

In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996

The Royal British Legion

Registered Charity No. 210270

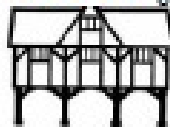


LIVE ON

To the memory of the fallen and the future of the living

92

Years of Caring



Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Centenary Year of 1915



Did the author
of the article on
pages 4 & 5
wear a cap
badge like this?

With thanks to Prime Life
Ltd, parent company of
Peaker Park Care Village
Market Harborough, for
printing this issue.

Issue 197
February 2015

Next Monthly Branch Meeting
7.30 pm **Wednesday 11 March**
Committee 5 March

Function Room, Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Branch News

January Branch Meeting

In his New Year Greeting the Chairman reminded us that 2015 is the centenary of many notable WWI events and of the 75th Anniversary 1940.

The Secretary gave some details from the County Conference of how subscriptions will be dealt with in future.

Copies of the branch Annual Report had been circulated to Committee Members and to the Library and the County Records Office.

An email from his son reported that George Seward is being very well cared for in the nursing home near Cheltenham. He is well liked by staff and fellow residents

Four members had decided not to renew their membership and two others had still not paid their subs.

After Meeting Talk

Having served in Korea during the war and as a prominent member of the Korean Veterans' Association, Neil Townsend was well qualified to present an informative, illustrated talk 'Korean War, 25th June 1950 - 27th July 1953'. Historical and geographical background of the whole of the country led to its partition along the 38th parallel into North Korea and South Korea.

Invading across that border, North quickly occupied most of the South. With international support by American and Commonwealth forces the invaders were pushed back to near their northern border but this was reversed by a large scale Chinese offensive. Much heavy and costly defensive fighting by UN, including British, forces eventually resulted in a cease-fire and armistice and a new border but not the end of the war which still technically exists.

Late Christmas Lunch

On 13th January branch members were joined by our RAFA and RNA friends when paper hats were donned and



mottos read raising a few smiles as these photos were taken we awaited



the The Angel's excellent festive meal.

Continued on Page 7

Cover Photo

The Cap Badge of the Rifle Brigade from the Internet.

Remember This?



It was lovely to see so many of you again when I came to your branch meeting this week, thank you for your welcome.

And of course, it was an absolute pleasure to present George with the Director of Corporate Communications' award for his editorship of this excellent newsletter – timed to mark his 'retirement'.

These awards are not given out willy-nilly – in fact, it's only the second time that it has been given – testament to the high regard that George is held in.

As I said on Wednesday, my working life is dedicated to trying to improve communication across the Legion so it's been lovely to have a kindred spirit in George.

In Touch really is a shining example – well written, interesting, engaging and amusing, a real credit to your branch.

I was also pleased to meet your new editor, John Standish, and I'm so pleased that he seems just as keen to keep up the good work started by Tom Ashmore and carried on so well for the last seven years by George.

So it just remains for me to hope that George isn't too modest to print this, to

thank him for his friendship, for inviting me to contribute to *In Touch* and to wish him all the very best for the future. I also wish John good luck as he takes over and promise him I'll be a better correspondent from now on.



Kay Callaghan

This appeared in February 2010, the last issue under George Seward's editorship. Since then, we have lost touch with Kay who may have been affected by the Legion reorganisation.

A Regular's Personal Recollections of the National Service Era

by Major General Sir Michael Carleton-Smith CBE, DL

Under the 1948 National Service Act, which replaced the 1939 Act providing for war service, all healthy males aged 18 or over were obliged to serve in the armed forces for 18 months, with four years on the reserve. Merchant seamen, farmers and coal miners were exempted. Some conscripts were arbitrarily selected to do their time down the mines, known as the 'Bevin Boys.' At the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 service was extended to two years and the reserve commitment was reduced by six months. The last national servicemen were discharged in 1963.

Doubtless quite a number of those reading this piece would have done their National Service, having been children during the war. I write this as a regular who joined the Army in September 1949 and before going to Sandhurst did the sixteen weeks basic training with my National Service cohort as a trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

A motley collection of youths 'detained' from the Darlington – Barnard Castle branch line at a little rural halt to be met by a group of incredibly smart junior NCOs in the 12th Lancers, then the armoured car training regiment. They were mostly National Service lance corporals.

