

Editorial



Christmas time is fast approaching and the cards are beginning to drop on the doormat each morning. Our town centre once again looks very festive on these dark winter evenings and all the decorations give a real Christmassy feeling whenever we go shopping.

The Christmas Dinner at The Countryman, on Friday, December 7th was a festive occasion for the 26 members and guests. After a good 3-course meal each person present received a Christmas gift, each of which had been beautifully gift wrapped by Irene Blissett and John Cox. Another success for the Social Team and I pass on our thanks to them.

We bring the spirit of the season to this December In Touch with a lighthearted piece of fiction to contrast with the more informative style of the rest of another bumper issue.

So, on behalf of the Communications Team, may I wish all our members and their families a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year (maybe It Could Be You in the Lottery winners next year!!).

I have written an article and sent it to *Legion* magazine concerning our programme for the Millennium Year. I wrote of the effort of turning the Memorial Gardens into a Garden of Remembrance, and of the work that went into the production of the Books of Remembrance. Personally, I think it was a great effort and deserves some recognition. Of course, whether or not the editor accepts the story for publication is another matter; but I am keeping my fingers crossed.

Then there's the traffic. For centuries Father Christmas and me had the skies to ourselves. But now I have to dodge around satellites, keep a look out for rockets, and the aircraft are up there in flocks. There's more metal up there than in a scrap merchant's backyard. It won't be long before we need traffic lights, mark my words. And you can warn those fliers I'll sue if they ever clobber us.

Oh yes, airline pilots often spot us, it's getting quite difficult to avoid them. Of course you never hear about it. Now ask yourself, if you were an highly-trained, self-respecting pilot, would you report to your ground control that you had just seen Father Christmas and his sleigh crossing your flight party? No way! You would probably be grounded for drinking on duty. We've shaken a few of those flier-boys, I can tell you. You know, we are probably the original UFO.

I might add that quite a few policemen and late night revellers have caught sight of us in the past, but the former keep it to themselves for the same reasons as the pilots, and the latter usually swear off drink for life.

Other reindeer? What other reindeer? Oh, you mean Dancer and Prancer and Nixon and Dixon, that motley crew. They're just a figment of some lyric writer's fevered brain. In fact, I think I'll sue that guy for intimating that I'm getting past it and need help.

Yes I know he mentioned me in his lyrics too, I'm definitely going to sue him for that. I mean, who wants to be famous on account of his big, red, shiny nose? I think my nose is rather pretty, don't you? Besides, let's face it, even your nose would be red if you had to gad about the sky on cold winter Christmas Eves. Why, even Father Christmas has got a large red nose, but no-one ever remarks on that. Though, mind



you, and this is not for publication, his red nose is caused by other things. It is the Christmas spirit that is captured in all those bottles, and all the glasses of port and wine that the kiddies leave out for him on our round. He never passes one by.

Do you know, I've seen effigies of myself with a red light bulb where my nose should be. Bally cheek. And my handsome antlers (they are rather magnificent, aren't they) used to hang hats and coats. I think I really will sue that writer. I couldn't warm to him even if I was being cremated next to him.

No I can't agree that his song made the kiddies love me. They love me because I'm handsome-looking, yet cuddly and loveable with it, wouldn't you say. No? Oh well, there's no accounting for taste. Besides it's all cupboard love--just let me forget to call on them one year and then see how much they love me.

Even modern transport makes my job harder. A tiny tot writes to us, say, from Aberdeen; then we discover that he will actually be spending Christmas with grandma in Southampton. Oh, the problems it causes. Still, when a little darling doesn't get exactly what he or she ordered for Christmas, it's mum and dad who get the blame, not us. Well it's their fault, they should stay at home for Christmas and then we would all know where we are.

Well I really must be going as Christmas is drawing ever nearer. It was nice meeting you, and remember: Watch what you write, or I might have to sue you.

Merry Christmas.





An Interview

by Bob England

When I was just a cub reporter, I was dispatched to the far north of Norway to conduct an interview at the now famous Christmas Village. As I set foot in the village the first thing I saw was a great lumbering reindeer dashing towards me across the snow. He grabbed the microphone from my hand, and transcribed here is exactly what went into my tape recorder.

Hi there. Are you looking for me? No, no, it must be me you want. At last some editor has had the good sense to send an interviewer to the brains of the department. Many of you lot come to talk to the boss, Father Christmas that is, but always ignore me.

Right, you're in luck, you've found me. Now lets start with my correct name. It's Rangifer Tarandus Christimus. I bet you didn't know that? Posh ain't it? It's Latin, you know, and sets me apart from my common cousins the Red Deer and Caribou and that common crowd. Mind you, I must admit, I added the Christimus bit on myself, as I consider I really am a one-off. But you can call me Rudolph. No, make that Rudi as I think I am going to like you.

