drop was forecast and it came a day later. Although food was limited, communications were good.

We were making progress. Patrols were carried out despite constant sniping from pockets of troops from Japanese artillery and infantry regiments in the vicinity. Life

was uncomfortable for many days and sleepless nights were spent listenig to Jap calling out 'Tommy I can hear you, Tommy I can hear you'. We maintained maximum silence.

Morale was high in spite of mail getting through only spasmodically either way. Limited news was reaching home, so our Colonel wrote a collective note for his troops. We just had not time during operations for any mail. This proved to be our last raid and we were withdrawn for a rest period to be trained for more important missions, the grand assault on Malaya.

Life was just beginning to be tolerable once again and we had to get used to fresh food and even a bed. My first experience of civilization en route to Madras was a bout of malaria. I had been lucky to escape both malaria and dysentery throughout the Burma campaign.



**Make a Date -
It's Our
Big Night Out!**

**MARKET HARBOROUGH BRANCH
82ND ANNIVERSARY DINNER**

Friday 18th March 2005

7.30 for 8.00pm

Market Harborough Golf Club

Music by David Hawke

Tickets £15

MENU

Minestrone Soup

Melon

Smoked Fish Platter

Breast of Duck in Plum Sauce

Roast Lamb

Salmon in Dill Sauce

A Vegetarian Dish

Selection of Desserts

Cheese and Biscuits

Coffee and After Dinner Mint

*A complimentary glass of sherry or wine
will be offered on arrival.*

Other drinks may be purchased from the bar.

Joan McMillin will be collecting orders and money at the February and March meetings. Cheques should be made payable to "Social Committee Account".

If you have any queries, please telephone Joan on 01858 462143.

If you would like to attend but have no transport, every effort will be made to help. Just ask Joan!



The Diary

Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143. Joan welcomes your ideas for events, outings, etc.

SOME DATES TO KEEP FREE

- 12 Feb RNA outing to Festival of Music.
- 18 Mar Branch Anniversary Dinner at MH Golf Club.
- 2 Apr Branch Coffee Morning
- 9 Jul Music for a Summer Evening, Beaumanor.
(Please note this is a corrected date)
- 5 Nov Branch Coffee Morning

What happened next!

Important - see the foot of page three first.

Canadians: We are a lighthouse. Your call!

The date of the next meeting is February 9th

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room, Conservative Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.30 pm in the upstairs Committee Room at the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

www.mktharborobl.ukvet.net

In Touch

Issue 76

January 2005

In Touch on-line

www.in-touch.ukvet.net

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Introducing . . .
The County Field Officer
The Who, What, Where, How and Why

WEDNESDAY the 12th of January was going well. That is until about half way through a lively RBL Branch Meeting at the Market Harborough Conservative Club when, having been used to singing for my supper on such occasions, I was also asked to write a 300 word article for 'In Touch' as well. The reason given by the Editor of this illustrious publication was that 'County Field Officer was a somewhat obscure title, sounding like some sort of agricultural engineer.' Thus an explanation of who I am and what I do seems to be required and, having received such a reasonable request, I could not do other but accept the challenge. So here goes

Who?

Richard Foster, aged 55, recently retired from the Royal Air Force after 35 years commissioned service: Helicopter pilot; flying and survival instructor; mountain rescue specialist; service attaché, joint service and NATO staff officer and commander at all levels up to wing commander. Very happily married to Elizabeth for 32 years. Now settled in Stretton, Rutland after 20 house moves in service. Two children: Sarah, Corporate Recovery Solicitor and Paul, Head of History at a large State Comprehensive.

This is apparently the transcript of an actual radio conversation between a U.S. Navy ship and the Canadians, off the coast of Newfoundland...

Canadians: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the South, to avoid a collision.

Americans: Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the North, to avoid a collision.



Richard at the controls of a Russian 'HIND' Helicopter Gunship or Armed Attack Helicopter. The picture was taken during his tour as British Air Attache in the former Czechoslovakia.

What?

Case co-ordinator and account holder (cheque signer) for all welfare payments at county level. Over £100,000 disbursed last year in emergency grants: mostly white goods, carpets, furniture, electric scooters, bath and stair lifts, riser-recliner chairs and therapeutic beds. Cases also included: priority debt settlement; hospital visits; respite care; vocational assessment and training courses; helping the homeless

International Incident in the North Atlantic
 Reported by Mark Hudson

Canadians: Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, please divert your course.

with emergency accommodation and ex-prisoners' rehabilitation into gainful employment and return to normal society. Welfare takes up 90% of my time. The rest is helping with the Poppy Appeal at County level; recruiting, training and supervising caseworkers; providing advice to Branches and briefing other individuals, schools, current servicemen, local and national government departments, youth organisations, clubs and societies on the work of the Royal British Legion.

Where?

Throughout the counties of Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire.

How?

With the invaluable help, support, experience and generosity of spirit of my Assistant Anita Iredale and through close co-operation with SSAFA Forces Help and the various joint-service, Naval, Regimental and RAF charities, together with civilian benevolent organisations, trade associations and local authorities.

Why?

