



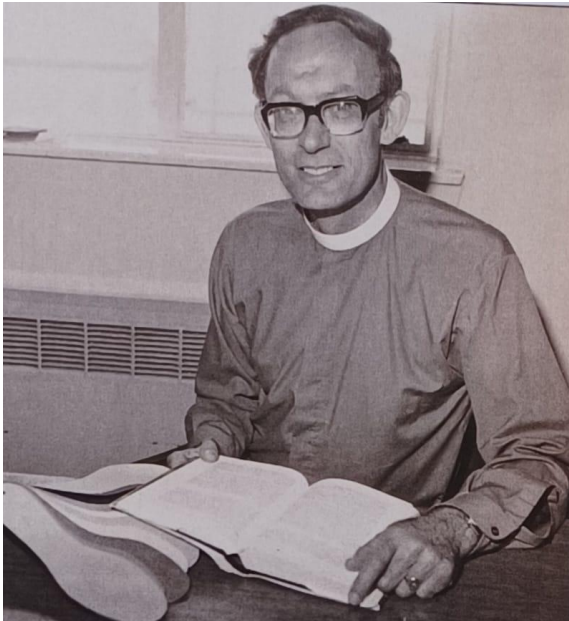
RBL ROYAL
BRITISH
LEGION



RUSHDEN

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

RUSHDEN BRANCH - NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2024



THE LATE REVEREND JOHN TYE

Earlier this week, many members of the Branch and the community attended the Service of Thanksgiving to Celebrate the Life of our former Branch Padre Rev John Tye at St Mary's Church. It was great to see so many present to pay their respects, with the Branch Standard being carried by former County Standard Bearer Pat Cutting. This was truly appreciated by the family.

It was a wonderful celebration of John's life led by the Rev Dr Glyn Ackerley, with tributes from John's Brother Jeff, his four children and two of his grandchildren; our Branch Padre, Rev Dr Linnet Smith, also gave a reading. It was a great service, portraying Rev John's remarkable achievements and full of humour, which epitomised his character.

85TH ANNIVERSARY OF MERCHANT NAVY DAY

Merchant Navy Day, observed annually on September 3rd, is a significant event that honours the vital role of the Merchant Navy in global trade and national security. This day commemorates the selfless service and bravery of merchant mariners, who have been crucial in transporting essential goods, including food, fuel, and raw materials, across the world's oceans. The date was chosen to mark the sinking of the SS Athenia, the first British merchant ship lost during World War II, highlighting the perilous conditions faced by these civilian sailors. Merchant Navy Day is an opportunity to recognize the sacrifices made by these unsung heroes, who often work in challenging environments and face the dangers of piracy, severe weather, and geopolitical tensions.

Celebrations and commemorations on Merchant Navy Day typically include ceremonies, flag hoisting, and wreath-laying events at War Memorials and Maritime Institutions. The Red Ensign, also known as the "Red Duster," is prominently flown on this day to honour the legacy of the Merchant Navy. Educational programmes and campaigns are often organised to raise awareness about the Merchant Navy's contributions to the economy and national security. These activities aim to foster a deeper appreciation of the maritime industry, and the essential services provided by

merchant mariners. By acknowledging their dedication and resilience, Merchant Navy Day helps ensure that the invaluable contributions of these seafarers are remembered and celebrated.

A small ceremony was performed at Rushden's War Memorial led by Branch President David Hawker. RN Veteran Terry Perkins carried the RNA Standard and in attendance was the Mayor of Rushden, Councillor David Coleman, Gen Kitchen MP's Representative Chris Ashton, a couple of Councillors and staff from Rushden Town Council, Branch members, members of the public, including Postgraduate Student Social Worker Councillor Victor James from Wellingborough and a 15-year-old Marine Cadet from Wellingborough School. Many of us retired to St Mary's Church Hall for light refreshments.

THE GOLDFISH CLUB – by Branch Vice Chairman Paul McKay

Paul was a member of the Fleet Arm and was unfortunate enough to have to ditch his aircraft in the sea. Anyone who has done this can join this exclusive club. Paul gave an excellent presentation last month to the RAF Association, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Here's what he said.....

