

## We will remember them

To all whom we have lost this month. Our sincere condolences to family and friends.  
Romsey Mountbatten Branch member Peter Newton passed away on 9th March aged 101yrs.  
He was one of the first soldiers to land on Sword Beach on D Day.



*Our mission is to safeguard the welfare, interests, and memory of those who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces*



## Our rapidly changing world

**O**n 28th February 2026 the Middle East was plunged into conflict when the USA and Israeli forces attacked targets in Iran. Their reasoning was that Iran is a threat to world peace. There is some merit in this in view of Iran supporting a number of proxy organisations such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis. Iran supplies military training, weaponry and finances to these proxy organisations and directs them to destabilise the areas in which they operate. Their efforts are largely covert at tactical level but at strategic regional level Iran is not averse to verbally supporting them.

The Iranian regime is not popular with all the citizens of Iran and in recent months Iranian citizens have protested vigorously against their own regime in the streets of Teheran and other cities. The Iranian government acted very violently to the protest marches and the armed forces of the Iranian regime opened fire and killed many thousands of its own citizens. This may well have been a catalyst for the USA to launch their attacks. In the last month Pakistan has declared war on Afghanistan and commenced with aerial bombing of targets in Kabul and other places. This conflict is ongoing. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan border on Iran and one wonders what the significance is. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine also continued unabated. The USA and Israel have attacked and destroyed thousands of military targets inside Iran. The Iranians have retaliated by firing missiles and launching drone attacks on a variety of military and civilian targets in most of the countries in the Middle East, targeting the many US bases in the region as well as civilian targets such as international airports, hotels and more. This has caused great concern amongst the approximate number of 250,000 British citizens as well as the citizens of other countries who live and work in the Middle East. More recently the Iranians have fired ballistic missiles at our military base on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia. This has a direct impact on the world itself as there are many countries that are directly affected.

Much of the world's supply of oil and gas comes from the Middle East. The Straits of Hormuz is a bottleneck where ships travel in and out of the Persian Gulf to distribute oil and gas to the rest of the world. Crucially 40% of China's oil and gas flows through the Strait of Hormuz. The adverse impact of this on China is immense as it affects their economy directly. Many of the world's commodities of every day life are based on oil byproducts. Much reduced oil supplies affect everything, not just vehicle fuel products. China has been supplying weapons and components to Iran for many years. Their missile systems have mainly Chinese technology and components which were supplied in order for China to have good access to Middle East oil. This is why this conflict is dangerous for the world. One mentions this state of global affairs as it directly impacts on us at home in the UK. The question is simple. Can we protect our own interests at home and abroad (Great Britain has strategically important sovereign territory in many parts of the world). We have military bases or a presence in the Middle East but also on the Chagos Islands, in Brunei, Belize, Kenya, the Falkland Islands, Nepal and Cyprus and elsewhere. These outposts are crucial for force projection purposes and for protecting our overseas interests. We cannot afford to not have them, if we want to be an influential partner in global trade and defence, and more importantly survive as a nation in our own right. Just as important is the task of the Royal British Legion. We support our armed forces and our veterans. The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force are deployed in a role that requires them to defend our sovereign territory and our citizens in the area. Are we in a position to support them in the coming days? DW



**2 April 1951. The Glosters battle in Korea.**  
**16 April 1973. Military coup in Afghanistan forms new republic.**  
**18 April 1983. Hizbollah suicide bomber blows himself up at the American Embassy in Beirut. Over 60 people killed.**

