

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

JUNE 2020



VE DAY 75

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LEGION



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WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

By now, you will be all too familiar with the phrases currently filling our news bulletins and newspapers, such as 'uncharted waters', 'lockdown', 'social isolation' and 'the new normal'. I hope this special issue provides some comfort and distraction. I felt a mixture of emotions – joy tinged with some sadness – when reading the VE Day 75 feature (page 16), highlighting our celebrations of 8 May. Various teams within the Legion worked tirelessly to create what proved to be an incredible programme of events. The obvious concern of not getting together for our intended street parties, parades and countless singalongs was soon swept aside by the extraordinary teamwork.

The core focus remained unchanged: to acknowledge the Service and sacrifice of the Second World War generation. Moving testimonies from veterans reminded us of how much had been given to bring us our freedom. It is poignant to make parallels between then and now, and to reflect that it is the Second World War generation who are currently most socially isolated. I do hope that listening to Katherine Jenkins's glorious singing or the nationwide singalong of *We'll Meet Again* will have lifted their and your spirits. The whole day demonstrated belief in the art of the possible – and a reminder of what can be achieved through creativity and collaboration.

COVID-19 has presented many challenges to our work but has not altered our commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community. The tight-knit network of Legion supporters who make up our membership, as well as those who volunteer or work on staff, have rallied to the call for nationwide support of those in need. As you will read in our feature, The Legion's Lockdown Action Plan (page 28), all our teams have found innovative ways to continue to support veterans and their families.

These are difficult times for us all, but one of the positive outcomes has been the way we have come together, just as we did in 1940. I am lucky to have a garden and regular food deliveries, thanks to my husband Peter having had 'the letter'! And the joy of online technology means that I have been able to speak to many overseas branches, including São Paulo and Kenya. You are all in my thoughts and, when allowed, I look forward to my Wednesday bingo at Royston Legion, dominoes and meals out, but most of all, I look forward to a cuddle from my grandchildren. Stay well and God bless you all.

Una Cleminson

UNA CLEMINSON BEM TD
National Chairman

For queries relating to The Royal British Legion, call 0808 802 8080

(8am-8pm, seven days a week, free from UK landlines and main mobile networks)



Top: RAF veteran Stuart Allen is among those who have been helped by the Legion during lockdown
Above: We look back at the highlights of this year's VE Day 75 commemorations

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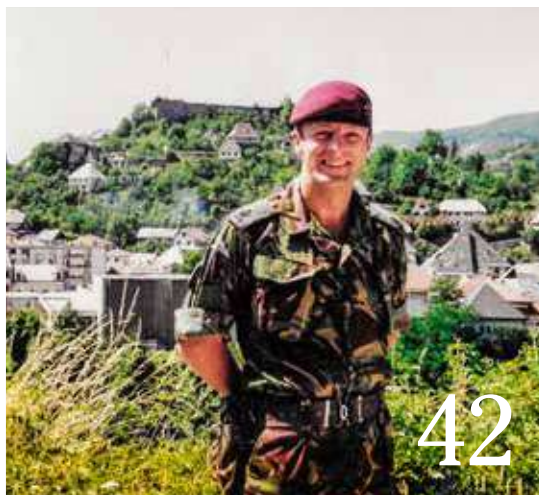
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Commemorating the 75th anniversary of VE Day

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A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST LEGION
STORIES MAKING HEADLINES





Warrant Officer Scott 'Barney' Barnett, an Air Engineering Officer at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, has helped produce nearly 7,000 face masks for doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and Care Homes

COVID-19 TASK FORCE

A 20,000-strong military COVID-19 support force has been assisting the NHS and the police, both operating at full stretch, in dealing with the coronavirus crisis. Since March, troops from each of the three Services have played a leading role in helping to build field hospitals, delivering personal protective equipment to front-line health workers and running more than 90 mobile coronavirus-testing sites. Much of the help has been practical, from using 3D printers to make protective face shields to driving NHS oxygen tankers and using military aircraft to transport key NHS staff to hospitals around the UK. But non-uniformed military personnel have also been deployed in a planning and logistics role to tackle the pressure on Care Homes, where there have been many deaths, after a request by Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Robert Jenrick.

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Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk in his poppy-embroidered shirt

FOOTBALL RAISES OVER £500,000 FOR THE LEGION

Premier League and English Football League clubs pulled out all the stops to raise money for the Legion, with auctions of special-edition football shirts embroidered with the poppy. Players wore the shirts for games in the lead-up to November 2019 Remembrance weekend in a show

of support. After they'd signed the match-worn shirts, these were auctioned online, raising a record £503,798, with all proceeds going to the Legion. The highest-selling single shirts belonged to Liverpool FC duo Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk, which raised £3,800 and £3,900 respectively.

MARKING VJ DAY 75

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we're reviewing plans for our event at the National Memorial Arboretum in August to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VJ Day. While we may not be able to deliver our original programme as we had intended, we'll still be marking this important anniversary and are working with the Government and partner organisations to make sure our plans align with advisories likely to be in place at the time – stay tuned for details. In the meantime, are you from the Second World War generation with a memory or story from VJ Day you'd like to share? Whether you served in the Asia Pacific region or marked VJ Day at home, please email prteam@britishlegion.org.uk



Ken recently visited his old squadron, where he was presented with a shield by the Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant Emelye Kenyon RAFAC

CALLING ALL CADETS

The Air Training Corps, now part of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets, marks its 80th anniversary in 2021. As part of the celebrations, the ATC would like to find cadets from when the Corps was formed back in 1941, to hear their memories.

One such cadet is Ken Muddimer, who joined the Air Defence Cadet Corps (a forerunner of the ATC) at the age of 13,

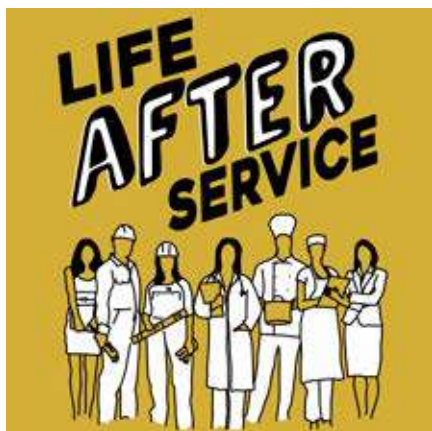
before becoming a cadet in the No 1 (City of Leicester) Squadron in 1941. Now in his early 90s, Ken asks, could he be the oldest surviving air cadet?

If you were an air cadet in the early years or know someone who was, contact Squadron Leader Al Munns RAFAC at al.munns@btinternet.com or HQ Air Cadets, RAF Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincs NG34 8HB.

STEREOTYPES OVERTURNED

The British Forces Broadcasting Service's new *Life After Service* podcast covers some of the exciting careers, businesses and sporting challenges undertaken by veterans after their Service career. The podcast aims to encourage the public to re-evaluate its perceptions of veterans. A study the BFBS commissioned earlier this year found that two-thirds of adults in the UK have been put off joining the military amid fears they will struggle to get a job or buy a home when they leave. Official statistics (the most recent are from a 2017 population survey) show these fears may be groundless: 79 per cent of working-age veterans are employed and they are as likely to be employed as non-veterans. Punchy and inspiring, the podcast is full of real-life examples.

Visit radio.bfbs.com/podcasts



Behind the scenes of the Legion's VE Day 75 livestream

LEGION COVID-19 UPDATE

Like all organisations, the Legion has had to pivot and rethink how we do what we do during the COVID-19 pandemic. The vibrant programme of virtual VE Day 75 activities this May demonstrates what we can still achieve during these challenging times – for more about this, turn to page 16.

Staff have been working remotely while our offices and Pop In Centres remain closed, but a special thank you goes to all those working in and supporting our Care Homes,

which continue to provide excellent care for our residents.

As we go to press, we're making plans for our lockdown exit, and our Aylesford factory is beginning to produce paper poppies again, following Government advice on physical distancing and using appropriate personal protective equipment.

We'll also be building on the success of VE Day 75 when we mark VJ Day 75 in August and this year's Remembrancetide. **For the latest information, visit www.britishlegion.org.uk**



Andy on his trip around the Beacon

PROPER JOB

Andy McReady, Vice Chairman of the Legion's St Agnes Branch, took part in the 2.6 Challenge when the London Marathon was cancelled this April. He cycled his trike (named 'Poppy') around the lanes of St Agnes Beacon, Cornwall, 26 times on marathon day, clocking up 80 miles while cleverly never being more than two miles from home. He stopped just once for a Cornish pasty at 1pm, and his ride has raised hundreds of pounds for the Legion. Poppy the trike is well travelled – three years ago, Andy rode for almost 3,000 miles across Australia, including the 90 Mile Straight across Nullarbor Plain, raising around £5,000 for the Legion.



