



**RBL** ROYAL  
BRITISH  
LEGION



**RUSHDEN**

Website <https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/rushden/>



## RBL RUSHDEN BRANCH NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2025

**THE FALL OF SINGAPORE** By Branch Member & Former Paratrooper Mick Homer



**As VJ Day approaches (15<sup>th</sup> August), I thought I would write a few notes on a recent visit to Singapore.**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1942, a pivotal moment in World War 2 unfolded as British-held Singapore fell to the Japanese Imperial Army. Often described as “the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history,” (Churchill’s words!) this sent shock waves across the British Empire.

Mick and Sue Homer at The Long Bar

Singapore had long been regarded as an impregnable fortress strategically located and heavily defended. Yet, in just over a week, the Japanese Army swept down the Malay Peninsula with startling precision; the invaders came not from the sea as anticipated, but through the jungles of Malaya, rendering many of the coastal defences useless.

By mid- February, Japanese forces had crossed the Johor Strait and were engaged in fierce street battles. British Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, faced with dwindling water supplies, civilian casualties, and no viable reinforcements, made the painful decision to surrender. Over 80,000 Allied troops became prisoners of war - a devastating blow.

If General Percival had not surrendered, then thousands more would have died, including innocent civilians. The Japanese army had overrun most of the island, captured the water reservoirs and surrounded the city; the British were low on ammunition, food and other necessary supplies. Some historians put the fall of Singapore down to Winston Churchill and the British Government of the day, by diverting resources from the defence of Malaya to other theatres of war, so making it easier for the Japanese army to sweep down the Malay Peninsula.

After the fall of Singapore, Changi Prison became notorious for its role as a prisoner of war camp for allied soldiers captured by the Japanese, many of these prisoners were subjected to brutal treatment and forced labour, and a significant number died from malnutrition, disease and mistreatment.

Many chapels were built by the POWs, one of which was named St George's; you can visit this site, which is also a museum, located on the Upper Changi Road N, Singapore. Sue and I visited the Changi Chapel and Museum and paid our respects to all the POWs who suffered and died at the hands of the Japanese.

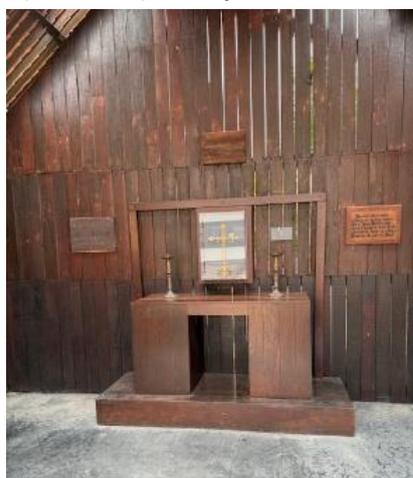
Whilst in Singapore we stayed in the famous Raffles Hotel; at the time of the invasion Raffles was an iconic symbol of British colonial luxury, which was seized by Japanese forces and transformed into their command centre, where Japanese officers directed operations across the region. I can confirm the hotel is one of the best I have stayed in; a true gem of our colonial past - Singapore Slings' highly recommended.

The war in Singapore ended with the Allied victory and liberation of the Island after the Japanese surrender. The formal surrender was signed on September 12<sup>th</sup> 1945.

In conclusion, there are many opinions of why Singapore fell so easily, with so many factors involved such as inadequate defences, strategic blunders, underestimation of the Japanese, poor communication and questionable leadership. At the end of the day, a lot of suffering was endured by so many, and I was pleased that Sue and I paid our respects, especially to those that didn't come home.



Raffles Hotel



Changi Chapel



Changi Chapel: Leaving a message



**RBL HELPLINE – 0808 802 8080 - CALL 8am to 8pm 7 DAYS A WEEK**

**COMMEMORATING  
VJ-DAY 80  
15 AUGUST 2025 RUSHDEN**

**RUSHDEN TOWN COUNCIL**  
MAKE IT BETTER

**VJ Day 80 Commemoration**

VJ Day marks the end of World War II, when Japan announced its surrender, thus bringing the war to a close. Join us as we remember the courage and sacrifice that brought an end to this devastating world war.

