

Editorial

By the time you are reading this, Christmas will be truly upon us. If you have not yet finished your Christmas shopping or sent those last few cards, then now is the time to PANIC!

I was reading in the newspaper the other day, that although the last World War finished in 1945, some 57 years ago, since then only one year has passed without a single British serviceman being killed in action somewhere in the world. Now we are at Christmas 2002 and once again we are faced with a possible conflict in the Middle East, in Iraq. This is a sad and terrible indictment of this modern age. Can there ever be real peace on earth?

But to more joyous things; such as crowded shops, full car parks, what to buy for whom! But without these things there would not be a Christmas atmosphere and it would just be another day.

Personally, I love Christmas. Now, perhaps, not quite as much as I did when our children (and, in their turn, the grandchildren) were toddlers. Then Christmas Day would begin at the crack of dawn, and within minutes the carpet would be buried under a deluge of Christmas wrappings. At such times real excitement and true happiness filled our home.

Even then I was a bit of a tyrant. I always insisted on a cup of coffee before I was fit enough (or awake enough) to distribute presents.

Nowadays with the children grown up and the grandchildren all young adults, (don't ask my age!) Christmas morning is a more relaxed affair. Christmas morning doesn't start until

It's Christmas !!

THOUGHTS OF HOME

The scene is Christmas somewhere in France, 1916. Rain is pouring down, in which two miserable-looking cockney soldiers are sitting in a trench in a war-torn landscape. Shells are whistling overhead, explosions are occurring just yards away and bullets are ricocheting around them.

One soldier turns to his mate and, shouting to be heard, says: "Ere Bert, one fing about all this, it will make Christmasses spent with the missus and kids and muvver-in-law seem like a picnic!"

I had intended this to be a cartoon, but being as I am artistically disadvantaged, you will have to make do with a word picture. - Ed.

GIFT TIP

A titbit from the *Good Housekeeping* magazine for Christmas 1937 advises that when buying a gift for anyone, try to make it appropriate . . . "remember that for a man stranded on a desert island a plank of wood and ball of string would be more appreciated than a string of pearls".

One can only wonder how you get a gift to someone "stranded" on a desert island. But as usual, I suppose it's the thought that counts.

THE 1914 CHRISTMAS TRUCE

Soon after the start of the First World War, Pope Benedict XV proposed a temporary ceasefire over the Christmas period. While this plan never materialised, news reached home that informal, local truces had occurred at intervals along the Western Front. Signals were passed over no-man's land, carols were sung, and in some instances men left their trenches and fraternised with the enemy.

One member of the London Rifle Brigade reported the event: "*It was agreed in our part of the firing line that there would be no firing and no thought of war on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day . . . on Christmas Day a football match was played between them and us in front of the trench. They even allowed us to bury all our dead . . .*"

The media and the military were unsure how to respond to this outbreak of peace, though by December 1915 strict orders against fraternisation had been issued. These orders and the war's increasing violence, ensured there was no repetition of the unofficial Christmas truce of 1914.

--From Schott's Christmas Miscellany



No Gratitude

By Bob England

You know, it gives one a sense of satisfaction if you can help out a friend with a problem. It gives you an air of superiority and also takes a great weight off the friend's mind. Although some will show no sense of gratitude. Like the other day for example. I had occasion to be in the local Electricity Showroom, when I spotted an old friend, Ben.

Hello, Ben," I said as I approached him. "Still spending your money?" "Got to," he replied, looking a bit glum. "Need a new electric fire, don't we?" The glum look was easy to explain, for Ben was well known for not being over-ready to part with cash, something to do with Scottish ancestry, I reckon.

"I thought you had central heating installed a few months ago," I recalled.

"Yes, we did, but we still find we need a back-up heating of some kind. You know, it's the darndest thing, let me tell you about it. The other evening, me and the wife were just sitting watching telly when she remarked she was feeling a bit chilly. As you might have noticed it has been a bit too warm lately to justify turning on the central heating and as it was about nine o'clock it seemed a waste to switch it all on then."