The Ballymoney Branch and Club committee members

TWO NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCHES WIN QUEEN'S AWARD

The Legion's Waterside Branch in Londonderry and the Ballymoney Branch in County Antrim have been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. Both branches received their award for outstanding work supporting members of the Armed Forces, especially veterans and their families, living in the community.

With more than 500 members, the Waterside Branch has been commended for its schools team, which has taken a cross-community approach to teaching children about the Armed Forces through interdenominational Remembrance services. Last year, the branch's members and volunteers raised £33,000 for the Legion's annual Poppy Appeal.

Ballymoney Branch volunteers have excelled at delivering food parcels and providing a telephone befriending service to those severely affected by the COVID-19 lockdown.

"To receive an award this year is a huge honour for us and is testament to the commitment of our volunteers

in helping others," says Ballymoney Branch Chairman Mark McLaughlin.

Representatives from each branch will receive their awards later this year from the Lord Lieutenants of the City of Londonderry and County Antrim respectively. Two volunteers from each branch will also attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in May 2021. The award is regarded as the equivalent of the MBE in the voluntary sector and was created in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee; recipients are announced each year on 2 June, the anniversary of HM The Queen's coronation.



Chelsea Pensioner Walter Swann at Oakgrove Integrated Primary School for the Waterside Branch's education programme

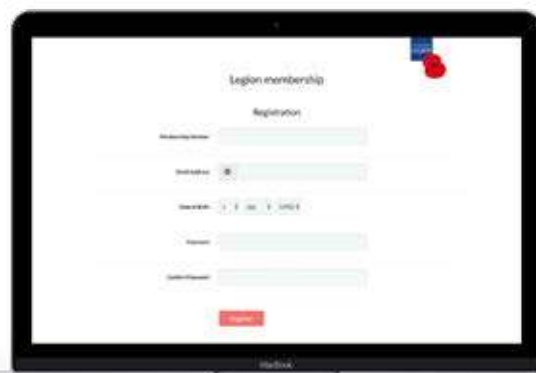
DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Since 1 October 2018, approximately 19 per cent of all members have renewed their membership online, helping us to minimise costs. **Have you tried the Legion's Self-Service Portal yet?**

You can renew your membership, pay online and change your details by visiting the Legion's Self-Service Portal – a secure area of the Legion website created just for members. To log in, please visit **selfservice.britishlegion.org.uk**. If you don't yet have an account, you can register quickly and easily by following this step-by-step guide:

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REMEMBER

Renewing your membership by Direct Debit is the most cost-effective method, saving the Legion much-needed funds processing your renewal.

MY LEGION

“THE LEGION IS NOT JUST FOR OLDER PEOPLE”

Desiree Niezen, Honorary Secretary for the Hanover Branch, is working to increase the visibility of the Legion in Germany and attract younger members

“

I joined the Legion by accident. My partner Lucas, who's a Sergeant in the German Army medical corps, joined the Hanover Branch in January 2018. One weekend, the branch was a person short for its Highland Games team and I offered to fill in. I had such a great time and I thought, 'Why not join them and support a charity at the same time?'

We go to about five Highland Games a year – they're very popular in Germany – and we take our stand and raise money for the Poppy Appeal. It's a great chance to promote the Legion as, so often, veterans who need help are isolated and don't know we're here for them.

Last year, when I became Branch Honorary Secretary, I started a Facebook page to help make us more visible, and we've had new members join recently, even though we've been in lockdown.

Our branch is only five years old but we already have a huge variety of members, including people who have just arrived in Germany, those who have been living here for years, Germans, Brits and other nationalities, including me – I'm from Groningen in the Netherlands.

Our branch members are relatively young, and I'm working to change the idea that the Legion



Desiree (front left) taking part in Germany's Volkstrauertag commemorations along with her partner Lucas Funnell (back left)



Members of the Hanover Branch attend a service in Neustadt am Rübenberge organised by reservists

is just for older people. In March, I became District Youth Officer and have been talking to schools and organisations such as Pathfinders (a co-ed Scouts' Association) about possible affiliations. For example, for Remembrance we lay poppy crosses on graves in the War Cemetery and the Military Cemetery – they could possibly help us with that, and we could explore what to do for them in exchange.

We also have a good connection with the German reservists – they attend some of our events and we attend theirs. This includes the annual service in Neustadt am Rübenberge to commemorate the blowing up of the Löwenbrücke over the river Leine in April 1945, during which 28 British soldiers were killed and the wounded were treated by German civilians.

The branch organises a Remembrance service in Hanover

**“THE HANOVER
BRANCH HAS
A FAMILY
FEELING, AND
I THINK THAT’S
IMPORTANT”**



Desiree (bottom left) with the Hanover Branch's Highland Games team

every November – last year, we had a record 100 attendees. A week later, we lay a wreath for Volkstrauertag, the German version of Remembrance. In June, we have a reception to celebrate HM The Queen's birthday, and we take the Legion stand to events such as British Weekend, which is a celebration of British food and music in Hanover.

One of the challenges I face is that Lucas and I live in Koblenz, 400km from Hanover, and I fit in the Legion work around doing a Masters in International Relations at the University of Groningen. But I keep in touch with other Branch Officers via WhatsApp and we often head to Hanover for events.

For me, one of the best things about being involved with the Legion is that I get to have contact with a lot of different people. The branch has a family feeling, and I think that's important.” ➤➤

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"I WEAR MY GOLD BADGE WITH PRIDE"

Malcolm Ireson is a lifelong member of the Costessey & District Branch, as was his father before him. He has been recognised for his dedication and commitment to helping beneficiaries for more than two decades



Malcolm wears medals from his grandfather and father for the 100-year commemoration of the First World War

“

I was born in 1936 in Old Costessey, a few miles West of Norwich, and I have lived here most of my life. Both grandads served in the First World War and my father served in the Second, in the Eighth Army under General Montgomery. Father went away in 1941 and came back in 1945, so we didn't see him for that length of time.

Most of Norfolk was covered in airfields, with lots of Americans and Italian prisoners of war in our village – we'd see the latter, with white circles on their backs, coppicing woodland around our way.

I remember the sky turning red and Norwich lit up during air raids, as well as walking through rolls of foil, dropped out of aircraft to confuse radar systems, on my way to school. Going to the Anderson shelter was a bit of a chore. I don't know how Mum put up with it all, especially the loss of a child when my seven-year-old sister was killed by a military vehicle outside our gate.

When a Liberator heavy bomber

crashed in our village, I went to the site soon after with a brother and a cousin, and we were chased away by the Americans. We have a plaque in the churchyard with the crew's names, which are read out along with the names on our memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

After leaving school, I was apprenticed to my father for five years in his building business, and in 1957, when I was 21, I did my national service in the 29th Company RAOC. I became Corporal and I'm still in contact with four mates. One of them had two boys, and my wife Yvonne and I had two girls and a son – my eldest daughter and my mate's younger son got married and now live in Australia.

Father was in the Legion and began helping with fêtes and various things. I joined in my 30s and went to the occasional meeting with him, as well as helping the Welfare Secretary with deliveries. In around 2000, I took on the role of Secretary of the Welfare Committee, visiting beneficiaries in hospital and the sick at home. It was satisfying to sit and chat and perhaps get a few groceries for them – when you visit someone, it's uplifting for both of you. I also did a Housebound and Hospital course, which was useful. It was one of my most enjoyable responsibilities but, after 20 years, I stood down as Secretary in 2019.

Each year, I used to make a small collection of Christmas gifts for the

elderly and infirm in the village – we set a bit of money aside in the branch to buy them. Records going back to the war show that years ago, that would be a hundredweight of coal or a bottle of whisky. Decades later, it would still be a bottle of something or we'd deliver biscuits or chocolates. Yvonne helped me through the years, all the time. I helped with the Poppy Appeal for 35 years, and they gave me a medal for that!

Then at the annual Christmas dinner last year, I was taken by surprise when our Chairman, Stewart Blackburn, called me up during his address and presented me with a Gold Badge for my service. I was lost for words. I had no idea. I'm privileged and humbled by this because there are many people in the group who have done far more than I ever did. I will wear it with pride for all those in the branch who do so much.”