We are holding two events to mark this day, one at Rushden War Memorial and one at Hall Park, which will culminate with the lighting of a Beacon of Hope. Refreshments will be available at Hall Park during the evening.

Rushden War Memorial 11:00

Service  
Presentation by David Hawker  
2 minutes silence observed  
Revillee, Kohima  
Laying of wreaths and lighting of peace lantern

Hall Park, Rushden 20:00

Band and war time music  
Tributes  
Service and Prayers  
2 minutes silence observed  
Revillee, Kohima  
Lighting of Beacon of Hope and peace candles

**80 VJ DAY**  
80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION

[www.rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk)  
01933 316216 | [info@rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:info@rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk) @rushdencouncil

## SERVE COLLABORATION WITH THE RBL

Many of us have got some amazing stories to tell, whether it be our life story, a specific period or event, or even a brief story of our careers. The local charity SERVE is looking for members, and not just Veterans, who would like to tell their story by befriending a SERVE Volunteer who'll come to your home with an iPad or Tablet, and beaver away typing, whilst you tell your story. They could even upload some of those treasured photographs that would not even leave your house, visiting as many times as possible, and not just to get your story, but actually being a Befriender. All of SERVE's Befrienders are vetted formally through the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS). If any member is interested in wishing to share their story or simply wishes for a SERVE Befriender to visit them, they should contact **SERVE** on **01933 315555** and ask to be put through to the Befriending Team.

**Editor's Note:** Following our Branch meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July, four members have already come forward. For the benefit of us all, this project will not only promote the RBL and SERVE's Befriending Service, but also various aspects of life, including service in the Armed Forces.

## WHAT'S ON DURING AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2025?

3<sup>rd</sup> August – Rushden Classic Car Show at Rushden Hall Park from 11am to 4pm

9<sup>th</sup> August – Bilton Court Summer Fayre – Veterans Welcome – *more details to follow*

10<sup>th</sup> August – RBL Thurmaston Car Relay – *see page 5 overleaf*

13<sup>th</sup> August – 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain – *more details to follow*

15<sup>th</sup> August – 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory Japan (VJ) Day – *go back to page 3*

**Second Monday of every month** – 11<sup>th</sup> August 2025 – 7.30pm start. **Branch Monthly Meeting** at the Athletic Club followed by a talk from Kevin Varty called “*Dancing Bust to Bust: Joyce Grenfell’s Life and Music.*” The following month on 8<sup>th</sup> September is a Branch Social – more details to follow as soon as they are known.

**Fourth Tuesday of every month** – 26<sup>th</sup> August 2025. The Community Social & Craft Group meet at the Rushden Athletic Club on Newton Road, between 1pm and 3pm. RAFA Members Free. Guests £3/entry or £20 per year. This is open to any RBL Rushden Branch Member. For more information contact Carol on **07922 141589** or [treasurer@rafarushden.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@rafarushden.org.uk) Next meet after this month’s is on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025.

**Every Wednesday & Saturday Morning** – 30<sup>th</sup> August: 9am start. Northants Breakfast Club (**NBC**) dine at The Needle and Awl. All Veterans are welcome. Families are invited to join on the last Saturday of each month. The next meet after this month’s is on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

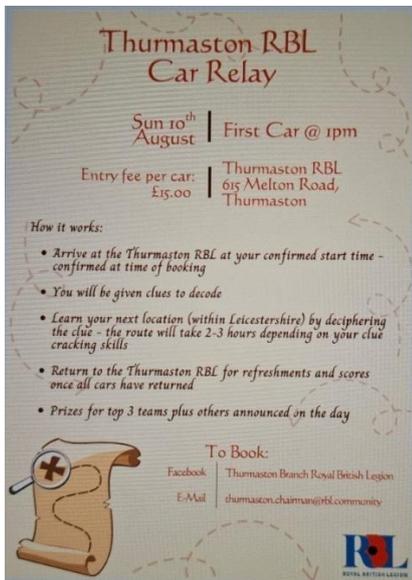
**First Thursday of every month** – 7<sup>th</sup> August: 10am to 12.30pm – **Friends of the Legion** meet at The Athletic Club, Newton Road, Rushden. Pop along for a cuppa and a chat any time between 10am and 12.30pm. The next after this month’s meet is on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