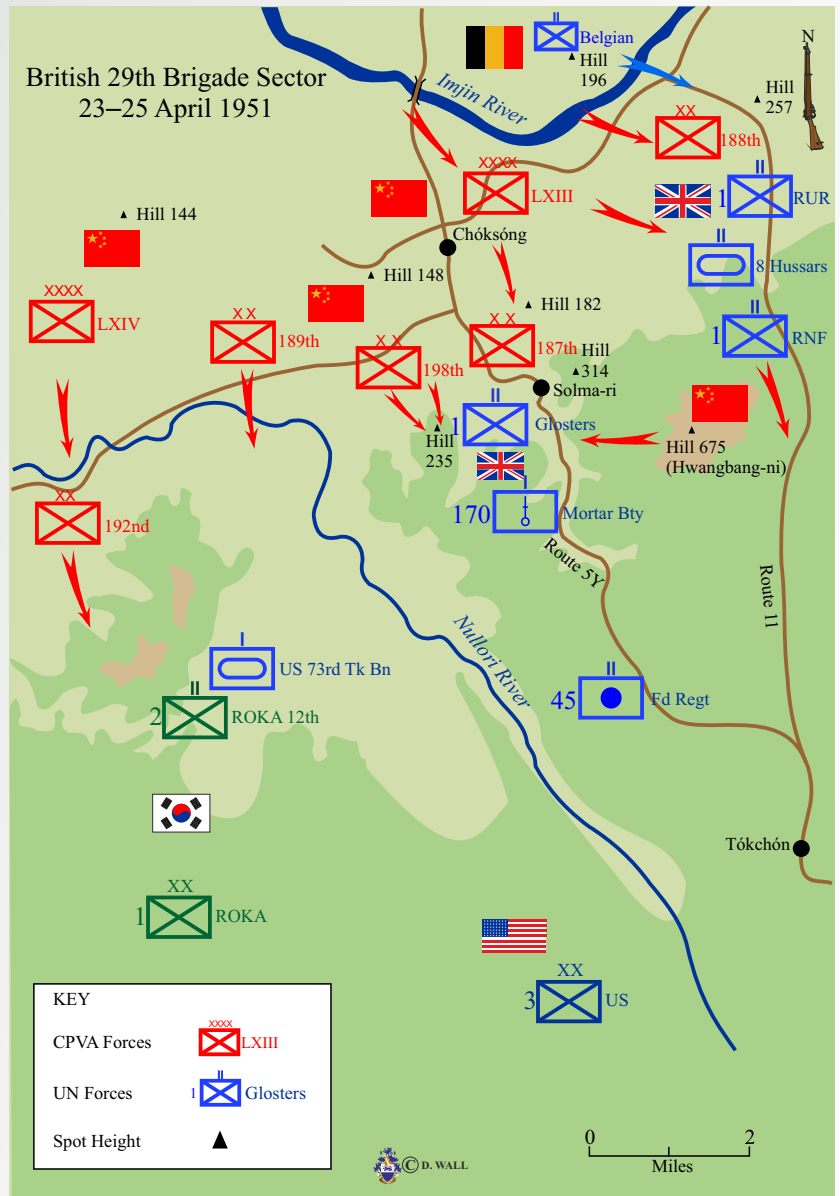


# The Glosters on the Imjin River April 1951

2nd April 1951. The 29th Infantry Brigade was placed under command of the 3rd US Infantry Division, 1 US Corps and were deployed along the Imjin River which was quite shallow at that time of year. A Chinese attack was imminent and the Brigade deployed the 1st Glosters to the west of its area of operations. The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (RNF) were deployed as the central battalion and a Belgian infantry battalion was deployed as the eastern battalion and were situated on the north bank of the Imjin River. The 1st Royal Ulster Regiment (1RUR) was deployed in depth. The brigade was supported by the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars (8KRIH) an armoured regiment equipped with Centurion tanks and the 45th Regiment Royal Artillery (RA) with the 170th Mortar Battery which was split in its deployments to the rear of the 1RNF position and also with the Belgian battalion. This position was intended as a temporary position for a forthcoming advance on the enemy and therefore no minefields or barbed wire fencing were laid out.

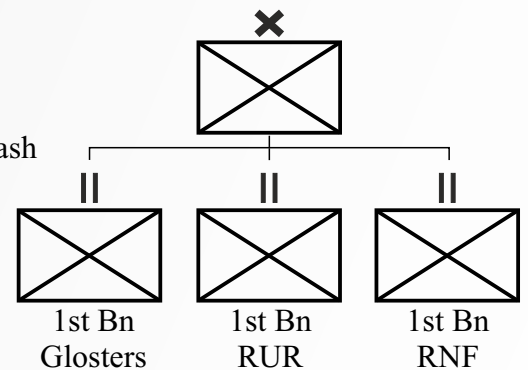
On 22nd April patrols of the Glosters made contact with the enemy north of the Imjin River and an aerial reconnaissance was conducted over the enemy dispositions. The air recce confirmed that a large force of the enemy was moving forward in large numbers. As dusk fell the enemy were on the banks of the Imjin River and came under artillery fire from 45 Regt RA. The enemy closed ranks at approximately 21h30 and began to cross the river in strength. As they did this the enemy conducted a heavy artillery and mortar bombardment of the British positions and at about midnight advanced on all three British battalion positions. By now the Belgian battalion and 1RNF had withdrawn from their original positions, being covered by 1RUR. Fighting continued throughout the next day and by midnight on the 23rd / 24th April the Glosters position was completely surrounded. As the fighting continued the battalion suffered very heavy casualties and was forced to withdraw onto a single hill in defensive positions. Allied armour and infantry was deployed forward but could not get close enough to be effective. Air strikes were called in but had minimal effect on the Chinese forces as there were so many of them. On the night of the 24th / 25th the RNF, 8KRIH and the Belgians were able to break out and complete a full withdrawal but suffered heavy casualties in the process, leaving the 1st Glosters totally surrounded.