Yes like I said, I'm the real brains behind this outfit. After all, without the one-deer power sleigh the old man wouldn't get very far, would he?

I have to do all the navigating around the world; not easy you know on a dark night. Father Christmas just sits on his sleigh, ho-ho-ho-ing every now and again, and throwing the parcels down the chimneys as I give the command "Parcels away". Remember, I have to allow for cross-winds, poor visibility and all that. Oh yes, it's quite a responsible job.

Maps? No I don't use maps; I just follow my nose, it's always out there in front you know. (A pause on the tape). That was a joke you know. Oh well, never mind. Besides, how could I carry maps? I haven't any pockets, have I, I'm a reindeer, you know, not a bally kangaroo.

Here, that would make a good Christmas cracker joke: What is the difference between a reindeer and a kangaroo? No? Well perhaps not, though mind you, it's well up to the standard of those elves who think them up in the cracker workshop. Better than most in fact, and they get a bonus for thinking them up. Scandalous really.

But let's get back to important things--me. I'm exploited Not only is the population expanding with housing estates popping up like mushrooms, but the merchandise is changing. For years the kiddies were quite happy to receive a box of soldiers, a doll or wooden building bricks. But no more, oh no. Nowadays they demand computers, heavy things to cart around you know, construction sets that I swear have actual girders in them, radios sets, DVD players, and anything so long as its big and expensive. That sleigh gets heavier to pull every year, but do I get any more thanks? Not likely; I'm just looked upon as the skivvy around here, that's me.



A Message from the Chairman

MY HOPES FOR THE YEAR
2002-2003

1. I would like to see more members involved in the branch activities, taking part and helping to run them.
2. I hope more members will relate some of their experiences and towards that I am introducing a quarterly prize for the best story used in the "In Touch".
3. I wish the Branch to become more involved with young people and to find ways in which we can work with the schools and the Cadet units to increase awareness of what the Legion is and why it exists. Opportunities may arise from
 - a. the school syllabus
 - b. Legion essay competitions
 - c. Lord Lieutenants' Cadet Competition
4. I would like the branch members to vote on whether or not to move the branch meeting nights in the year 2003-2004. My thoughts are towards the first or third Wednesday or Thursday of a month if a meeting room was available.
5. I would like see more members wearing their Legion badges not only at meetings but during normal day to day activities as some people still don't seem to know that we have a branch in Harborough.
6. I would like the Social Team to consider as

future days out, visits to places such as garden centres or other venues which might appeal more than just those of a military type. It is important to cater for those without cars to enable them to get stuff like plants, etc. that they wouldn't normally be able to.

7. I would like to encourage more members to take part in the Poppy Appeal and to ensure that Andrew Marriott gets all the support that he deserves with this fine tradition in the town.
8. I would like also to ensure that the Welfare Team is fully supported and that if anyone knows of a member of the ex-service community in need of help that the Team is informed quickly.

These are not in order of importance as they all deserve to be thought about and in the case of the Poppy Appeal, Welfare and Social Teams all members should be actively supporting them without being pressured. Ω



Branch News

SUNDAY MEETINGS

Three monthly meetings on Sunday afternoons are to be held early next year. These would be primarily social occasions to allow those who cannot attend on Wednesday evenings to meet other members and so avoid "being left out of things". More details next month—Watch this space!

NEW BRANCH NUMBER

We used to be AB031 now we are BR0106 . This will appear on your next Membership Card.



What a CFO does for a living...

By Moira Watson

The roles of the County Field Officer are very straight forward in principle.

Firstly, and most importantly, my task is to look after the welfare of the ex Services personnel in the three counties I cover – Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire. This is done via the network of caseworkers provided by every branch in that area, and who are my eyes and ears. Occasionally someone does ring the office asking for help, and I pass the request to a caseworker for him or her to pay a home visit. It is often the case that the original request is only the tip of the iceberg.

Once I receive the paperwork required, it is my task to study the information and look for the following:

- Does the applicant qualify for assistance under the rules for Membership of the Royal British Legion? The client does not have to be a member, but they should fulfil the qualifying criteria.
- Are they receiving the full State Benefits they are entitled to? And if not which applications should be made?
- Which previous employment has the client undertaken? Although not obvious at first, this opens doors into the various occupational charities who hold money I can access for any assistance which the client may need. Once I can identify any and every charity, I write letters to all of them asking for contributions or annuities.
- Is there anything else in the Caseworker's Report that could suggest further help ie would the

client benefit from a break at one of our Homes or a holiday?