**Second Thursday of every month** - 14<sup>th</sup> August 2025 - 9am start - **NGH Breakfast Club** at Northampton General Hospital, Cliftonville, Northampton, NN1 5BD. **Eat Street** is the hospital restaurant on the main corridor through the hospital opposite the Chapel. The Breakfast Club is open to **all veterans (staff, patients and public)**. Attendees to purchase their own breakfast and drinks. The next **NGH Breakfast Club** meet after this month’s is on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

**Last Friday of every month** – 29<sup>th</sup> August 2025 – 9am start – **KGH Breakfast Club** Kettering General Hospital, Rothwell Road, Kettering, NN16 8UZ. The Basement Brassiere is located on the lower ground floor of the main hospital building. The Breakfast Club is open to **all veterans (staff, patients and public)**. Attendees to purchase their own breakfast and drinks. The next **KGH Breakfast Club** meet after this month’s is on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## RBL WELFARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

**DO YOU NEED ANY HELP, OR DO YOU KNOW A VETERAN OR RBL MEMBER WHO NEEDS HELP? IF SO, PLEASE CALL OUR BRANCH COMMUNITY COORDINATOR, PETER ARMSTRONG ON 07498 243683. REMEMBER, THE RBL IS HERE FOR YOU. IF HE CAN’T HELP, HE’LL GET YOU HELP. PLEASE BEAR IN MIND THAT EVERY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT.**



## WHY NOT TRY AND HAVE AN UNUSUAL ADVENTURE!

Members may wish to take part in the Car Relay. Teams are not to exceed 5 members, ie maximum passengers in most vehicles. A Branch Team has already been entered (The Rushdenites), but we can enter as many teams as we like.

Why not give it a go; it's something different and its fun. If you're interested, then follow the advice in how to book and please let either Jake Baker or Steve Miller know. Good Luck!

## GET READY TO SHARE SMILES AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026!

### 'MEETING FRIENDS AND SOCIALISING' SCORING HIGHLY FOR ALL AS A REASON FOR ATTENDING



National Youth Standard Bearer Rebecca Bell & National Standard Bearer Ellie Parke, both of Cookstown Branch.

Although it's nearly a year away, we'd like to take this opportunity to remind members that Annual Conference 2026 will take place on **8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of May at The Brighton Centre, Kings Road, Brighton, BN1 2GR.** Check the RBL website from time to time for up-to-date details.



Director of Membership, Ruth Efunuga – joint runner up to the Sir Clive Johnstone award, applauded by National Chair, Lynda Atkins and Director General, Mark Atkinson.



Lynda Atkins, RBL's new National Chair, Paul Harris, RBL's new National Vice Chair, all smiles and a handshake.

If you have never attended Annual Conference before, now may be the time to start planning! This Conference is open to all members and 30% said it was the first time they had attended.



Delegates, Standard Bearers and Members gather for the RBL Annual Conference 2025 at Harrogate. What is your Chair up to?

## THIS IS THE RBL'S TEN-YEAR STRATEGY AT A GLANCE – WE WORK AS ONE

THE RBL'S TEN-YEAR STRATEGY AT A GLANCE		
<b>THE VISION</b> Bringing society together to recognise, remember and support the Armed Forces community.	support and comradeship. We share knowledge and build connections. Together with a national network of charities and partners, we ensure life during and after service is filled with purpose and community.	Forces community, remembering and honouring service and offering support. We are thoughtful and focus our passion in the right way, taking ownership to ensure every action counts.
<b>THE MISSION</b> The RBL will support our Armed Forces community and ensure their unique contribution is not forgotten.	<b>Be respectful</b> – We stand with the Armed Forces community, valuing and respecting all experiences with empathy. We put people first, treating everyone with fairness and kindness, acting with integrity.	<b>Embrace change</b> – We look ahead to better understand the needs of those we serve, leading with confidence, expertise and relevance. Guided by evidence and committed to learning, we are responsive and adaptable, empowered to ensure what we do is meaningful and impactful.
<b>THE VALUES</b> <b>Stand together</b> – We stand with an ever-evolving Armed Forces community, sharing a lifelong commitment to	<b>Take pride</b> – We exist to make a positive difference to the Armed	