Malcolm receives a Gold Badge from Costessey & District Branch Chairman Group Captain Stewart Blackburn MBE

VE DAY 75: THE TRIUMPH OF HOPE OVER ADVERSITY

When nationwide commemorative events were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legion deployed inspirational teamwork and extraordinary ingenuity to create a series of events we'll never forget

Today's commemorations are obviously different to those we'd planned only a few short months ago," announced presenter Sonali Shah at the beginning of the Legion's livestream broadcast, just after the Two Minute Silence on 8 May 2020, the 75th anniversary of VE Day. "Life has changed dramatically for all of us in that time and particularly for the Second World War veterans for whom today means so much. Today they find themselves in lockdown, sometimes alone."

It was a sombre acknowledgement that those who sacrificed so much during the Second World War are once again being asked to put the good of society above their own comfort and freedom. But while the recognition of sacrifice was an important part of this day, the occasion also offered a chance for

them to reflect, to remember and to "rejoice in everything that was achieved 75 years ago".

While the day's activities – almost all of them on television and online – made space for respectful Remembrance, there was also joy, thankfulness and plenty of fun. In the BBC's coverage on the Friday evening, *Strictly Come Dancing* star Anton Du Beke performed *Puttin' on the Ritz* to the nation in front of a spaced-apart military band in the otherwise empty courtyard of Buckingham Palace and made it feel like a packed concert hall. In the Legion's livestream, cookbook author Melissa Hemsley made vegetable fritters (inspired by victory gardens and rationing) in her kitchen, while in the studio Sonali Shah produced, *Blue Peter*-style, some she had made earlier so they could compare ingredients.

There were dozens of other heartfelt performances and interviews throughout the day, both on the BBC and the Legion's website. And while much of it was – as we've become used to in recent weeks – via video call, with occasionally patchy reception, it was all the more intimate and personal because of that. People spoke from the heart, from their homes. And for some, that meant Care Homes: in the BBC's coverage, David Jason and TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge visited (virtually, of course) the Legion's own Galanos House and Mais House to speak to residents about not only their VE Day memories, but also about the difficulties of living in lockdown. The staff watched on in face masks, but their smiling eyes gave away their enjoyment of the whole event.

"There were clearly things that »



"LIFE HAS CHANGED
DRAMATICALLY,
PARTICULARLY
FOR THE SECOND
WORLD WAR
VETERANS FOR
WHOM TODAY
MEANS SO MUCH"



I wished we had more time to deliver, but the range and quality of the programmes on VE Day made me feel immensely proud given the challenges we faced,” says Bob Gamble OBE, the Legion’s Assistant Director for Commemorative Events. “It’s worth remembering that the BBC broadcast was produced from scratch in just eight weeks. That was made possible through working effectively with major partners such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the Ministry of Defence and especially with the BBC but, as importantly, it was the collaborative effort of staff from right across the Legion.”

Catherine Davies, the Legion’s Head of Remembrance, was part of the team that brought together the livestream on the Legion’s website. When it became clear that the physical events would have to be cancelled, she says: “We didn’t even need to brainstorm what we were going to do. It was just, ‘We have to do it digitally. How do we do it?’ It’s amazing what is possible when you’re willing to collaborate and be creative with the situation that’s been given to you.”

She cites the Legion’s Standard Bearers as an example of that creativity. Hundreds of branch members and counterparts from other veteran organisations across the world lowered their Standards in their homes and sent pictures, which were displayed during the livestream (see opposite). “They were determined they wanted to do this, and it was right that we were able to show that,” Catherine says. Elsewhere, musicians from the Armed Forces, emergency services and NHS performed *We’ll Meet Again*. The music had been arranged by David Cole OBE MVO, the Legion’s Director of Music, and each performer had recorded themselves playing their part, including one



Tony Strange dresses as Winston Churchill to entertain the residents of Mais House Care Home on VE Day

“OUR STREETS ARE NOT EMPTY. THEY ARE FILLED WITH THE LOVE AND CARE WE HAVE FOR EACH OTHER”

police officer who had used the station garage as a recording space.

Among the more reflective sections of the Legion’s livestream was an interview with the historian Julie Summers. “The sense of community is extraordinarily powerful today – that’s something people had during the war and it’s what we have now. That’s one of the positive aspects of lockdown.”

HM The Queen closed the BBC’s evening coverage, her message focused on the uniting of generations in a shared understanding of similar experiences. “Today, it may seem hard that we cannot mark this special anniversary as we would wish,” she said. “Instead, we remember from our homes and our doorsteps. But our streets are not empty. They are filled with the love and the care that we have for each other. And when I look at our country today and see what we are willing to do to protect and support one another, I say with pride that we are still a nation those brave soldiers, sailors and airmen would recognise and admire.”

Watch it all again online at www.rbl.org.uk/veday75 or search ‘VE Day 75’ on BBC iPlayer.



TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge paid a virtual visit to the Legion’s Galanos House and Mais House Care Homes to speak to residents as part of the VE Day commemorations



Huntingdon & District Branch virtual parade

Soon after the lockdown was announced, Huntingdon & District Branch Membership Secretary Steven Carr came up with the idea of a virtual Standard parade as a way to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day. Initially, Steven was hoping for a few other branches to become involved, but as word about this initiative spread among members, it was so popular that more than 350 Legion branches and a number of other associations took part. The virtual parade also attracted positive media coverage and was included in the VE Day livestream.

Steven explains: "Our branch was aiming to attend a flag-raising ceremony at 11am on VE Day. There was also another ceremony nearby,

which a number of us were planning to be at. When it became clear that neither of these ceremonies was going to happen, I decided that such an important event could not go unmarked. I wanted to perform a private act of Remembrance in the garden at home for my wife and me. Although we are in less-than-ideal circumstances during lockdown, they pale into insignificance when you compare them to the struggles and sacrifices that the veterans faced to bring about the end of the war in Europe.

"I shared the idea on Yammer, thinking that maybe a few others might like to do the same thing to mark the Two Minute Silence. As more people joined, it morphed into a full-on virtual parade with more than 350 contributors." >>

More than 350 Standard Bearers lowered their Standards in their gardens and shared pictures, which together created an inspirational virtual parade

"I DECIDED THAT
SUCH AN
IMPORTANT
EVENT COULD
NOT GO
UNMARKED"



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Second World War veteran Bernard Morgan takes part in the Two Minute Silence outside his home

Isle of Wight

Community groups from across the island came together, remotely, to create a film celebrating and commemorating VE Day 75. Ian Ward, President of the Isle of Wight Royal British Legion, says: "While events planned for this year couldn't proceed, in different ways we can still remember the sacrifices made 75 years ago, and think forward to when we will be able to meet up again and share the memories of what this day means to us all."

The film can be seen on YouTube and will undoubtedly form part of the island's history. As well as featuring previously unseen footage of local celebrations, it contains words of hope and encouragement from local dignitaries.

Susie Sheldon (pictured below), the Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, spoke directly to her fellow islanders: "For those of you who are alone or worried at the moment, VE Day is a reminder that there is an end to everything and we should look forward to the future with hope. Just as at the end of the war, life did not immediately return to normal, so the weeks ahead will hold challenges for all of us. But for the moment, try to forget the present, enjoy the past and imagine joining in the celebrations on the Isle of Wight 75 years ago."



Donald Hunter, Merchant Navy radio officer

"I joined the Merchant Navy at 16 and trained as a radio officer. During the Battle of the Atlantic, I served on three Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships. Two were high-octane aviation-fuel tankers, high-explosive ships. My cabin was on the main fuel-tank deck, so I was a bit nervous going to bed.

My first ship was an infantry landing ship – we were transporting

troops to Juno Beach during the D-Day landings. I was 18 and it was my first experience of warfare. We had to bring the troops right on to the beach. We were directly under fire from the Germans, who were determined to sink us, but we were determined to beat them.

On VE Day, I was in India on a tanker. We were awaiting orders to go to the Pacific to join the combined Allied fleet for the attack on Japan. When the Japanese surrendered, we were pleased for ourselves – but very sad for the great loss of life. It should never have happened.

I didn't return until just after VJ Day. I landed in Falmouth and came up to meet the family. The first thing my mother did was tell me off for not communicating with her. My letters never made it home and my family had no idea where I was all the time I was abroad."