In the morning the Glosters battalion commander ordered his company commanders to fight their way out independently. All three companies failed to break out except for a small element of D Coy and in total only 39 men made it out to safety. DW



29 Infantry Brigade flash

## 29th Infantry Brigade





## New Milton & District Branch Standard dedication ceremony 1st March 2026

This special ceremony to dedicate the new Standard and to officially decommission the old Standard, took place at St. Magdalene Church in the Town on Saturday 1st March. The event was attended by our Vicar, local dignitaries, and proud members of the Legion. Everyone present felt honored to witness this meaningful occasion. New Milton & District Branch was formed in 1928, our first Standard was recorded in 1930. The significance of the RBL Standard holds deep meaning for all of us, serving as a rallying point and a symbol, inspiring all of us to join together with unity, resolution and pride. We are very grateful to the lady standing to the right of the Standard Bearer in both photos for her kindness and generosity in making our new Standard possible.

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The Significance of the RBL Standard. The RBL Standard holds deep meaning for all members and branches. It serves as a rallying point and a symbol, inspiring everyone to march together with pride. Lee Fleming Branch Chairman



## Civil Defence during World War Two

The Civil Defence Service was established by the Home Office in 1935 just before the war started. It consisted of volunteers from the community and began life as the Air Raid Precautions (ARP). The name was changed to Civil defence in 1941. It included the ARP Wardens Service as well as firemen of the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) and later the National Fire Service (NFS). Also included were the Fire Guard, rescue, first aid post and stretcher parties. Nearly 2 million people served in Civil Defence and nearly 2,400 lost their lives to enemy action. Each local authority was responsible for Civil Defence and Kingsclere was no exception. The local Civil defence organisation was divided into sections and had Report and Control centres were established to control Civil Defence activities. Wardens were responsible for local reconnaissance and reporting, and leadership, organisation, guidance and control of the general public. Wardens would also advise survivors of the locations of rest and food centres, and other welfare facilities. Rescue Parties assessed and entered damaged buildings during air raids and retrieve injured or dead people. They also turned off gas, electricity and water supplies in damaged buildings.



First aid parties provided on the spot medical assistance. More serious injuries were taken to first aid posts by stretcher parties and to local hospitals by ambulance personnel. Gas Decontamination Teams dealt with possible gas attacks and decontaminated buildings, roads, rail and other material that were contaminated.

Welfare teams supported injured and people bombed out of their homes by finding suitable accommodation, issuing new documentation (ration books, identity cards) and money to buy food. Fire Guards were responsible for a designated area and monitored the fall of incendiary bombs and pass on news of any fires that had broken out to the NFS. The Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) aided in ARP and observer duties as well as running and operating the mobile canteens and rest centres. DW





## Headstone unveiling in Gosport John Henry Gilbert MM Royal Scots Fusiliers



A Gosport family asked for assistance for a headstone unveiling for John Henry Gilbert M.M. Jack as he was known served in the Army from 1909 until 1931. He served in the Royal Scots Fusiliers and was based in St George's Barracks in Gosport at the outbreak of WW1. He landed in France on 23rd Aug 1914 as part of the British Expeditionary Forces, becoming one of the

Old Contemptibles. He was mentioned in despatches during one of the battles of Ypres and was also awarded the Military Medal during the 1st Battle of the Somme. Jack was wounded 3 times, twice being shot, hit by shrapnel and lastly gassed in the closing months of the war.

Four RBL Standards paraded on the 21st March 2026 to help honour Jack. Gosport and Alverstoke branch standard was carried by Ross Nicoll, Lee On The Solent branch standard was carried by David Atkinson, Portsmouth South Branch standard was carried by Nick Checketts and Havant Branch standard was carried by David Barton. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the Regimental museum. Ross Nicoll



## Remembering 550808 Pte Relf Fiddler 5th Bn Royal Sussex Regt

Private Relf Herbert Fiddler. 5th Bn Royal Sussex Regt. Died 29/10/1942. Aged 26. Son of Sidney and Elsie Fiddler; husband of Kathleen Dolly Fiddler, of Kingsclere, Hants. Commemorated at Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Number of casualties: 11869. Cemetery/memorial reference: Column 62. He served with the 5th Bn (Cinque Ports) Royal Sussex Regiment under command of 133 Infantry Brigade of 44th Home Counties Division. The Brigade saw action with the British Expeditionary Force in France having deployed on 9th April 1940. The Brigade withdrew to Dunkirk and were evacuated on 30 May 1940. The 5th Royal Sussex Regiment suffered 354 casualties (almost half their strength).