### MEMBERSHIP FEE INCREASE

A Motion to increase the membership fee was passed at Annual Conference 2024. As a result, the membership fee is increasing by £2 a year until 4th September 2028. Here's a few Frequently Asked Questions about the upcoming increase to membership fees.

**Question 1:** By how much is the membership fee going up?

**Answer:** The fee will increase by £2, raising the fee from £20 to £22 from 4 Sep 25.

As per the Motion passed at Annual Conference 2024, the membership fee is increasing by a further £2 a year through to 2028 as follows:

- From 4 September 2024 - £20 per year.
- From 4 September 2025 - £22 per year
- From 4 September 2026 - £24 per year
- From 4 September 2027 - £26 per year
- From 4 September 2028 - £28 per year

**Question 2:** The increase was meant to be from October so why is it from September?

**Answer:** To provide a good member renewal experience, it is critical that we do this work well and get it right. Therefore, we will closely monitor a smaller number of members who renew in September to ensure the process runs smoothly ahead of October, when most of our members renew. The Board of Trustees discussed the implementation date at their post-Conference meeting and agreed that the date change from October to September was the best option to ensure the process was well tested and ensured a good renewal experience.

**Question 3:** Will new members joining before 4th September 2025 pay £20 or £22?

**Answer:** Those joining before 4th September 2025 will pay £20. Those joining on or after 4th September will pay £22.

**Question 4:** I am already charged more than the current £20 a year – why is this?

**Answer:** Our branches may charge their members a branch administration fee or a joining fee to support their administrative costs associated with engaging and recruiting members. These branch fees are collected alongside the membership fee and returned to the branch.

**Question 5:** What happens after 2028?

**Answer:** The membership fee will remain at £28 a year until such time that Annual Conference delegates pass any Motion for further increases.

**Question 6:** Will you remind me of any increases each year?

**Answer:** Yes, you will receive a renewal letter as normal ahead of your renewal date. We will remind you of the decision to increase the membership fee each year.

**Question 7:** What was the Motion passed at Annual Conference 2024?

**Answer:** The Motion (7) proposed by the Membership Council was to increase the membership fee by £2 a year through to 2028.

**Question 8:** How will I know the payment has been taken from my account?

**Answer:** Charles Novacroft is our payment processing provider for membership fees and may appear on your statement.

**Question 9:** Do I need to do anything or change my direct debit mandate?

**Answer:** No, the change will take place automatically when you renew so you do not need to take any action. This will also be confirmed in your renewal reminder letter, which you will receive as normal.

**Question 10:** Who do I contact if I have any queries about my membership?

**Answer:** Please contact [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk) for any queries regarding your membership, including fees. Or contact us on: UK: 0800 307 7773

**Question 11:** Who do I contact if I am in financial hardship?

**Answer:** Members who qualify as beneficiaries can contact our Welfare team on 0808 802 8080.

**Question 12:** If I'm struggling to pay my membership fee, who do I contact?

**Answer:** In some cases, branches may be able to assist in on a case-by-case basis. Charter rule 4.5 allows for branches to pay a member's fee where that member is in hardship.

**Question 13:** Where does my membership fee go?

**Answer:** The membership fee increase will support the delivery of RBL membership in a variety of ways. Already there is work underway to enhance the membership experience, to enable us to attract the next generation of members and prepare us for a future audience.