MAE WEST - THE DARLING OF DITCHED AIRCREW



I was delighted as a new member of the RAFA Rushden Branch to be invited to speak about the 'Goldfish Club' to its veteran community on 10 August. It had to be informative with a bit of 'dry' humour added, as the Goldfish Club is one Club that nobody wants to join.

I am PAUL ANTHONY MCKAY and I recently moved to the district on civilian retirement, after working 20 years in the Middle East in the defence services and diplomatic sectors. There is enough ammunition here for future articles.

But back to Mae West. Why is she revered as the darling of aviators and for me, the sweetest of sweethearts? We love you, Mae!

There are many clubs for those who enjoy being on, in or underwater, but there is one exclusive club that had 10,000 RAF and Allied aircrew members after WW2, but only 300 members worldwide today, for those who ended up in the drink by accident (or in naval parlance having to take the proverbial float test). It's called the Goldfish Club and its members count themselves lucky to be alive.

The Goldfish are aircrew who crashed or bailed out into the sea and survived. Gold for the value of life and fish for the water. It was formed in 1942 by a British draftsman who designed rubber lifesaving equipment. He was so moved by the experience of WW2 aircrews' watery episodes, he formed the Club which still exists today. Many of the former members have crossed the bar, but new members still arrive.

The Goldfish became the emblem showing a white-winged goldfish flying over two symbolic blue waves. Due to wartime regulations, the production of metallic-embroidered badges was prohibited and all cloth was severely rationed.

These problems were overcome with silk embroidery substituted for wire upon black cloth from old evening dress suits, that were sent in by London Daily Express readers after an appeal. Mae West, because of her sizeable assets, became the name adopted by aircrew for their lifesaving vest.

In response to a message of greetings sent to Mae West, she made it clear that she took great pride in the fact that aircrew had adopted her name for their flotation jackets. The badge is worn by aircrew on their Mae Wests or flying suits.

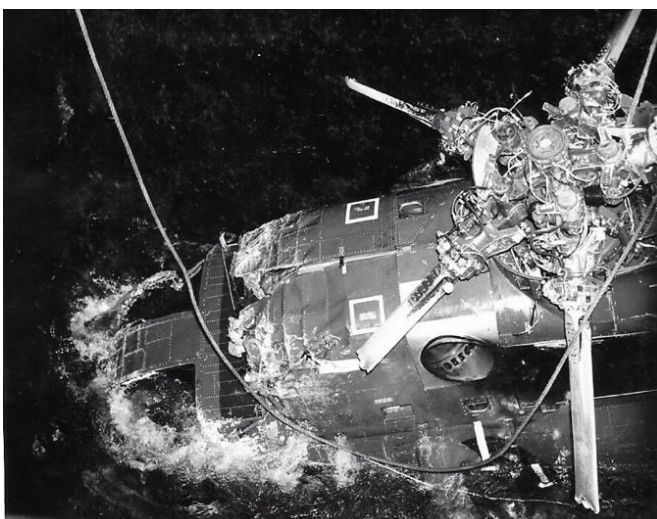
I have the unfortunate distinction of being a 'Triple' Goldfish member. Yep, three times ditched and where my best friend, Mae West, kept me afloat until rescue. My story began in 1974.

As a young aircrew officer during flying training, I ditched on my first ever night sortie, in a Wessex helicopter with an engine fire on climb-out from RNAS Portland, Dorset into a heavy sea.



It was a surreal moment, I recall, having given the pre-flight crew ditching brief only 50 minutes earlier to my Squadron Boss, there I was in the drink with him, riding the surf in our single seat life rafts; in sight of the lights of the Chesil Beach pub a mile away, enthusiastically firing off red mini flares whilst waiting for the SAR helicopter rescue and winch pick-up.