"EVERY NIGHT,
WE HEARD THIS
HEAVY ROARING
OF THE BOMBERS
GOING OVER TO
GERMANY"



Mary Bowen-Bravery, RAF nurse

"I was training at Leeds General Infirmary when the war began, and I was planning to become a health visitor. Then in 1944, a bomb dropped on our theatre, which had just been built. No one was hurt but the theatre was ruined. And it was then that I felt that I ought to be doing something for the war effort.

The next thing that made me change my mind was when we had

a group of prisoners of war from a field hospital – 36 patients arrived one night and we were all called up to help. They'd been plastered in a field hospital first and they had grotesque casts, some with their arms wired up and really in a bad state. Each one of them had to go to theatre to be checked with an X-ray to make sure their limbs had been put in the right place.

When a friend who I'd grown up with was killed in a Pathfinder

squadron, I felt I ought to be helping with my training. I joined Princess Mary's RAF Nursing Service. I went to Ely in Cambridgeshire and we were all in Nissen huts. Every night, we heard this heavy roaring – the bombers going over to Germany. The noise was breathtaking – and the feeling was that these boys were going and may not come back.


For VE Day, I was in India, so I didn't see any of the celebrations. I missed all that."

SURVIVING



ISOLATION

Doug Farrington salutes his Second World War comrades from his home on the 75th anniversary of VE Day



While lockdown may mean being physically cut off from friends and family, it can have surprising benefits. Here is our guide to thriving in this time

Shielding, in the COVID-19 context, means that those deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable must take extra care to minimise contact with others. This is what has been demanded by the Government and scientists to help prevent the spread of the virus.

In a wider context, isolation is happening in all sorts of situations – not just to those in the shielding category. Doctors and nurses on the front line describe moving out of the family home to protect their loved ones. Even those who are not alone can feel isolated while cut off from their usual activities and only able to keep in touch via phone and video calls. We have become accustomed to the reminder that “we’re all in this together”, so here are our tips to help you through this time.

Have an objective, no matter how small

This is about giving your day a specific purpose, no matter how minor. The Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, who spent several months isolated aboard the International Space Station, shared some advice on YouTube. “What is your mission right now?” he suggests we ask ourselves. “Make one that is clear, for this afternoon, for the next week, for the next month. What do you want to get done?” Similarly, John McCarthy, who along with Brian Keenan and Terry Waite was held hostage in the late 1980s by terrorists in Lebanon, has told how he survived his harsh circumstances through the shared humour and deep bonds he formed with his fellow hostages. “I tell people that the human drive for survival is so strong that you keep going no matter what,” he says.

If you’re feeling isolated during lockdown, use this time to consider tackling projects you’re normally keen to postpone – for example, working in the garden, dealing with outstanding admin, mastering an exercise technique or decluttering your house. Constructive activities provide a sense of achievement. Bill, who is shielding because he has a lung condition, says: “I always have some plan of action for the next day, even if it’s minor. My advice is, don’t go to bed wondering how you’re going to fill your time when you wake up.”

Doug Farrington (pictured left), who served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers (7th Battalion) between 1943 and 1947, was due to travel to London with the Legion for VE Day 75 celebrations. “I sold poppies for the Legion for 22 years; it’s always close to my heart,” he says. Instead of joining the Legion’s planned celebrations on 8 May, Doug stayed home alone in Oldham and, by saluting his comrades through his window, paid a solitary tribute to those who had served.

“My daughter has been brilliant [throughout lockdown],” he explains. “I give her my shopping list and she sorts it all for me. To be honest, the lockdown hasn’t really bothered me yet, I just take it on board. I think the secret to getting through all this is that I’m keeping myself busy. I’ve got a big 60ft garden at the back with my greenhouse and my workshop, so I’m able to potter about. The day I start worrying about stuff will be the day Nelson gets his eye back! I just carry on, regardless. I’ve also had a few calls from The Royal British Legion, which has been lovely. It’s great that they keep in touch with me.” ➤➤



Switch off the news

Mental-health charity Mind suggests that we should limit our consumption of news stories that may contribute to anxiety. Sally, who lives alone and has not been out during lockdown because she suffers from asthma, agrees. "I'm making an effort to stay informed but not to binge-read the news. I check a couple of key websites in the mornings and evenings, and that's it," she says. At the beginning of lockdown, she could hardly drag herself away from rolling news – until she realised the effect it was having on her mental state. "Obviously, this is a negative situation and some people are having an awful time, but I don't think me becoming anxious will change the situation," she says. She adds that turning off the news and focusing on what she can actually control has helped keep her on an even keel.

Make a list

Checklists are a popular way of giving yourself focus. "I get satisfaction from ticking things off, and it calms me to know that I have my priorities in order," says Catherine, who has cerebral palsy and is shielding at home. Catherine suggests breaking a task down into its constituent parts: "Don't just write 'gardening' – list the smaller, individual tasks. As you tick them off, it makes you feel you've achieved something."

US Navy officer John Rafferty, who once spent a month on a submarine, told the World Economic Forum: "Making lists for the future can be helpful – it gives you hope and makes you realise there is a world on the other side. When the world opens up again, you'll be able to go to those places and do all

"PEOPLE THINK OF ISOLATION AS NEGATIVE, BUT IT ALLOWS A TRUE FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE"

the things you used to do. Making a list helps you focus on the good things that you can look forward to."

Keep in touch

Mind encourages those who are feeling isolated to try video chat, phoning or messaging people you'd normally see in person. "Make a plan to watch a TV show or read a book to have something you can discuss," says the charity.

But it's also good to learn to enjoy time to yourself. "You don't need to be constantly connecting," says Anne, who is self-isolating with COVID-19 symptoms. "One or two calls a week to friends is enough for me to feel better."

Look after yourself

"It's easy to neglect our physical health when we are worried or distracted, so try to stay aware of your wellbeing, as well as your sleep and eating patterns," says the charity Age UK. Eat well, drink water and exercise regularly is the advice provided by the NHS.

Lots of people are using alcohol to cope, but many are drinking less or not at all. Research by the charity Alcohol Change UK found that a fifth of adults who normally drink started drinking more frequently after lockdown began on 23 March. But one in three were either drinking less often or had stopped altogether. Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance UK, says: "Cutting down on alcohol will not only improve our own health, but it will help to protect the NHS long term."

Focus on the positive

We can learn from those who have lived an isolated life for centuries. "People think of isolation as negative," Sister Philippa, a nun at the Benedictine community of Stanbrook Abbey (pictured above), told *The Times*. "But our way of life has demonstrated that the concentration you get from this existence allows a true focus on the positive."

The first female commander of the International Space Station, Peggy Whitson has spent a total of 665 days in space. "COVID-19 gives us a higher purpose much like being in space does because we are saving lives by quarantining," she told the World Economic Forum. "It is important to understand that bigger purpose to give you reason and rationale for continuing to put up with the situation."

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THE LEGION'S LOCKDOWN ACTION PLAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our way of life here and across the globe, but it hasn't halted the Legion's core purpose of supporting the Armed Forces community. Here, members and staff share examples of how the organisation has risen to the challenge during these testing times



The Legion has been a crucial pillar of the British community since its founding in 1921. From supporting veterans and their families on a day-to-day basis to being the custodian of Remembrance for the United Kingdom, the charity has played a pivotal role in society throughout its almost 100-year existence.

The Legion has demonstrated its value through many crises in its history and is doing so again during the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks in the main to the selfless actions of its members. The tight-knit network of Armed Forces supporters who make up its membership – as well as those who volunteer or work as staff for the Legion – have rallied

to answer the call for nationwide support of those in need.

Although COVID-19 is a different threat from those faced in the past, the measures aimed at stemming the rate of infections – including self-isolation, shielding and social distancing – have affected the work of the membership, employees and volunteers in unforeseen ways. Branch meetings have had to be cancelled, case workers can no longer visit those they support and the coming together as a nation for Remembrance events such as VE Day has been prohibited. Rather than admit defeat, the Legion has found innovative ways to work within the restrictions so that it can continue supporting veterans and their families. »



"THE LEGION
HAS FOUND
NEW WAYS TO
CONTINUE
SUPPORTING
VETERANS"

"WE CAN'T DO OUR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING OR PUB LUNCH, SO WE THOUGHT WE'D RING EVERYBODY TO KEEP IN TOUCH"

REACHING OUT

Even before the announcement of the full lockdown on 23 March, the Legion's members up and down the country were hard at work contacting vulnerable people in their community to offer support where needed. This is Branch Community Support in action.