Membership fees also go towards the delivery of events such as Annual Conference and Membership Council meetings, and support the membership governance structure through, for example, training, meetings, seminars and the election process, to ensure that branches and counties are supported. They also go towards directly keeping our members informed, via communications such as Legion magazine, the member eNewsletter, and other channels. We also provide resource and expertise to support and engage with our branches, so they are fulfilling their purpose out in their local communities, as well as compliant which enables RBL to fulfil its charitable regulatory obligations.

 **YOU DESERVE SOME HUMOUR HAVING GOT THIS FAR!!!**

**Husband:** "Scientists say men speak about 10,000 words a day, while women say around 20,000..."

**Wife (from the kitchen):** "That's because we have to repeat everything."

**Husband:** "What?"

I came second in the National Toe Sucking Championships last night. It was the first time I'd ever tasted defeat.

A vegan said to me, "People who sell meat are disgusting." I said, "People who sell fruits and vegetables are grocer."



*I tried to download the NHS App, but I accidentally paid for car parking in the High Street'*



## WHO'S WHO IN OUR BRANCH?

President - David Hawker: via [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

Chair/Media Rep: Jake Baker [rushden.chairman@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.chairman@rbl.community) 07525 441267

Vice Chair – Paul McKay: [rushden.vicechairman@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.vicechairman@rbl.community)

Secretary – Lynne Baker: [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

Treasurer – Janet Flowers: [rushden.treasurer@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.treasurer@rbl.community)

Committee Member – Heather Phillip: via [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

Committee Member – Sally Morton: via [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

Committee Member – Steve Miller: via [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

Committee Member – Graham Chambers: via [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

Branch Padre – Pauline Cook: [richardpaulinec@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:richardpaulinec@yahoo.co.uk) 07871 923337

Asst Branch Padre – Richard Cook: [richardpaulinec@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:richardpaulinec@yahoo.co.uk) 07871 923337

**BCS Rep/BCC Rep – Peter Armstrong:** [rushden.bcc1@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.bcc1@rbl.community) or 07498 243683

**BCS & BCC – Paul McKay:** [rushden.bcc2@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.bcc2@rbl.community)

Poppy Appeal Organiser – Ruth Miller: [poppyappealrushden@gmail.com](mailto:poppyappealrushden@gmail.com)

Standard Bearer - Mark Taberner-Stokes: via [rushden.secretary@rbl.community](mailto:rushden.secretary@rbl.community)

## POPPY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER TO 8<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2025

It may appear to be too early asking for Poppy Volunteers, but now is the time to get in touch. If you wish to volunteer, please contact Poppy Appeal Organiser Ruth Miller at either [poppyappealrushden@gmail.com](mailto:poppyappealrushden@gmail.com) or via text ONLY on 07962 040685

## HERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT

This poem about Rushden-on-Sea was written in 1946 by local poet and cartoonist Reg Norman, who lived in Moor Road (there's a blue plaque).

He's best known today as the creator of the Air Ada character who once appeared in the Evening Telegraph and spoke in a broad 'Ruzhden' dialect. Ent, kent, shent and enagunna were some of her well-known phrases – but of course the words may require some translation for many of today's Rushden town folk!

See more about Reg on the Rushden Hearts & Soles website here <https://bit.ly/44PRNoJ>, and you can follow the links to some of his other poems. [The poster is of course fake but based on a well-known one of the era advertising the delights of Skegness.]

♥ □ [#LoveRushden](#) [#RegNorman](#) [#SeasidePoster](#) ♥



## Rushden-on-Sea

Have you ever, fellow-townfolk,  
Thought how wonderful 'twould be  
If, instead of in the Midlands,  
Rushden lay beside the sea?  
If, when standing at the Oakley,  
Looking over, say, to Hock,  
All we saw was bounding billows  
From our perch on craggy rock.

There would be no pong of leather  
Permeating everywhere,  
But fresh iodised sea breezes  
Would have been our happy share.  
And we'd see no weary fish queues  
In this post-war year of grace,  
But each day make hearty meals off  
Haddock, mackerel, cod and plaice.

