HALE BRANCH ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NEWSLETTER – Issue 41

October 2026

Hello everyone,

I hope you are all keeping well and settling in to the cooler weather now that the hot spell we had is over. What a scorcher!

This year has been quite an eventful one for me. I am still getting to grips with the role of Chair. There is so much to learn and understand. I am grateful for everyone's support and patience as I adjust into this role.

As you know, we attended our annual trip to the Commonwealth War Graves in April. There were quite a number of new people on the trip and, after speaking to them, they really enjoyed the experience. I hope they will join us again on our next one.

We have three new leaves on the Tree of Cherished Memories, which is in the RBL Garden of Remembrance, formerly known as the National Memorial Arboretum. Unfortunately, as they have only recently been installed, we haven't been able to arrange a trip there to view them. I have seen the photos and where they are placed and they look really nice. We purchased these leaves to commemorate members who have sadly passed away since the initial ones were placed a few years ago and are still in place. We are hoping to arrange a trip to the Remembrance Garden early next year.

October brings us to our Annual General Meeting. This will be held upstairs in the Childe of Hale at 7:30pm. The monthly Branch meeting will follow straight afterwards. Members are invited to attend the AGM.

Thank you again for your support and in keeping alive the values of the Royal British Legion.

Marie
Chair



At our August meeting Bill Sergeant was presented with Lifetime Achievement Award. Congratulations Bill!

Grassington 1940s Event



On Saturday 19 September we visited the town of Grassington in North Yorkshire to take part in the annual 1940's event. Thankfully the weather was quite kind to us, although a bit windy at times. We had a coach of approximately 44 people. There were many regulars on the trip, but we were lucky to have several newcomers joining us. From those I have spoken to since, they said they had a lovely time and hoped to be able to join us again in the future.

The town is quite small, but there was still plenty for us to see and do including outside entertainment. There were dance displays and everyone was invited to join in and have a go. The event was very well attended. Many people took part in the spirit of things and dressed in 1940's style. Although there were several cafes, pubs and restaurants they were all very busy with people wanting to buy food and drinks and generally soak up the atmosphere.



In our coach group there were a few of us who had decided to also enter into the spirit of things and dressed in 1940's. Ben Jackson was a particular hit, dressed in his khaki WW2 uniform, Many people took the opportunity to take his photograph. One photo in particular was taken with a chap who was dressed as Captain Mainwaring from Dad's Army. This was a fantastic photo so has been included in this article. They were quickly tagged as Captain Mainwaring and Corporal Jones. I think you will agree they certainly look the part.

Jackie Brown was also requested for many photographs. I think she felt like Royalty or a Super Star. She looked amazing and we might have to ask for her autograph in future!



I would like to thank everyone who came along and made the day really special. Thank you also to the people who provided raffle prizes and to Aaron Wythe for arranging the coach for us and providing us with a fun quiz. I hope you will all be able to join us again when we arrange our future trips.

Marie

For more photos of the trip, take a look at our webpage:-
https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/hale

Poppy Appeal 2026

This year's Poppy Appeal begins on 22nd October running through to Wednesday 11th November and we will be covering a number of supermarkets and the Retail Park again. If you have a couple of hours to spare and would like to volunteer, then please get in touch with Bill Sergeant, our Poppy Appeal Organise. Telephone 0151 724 3171.

Trip to Ypres 2027

As there are a number of 110th anniversaries in 2027 in addition to the centenary of the unveiling of the Menin Gate in 2027, we will be visiting Ypres in April. We will be staying in a central hotel and visiting various cemeteries and places of interest. The dates are Thursday 22nd to Monday 26th April. If you are interested in going on this trip, please let Lesley or Marie know as soon as possible.

Another Unsung Hero

Reading military history intrigues me – not only because of the heroism involved but also when I come across a local man about whose exploits I have been until now unaware. I recently read a biography of Major Anders Lassen VC MC (two Bars), a Danish military officer who was the only non-Commonwealth and the only SAS recipient of the Victoria Cross during WW2 and with David Stirling and Paddy Mayne was one of the first operatives in the Small Scale Raiding Force (SSRF), the SAS and the Special Boat Service (SBS). Lassen's story is fantastic but my interest was caught by a reference in the book to one of his men, Sergeant Douglas (Duggie) Pomford, a native of Liverpool. I decided to do some research on Duggie.



He was born on 29th March 1920, the youngest of seven children of John and Martha Pomford, who lived at 21 Shaw's Alley, Liverpool, later moving to 19 Hatherley Street, Liverpool 8. He attended St Michael's Church and School, Upper Pitt Street, and was later to describe himself as having been a "rascal" as a youngster, having once run away with his dog to join a circus! Having said that, he was a member and subsequently an officer with the 17th (Liverpool) Battalion Boy's Brigade. He took up boxing and became the Golden Gloves middleweight champion, eventually fighting Bruce Woodcock, later to be British Heavyweight Champion, in 1938 in the Amateur Boxing Association semi-final in Blackpool. By 1939, his father had died and Duggie was living at 19 Hatherley Street with his widowed mother and his brother and sister and working as a mill porter.