Still under flying training at 737 Squadron, a few weeks later I ditched again. This time in a Sea King helicopter having suffered tail rotor-drive failure during an Anti-Submarine exercise in the English Channel. This one wasn't textbook, an uncontrolled ditching, the aircraft spinning out of control; I had to find an air pocket after snagging myself underwater.



Once on the surface and awaiting rescue from the frigates and circling Sea Kings overhead, my survival dingy started to be pulled under the surface with me in it and dragged backwards.

To my surprise the submarine surfaced yards away giving me a second dunking. Sailors on the submarine casing were thrashing the water around me with

boat hooks trying to connect with my Mae West and inviting me to climb up the scrambling net they had thrown over the side. In a few polite words, I declined the submariners' vigour to rescue me and waited to be winched up by a rescue helicopter.

As a Sub Lieutenant, I was presented with my Goldfish badge and tie, and my SARBE (Search and Rescue Beacon Equipment) Company tankard whilst serving on HMS Ark Royal 824 Squadron.

It was 4 years later as a Lieutenant Instructor on 737 Squadron, that I was returning from Prestwick Airport leading a formation of Wessex helicopters – some 20 miles north of RAF Valley, Anglesey the aircraft suffered an engine failure.

Textbook autorotation to maintain rotor RPM before flaring to reduce speed on impact, but the sea surface was covered in patchy fog; the impact was heavy. I was propelled under the cockpit seat harness and entangled in the co-pilot flying controls semi-unconscious.

It took me several attempts to untangle myself, inflating my Mae West on the surface, I spent about 2 hours on the surface with staged hypothermia before rescue from the SAR helicopter from RAF Valley. Convincing myself that ditching does not come in groups of four, I completed a military flying career that had further flying incidents, but no more where survival required the use of a life jacket and inflatable dinghy. I was the last crew member to escape the upturned aircraft with some difficulty, having to find air pockets. *"I'll try anything once, twice if I like it, three times to make sure."* – **Mae West**



BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO – 9TH FEBRUARY 2025

R B Travel are organising this event, and tickets cost £55.25 per adult (£53.50 for seniors). You can book by telephoning **01536 791066** or visiting the Post Office in Rushden, or by emailing enquiries@rbtravel.co.uk. There are 18 seats still available; if members are interested in going as a group, then please call or contact Jake on **07525 441267** or email him to rushden.chairman@rbl.community

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.

BRANCH COMMUNITY CO-ORDINATOR (BCC)

Peter Armstrong's role has increased, and he is now also appointed as our Branch Community Co-Ordinator. This role entails supporting our BCS (Branch Community Supporter) – The BCS position is now vacant, but Peter is allowed to perform the tasks - in promoting the activities of the Branch, improving connections with Veterans, and the Armed Forces Community, liaising with other branches, offering a support network, help in organising events and recruiting new members. Welfare support such as assistance with food, finances, employment, housing, mental health support, and physical support is NOT part of the role – this is provided by dedicated RBL Welfare Teams.

Branches may have as many BCCs as possible, so if any member is interested in taking up this role with Peter and is interested in being formally appointed as our BCS, then please contact Peter via his mobile phone or email him on **07498 243683** or rushden.bcs@rbl.community In conclusion, Peter will still be the BCS Rep, as he can do both roles, but the BCS, when formally appointed, cannot undertake the BCC role.

VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM (NMA)

Branch Member Terry Perkins is organising a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum through the Breakfast Club. The trip is on the 28th of September (a Saturday) and is open to the RNA, RBL and RAFA. He is booking a 58-seater coach (with a toilet!!) – it is only half full. Cost is £10 per head to cover the coach.

Anyone needing a mobility scooter, (hire charge is £10) should let Terry know soonest. There is a limited number of them, so he needs to get them booked early. Members may, if they wish, take their own mobility scooter or wheelchair. **Note:** The Land Train at the NMA has wheelchair access.

The Rig of the Day will be Club polo shirts (RBL, RNA, RAFA or Breakfast Club, (some may want to wear a blazer)). A quick straw poll suggested this was the preferred option. Berets would be a good touch for everyone.