"The same old tight-fisted Ben," I interceded with a grin, which was only returned with a glare. "Anyway," he went on, choosing to ignore my remark, "my wife suggested that I should get the old electric fire out from the

garage and put that on for the rest of the evening. But I had put the old fire in the garage because it had packed up on us last year. That's when we decided to have central heating installed.

"Anyway, to cut a long story short, I thought I'd give it a try. I sorted the thing from a pile of stuff in the garage (amazing how much stuff piles up in a garage, isn't it?) and took the back off to look at the wiring, but I could not spot anything wrong. So I took it back to the house and plugged it in, without much hope I might add. But to my amazement it worked. Within minutes it was glowing a lovely red on all three elements and we were lovely and warm."

Ben paused here in his narrative and shook his head slightly. "The next day was just the same weather-wise, a warm day and a cool evening, so again I plugged in the fire. Not a glimmer. I've had the back off again and fiddled around with it, but no good, it's as dead as a dodo. I just don't understand how it could be perfect one night and never work again since."

"It certainly sound peculiar," I sympathised. "But electrical things are like that, working one minute and dead the next. But, hey, wait a minute." I did some quick calculations in my head, risking the headache. Then I asked: "The night the fire worked, was that three nights ago?"

Ben thought for moment, "Wednesday, Thursday, why yes. But what's that got to do with anything?"

"Why it explains everything," I said gleefully. "Three nights ago was November 5th – fire works night."

Ben just walked off in a huff. No gratitude, you see.

Well, it was nearly November 5th, and if you will not send me articles, you will just have to put up with my stories. – Editor.

after TWO cups of coffee and a leisurely breakfast at a civilised hour. But then the real excitement is no longer there. Oh, for the good(?) old days!

On behalf of all the Communications Team, may I wish for all members and their families a really **Merry Christmas and a Prosperous**



Branch News

CONGRATULATIONS. As a result of successfully completing the training course reported in the October issue, George Fleming has now been appointed County Recruiting Officer.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS - 2003

Following discussions, it has been agreed that Meetings will continue to be held in the Conservative Club building. Branch meetings will still be on the second Wednesday of each month and Committee meetings on the Thursday preceding the Branch meeting.

POPPY APPEAL RESULTS, as presented to the December meeting were:-

Street collections raised £3,738.27; House-to-house £3,652.66; Static boxes (shops, offices, pubs, etc.) £3,387.67; Donations, Church collection, Special events and wreaths £744.50; Other miscellaneous collections £695.90, and £606 still due making a total of £14,114, an excellent result and in excess of last year's figure. Well done everyone. This will be further increased when the donation from Branch funds is agreed later and if any special fundraising event is organised, e.g. as part of the Branch 80th Anniversary celebration.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER Dougie McMeeken gallantly stepped into the breach as temporary PAO when we faced potential disaster last September, and has led the very successful effort reported on the previous page. He has agreed to remain in post until 31st May 2003, the end of the current Appeal Year.

HOT PUNCH AND MINCE PIES. Thanks to Bill Farnsworth for the gallon of special RBL Elderflower wine, to the “secret recipe” additions, to Janet and Les Sewell for behind the scenes and front of house activity and to all who made the after meeting event a success.



Other News

COUNTY FIELD OFFICER.

The newly appointed CFO is Mr Mark Melaugh.

DIRECT DEBIT. New members or those who rejoin in future will have to pay their subscriptions by direct debit, unless there are special reasons why they cannot. Existing members can still pay in cash but are encouraged to change to direct debit payment. (Forms available from John Standish, Tel: 0116 240 4170).

The Late News Column

A Good Night Out. We are pleased to report that this Christmas the local old folks home is producing excerpts from the musical *Can Can*, performed by those who still can.



A Strange Story

This story appeared in The Daily Telegraph. It tells of how two Army dental technicians at Aldershot, bored and deemed unfit for active service, went AWOL and made a two-man invasion of France in 1942.

Sgt. Peter King (then 55) and Private Peter Cuthbertson (20), armed with nothing more than revolvers and a dozen grenades taken from their barracks, stole a boat from a Cornish fishing village and went over to the Cherbourg peninsular.