"Stand to attenshun when yer speak ter me and call me corprul". Having got that point across we were marshalled into some sort of column and led across the fields rather like prisoners of war carrying our few permitted personal possessions to a war time hutted camp. There we were grouped forty men to a hut in double tier bunks with a coke stove in the middle of the floor. There was an outside ablution block, inevitably called the sstt house.

We were marched almost everywhere including to the cook house carrying our KFS and mug in our left hand. Reveille was at 0530 when we folded our blankets into a neat square and laid our kit out on the bunk as per the photo on the wall. Life revolved around drill, more drill, PT and weapon and specialist training, with evenings spent 'bulling and ironing' with a quick trip to the NAAFI for those not 'in some sort of trouble'.

After eighteen months at Sandhurst and four months special-to-arm courses I joined the 1st Battalion The Rifle Brigade in Germany where they were the motor battalion in the 7th Armoured Division. I was given command of one of the three scout platoons, ten ancient open tracked bren gun carriers and a half track 'mother duck' for the platoon sergeant.

Most of the riflemen throughout the battalion were national service men who had been evacuated during the war from the east end of London and enjoyed the most delightful cockney accents.

These riflemen had left school at fourteen and had been at work since then. Though their number included a few who had only recently left public and grammar schools; had never been in a job and had not, anyway at that stage, demonstrated the necessary qualities for selection for officer training. Our old Etonian commanding officer's driver was, for

instance, also an old Etonian. They were fairly unmercifully teased but most appeared the better for it. Most of the platoon commanders were national servicemen who having shown the necessary qualities had

been commissioned through the Infantry Officer Cadet Training Unit at Eaton Hall, where after our service in the Kenya Mau Mau campaign I became Weapon training Officer before rejoining the battalion in the Malayan emergency.

How would I describe our National Service cockney riflemen? - salt of the earth characters; witty, loyal, crafty, hardy, fun, competent, street-wise and capable of hard work. No wonder we young officers 'loved' our soldiers. One of them, Ron Cassidy had been evacuated to Kettering at the tender age of six. After experiencing the battalion life he signed on as a regular. He was my company transport corporal in Kenya, my CSM in Borneo, then RSM and retired as a major QM, and became regimental secretary. He is now chairman of the Suffolk branch of the RGJ Association and of The

Rifle Brigade Association to my appreciative presidency.

The young National Service officers were a good lot too. Jocelyn Stephens was one notable character. He was already a

wealthy teenage, old Etonian and after leaving Cambridge he bought 'the Queen', a glossy society magazine; was a financier of the pirate radio station 'Radio Caroline', was managing director of the Evening Standard and then the Daily Express



2Lt Carleton-Smith with the lads at a battalion party in the gym in Celle c. 1952.
Rfn Ron Cassidy 3rd from left.

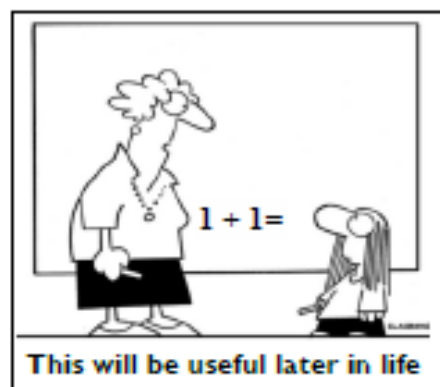
and subsequently chairman of English Heritage for which he was knighted. On one battalion exercise he so infuriated his company commander that he was ordered on the radio to 'Go away-just go away'. So 2/lt Stephens ordered his three section half tracks to follow him for about thirty miles to the notorious red light district 'the Reeperbahn' in Hamburg. There he treated the entire platoon to a night out. When he reported back on return by radio to a commander who had spent anxious hours concealing the absence of a third of his command there were no recriminations! The company commander, Jim Wilson, also survived and went on to be a lieutenant general and also a knight.