For any further information please contact Terry Perkins on **07518 738512** or Lperkins18@hotmail.com

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS?

Second Monday of Every Month – 7.30pm start. Branch Monthly Meeting at the Athletic Club. The next meeting is on **9th September** followed by a talk from Kevin Varty called "*Flushed with Success. The History of the Smallest Room.*"

Fourth Tuesday of Every Month – The Community Social & Craft Group meets 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 Members. For more information contact Carol on **07922 141589** or treasurer@rafarushden.org.uk

Every Wednesday & Saturday Morning – 9am start: Northants Veterans Breakfast Club dine at The Needle and Awl. All Veterans are welcome – Veterans' Families are invited to join on the last Saturday of each month. See 14th September below.

First Thursday of every month – 10am to 12.30pm – Friendship Group meet at The Athletic Club, Newton Road, Rushden. Pop along for a cuppa and a chat any time in between 10am and 12.30pm. The next meet is now on **5th September**.

7th September – Proms in the Park – see poster below.

8th September – Bark in the Park - **YOUR HELP IS NEEDED TO RUN THE STALL**

13th September - Annual Civic Opening of Rushden Feast and Fish & Chip Supper – see poster below



MAYOR'S Proms IN THE PARK

Performed by
Rushden Town Band
In aid of the Mayor's Chosen Charities

DementiaUK RBL Rushden

7th September, 2024 | At 7pm
Gates open at 6 O'clock

Location: Walled Garden at Rushden Hall
Tickets £15.00

Includes light refreshments, seating and a Union Jack Flag

You are also welcome to bring your own champagne, picnic, chairs and rugs

Please email :mayor@rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk
R.S.V.P 23 August 2024
01933 316216
www.rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk

www.rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk
01933 316216 | info@rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk @rushdencouncil



ANNUAL CIVIC OPENING OF RUSHDEN FEAST

Friday 13th September 2024
6.30pm at the Dodgem Cars
Spencer Park, Washbrook Road,
Rushden, NN10 6UR

Followed by a Fish & Chip Supper at the Railway Station

Tickets £15.00

To include a ride on the Dodgemes, Fish and Chip Supper in the Railway Carriage at Rushden Station and a look around the Railway Station and Station Museum

RUSHDEN
In aid of the Mayor's chosen charities

14th September - 9am start: Northants Veterans Breakfast Club celebrates its **10th Anniversary**, so come along and dine and celebrate at The Needle and Awl.

15th September – Battle of Britain Service at St Peters Church, starting at 10.30am.

22nd September – Rushden & Higham Ferrers Heritage Day at Rushden Lakes – no RBL Rushden Branch participation.

25th September - Armed Forces Information Day at Northampton Guildhall from 11am to 3pm with Defence Medical Welfare Service and RBL Rushden Branch presence.

28th September – Coach Trip to the National Memorial Arboretum organised by the Veterans Breakfast Club – Departing Rushden at 8am.

3rd October – Alfred Lord Tennyson School Remembrance & Memorial Day. Short ceremony to be held in memory of 7 children killed by German bombs during WW2 that occurred 84 years ago. More details to follow.

14th October – Branch Annual General Meeting – followed by *Grandad's War* presented by Edward Barnes. Separate details to follow in the next two weeks.

19th October – Royal Naval Association Pickle Night at the Windmill Club to celebrate Trafalgar Day. Comedian & Singer with Buffet. £5 a ticket. Names at the next Branch Meeting or by 1st October the latest to Terry Perkins on **07518 738512** or email him at Lperkins18@hotmail.co.uk

25th October – Presentation of items and cheque to RBL Rushden Branch from Happy Feet Line Dancing Club. To be held at The Working Men's Club. More details to follow.

26th October - Town Mayor's Civic Italian Night at Pizzeria Venezia, Rushden – see poster below.

26th October to 10th November – Remembrancetide – Poppy Selling Fortnight. If members, their family or friends and neighbours wish to help during the Poppy Appeal fortnight, then please contact our Poppy Appeal Organiser, Ruth Miller via her email which is poppyappealrushden@gmail.com and remember, anybody can help out whether RBL members or not.