In May 1942 133 Brigade deployed to North Africa under command of 44th Division and saw action in the Battle of Alam el Halfa. The Brigade saw action with 10th Armoured Division at the Second Battle of El Alamein from 23 October – 11 November 1942. It was during the Second Battle for El Alamein that Relf Fiddler was killed in action. See the red star on the map. After El Alamein 133 Brigade's battalions were posted away and 133rd Brigade was officially disbanded on 15 January 1943. DW





## County Training Courses

Please be advised that the following training is now programmed in Hampshire but is accessible to neighbouring Counties:

### Secretary's Course

The next secretaries course is scheduled for Saturday 11th April (10am-4pm) at Andover RBL Club. This course is now available for booking/enrollment on Discover. Whilst this course is primarily for Secretaries, we encourage Branch Chairs to attend also. Feedback from Chairmen who attended previous courses with their secretary is that they found it beneficial to improve understanding of the role but also to build that working relationship that is essential for effective branch management

### Branch Management - In-Person Course

Normally the in-person course is a one day course on a weekend. Following feedback that this is not helpful for those that work, the course has been adapted for delivery on Teams over 2 x 2hr evening sessions. Our next online course will be run on 21st and 22nd April (6.30 - 8.30pm). L&D have received the details and I expect the enrollment to be available on Discover in the coming days.

This is an opportunity for Branch Chairs in particular, to complete their essential management training but note that the e-learning introduction to Branch management must be completed first. This course is open to anyone but all Branch Officers and Committee members should be encouraged to complete it. Branch Chairs and Secretaries courses. Please ensure that you advertise this opportunity amongst your Branch members. Should you need any further information in relation to training generally or these courses specifically, please contact our County Training Officer John Davies at [hampshire.cto@rbl.community](mailto:hampshire.cto@rbl.community) J. Davies



## Dig for Victory

During World War Two there was always a shortage of food and other commodities. The government of the day encouraged people to “dig for victory”. Farmers were paid to cultivate more on their farms. They began to use areas on their farms that were poorer in soil growing capability and also cultivated land on hillsides in an effort to grow more food. A campaign to “Plough Now” was launched and each County appointed a War Agricultural Committee who were tasked to find as much spare and unused land as possible to grow vegetables and cereals.

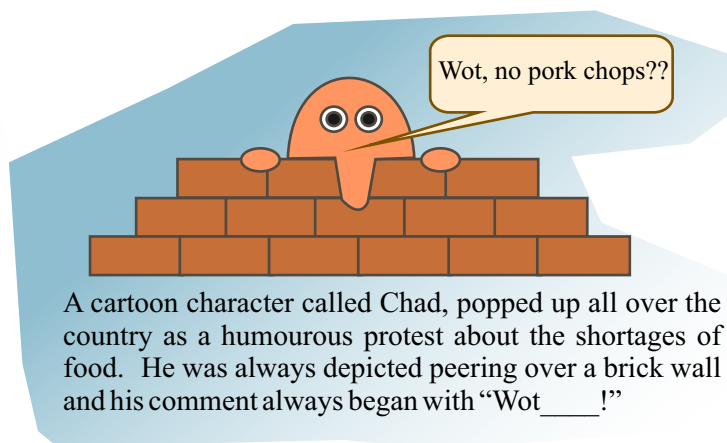
The target set by the government was to have 1,700,000 acres of land ready for food production by 1940. This target was met before the due date required. People in towns and villages were also encouraged to help. The Minister of Agriculture of the time, Rob Hudson, sent out a message to the nation to Dig for Victory in October 1939. Lawns and flower beds were converted into mini allotments to grow food. Seeds were sown and soon many people were providing their own food and some to spare in the effort to feed the nation at war. Many places were used for this purpose including tennis courts, golf courses, parks and recreational grounds, railway embankments, seaside promenades and bomb sites. Even the moat at the Tower of London was used! Allotment holders and householders produced approximately 10% of the nations food requirement. Every Sunday people gathered around their radios to listen to C.H. Middleton who broadcast useful “growing, harvesting and storing” tips for the amateur agriculturalist of the day. He was the first “celebrity gardener”. DW



## Need Help?

Statistics indicate that approximately twenty two Veterans succumb to their struggles daily. Please spread the word that there is help at hand. Someone's life may depend on it. The following phone numbers are relevant. Call one of them if you need help or just want to talk -

Veterans In Action - 01264 771658  
Veteran's Hotline - 0800 1381619  
Samaritans - 116123  
Breathing Space - 0800 838587.



