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RUSHDEN BRANCH - NEWSLETTER APRIL 2024

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Welcome to this edition of April's Newsletter. It is deliberately WW2 influenced as we approach numerous anniversaries, including the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings on 6th June 2024 where many events will be held up and down the country, France and the countries of our WW2 Allies. Please volunteer where you can; only a couple of hours is needed and don't forget, volunteers can be collected to and from home and brought to the local event at no cost and thus saving a taxi fare; just contact Jake or Lynne Baker.

WHAT'S ON IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

Wednesdays & Saturdays (9am) – Northants Breakfast Club (Veterans) at The Needle & Awl

First Thursday of each month – **Friendship Group** at the Athletic Club (10am – 12pm) with Peter Armstrong our Branch Community Supporter or BCS

8th April – **Branch Monthly Meeting** followed by Community Fire Safety Officer presentation from Jo Gouldson.

16th April – **50th Gold Badge and Certificate Award Ceremony to Mrs Megan Graham at Rushden Hall** – Those wishing to attend must inform Branch Secretary by end of Branch Meeting on 8th April at the latest as numbers are restricted.

24th April – **RBL Visit to RAF Coningsby** as organised by Branch Member Craig Stevens

4th May – **VE Day** – no known plans yet (this will be the 79th Anniversary)

10th – 12th May – **RBL Annual Conference** at Newport, Wales

13th May – **Branch Monthly Meeting** – followed by presentation from Alan Palmer "*The Greatest Humanitarian Airlift in History, or was it?*"

18th May – **Veterans' Big Band** – See Poster on next page – 3pm at Park Road Baptist Church

6th June - **D-Day Celebrations and Beacon Lighting at Rushden Hall Park Walled Garden and a Church Service with Branch Standard** – full details in May's Newsletter.

THE VETERANS BIG BAND BRING £15 FOR YOUR TICKETS AT APRIL'S MEETING

18TH May –The Veteran's Big Band commencing 3pm at Park Road Baptist Church
The Veterans' Big Band is made up of musicians drawn from the Royal Marines Band Service, various Army Bands, and the Royal Air Force Music Service. Their mission is to promote music of the Big Band era, performed by these talented musicians as well as showcase their skills and highlight the various Armed Forces Music Services that can be a positive career choice for young musicians just starting out. Tickets cost £15 and can be obtained from fellow RBL Branch Member Jim Doran - HE WILL BE AT THE MEETING or by calling him on **07460 599284** or emailing Jim at vicepresident@rafarushden.org.uk Whilst this will be a dedicated fundraising event for the RAF's Wings Appeal, our local RAF Association have decided to split profits three ways evenly to the RBL, RNA and RAFA. Finally, we need Ushers, Refreshments Assistants and Bucket Holders for donations. **Can you help?**

RUSHDEN & DISTRICT VETERANS GROUP
PRESENT

THE VETERANS BIG BAND

19-PIECE
BIG BAND
CLASSIC BIG BAND MUSIC

PLAYED BY EX-MUSICIANS FROM
THE ROYAL MARINES, THE ARMY &
THE ROYAL AIR FORCE BANDS
- PERFORMING TOGETHER ON STAGE!

D-DAY 80
Commemorating the heroes of
the Battle of Normandy

SATURDAY 18th MAY 2024
START: 3PM TICKETS: £15

FROM: P W HOUSE & OSBORNE TOYS OF RUSHDEN
SIDEY DESIGN ARCHITECTURE OF HIGHAM FERRERS
JESTERS - BROOK STREET, RAUNDS
OLD SCHOOL SHOP & PO - HIGH STREET, STANWICK
BELLAMY EYE CARE - IRTHLINGBOROUGH

PRBC
PARK ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH
RUSHDEN NN10 0LH

TICKETS ONLINE FROM
www.WeGotTickets.com

2024 ANNIVERSARIES

18 May 2024 - 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Monte Cassino
6 June 2024 - 80th anniversary of D-Day and the start of the Battle of Normandy
20 June 2024 - 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Kohima
18 July 2024 - 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Imphal
25 September 2024 - 80th anniversary of the end of Operation Market Garden
8 November 2024 - 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of the Scheldt

EXTRACTS FROM FORCES NET: LAST LIVING RECIPIENT OF WW2 VC AWARDED ONE MORE MEDAL - 75 YEARS LATE

A former Royal Air Force pilot who is the last living recipient of the Victoria Cross from the Second World War has just received another medal - 75 years after he earned it.