6th November – Garden of Remembrance Service for Schools at Rushden War Memorial starting at 10.45am. Branch Members and the public are welcome.

10th November – Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service at Rushden War Memorial. Parade forms up outside Rushden Hall, Rushden Hall Park at 10.30am.

11th November – Armistice Day – Rushden War Memorial & Rushden Academy; further details to follow.

Town Mayor Cllr David Coleman
Civic Italian Night
Saturday 26th October 2024
An Evening of Authentic Italian Entertainment
Pizzeria Venezia, Church Street, Rushden, NN10 9YT
In Aid of the Mayor's Charities
~ Royal British Legion Rushden Branch
~ Rushden Sea Cadets
~ Dementia UK
Tickets £35.00
Reception: 7.00pm
Dinner: 7.30pm
Carriages: 11.30pm
Dress: Smart / Cocktail
Chains to be Worn
To book your place please RSVP by Friday 18th October
mayor@rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk

RBL RUSHDEN BRANCH CHRISTMAS DINNER

Yes, it's months away, but the Mayor of Rushden and his Consort wife, Councillors David and Melanie Coleman have accepted our invitation to be our guests at our Xmas Dinner on Tuesday 10th December. The list for names can be added at our next meeting. Cost will be between £10 and £15, depending on donations which we hope will be forthcoming.

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO – 9TH FEBRUARY 2025

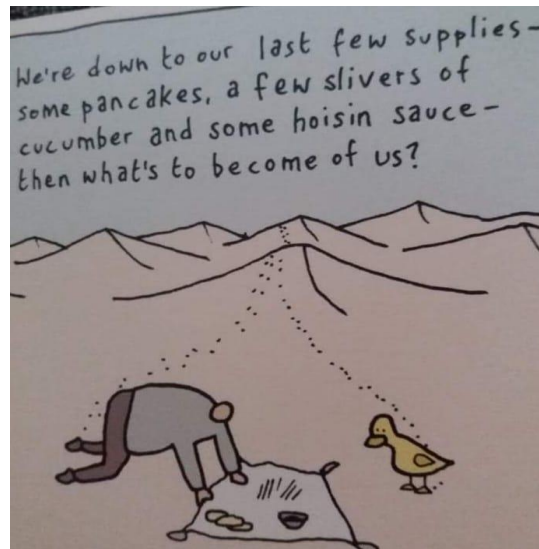
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A BIT OF HUMOUR from Rudes on a Roll



From Puns, One Liners & Clever Wordplay

I was hoping you could help me by printing the following message for my husband who popped out for a pint of milk two years ago and hasn't returned. "Barry. If there's no silver top, semi-skimmed will do."



WHO'S WHO AND HOW YOU CAN CONTACT THEM?

President - David Hawker: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Chairman/Media Rep: Jake Baker rushden.chairman@rbl.community **07525 441267**

Vice Chairman – Paul McKay: rushden.vicechairman@rbl.community

Secretary – Lynne Baker: rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Treasurer – Janet Flowers: rushden.treasurer@rbl.community

Branch Chaplain Rev Linnet Smith: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Committee Member – Heather Phillip: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Committee Member – Sally Morton: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Committee Member – Steve Miller: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

BCC & BCS Rep – Peter Armstrong: rushden.bcs@rbl.community or **07498 243683**

Poppy Appeal Organiser – Ruth Miller: poppyappealrushden@gmail.com

Branch Standard Bearer - Mark Taberner-Stokes: via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

LONDON POPPY DAY 2024

Taking place on Thursday, October 31st, London Poppy Day is the flagship fundraising event for RBL's annual Poppy Appeal. This one-day street collection from 7am - 7pm mobilises more than 1,000 uniformed personnel from the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force, plus 1,000 veterans, volunteers, and supporters - many of whom are dedicated RBL members. This is an exciting and unique opportunity to be part of one of the largest fundraising collections of its kind, as well as for communities to engage with uniformed personnel. The presence and efforts of these volunteers are crucial in ensuring the success of the event, allowing for significant fundraising that directly benefits those who have served, and their loved ones.