A cartoon character called Chad, popped up all over the country as a humorous protest about the shortages of food. He was always depicted peering over a brick wall and his comment always began with “Wot \_\_\_!”

Postal Address for Hampshire County Committee  
Hampshire & IOW MEO (or Name), Royal British Legion, 199 Borough High St, London SE1 1AA

RBL Website: [www.BritishLegion.org.uk](http://www.BritishLegion.org.uk), County Website: <http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/hampshire>

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrb/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrb/) Facebook Email - [Hampshire.web@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.web@rbl.community)

Poppy Appeal - [www.facebook.com.poppy.HampshireRBL](http://www.facebook.com.poppy.HampshireRBL)

Contact us

It`s your newsletter!!!

If anyone has any articles that they would like published in the Newsletter then please contact the editor  
Colonel (Retd) Dudley Wall MSM (Rhodesia), MMM (SA) with any information or articles by the 20th of the month at:  
[HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com](mailto:HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com)

ALL LEGION ENQUIRIES  
(including Welfare requests) should be directed to the national call centre  
**0808 802 8080**

County Personnel

Patron Lt Gen Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL

County President Col Andrew King

County Vice President Brian C.N. Soffe

County Vice President Robert G. Knight

County Chairman Richard Moore [Hampshire.chair@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.chair@rbl.community)

County Secretary Avril Mitchell [hampshire.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:hampshire.secretary@rbl.community)

Treasurer Ges Brown [hampshire.treasurer@rbl.community](mailto:hampshire.treasurer@rbl.community)

Recruiting and Retention Officer Tim Russell [Hampshire.CRO@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.CRO@rbl.community)

Vacant [Hampshire.CCSC@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.CCSC@rbl.community)

Training Officer John Davies [Hampshire.CTO@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.CTO@rbl.community)

Youth Officer Andrew Dawes [Hampshire.CYO@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.CYO@rbl.community)

Vacant [Hampshire.clubs@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.clubs@rbl.community)

Webmaster Avril Mitchell [Hampshire.web@rbl.community](mailto:Hampshire.web@rbl.community)

Committee member Brian Mansi [Ringwood.chairman@rbl.community](mailto:Ringwood.chairman@rbl.community)

Membership Council Representative ((Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight) David Taylor [DTaylor2@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:DTaylor2@britishlegion.org.uk)

Parade Marshall: David Graham, Deputy Parade Marshall: Andy Cassidy

County Standard Bearer: Pete Pullin, [ppullin@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:ppullin@britishlegion.org.uk)

Deputy County Standard Bearer: Andy Dawes

County Youth Standard Bearer: Amelie Neal

Ceremonial Support: David Graham, Karen Graham

County Padre: Reverend David Roache

Golf Officer: Rick Bourne

Membership Engagement Officer: Holly Church, Membership Engagement Manager: None

Membership Council Representative: Gerry Nunn

Public Relations Officer: VACANT

Independent Examiners: Ges Brown, John Davies, Pat Prior, Malcolm Brunnsden and Avril Mitchell.

UK Honours Awards: County President, County M.E.O.

Committee members - David Barton, Melvyn Cole, John Davies, Paul Holyoake, Brian Mansi, Avril Mitchell, Tim Russell

County Management Board: Ges Brown, Avril Mitchell, John Davies

Conference Committee: Brian Mansi, Avril Mitchell, Melvyn Cole, Pat Prior, Nigel Thomas, Patti Cunningham

Independent Examiners - G.S. Brown and M. Davis

Cups Sub-Committee: Avril Mitchell, Pat Prior BEM QVRM. Brian Mansi

Poppy Appeal co-ordinator (South) Pat Prior BEM QVRM

Poppy Appeal Manager South Hampshire Clair Smith [csmith4@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:csmith4@britishlegion.org.uk)

Poppy Appeal manager North Hampshire Chris Hayward [chayward@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:chayward@britishlegion.org.uk)

Newsletter Editor: Dudley Wall [HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com](mailto:HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com)

**Errors and Omissions Excepted**