The French countryside appeared deserted and it was a full day before they saw their first Germans. They decided to cut telephone wires and to blow up railway lines and a signal box with their grenades.

They were discovered and fled back to their boat, which was then damaged by a mine in the Channel. With no engine, they drifted back to Cornwall, half starved, only to be held as suspected German spies.

But King and Cuthbertson, before leaving, had written to Churchill, sending him their pay books and explaining that they were men of honour, not deserters. Downing Street intervened and the men received only minor punishment.

Cuthbertson was transferred to the Durham Light Infantry and later became Deputy Lord Mayor of Newcastle. He died in 1956. King later won the Military Cross, and was killed in a car crash in 1962.

The very fact that Pte Cuthbertson seems to be well known in Newcastle, would seem to support this as a true story.

Now a film has been made of their exploits called “Two Men Went to War”, starring Sir Derek Jacobi.

Can you recall any similar strange stories that were around while you were serving in the forces?



Crash Course

The following appeared in the Guardian newspaper and I thought that it might hit a chord with those who own a computer – and a warning to those who do not! - Ed.

Apparently, at a recent U.S. computer exhibition, Bill Gates said that if General Motors had kept up with technology in the same way that the computer industry has, cars would cost \$25 and would get a thousand miles to the gallon.

Piqued by this, GM hit back. They said that if cars were designed along the same line as computers, for no reason whatever they would crash twice a day. Every time they repainted the lines on a road, you would have to buy a new car.

Occasionally, if you needed to perform some complicated manoeuvre such as turning left, your car would stop. You would have to go to the hard shoulder, take the engine out and re-install it.

Before the airbags could be deployed you would have to respond to a sign saying “*Are you sure?*”. Instead of warning lights for water, battery and fuel, there would be a sign saying “*You have performed an illegal act*”.

Every now and again your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in, until you simultaneously lift the door handle, turn the key and grab hold of the radio aerial.

You would need to press the start button to turn the engine off.

To err is human but to really foul things up requires a computer.



JANUARY PUB LUNCH

Tuesday, 14th at 12 noon for 12.30 at the Coach & Horses, Lubenham.

For those newer members who have not yet attended one of these events and would like to come, just add your name to the list at the next meeting. The cost is entirely up to you, as you make your own choice from the menu and pay at the bar before leaving. If you wish to bring a guest, he or she will also be made very welcome.

CAN YOU HELP?

Our Secretary has received an appeal from a Mr. A. J. Ruddy, at the Leicester Mercury, for anyone who may have served with the Home Guard from 1940 – 44 or when it was reformed in 1952-56.

He is researching a book which the Leicester Mercury is hoping to publish about this body of men.

He does not believe that TV's Dad's Army does justice to the important role that the Home Guard had during the war and would like to redress the balance so that future generations will know the true nature of their roll.

He points out that those concerned would be well into their eighties by now and this may well be the last chance to interview them.

He requests the names and telephone numbers or addresses of former Home Guards who may be able to help. Can you help, or do you know anyone who can? Please let Betty Ramsay or the Editor know.




Diary

Reminders for January & some other dates to keep free

- 2 Jan Branch Committee
- 8 Jan Branch Meeting
- 14 Jan Pub Lunch—details opposite
- 25 Jan County Annual Conference @ Wigston
- 6 Feb Branch Committee
- 12 Feb Branch Meeting & Buffet
- 20 Mar 80th Anniversary of Branch formation
- 21 Mar Branch 80th Anniversary Dinner
- 29 Mar Coffee Morning—Harborough Theatre
- 4 Apr RNA Spring Dance
- 3 Oct Autumn Dinner (to be confirmed)
- 17 Oct RNA Trafalgar Day Dinner
- 25 Oct Coffee Morning—Harborough Theatre
- 8 Nov Remembrance Concert—Baptist Church
- 12 Nov Branch AGM

Meetings	
Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the <u>downstairs</u> Function Room, Conservative Club Building, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.	
The next meeting is on 8th January and will be followed by a Quiz.	
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The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting	




The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch

Over **75** Years of Caring



Founded in 1923

In Touch

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