War service and subsequent National Service had a big impact on the generations affected and thus on society as a whole. It engendered discipline, loyalty, team spirit, personal, unit and national pride, guts, determination, fitness, comradeship, respect, and sense of purpose, often with the benefit of a trade skill, overseas service, adventurous activities and possibly combat experience. It was a shared, bonding, maturing and mostly enjoyable experience. It had the added advantage of developing leadership potential and merging classes, creeds, backgrounds and life styles. For most of us they were great and memorable days and we still enjoy meeting old 'muckers' at our reunions.

Miscellany

February News 100 years ago

- 2nd - Turkish attempt to cross Suez Canal defeated
- 4th - Total British casualties to date 104,000
- 10th - Germans take 100,000 Russian prisoners
- 12th - French start offensive in Champagne region
- 18th - Planned Berlin Olympic Games cancelled
- 24th - 1000 British suffragettes go to France to do war work



2015 February dates

- 14th Valentine's Day first associated with romantic love in the Middle Ages
- 17th Shrove Tuesday -Pancake Day for most people but others may have Broth (Scotland), doughnuts (Herefordshire), frying pan pudding (Lincolnshire) or pea soup (Cornwall).
- 18th Ash Wednesday The start of Lent

In Memoriam

We regret to announce the death during January of three members: Colin Hammersley who died after a long illness on New Year's Day and whose funeral was on 28th January, Bill Cotton who died on the 26th and of Douglas Miller. Our condolences go to their families.

Branch and Youth Links

Youth Officer, Betty Ramsay has been working hard to secure the Affiliation of the newly independent Sea Cadets unit, on 12th December. and the District Scouts groups on 16th January. With five youth groups affiliated to one branch, is this a record?



Joanne Hill's photos show John Morley and Betty with Cadet Unit, C O Lt. Shane Daley, SCC with affiliation certificate and

Pat Middleton receiving a picture of HMS Fernie from Captain Mark Windsor R.N on her appointment as President of the Market Harborough Sea Cadets



LUNCH AT THE ANGEL



for good food and good company

3 MARCH

**MEET IN THE
BAR AT NOON**

MENU

British beef, Guinness & mushroom
casserole with roast potatoes
& herb scone

Chunky chicken, bacon & leek
fricassée with mash potatoes

Roast shoulder of Welsh lamb
with roast potatoes, Yorkshire
pudding & gravy (can be gf)

Field mushroom stuffed with spinach
topped with poached egg draped in
hollandaise sauce (gf) (v)

All served with a selection of vegetables

- - - - -

Fresh fruit salad with fruity sorbet (gf)
(v)

Warm spiced apple tart &
creamy custard (v)

Banoffee cheesecake with ice cream

- - - - -

Tea or coffee with chocolate mints

£8.50 - pay on the day

To book, contact Kathie Morley, email kathiemorley@talktalk.net or phone 01858 419714 -before 21 February. To cancel, ring **The Angel** (01858 462702) before 10 am on the day or you will be charged

What's Going On?

Forthcoming Events

- 21 Feb Branch Coffee Morning @ Theatre. Helpers & items for Raffle & Cake & Tombola stalls please.
- 27 Mar Anniversary Dinner at M H Golf Club. See details and menu in enclosed sheet.
- 8 Apr Branch meeting + talk 'War & peace in the Holy Land....by Sir Michael Carleton-Smith
- 18 Apr RNA Coffee Morning at MH Theatre
- 10 May Branch meeting + talk 'war Memorials at Risk Project by Denis Kenyon

Welfare

If you are aware of any one who qualifies for, and may benefit from the Legion welfare services please contact Betty Ramsay on 01858 434923

RBL Helpline

is open to everyone, 8am - 8pm, 7 days a week on Freephone 0808 802 8080 for advice and support for serving & ex- service people and dependents.

In Touch Next Month

'Uncle George', a WWI soldier remembered, Remember This?, News, etc.

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Branch Website

www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/
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