Because to have one single, full time, point of contact for all of the above enables effective communication and co-ordination of effort, with the primary aim of giving disadvantaged ex-servicemen and women and their dependants the best service possible towards a rapid, appropriate and compassionate solution to their difficulties.

Canadians: Negative. I say again, you have to divert course.

Americans: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS "LINCOLN", ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND YOU CHANGE COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH, OR MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

To find out what happened next turn to page 11.

A Burma Incident **Ken Harrison** **Captain, York & Lancaster Regiment**

A bright afternoon in Burma and the sun was shining in a perfect blue sky. It was March 1945 and all was at peace with the world with one rather big exception. Apart from factual evidence that they were on the run, the Japanese army was in an unknown position. But where?

Suddenly, out of the blue, a Japanese Paymaster appeared, complete with escort, heading towards Chittagong. That was a formidable journey for them because General Bill Slim's 14th Army occupied a large portion of the Arakan coast. They must certainly have been mad. They were completely outnumbered and one Jap Paymaster was killed and two prisoners were taken.

The British Army had gained another financial victory except, of course, the money was worthless to the British Tommy who at that time had no purchase power. The only use would be to buy information from Burmese villagers. Such information proved useful sometimes, but only if we could really trust it. We were always suspicious, particularly when Japanese soldiers appeared in the middle of our defences, which it will be remembered were extended many jungle miles. It was sometimes hard to realise we were supported by other platoons, companies and battalions. I was a Subaltern with one of the few fully-manned infantry platoons and we were part of an Indian Division. Such was my initiation into real jungle warfare.

Our only items of equipment were what we could carry. By this stage steel helmets were worn night and day and Green drill battledress, which we never changed, was the order of the day. A pack contained a few changes of other essential clothing. But, the most important kit was a few hand grenades which were always maintained in a working condition. As a Battalion we had paid the price for that. A faulty pin resulted in an accident and three more of our depleted number disappeared. This was tragic and sent shudders through the infantry platoons.

A very secret message was received that afternoon. We were moving rapidly down the Arakan coast towards

Rangoon and the battle was on and Malaya was our next target. Our destination was unknown and the brief included only one item of information: water was very scarce. We must fill our water bottles and a new issue of chlorine tablets was made. We were destined for a very important secret mission and there was much speculation among the lads. We were to rendezvous on the coast to be picked up that evening by the Royal Navy. Corvettes were operating in very limited numbers in the Indian Ocean. Rations were sparse and mainly American, which was disappointing for Tommy. The brew-can was just as important as a rifle, and both were carried at all times. Badges of rank were removed at a very early stage as it was known Jap sniped at rank.

We were duly collected without incident and, during the late evening at sea, I received my brief. We were the supporting platoon of British soldiers in an Indian Brigade. We were on the ocean preparing for a beach-head landing into the unknown with hot wet jungle to negotiate. It was a frightening thought and the only comfort was that we all shared the same feeling,

The boys were given instructions to rest, fully clothed and equipped, for a dawn raid and, if we were successful, we would be supported by the remainder of the Battalion. This was my first occasion on an initial assault. Previously I had watched British Commandos doing the pioneering operation but their numbers had been sadly reduced on a previous raid.

We had been trained to keep advancing and we kept up the assault at all costs, there was no going back. Training in all conditions had been rigorous in North Wales and the Indian hills, to say nothing of a monsoon in Burma. Life was tough, but there was a job to do and the prestige of the Battalion was at stake. How deep the muddy banks were we could not see. In the early hours I could just make out the land in front through binoculars.

A rum ration was issued in conjunction with the Royal Indian Navy. A landing was to be made before daylight and we were glad of it to keep out the cold. Some of the lads made the most of the bottle of rum I carried, which was part of the equipment on a raid of this kind. We were now

This makes it all worthwhile.

Thank you all so much for your generous Christmas gift brought to me by one of your members. You certainly keep 'in touch' with all your Oldies and such an active and busy branch.

May I congratulate the people responsible for producing the wonderful newsletter In Touch.

Most sincerely

Betty Potter,
Smeeton Westerby.

Branch Membership Directory

Please note the following amendments:

Change of address:

01487 832830 Brazil Mrs H R (Hilary) 3 Brookside, Conington, Peterborough PE7 3QL.

01858 434923 Ramsay Miss E M (Betty) 31 Rupert Road, Market Harborough LE16 9LT.

01858 461889 Tyler Mrs P M (Peggy) 6 Poplars Court, Market Harborough LE16 7BU.

We welcome a new member:

01858 565607 Southorn Mr A C (Anthony) 3 Hall Close, Weston-by-Welland, Market Harborough LE16 8HT.

It is with regret that we record the death of

Fulford Mrs I (Irene) 67 Northleigh Grove, Market Harborough LE16 9QU

For various reasons the following have resigned

Gibson Mrs C J, 10 Logan Court, Market Harborough.

Harrison Mr T H, 11 Rolleston Road, Billesdon.

Marsden Mr A W, 26 Bramfield Park, Lubenham.

Just for Fun

An elephant born in Tibet
One day in his cage wouldn't get
So its keeper stood near
Stuck a hose in its ear
And invented the first Jumbo Jet.