On the outbreak of war, he joined the South Lancashire Regiment but 6 months later was selected for the 11th Commando and was to become a founding member of the Special Boat Section (later SBS). In October 1941, he was one of those selected to take part in Operation Flipper – an operation to include the capture or killing of Erwin Rommel in Libya. Commandos were to be dropped by two submarines but one of the subs found it impossible to land its complement, including Duggie Pomford. Consequently understrength, the operation became a disaster with only 3 of 34 men surviving the raid unscathed. This was a costly episode in their learning curve but they were soon active again with the SBS and Duggie was one of some 200 of its members stationed at their training base in Palestine from where they launched surprise attacks on three airfields in Nazi-occupied Crete having been delivered there by sea. Despite being greatly outnumbered, they destroyed numerous planes and Nazi fuel supplies – the stuff of films! He and his comrades then turned their attention to other of the Greek islands, all occupied by the Nazis and including Kos and Leros. Again, they were totally successful, clearing the enemy and establishing an airfield for Allied use. When the Nazis counter-attacked, the Commandos were obliged to retreat to Turkey. Duggie Pomford was awarded a Military Medal for bravery during these attacks. In 1944, it was decided to send a team of elite fighters from the SBS to retake

the islands and in particular the airfield and Duggie was one of them. Again, delivered surreptitiously by sea, they launched surprise attacks on the islands of Ios, Naxos and Amorgos. It was during these raids that he earned a Bar to his Military Medal. On one such raid, he took two senior Nazi officers by surprise as they were changing for bed; they fought back but were no match for born fighter Duggie, who killed them both with his bare hands. These are just a few examples of numerous operations in which he participated and which continued when, in 1945 and having qualified as a paratrooper, he was deployed to the Balkans before being demobilised in 1946.



Returning to Liverpool on leave in January 1945, he found himself the surprised guest of 17th City of Liverpool Battalion of the Boys Brigade in St Michael in the City's church hall in Cornwallis Street with whom he had served and first learned to box. A modest man, he managed to address those present about Army life but no mention of his exploits – in fact he did not even tell his parents about what he had done to earn his MM and Bar! In fact, he was no doubt conscious of the secret nature of what he had done – even the London Gazette, when reporting the award of his MM, said he was serving with the South Lancashire Regiment. He was dismayed to see that his old school and the church itself had been destroyed during the Blitz, and declared that he "would rather face Alamein again" than go through the ordeal of public speaking again! Asked why he held his right arm so stiffly, he merely said it was because he had been wounded – in fact this had occurred during one of the Crete raids. In July 1945, giving his address as 1 Eversley Street, he married Catherine Cavanagh in All Saints Church, Bentley Road, Liverpool, the Liverpool Echo describing him as a former amateur boxer who had fought Bruce Woodcock in 1938 and been awarded his medals for raids on Rhodes and German-occupied islands in the Aegean. Following demobilisation, Duggie became the foreman of the Port of Liverpool Stevedoring Company and on 27th May 1954 the Liverpool Echo reported that Duggie had been one of three dockers who rescued a young seaman who had fallen into the Mersey from his ship, the Dunedin Star. He was awarded a Shipwreck & Humane Society certificate – but sadly his wallet containing £10 had been lost/stolen from his coat during the rescue!

He had maintained his interest in boxing and during a visit to Chicago in 1946 he visited the Golden Gloves Boxing Club and was so impressed that in 1947 he was instrumental in the creation of the Golden Gloves Boxing Club in Admiral Street (now in Lodge Lane) which is still going strong almost 80 years later.

On 29th October 1969, aged only 48 years and living in Alwyn Avenue, Litherland, he died in hospital "after much suffering". His grave is in Anfield Cemetery, Section 17, Grave 4445.

Bill Sergeant

If anyone would like to write a short report, an article about yourself, any ex-servicemen/women, book review for inclusion in a Newsletter, please email it to Lesley Jackson – jacksonlesley66@gmail.com

Deadlines for inclusion are 15th January, May and September

The RBL Hale Branch meet on the first Wednesday of every month at 8.00pm at The Childe of Hale public house. Please do come along.

You don't have to be a member to join us on our trips so if you would like to come along please contact:-
Lesley Jackson jacksonlesley66@gmail.com or telephone 07891 553810;
Marie Fisher marie.fisher@ymail.com or telephone 07958 399252