The second thing I have responsibility for is the Poppy Appeal. This year I am running a launch for the Poppy Appeal locally and trying to raise awareness of the need for the collection. I have a CD to pass on to radio stations and television. I try to get as much media interest in anything and everything the Branches are doing, if I know what they are! I also pass on information from the Poppy Appeal HQ at Maidstone and offer support to the Poppy Appeal Organisers, many of whom are not members of The Royal British Legion but who help us every year.

There are lots of other small tasks which crop up from time to time which I am asked to do. I visit schools, youth organisations such as the Brownies and Guides, retirement clubs and anyone who invites me! I attend meetings which involve community groups to make them aware of our existence and what we can do to help ex Service personnel in need, and mention the local Branches and Clubs at the same time.

It is a very varied and busy job and on the whole very worthwhile. One can begin to despair of the human race, but being able to help in cases of real need makes it all worth while.

Moi Watson attended the October branch meeting and was asked to speak briefly about her role and to answer members' questions. She also agreed to write a piece for In Touch for the benefit of members who were not at the meeting.

It is interesting to contrast the emphasis of her welfare work with that of our branch welfare officer most of whose cases involve giving advice and moral support rather than seeking Legion financial help.



These pictures are from photographs taken on 11th November 2001 of the Garden of Remembrance and the Remembrance Sunday Parade



Thanks to Robert Brewer for the Photographs



December Branch Meeting

An improved arrangement of the 'Top Table' and members' seating and a signing-in table near the door manned by a 'Welcomer' (Con Halsall) were innovations introduced by new Chairman, Mark Hudson. Some of his other ideas and wishes for the coming year are given here in "A Message from the Chairman" on pages 2&3.

POPPY APPEAL

It has been the practice to seek members' approval for an annual donation to the Poppy Appeal from Branch funds but the amount was decided without knowing how much of it was to cover the cost of wreaths, crosses, etc. used by the Branch. This year this cost was just over £400 and a cheque for that amount had already been paid. Members were asked to approve a separate donation and £600 was agreed. The total of the two amounts is about the same as last year's contribution and brings the Market Harborough Poppy Appeal total to just over £13,800.

Tom & Betty Jeacock were warmly applauded for achieving this magnificent total and in difficult circumstances.

They in turn wish to thank all members and non-members who helped during the Poppy Appeal period. It was a wonderful result and a credit to everyone involved. Tom also reminds us that the Poppy Appeal lasts throughout the year and hopes that the Branch will organise more fundraising events such as the successful Remembrance Concert. *Continued at foot of page 5*



The Man who Torpedoed the Scharnhorst

by Bill Cotton

The destroyers Ardent and Acasta were escorting the aircraft carrier Glorious from Norway to Scapa Flow when they were sighted by the enemy ships the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. In the ensuing engagement the Glorious and Ardent were quickly sunk. The captain of the Acasta decided to fight it out.

Leading Seaman Nick Carter's action station was manning the torpedo tubes. After most of the crew had been killed, he managed to fire a torpedo which hit the Scharnhorst which forced it and the Gneisenau to retire.

The Acasta also sunk and Leading Seaman Carter spent three days adrift on a raft in the North Sea. But he survived to tell the tale.

No one would believe his claim that a torpedo he had fired had actually damaged the Scharnhorst and I understand that it was not until the late 50s that his story of the gallant fight put up by the Acasta was finally believed. Ω

Continued from page 4

TRADITION

Does something done for the second time make it a tradition? If so, following the business part of the December branch meeting with pre-Christmas punch & hot mince pies has become traditional. Bill Farnsworth, thanks for your Damson & Raisin, the basis of the secret recipe. Kitchen & servery staff Jan & Les Sewell, Joan & Tom Ashmore, thank you, too. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves!



The Royal Charter

By Tom Ashmore

When I read in the last issue of *Legion* magazine the article about proposed changes, I realised that I did not know what a Royal Charter is. My dictionary says it is a document issued by the sovereign, granting privileges and recognising rights to those to whom it is issued. The most famous in British history is the Magna Carta issued in 1215 by King John. King George V granted the British Legion its charter 710 years later. As circumstances have changed over the years the Legion has asked for amendments to be made to our charter. In each case, however small or detailed the proposed change is, a petition is submitted to the Privy Council which acts on behalf of the sovereign in these matters.