For instead of clicking, lasting,  
We should sail the mighty deep,  
And our closers would be gutting  
Fishly harvests that we'd reap,  
Whilst our visitors in season  
Would the sea-front gaily deck  
As they bathed, or quietly rested  
On the Promenade-de-Rec.

Every villa, cottage, garage,  
Would with guests now be replete;  
Yells of kids with spades and buckets  
Would resound in Griffith-street.  
Prospect-avenue would tender  
Hospitality benign  
As each residence displayed a  
Tempting Bed and Breakfast sign.

Houses, too, would not be titled  
"Pixiecot" or "Jimanmay,"  
But aquatic appellations  
On the gate they would display.  
"Ozone," "Sandy Nook" and "Wave  
Crest"  
Would in Duck-street scintillate,  
And no doubt there'd be a "Sea  
View"  
Way back up in Court Estate.

But though sea-fringed Rushden  
LOOKS well  
Basking in the sun's war rays,  
What about the raging tempests  
Slashing through the winter days?  
No, sir! Give me inland Rushden,  
Nestling in the valley's fold,  
Whilst each year there's ten days'  
summer  
And three-fifty blinkin' cold.

## THE BRITISH MILITARY TRAIN – THE BERLINER



The US, French and British armies ran trains to West Berlin during the Cold War. The British Military Train was crucial for British forces in West Berlin, operating daily between Charlottenburg in West Berlin and Braunschweig, through Soviet-controlled East Germany. The train was run by the Royal Corps of Transport. Its 287km route passed through multiple East German checkpoints, most notably Marienborn (Checkpoint Alpha) and Potsdam-Griebnitzsee (Checkpoint Bravo).

Unlike civilian trains, the train did not recognise East German authority. Soviet officials were allowed to check travel documents but could not board. Passengers were locked into the train and a British Army officer with armed escort accompanied every journey to ensure security and compliance with agreements.

The train ran on a fixed schedule with no unauthorised stops, preventing East German interference. That said, the train was often subjected to extended inspections or slow processing at checkpoints. And at times, East Germans tried to cling to the train to escape to the West. It wasn't all grim. On the morning train out of Berlin, a full English breakfast was served. On the evening train from Braunschweig, there was a lively formal dinner. Port was served between Potsdam and Charlottenburg, the last drops consumed as the train pulled into the West Berlin station. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and German reunification in 1990, the need for the British Military Train ended.

The final journey, which took place on 31 March 1991, marked the conclusion of nearly five decades of continuous operation.

## COMING NEXT MONTH'S BARK IN THE PARK: VETERANS WITH DOGS



**VETERANS WITH DOGS**  
*Helping lead independent lives*

**ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR "INVISIBLE INJURIES"**

- Enabling Recovery
- Enhancing quality-of-life and increasing independence
- Improved well-being
- Promoting motivation, structure and routine

Providing Training, Education and Support Services for Assistance Dogs and Companion Animals

There are lots of ways to get involved in your area! We run training for Veterans with their own dogs, residential activities, seminars, group walks, workshops and other events! For all the latest news and developments you can sign up for our newsletter at [www.veteranswithdogs.org.uk](http://www.veteranswithdogs.org.uk)

Rushden Town Council has invited "Veterans with Dogs" to join us. This great charity will be beside our stall at Bark in the Park in the Walled Garden, Rushden Hall Park from 10am on 7<sup>th</sup> September.



**Calling All Supporters**  
**Could You Take on a Challenge for Veterans With Dogs**

Looking for a meaningful way to challenge yourself, unite with friends, and make a real difference?

Join the Veterans With Dogs fundraising community and take on one of our exciting challenge events! Whether you go solo or rally your squad, every step you take helps change a veteran's life, one wet nose at a time.

**VETERANS WITH DOGS**

More information: <https://veteranswithdogs.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise/challenge-events>

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Did you know in 2018, a 4-year-old springer spaniel from Rushden called Elkie was named Hero Dog of the Year for being there around the clock when her diabetic owner needs her. Well, you do now! 🐕 🐕