John Cruickshank VC, 103, was presented with the Air Efficiency Award at his home in Aberdeen.

It was awarded to many volunteers who served in the RAF's two reserve contingents during the war and later.

However, the 75-year oversight that led to Mr Cruickshank missing out on the medal was only uncovered last month.

The Air Efficiency Award has now been added to one of the most impressive racks of medals belonging to anyone who served in that period – includes his Victoria Cross.

Mr Cruickshank, who was then a Flying Officer, earned the UK's highest award for gallantry while he was piloting a Catalina flying boat with 210 Squadron at RAF Sulom Voe in Shetland.

He sustained 72 injuries during a patrol in the Norwegian Sea to protect the British Home Fleet as it returned from an attack on the German battleship Tirpitz on 17 July 1944.

Mr Cruickshank and his crew sunk a German U-boat while returning from the mission, believed to have been the Type VIIC submarine U-361, but three other members of his crew were also injured - and his navigator killed - by German anti-aircraft fire.

Two of Mr Cruickshank's injuries were particularly life-threatening, but he managed to get the aircraft and his surviving crew members home and land safely.



John Cruickshank VC, 103, receives his long overdue Air Efficiency Award from Group Captain (ret'd) Bob Kemp of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Foundation (Picture: Group Captain (ret'd) Bob Kemp) – also pictured is a typical Catalina.

CHICK HENDERSON: HMS VICTORY'S WORLD-FAMOUS SINGER WHO SERVED DURING WW2

To this day, HMS Victory remains a commissioned warship in the Royal Navy. But did you know she once hosted a music superstar? Chick Henderson enjoyed success in the 1930s as the only British singer to sell a million copies of a single record in the whole decade - Begin the Beguine. Nowadays he has almost been forgotten.

But once wildly popular, the star singer, whose real name was Henderson Rowntree,

served in the Merchant Navy when war broke out, later transferring to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

In June 1944, Henderson was promoted to Sub Lieutenant on board HMS Victory. One day, he found himself serving on board the ship in Southsea when an air raid siren went off. He and his comrades hurried to the nearest air raid shelter, but just as he was making his way down the stairs to safety, he collapsed. He had been hit in his side by a fragment of a shell fired from a British 3.7-inch anti-aircraft gun that went off prematurely. He was carried by his friends to the Royal Beach Hotel but could not be saved.

Being assigned to HMS Victory might well have meant he served on the famous vessel. But the designation "HMS Victory" was applied to up to 10 shore establishments - not all of which were in Portsmouth. Many sailors and officers were assigned to HMS Victory while they awaited their next role.

Sadly, in Henderson's case there would not be another. The once-famous singer was laid to rest in the Haslar Royal Naval Cemetery in Gosport, having died at the age of 31.



ARMED FORCES TO RECEIVE NEW WIDER SERVICE MEDAL

A new medal to broaden the recognition of service personnel carrying out operational roles has been announced.

The Wider Service Medal will be awarded to personnel delivering crucial operational impact, where the physical risk to life is lower than traditionally required for an operational medal.

Royal Navy personnel deployed on the UK's continuous at sea nuclear deterrent, soldiers deployed as part of the UK's reassurance to the people of Estonia and RAF pilots and ground crew deployed to Estonia and Romania on Nato air policing patrol will all be eligible for the award.

The first medals will be presented in early summer and will be awarded retrospectively to personnel who've been deployed on ongoing operations since December 2018.

The medal is being introduced to recognise the changing nature of operational activity, whereby personnel are increasingly deployed or used to deliver operational impact but not necessarily in roles that expose them to physical risk, the MOD said.

This activity does not fall within the traditional operational medal criteria that still relies on 'risk and rigour'.