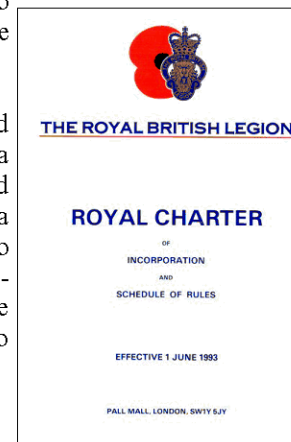
The current version of the Charter was issued in 1993. Like its predecessors (and the Magna Carta), it is a lengthy, detailed, legally phrased document (but fortunately not in Latin!), with a rigid structure. A new version better suited to current or likely future conditions is to be submitted to the 2002 Annual Conference (the Charter specifies that proposals for changes to it must be approved at the Annual Conference).

The main features of the new version are

1. It retains the basic objectives of earlier versions
2. It is written in plain English
3. It more clearly separates the purposes and powers of the Legion (i.e. why it exists and what it is) from how it operates (i.e. the rules by which it is governed).
4. This separation satisfies the Privy Council's wish to control only the 'why and what', leaving the Legion (i.e. the Members) to control the 'how'. Members exercise this control by
 - a. electing the National Executive Council

- b. electing delegates to Annual Conference.
5. There is a distinction between
 - a. Rules which are basic to how the Legion operates and would be within the jurisdiction of Annual Conference.
 - b. Regulations which are procedures laid down for the day to day administration of the Legion. These would be under the control of the NEC and would allow necessary administrative changes to be made quickly as recommended by the Charity Commission.

As mentioned in the *Legion* a document which allows a detailed comparison to be made between the existing and proposed versions has been sent to Branches



for discussion so as to obtain the views of the membership as a whole. This Branch has been unable to find a way to do this with the 59 page document and in the short time allowed, so "your voice" did not "count in the Royal Charter debate".

My personal view is that confusion and possibly suspicion has been caused by attempting to bring about at the same time, the highly desirable overhaul of two aspects of how the Legion is run and controlled: the Royal Charter and the Annual Conference. Even the *Legion* article does not make clear that members' views were

also being sought on a number of proposed changes affecting the Annual Conference. Until these are introduced it seems to me that the frustration echoed by the writers of the Letters on page 17 of the same issue of the *Legion* will continue.

I hope my pessimism is ill founded and that delegates at the Annual Conference will accept that the proposals are in the best interest of the Legion, their Branches and their own. Ω



Notices

BRANCH COMMITTEE MEETINGS

To reduce the delay in reporting to a Branch meeting matters arising from Committee, in future each monthly Committee meeting will be held on the **Thursday** prior to the corresponding Branch meeting.

JANUARY PUB LUNCH

For the first time we are using the Coach & Horses at Lubenham which has built a very good reputation under its new landlord & landlady for its good value-for-money fare. Please put your name on the list at the January branch meeting or phone Tom Ashmore on MH 433108 before 10th January. Meet at the pub at 12 for 12.30. Say if you need or can offer a lift.

COFFEE MORNING

This is the usual call for items for the Raffle, Cake, Tombola, Bric-a-Brac & Book stalls and for **HELPERS** on the day. See the Clip Board at the January meeting and this column in next month's issue.

POPPY RACE DAY

As mentioned in *Legion* magazine, Doncaster Race Course hosts a race day in aid of the Poppy Appeal on 30th June. If there is sufficient interest, the Social Team will organise a coach trip. More details later but if you would go let a Team member know ASAP.

ROYAL JUBILEE CONCERT

As we go to press we have just heard that Quorn Branch are organising another of their music, picnic and fireworks spectaculars. More details later but please note the date.



Diary

Reminders for January with some other dates to keep free (see also page 16)

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 3 Jan | Branch Committee Meeting |
| 9 Jan | Branch meeting |
| 15 Jan | Pub Lunch - Coach & Horses, Lubenham |
| 2 Feb | Coffee morning—Harborough Theatre |
| 13 Feb | Branch meeting + Buffet |
| 22 Mar | Birthday Dinner—venue to be announced |
| 27 Mar | Jaguar visit (with Photo Soc.)—fully booked |
| 16 Apr | Pub Lunch—provisional |
| 2 Jun | County Standard Bearers' Service -?? |
| 15 Jun | Coffee Morning— Harborough Theatre |
| 18 Jun | Pub Lunch—provisional |
| 30 Jun | Poppy Race Day—Doncaster |
| 13 Jul | Royal Jubilee Concert— Beaumanor Hall |
| 18 Oct | Annual Dinner—venue to be confirmed |
| 2 Nov | Remembrance Concert -to be confirmed |

Meetings

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

The next meeting is on 9th January and will be followed by an informal social event.

The Branch Committee meets on the **Thursday prior to the Branch Meeting** at 7.30 pm in the upstairs lounge, Conservative Club Building.



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch

(BR0106)



Founded in 1923

In Touch

Issue 39

December 2001

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