Launched in 2016, the scheme was intended to help grow awareness among hard-to-reach individuals who may not have known about the assistance that was available to them through the Legion. The branch-led Telephone Buddies activities were also a way of breaking down loneliness.

Branches are tackling the crisis in their own ways and working alongside other organisations in the local community to support those who need it most. Swadlincote and District Branch was put in touch with

the local Morrisons supermarket, which was hoping to donate essential items to veterans in the town and surrounding area.

Branch Secretary Glyn Jackson explains: "Someone in my village who normally organises our village parade sent me an email explaining that the new Community Champion at Morrisons wanted to do food parcels for local veterans. As a branch, we attend local events for fundraising throughout the year, and having that community network link has been very helpful." Glyn is now working with Morrisons to assist with the distribution of

weekly food packages to veterans aged between 77 and 101, and the response has been very positive. "We've had people who have sent thanks afterwards," he says. "They're all initially shocked but welcome the receipt of the packages." The number of veterans receiving a delivery has already doubled as word gets out, and Glyn hopes more people will come forward as awareness grows further.

The Byfield and District Branch started its Telephone Buddies calls to members aged over 80 about 18 months ago, and it was this regular contact by telephone that influenced its lockdown idea. "We can't do our monthly membership meeting or pub lunch, so we thought we'd ring everybody – not just the ones who are over 80 – to keep in touch during lockdown," explains Byfield and District Branch Secretary Terry

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY



The Legion's branches are working hard to offer those in need everything from food parcels to companionship



Swadlincote and District Branch Chairman Stuart Allen, an RAF veteran, is just one of those who have received a food parcel from the Legion and Morrisons

Hoyle. "I got in touch with all of our 73 members during the first week of lockdown. They were all happy to hear from us, especially those who live alone or with spouses who have underlying health conditions such as Alzheimer's. This contact is important and brings them out of themselves in the absence of any of our usual social activity."

The branch's four committee members now have a shared rota and are phoning all of its members regularly throughout the lockdown. "It's a blessing that we have yet to find anyone in need," adds Terry. "Everyone on our list is well served by neighbours, family and friends – but now they have the added reassurance that we are on hand too and are not just a distant

organisation they subscribe to or only read about in magazines."

FRONT LINE ONLINE

While some branches are picking up the phone or delivering essentials by hand, others are using digital methods to stay connected during a time of social isolation. An

example of this is the St James's Branch's work with the Legion's six Care Homes, where visitors aren't allowed in order to keep vulnerable residents safe.

"There are headlines about the crisis in Care Homes, and I know a lot of friends and family of these residents are concerned," says Mike Dargan, editor of the branch's website and a volunteer at Legion Care Home Galanos House in Warwickshire. "Families of residents need reassurance that behind the headlines, there's a lot of positive news and safe care continuing, despite the obvious difficulties."

Steve Barnett, Assistant Director of Operations, says: "All of the Legion's Care Homes are doing a fantastic job under very difficult circumstances. The dedication and commitment of staff across all of the Legion's homes is truly incredible. Staff are going the extra mile to ensure that residents stay safe, maintain contact with relatives and that high standards of care are >>

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THAT WE'RE ON HAND AND ARE NOT
JUST A DISTANT ORGANISATION"**

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maintained throughout this extremely challenging time. As an organisation, we are supporting homes in responding to Government guidance, with the purchasing of personal protective equipment, through increased recruitment of staff and investment in looking after the wellbeing of our staff teams. The safety of residents and staff is the guiding principle in everything we are doing.”

Through its website, the St James’s Branch is helping to keep friends and families of residents well informed, sharing regular updates from all of the Legion’s six homes to show the dedicated work that is going on behind closed doors. Residents in Mais House, for example, are being entertained by musicians or performers at a safe distance in the home’s garden.

“Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, we’re updating the website

Work that the Legion used to carry out in person now takes place over the phone or via video calls

with information about the activities in the Care Homes and how hard the carers are working to ensure that all residents are being minimally affected by the whole maelstrom outside,” adds Mike.

“YOU FEAR LOSING THAT ONE-TO-ONE CONTACT, BUT NOW WE CAN DO OUR INITIAL RESPONSE FASTER”

CHANGING THE WAY WE HELP

COVID-19 has forced the Legion’s staff and volunteers to adapt the way they work to ensure that the assistance offered to those in the Armed Forces community is there during the crisis.

All work that used to be done in person – be it an outreach case worker visiting a beneficiary or an assessment at a Pop In Centre – is now done by telephone or video. In some instances, this has meant that beneficiaries are getting the help they need sooner.

“You fear losing that one-to-one contact in terms of someone coming down and sitting with

you, but we can do the initial response faster,” says Nicola Meredith, Area Manager, Northern Area. Initially, calls were due to concerns about food >>



The Legion has embraced technology in order to keep in touch with those who need it

shortages, but later in the crisis they centred on financial advice.

“A key change is that we’ve opened up our criteria around the support that we give,” explains Jennie Anderson, Regional Specialist Service Manager, who is heading up a restructured national Benefits, Debts and Money Advice Service in response to the pandemic. “Previously, we would only support people who were in debt and required representation. Now we’ve opened it up to pretty much anyone who needs our support. They might be concerned about changes to their income – possibly they’ve been furloughed or are self-employed – and they may never have navigated the benefits system before.”

Another service provided by the Legion – Admiral Nurses – has increased the number of people it can support, thanks to the launch of a telephone service. A partnership with Dementia UK that

supports those in the Armed Forces community and their families living with dementia, Admiral Nurses have had to change how they work, which has come with challenges.

“We miss the face-to-face contact because that’s what we do – that’s why we nurse,” says Paula Smith, Admiral Nurse National Lead. “My team can feel like they’re working with one arm behind their back. [Not visiting people] saves us time, but we find we’re spending longer

on the phone because people are so distressed.” Despite the problems, she continues: “We’re able to offer support and are reaching more people than before. If there is anyone struggling caring for someone with dementia, send them our way and we can support them.” In essence, Paula believes that the new nationwide phone line is a very worthwhile response to the current situation.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of these Legion members, volunteers and staff, and countless more in every village, town and city across the UK, the Armed Forces community is getting the support it needs.

“There’s a wealth of stories from across the Legion,” concludes Gail Walters, Assistant Director Operations, “and it’s worth

highlighting how everyone – from those supporting people with money worries to those who are supporting local veterans at the end of a phone line – is playing their part.”

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SUPPORT AND ARE
REACHING MORE PEOPLE”**

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INTO THE ARCTIC...

The Legion's unique Arctic Survival Challenge tests your ability to adapt and survive in one of the harshest environments on the planet

Three days' worth of freeze-dried rations, a driving licence covering snowmobiles and a set of swimmers for the hot tub... an unusual combination of kit for a trip abroad. Handy, though, if you're heading to Jämtland, Sweden, to learn survival skills in pristine wilderness 150km south of the Arctic Circle.

This is the setting for the Arctic Survival Challenge, a fundraising trip of a lifetime supported by the Legion, with participants from all walks of life. "For the first three days at the cabin in Raftlaven, you're doing exciting things such as snowmobiling and husky sledding," says David Goff, an IT networks specialist who took part in a trip earlier this year. "Over the next three days, you graduate from sleeping in a tent to a shelter you've built, then a snow hole, and you quickly learn how

to work with each other."

"The night we were packed like sardines in the snow hole was the peak for me," says sports coaching and development student Claire McKay. "I got the best night's sleep. It was just so different."