To get involved, please register at rbl.org.uk/londonpoppyday2024

Volunteers will be provided with a food voucher if volunteering for the day as well as travel passes for the day before, the day of and the day after London Poppy Day across the National Rail network, and on the day across the TfL network.

WILL YOU HELP THE RBL TO CONTINUE INFLUENCING THE GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA?

Last month the Legion Magazine asked for our help with spreading the word about the RBL's latest campaign. And thanks to our support, the RBL have been able to reach more than 300 MPs! The RBL says "But there is still more to do and we are calling on all MPs to commit to [Supporting those who Serve Us](#) (see the link [General Election Manifesto 2024 | Campaigns and Policies | RBL \(britishlegion.org.uk\)](#)) so that our Armed Forces community receive the support they so deserve for their sacrifice and Service."

"We still need your help to reach as many MPs as possible and ensure that our Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged because of their Service. Contacting your MP helps us to continue influencing the Government's agenda. Will you support this campaign further and write to your MP using this link? [Write to your Parliamentary candidates | Royal British Legion](#)

By sharing this message you're helping the RBL create the change we want to see for our Armed Forces community. If members receive any responses from their MP, please forward them to campaigns@britishlegion.org.uk Thank you!

VETERANS' UNCLAIMED PENSIONS – SOME GOOD NEWS!

The Forces Pensions Society's campaign launched last year has begun to show tangible results. The latest AFPS Annual Report published in July, reveals a reduction in the number of Veterans' unclaimed pensions. This year's report records some 14,800 unclaimed pensions (17,100 in 2023), a 14% improvement.

However, it remains a cause for great concern that there are still almost 15,000 pension benefits that remain unclaimed and thousands of entitled Veterans could be missing out. These are the details:

- Anyone serving after April 1975, now aged 60 or over, could have an Armed Forces Pension if they served for two years or more.
- The pension is not paid automatically, and Veterans must apply to Veterans UK using AFPS Form 8 or call **0800 085 3600** for information.

Commenting on these latest figures shown below, Forces Pensions Society Chief Executive Neil Marshall said:

“It’s clear that our call to action to a wide community has made a real difference. But we won’t be satisfied until we reduce the outstanding number of unclaimed pensions substantially. Many of these pensions involve significant sums of money which could make a serious contribution to the quality of many lives. So, if you know a Veteran who might not have claimed their entitlement, please visit the Veterans’ Gateway website without delay. For our part, the Forces Pension Society will maintain its focus on the issue until we see many more pensions in the hands of those who earned them.”

Veterans Unclaimed Armed Forces Pensions

At least **14,800** unclaimed Armed Forces pension benefits*

Historically, around **2,000** preserved Armed Forces pensions go unclaimed each year

Anyone serving after **April 1975** now aged **60** or over could have an Armed Forces pension if they served for **2 years** or more

The pension is **NOT** paid automatically – Veterans must apply to Veterans UK using AFPS Form 8 or can call **0800 085 3600** for further information

A CALL TO ACTION!

FIND OUT MORE

*Source: MoD APFS Annual Report July 2024

Dated 24/07/2024



FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE RED ARROWS HAS DIED

Tributes have been paid to one of the founding members of the Red Arrows who was known for his exceptional flying skills - especially at very low level. Squadron Leader (Retired) Henry Prince (pictured above), who recently died at the age of 90, was part of the team that got the Red Arrows off the ground alongside Lee Jones.

Sixty years later (in March this year) the Royal Air Force aerobatic team continues to wow crowds around the world. Henry was Red 7 on the first team in 1964.

A Folland Gnat aircraft was scheduled to fly over as Squadron Leader Prince's funeral takes place. The Gnat was used by the Red Arrows back in the 1960s and 70s before being replaced by the Hawk in 1979.