The medal will be given to those who have accrued 180 days of aggregated service on eligible operations.

Subsequent service of 180 days will result in the award of a bar to the medal - up to a maximum of three bars.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "Our modern Armed Forces are among the

best in the world and do incredible work across the globe. The Wider Service Medal recognises the wide range of roles our personnel play in ensuring success on operations. It also recognises the ever-changing nature of warfare, underlining the importance of operations which deter adversaries in a pre-war world."

The design of the medal features a Tudor Crown, symbolising the Sovereign, directional arrows depicting reach across the world and a Laurel Wreath that symbolises service and achievement.



Surrounding the Tudor Crown on the front of the medal are the words, "for wider service".

The ribbon has a central stripe of purple, with four narrow stripes on either side featuring the colours, white, light blue, dark blue and green.

The ribbon is designed to reflect the joint cross-Government nature of operations (purple), on land (green), on the sea (dark blue) and in the air (light blue).

 <p>ARMED FORCES DAY SHOW YOUR SUPPORT</p> <p>ARMED FORCES DAY RUSHDEN</p> <p>Saturday 29th June 2024</p> <p>Parade Starts 1pm Alfred Lord Tennyson School, Playground, John Street NN10 9NL</p> <p>At the Station from Midday-Late Station Approach Rushden NN10 0AW</p> <p>Stalls & Displays in the Goods Shed, WW2 Plane Flypast, Train Rides. Bar & Buffet Carriage Open. Evening Event-Live Entertainment</p> <p>"Neil Richardson & the Blitz Dancers"</p> <p>Evening Event tickets on sale from the bar or online at: http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/rhts</p> <p>Contacts: Jake Baker: afdrushden@hotmail.com Tel: 07525 441267 RHTS (Rushden Station), Tel: 0300 3023 150. secretary@rhts.co.uk In association with Rushden Town Council, Rushden Royal Naval Association, Rushden RBL, Rushden Historical Transport Society</p> 	 <p>1940's Evening Dance In Support of Armed Forces Day at the Rushden Goods Shed</p> <p>Saturday 29th June 7.30pm - 11pm</p> <p>Featuring Neil Richardson and Blitz Dancers</p> <p>£10 per ticket</p> <p>Book online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/rhts or buy from our Station Bar</p>  <p>Rushden Goods Shed, John Clark Way, Rushden, NN10 0AW 0300 302 3150 administrator@rhts.co.uk www.rhts.co.uk</p>
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THE RBL INFLUENCED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO CHANGE VISA RULES SO SERVING PERSONNEL CAN BRING FAMILY MEMBERS BORN OUTSIDE OF THE UK TO JOIN THEM IN THE COUNTRY THEY SERVE.

The government has confirmed that the Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) for Regular Armed Forces personnel to sponsor visas to bring non-UK partners and children to the UK will be brought in line with the minimum Armed Forces salary.

This reflects the call RBL made to Government to waive the far higher MIR applying to skilled workers and their families. With military pay for many recruits falling well below the higher threshold, personnel (including UK nationals and non-UK personnel) with family members born outside of the UK, would have been forced to choose between maintaining a family life or serving in the UK Armed Forces.

This decision reflects the need to recruit and retain this crucial cohort, and recognises the huge contribution non-UK personnel and families make to our Armed Forces. There are currently over 6,000 non-UK personnel in the UK Armed Forces – nearly 1 in 20 of all trained personnel – serving our nation from over 20 countries including Fiji, Kenya, Jamaica, Nepal, and Canada, and around 1 in 8 spouses and partners of serving personnel report a Non-UK nationality.

WHO'S WHO IN OUR BRANCH AND HOW CAN WE CONTACT THEM?

President – David Hawker – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Chairman – Jake Baker – rushden.chairman@rbl.community or **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

BCS – Peter Armstrong – rushden.bcs@rbl.community or **07498 243683**

Poppy Appeal Organiser – Ruth Miller – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

Media Representative – Chloe Duggan Jones – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community

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

Branch Bugler – Bob Crick – via rushden.secretary@rbl.community