Participants invariably say the way their group bonded was one of the best things about the expedition. "When you're living off-grid, it's amazing how quickly a group of >>



"WE WERE ALL FROM
VERY, VERY DIFFERENT
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ME MOST WAS THE WAY
WE GELLED AS A TEAM"

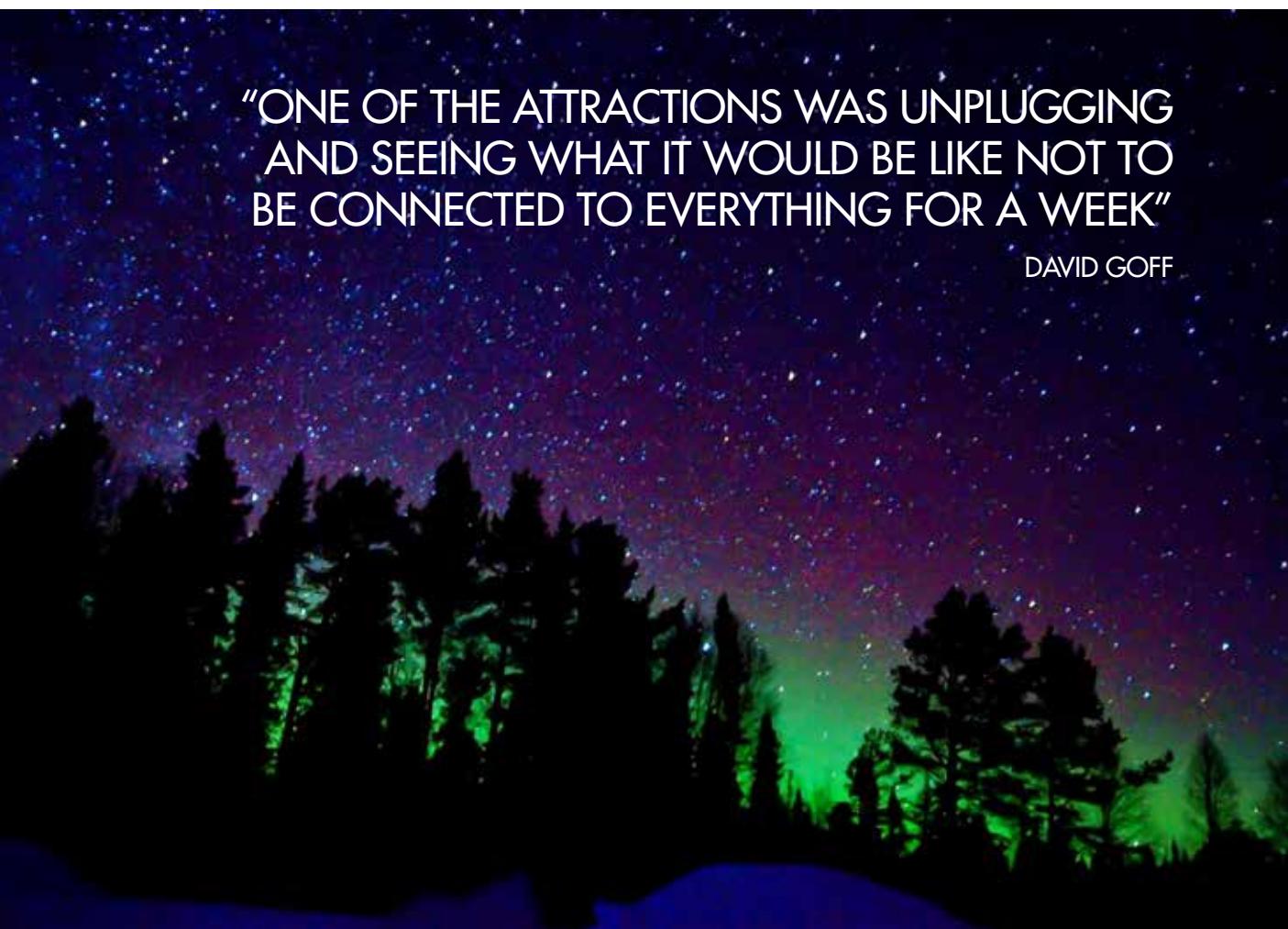
CLAIRE MCKAY



Clockwise from top: Picking up cross-country skiing; snowmobilers take a break; Graham Akins, one of the participants; testing out sleeping positions in the open shelter – "That night it was -17°C and I was right next to the wall, so I was getting all the breeze. It was brutal," says Claire McKay; husky sledding and cross-country skiing are just two of the activities

"ONE OF THE ATTRACTIONS WAS UNPLUGGING
AND SEEING WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE NOT TO
BE CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING FOR A WEEK"

DAVID GOFF



strangers can gel," says diving manager Martin Shepherd. "When the airline mislaid my kit and ration packs, I was touched that the others donated spare items of their own kit – even if it was in some unusual sizes," he says.

"We had a really, really good dynamic," David agrees. "Everyone supported and bantered with everybody else. That makes it so much fun."

And the swimwear? That's for the final day, when the wood fires for the sauna and hot tub are lit, and everyone celebrates with a big group soak before heading home. >>



NORTHERN LIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHY: BOB WALTERS



"LIVING
OFF-GRID,
COLLECTING
WOOD FOR THE
FIRE AND
COOKING BY
HEAD TORCH ALL
ADDED TO THE
EXPERIENCE"

MARTIN SHEPHERD



Opposite, clockwise from top: "The night skies during the three-day survival stage were amazing," says Martin Shepherd; making the most of the chance to dry clothes and warm feet by day; huskies ready for action

This page, clockwise from top: skiing in single file; getting used to the huskies; Claire McKay; snowmobiling under clear blue skies; snow hole banter; Martin Shepherd melting snow in the kettle for a brew





"TIME SPED BY WITH
ALL THE ACTIVITIES,
SUCH AS SLED RIDES
OVER A FROZEN LAKE"

MARTIN SHEPHERD

READY FOR THE CHALLENGE?

If you'd like to take part in an Arctic Survival Challenge between January and March 2021, visit www.rbl.org.uk/arctic for details (2022 dates are also available now). There are two entry types: a charity place (£200 fee and fundraise £2,500 sponsorship) and a self-fund charity place (£200 deposit, pay £1,195 and fundraise £1,100 sponsorship). The Legion will support with fundraising ideas, training tips and advice to prepare you for the adventure.



Clockwise from top: Martin Shepherd fronts the husky convoy; speeding along, on top of the world; hollowing out a snow hole



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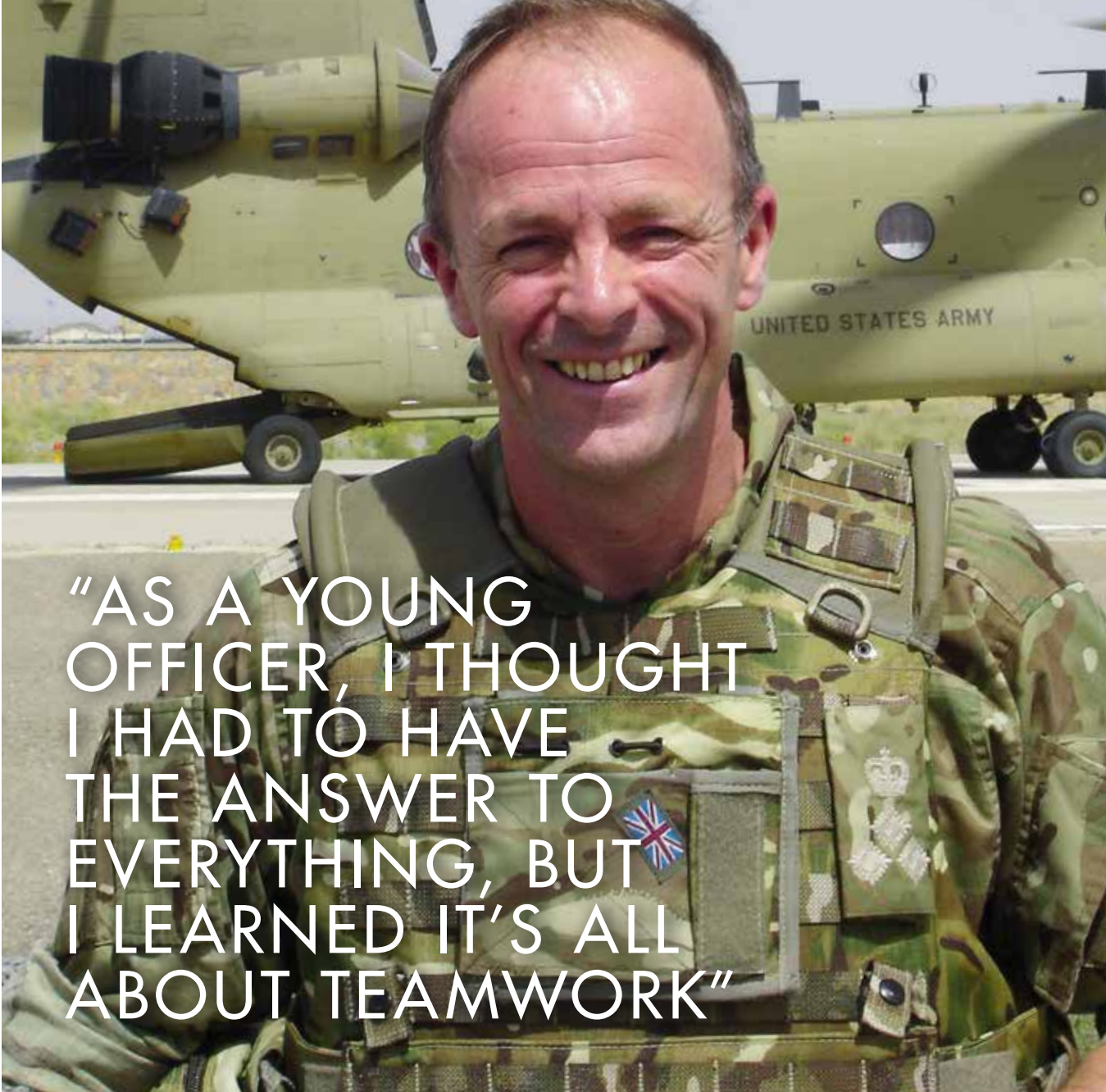
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MAJOR GENERAL
CRAIG LAWRENCE CBE
THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES

1983-2016

A portrait of Major General Craig Lawrence CBE, a man with short brown hair, smiling. He is wearing a British Army combat uniform with a Royal Gurkha Rifles crest on his chest. In the background, a large military helicopter is visible, with "UNITED STATES ARMY" printed on its side.

"AS A YOUNG
OFFICER, I THOUGHT
I HAD TO HAVE
THE ANSWER TO
EVERYTHING, BUT
I LEARNED IT'S ALL
ABOUT TEAMWORK"

“

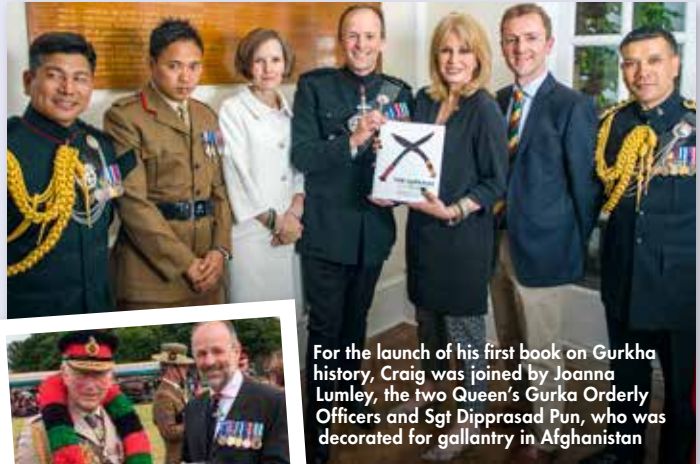
I grew up in the village of Kirk Smeaton in North Yorkshire and hadn't been out of Yorkshire until I was 18 and went to study Engineering Science at Durham

University. My dad had a small chain of four shoe shops and was keen that I should follow in his footsteps, but selling shoes didn't appeal to me. Joining the Army struck me as an opportunity to go abroad and do something exciting. I visited 13 different Regiments and one of those was the 7th Gurkhas, who had just come back from the Falklands. I was commissioned as a student into the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles) in 1983, and every university summer holiday I spent a few weeks with them as a probationary officer. I felt increasingly at home.

As a young officer, I thought I had to have the answer to everything, but I learned fast that it's all about teamwork, whether you're in Brunei rainforest or on exercise on Salisbury Plain.

I also had an early introduction to the concept of commemoration – and how important that is – when I joined my battalion in Hong Kong in the late Eighties. I'd had a great three years there when, one Sunday morning during a *khud* race – a hill race Gurkhas are famous for – my hugely respected Company Commander was murdered. A grenade had been attached to the back of his desk drawer and as he opened it, he pulled the pin out of the grenade, which killed him and wounded the Gurkha officer who was with him. The military police investigated, but the guy who was thought to have done it was never apprehended. Because he wasn't killed on operations – it was something that happened in the course of routine business – there's very little to say that he ever served in the Regiment. He gets a brief mention in the Regimental history, but there's nothing that really describes his contribution. His death broke his father, and I realised it's so important to commemorate and to record formally what happens.

As a Gurkha paratrooper, I spent time in the UK's airborne brigade, as well as on tours, including Nepal, South Africa and Belize. After staff college in my 30s, I took over my company and we were deployed in the Balkans, as part of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force. Bosnia had its moments, but it was benign compared to Afghanistan, where the battalions started deploying in 2002. Afghanistan had an intensity for those on the ground, a constant exposure to violence, danger and death.



For the launch of his first book on Gurkha history, Craig was joined by Joanna Lumley, the two Queen's Gurka Orderly Officers and Sgt Dipprasad Pun, who was decorated for gallantry in Afghanistan



Opposite: Pictured in Afghanistan in 2014
Above: HRH The Prince of Wales wrote the foreword for Craig's most recent book on the Gurkhas

The Regiment lost 14 people in Afghanistan – four officers and 10 soldiers – and these were people I knew, of course. By that

time, I was Colonel of the Regiment, so I was in a staff job in the UK, but one of my responsibilities was going with families to meet the bodies as they came back into Wootton Bassett or RAF Lyneham. It's heartbreaking. The Hercules lands, soldiers carry the coffin out, and it's the first time the family knows it's not a mistake. They know there have been no crossed wires. It's incredibly poignant.

It really mattered that I could share the experience of those people by going to Afghanistan myself. I felt that strongly, but the more senior you are, the harder it is to get to operational theatres because there are fewer appointments for people at senior rank. In 2013, however, there was a plan for my brigade to go. We did all the training, I learned Pashto, then at the last minute we were told we weren't going and another brigade was sent to Afghanistan instead.

I was gutted to the point of almost resigning. I was so angry. I felt really bad as I'd been there at the funerals of soldiers, there receiving bodies coming back, there handing out medals that I didn't have, so I cast around for any job I could to get myself to Afghanistan. Although it was in a much lesser way – I wasn't out on the ground dodging bullets and bombs – I needed to have that affinity with those soldiers.

In late 2013, I was sent as a Brigadier with the International Security Assistance Force's Election Support Cell to an HQ





commanded by a senior American to help ensure the 2014 elections were democratic. I was told: 'We need to make the Afghan elections more transparent, credible and legitimate. Off you go.' There was little other guidance, so it was a fascinating exercise to come up with a set of conditions that would deliver. We looked at things like ensuring equal access to polling stations by different ethnicities, that women were encouraged to vote, and that all the electoral material got to different places, and we worked with the UN, the international community and the Afghan election institutions. It was really fulfilling and I think we made a difference.

The downside of operational tours is that families find them hard. Every time the phone rings at a funny hour, you think something must have happened. Eleven months in Kabul took its toll on my wife Laura and our five kids, without a doubt.

Back in the UK, I was promoted to Major General and spent 18 months as the Director of Joint Warfare in London, but in 2015, I decided to leave the Army for the sake of my family. I did a final trip to Nepal as Colonel of the Regiment just after the earthquakes, and met my old friend Hitman. He had been my second in command when

"I'M IMMENSELY PROUD OF THE GURKHAS I'VE SERVED WITH"

I first took on my company, he did an operational tour with me in Bosnia, and he had gone on to become a Gurkha Major, the most senior rank that Gurkhas could get to then. We were talking about Afghanistan and the losses, and about how there was nothing tangible that the soldiers' families could touch to celebrate their lives or commemorate their deaths. Hitman said, 'Someone has to tell the story,' which led to my book *Gurkha*. I have a deep affection for the Gurkhas I served with, and the book is about ensuring that what they have achieved is recorded. It also describes what every one of the 14 soldiers and officers who were killed in Afghanistan was doing, why they were doing it and how they died. We owe it to families to say: 'This is the role that your son, husband, father or sibling played.'

Gurkhas were excellent in Afghanistan because they're good with people and they understand how hard it is for an Afghan to eke out a living on a hillside. The soldiers we recruit often come from smaller villages in Nepal where people have to rely on each other – it's a much less self-centred society than ours and there's that recognition that you have to support each other. I think that has rubbed off on me. I think I'm a better person for having served with Gurkhas.

And if you're exposed to people like my friend Hitman, who point out your flaws, albeit in a gentle way, this gives you a sense of humility. You see so many senior officers who don't have that, and hubris has been at the root of many military disasters.

