

OBITUARY



OBITUARY - JOHN RAYMOND BARNETT CRISFORD CBE (2018)

As members are aware, John died in May, just before our May newsletter was published. In my naive way, I thought that there would be some mention of him in the quarterly "Legion" magazine, but not so far, and I felt that our newsletter was incomplete without recognition of his achievements.

Born in 1940, John always used to joke that he was born in Jerusalem, with the initials 'JC' - 'so watch your step'! Educated at The Duke of York's Royal Military School, he was an accomplished musician, and his name is now on the honours board at The Royal Military School of Music. Having learned to play the euphonium at school, he decided to join the Army in that capacity, passed audition, and said that he had 'signed on the dotted line' AND arrived at Combermere Barracks in Windsor before realising that for Household Cavalry ceremonial duties, he would have to learn to ride a horse! He spent and enjoyed twelve years as a horseman/musician in the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues), subsequently transferring to the Royal Army Pay Corps, where he spent most of his Army career, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant after eight years. During this time, he was posted to BAOR, enjoying life in Germany; subsequently, seconded to Kuwait, working with a tri-service team advising the Kuwaiti government; and finally, to Larkhill. His service amounted to 22 years in Army uniform.

Having left the Army in 1981, John became Principal Housing Benefit Officer in Nottingham, remaining in this rôle for eight years. Then he 'came down to earth', and joined a flooring company as a flooring surveyor, which lasted until the company went into liquidation. In 1997, he and Jean moved from Nottingham to Hunstanton, where he worked part time in Victoria Wine, and part time as a postman – many members remembered him in this job, from which he retired in late 2005. He enjoyed exploring rural Norfolk (apart from being attacked by George the goose in Stanhoe) whilst delivering mail (and recruiting members to the Legion!). He also formed, and of course played in the Hunstanton Concert Band, as well as in the Fakenham Town Band.

Following his retirement from full time work, he gained an Open University BSc (Hons) in Social Sciences in 2006. John's favourite sport was Rugby Union: he was a referee for Notts, Lincs and Derbys RFU, and also officiated at many national first class clubs as a national touch-judge.

A member of The Royal British Legion since 1983, John had made his mark and became an experienced Legion committee officer, as his time in the Legion included serving as branch committee officer, chairman of Hunstanton branch, group secretary, county representative, county recruiting officer, and county treasurer. He joined Sedgeford branch when it was struggling for survival, with few members attending branch meetings, and all the elderly branch committee officers wishing to stand down. Enrolling our current chairman, Terry, and myself, he set about reviving the branch, and recruiting more members. With his willingness to accept proposals for monthly lunches instead of formal meetings, and for the publication of a branch newsletter, the branch flourished under his influence. John was appointed National Vice Chairman of the Legion in May 2010, and subsequently National Chairman in 2013, retiring from that position in 2016, and kindly taking over as branch treasurer from me. The annual conference, when he handed over the National Chairmanship to the current incumbent, saw him on the Eastbourne bandstand, conducting the Band of the Household Cavalry playing The Royal British Legion March - a wonderful tribute to him.

John and Jean lived in the same street in Didcot, were married in 1967, and have two lovely and loving daughters living in Nottinghamshire: Andrea (like Jean, a member of Sedgeford branch) and Alexa. They both read tributes to their father at his funeral service, Andrea keeping the congregation giggling with her reminiscences of John, who had obviously been a huge influence on them both. He taught his girls to ride bikes, to swim, and to ride horses, along with a lot about music; and also the rules of rugby, accompanied by phrases like "You're missing a good game, ref!!" RIP, JC !

With grateful thanks to John's family