I'm more accepting now that you need other people's ideas to solve problems, and the more complex the problem, the more you need contributions from a diverse group. I can't say enough times how immensely proud I am of the Gurkhas I've served with and how the experience has shaped me."

***Gurkha – 25 Years of The Royal Gurkha Rifles* by Major General (Retd) JC Lawrence CBE FRGS (Unicorn, £30) is out now. www.craiglawrence.co**

Clockwise from top: Craig was Colonel of the Regiment from 2009 to 2016; a Gurkha kukri; on Operation Lodestar in Bosnia, 1997

REUNIONS

Check our listings to find out if old friends are meeting up again soon

CORONAVIRUS

As there are restrictions on gatherings due to COVID-19, events are subject to cancellation.

Please check with the event organiser and visit www.gov.uk for updates.

NAVY

846 Sqdn RNAS (1962-64)

11-13 September, Tiverton Hotel, Tiverton
Reunion dinner on 12 September.

Contact the Secretary Barry (Baz) Marshall on 01288 381002 or at percycar@littlebridge.eclipse.co.uk

Royal Naval Communication Chiefs' Association (RNCCA)

18-20 September, Hallmark Hotel Chester The Queen, Chester
51st reunion weekend and AGM. Friday: evening meal and disco. Saturday: visit to Liverpool; 18.30 reception and gala dinner. Sunday: 09.30 AGM.

Book through Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116. For details, email honsec@rncca.org.uk or Brian Taylor at btaylor18@ntlworld.com

Anti Submarine Warfare Association (ASWA) (TASI) (ASWI)

26 September, Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea
65th annual dinner and dance, £45. All ASW, UW and TAS welcome.

Visit www.aswassociation.org.uk or contact Mr Bob Burton at webmaster@aswassociation.org.uk

HMS Dido

2-4 October, Hallmark Hotel Derby Mickleover Court, Derby
All-commissions reunion, £160pp. Friday: evening buffet. Saturday: National Memorial Arboretum visit, AGM and gala dinner. Contact Colin Bates on 0121 742 8188 or at secretary@hms-dido.com

HMS Phoebe Association

2-5 October, Aztec

Hotel, Bristol

Reunion for all who served on HMS Phoebe (includes C43, Dido-class AA Cruiser, WWII service and F42, Leander class frigate). Book through Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116. For details, contact S/M Dave Newson on 01636 673970 or 07746 619856 or at hmsphoebeassociation@outlook.com

HMS Lowestoft Association

2-5 October, Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea
10th reunion including gala dinner. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1986) are welcome (including wives/partners/guests). Book through Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116 or contact ian@hmslowestoft.co.uk

Royal Navy Weapon Mechanics Association

10 October, Bear Hotel, Havant

The final reunion of the Weapon Mechs Association. Wives and partners welcome.

Contact Secretary Peter Andrews at weaponmechs50@btinternet.com

HMS Ariadne

5-7 March 2021, Best Western Ipswich, IP8 3JD

10th reunion – all shipmates welcome, along with wives, partners and guests. Book through Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116. For details, contact Dave Sprinks on 07989 435701 or at dave-sprinks@hotmail.com >>



HMS Lowestoft at sea, circa 1970



Royal Corps of Transport

HMS Ganges Association

23-26 April 2021, Warner Gunton Hall Coastal Village, near Lowestoft
Annual reunion open to all those who served at HMS Ganges, as well as wives and partners.

For booking details, please contact Tony Willders on 07787 106202 or at tony.willders@btinternet.com

HMS Ships Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association

7-9 May 2021, Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea
2021 AGM and gala dinner.
For further details, contact Denis Askham at askhamd3@gmail.com

HMS Saintes, HMS Cadiz, HMS Wizard

(combined)

7-10 May 2021, Novotel Nottingham Derby Hotel, Long Eaton, Nottingham
A combined reunion (each has its own AGM). All members from each ship are welcome, as are friends, families, wives and partners – the more, the merrier!
For more details, contact Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116 or at enquiries@iowtours.com

ARMY

38 Sqn, Royal Corps of Transport
26 September, Ex Servicemen's Club, St. Neots, PE19 8GW
13th annual reunion. All who served with 38 Sqn RCT and families welcome.
Email rct38sqn@hotmail.com

The Army Dog Unit NI (RAVC) Association
26-27 September, Holiday Inn Express, Burton on Trent
AGM, annual memorial service and reunion at the Legion Alrewas club (no dress code).
Contact John Tucker on 07734 113077 or at johnatucker70@yahoo.com

1 Parachute Logistic Regiment

9-11 October, Bedworth, near Coventry
Annual reunion.
Contact Pete Stead on 07976 278919 or at stead3@icloud.com

Royal Army Pay Corps Regimental Association Gloucester Branch

10 October, Dumbleton Hall Hotel, Evesham
Reunion 12pm.
Contact Derek Evans at derekevans@sky.com

Singapore Dawnwatchers' Society (SDWS)

12-14 October, Hard Days Night Hotel, Liverpool
Reunion for those who served in, or were attached to, the Intelligence Corps in Singapore, Borneo or Malay Peninsula in the 60s or 70s.
Contact Dave Wakelam at davidwakelam396@gmail.com

The Royal Artillery Boys and Junior Leaders' Association

17-18 October, Holiday Inn Birmingham – Bromsgrove
30th reunion.
Contact Ted McKenzie on 07900 806235 or at exboysra.tm@gmail.com

Herforder Association
30 October-2 November
Auckland Hotel, Morecambe
Reunion for all who served in Herford in Germany, including civilians attached.
For details and costs, contact Harry Courtney at hazbren2430@gmail.com

RAF

RAF Locking 119/219/404

Apprentice Entries
23-24 October, Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1AJ
50th anniversary reunion.
Friday: informal evening.
Saturday: formal dinner.
Open to all RAF Locking 119/219/404 entry apprentices, plus wives and partners.
Contact Barry Cox at barrycox124@hotmail.com

RAF Boys Entrants 42nd Entry Telegs Association

27-29 April 2021, Telford Hotel & Golf Resort, Telford, Shropshire
Annual reunion.
For more information, contact John Lewis (Chairman) at jaslmlewis@aol.com

PLANNING A REUNION?

Please note that while The Royal British Legion's head office remains closed, we can only accept reunion information via email. Send details, especially the date, time and location, with 'Reunions' in the subject line, to: membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

LOST TRAILS

Searching for old pals or have a gap in your family tree? We can help



« Indian summer

Haydn Foulkes sent this photo of his late father, Private Philip Snowden Foulkes from North Wales, serving in India in 1945-46. Private Foulkes (circled) was positioned in Kalyan, Ramgarh and Lucknow, serving in the Queen's Royal Regiment then the Lancashire Fusiliers. Haydn would like information on the units at this time and place or on anyone pictured.

Contact: Haydn Foulkes at s.foulkes01@btinternet.com

» Mystery medal

Maurice Brown from Londonderry, Northern Ireland, needs help identifying this medal from the First World War. It's inscribed 7504 PTE Downs A&SH. Can you shed some light on its history?

Contact: Harry Brown at hmb46@btinternet.com

» A case for Colombo

Jane Pollard's father Flt Lt HAB Catlin, known as Bob, served mainly in Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) from 1941, and the family also has a record of him being in Aden and Cairo. This photograph shows him (circled) at RAF Station Colombo HQ in August 1943. Jane would be interested in hearing from anyone who recognises any of the other people in the photo.

Contact: Jane Pollard at janesboat@yahoo.com



» Looking for answers

Kath Tucker needs help identifying this regiment and where this photo may have been taken, as it shows her father Frederick Arthur William Hickie (circled). "He was never overseas due to health issues, but I know at some point he was at Grateley," she says. It's a family mystery she'd like to resolve.

Contact: Kath Tucker at kaththeminder@outlook.com



LOST AND FOUND

Looking for someone? All we need is a photo, brief description and your contact details. Please note that while The Royal British Legion's head office remains closed, we can only accept submissions via email, at membersmag@britishlegion.org.uk

Already found someone through Lost Trails? Then let us know about it using the email address above.



Credit: Jane Paine Images Ltd

Millions of endangered animals are being illegally and cruelly slaughtered to satisfy the demand for markets that exploit human weakness. It's time to stand together to end illegal wildlife trade.

• Fauna & Flora International is working to stop illegal wildlife trade at its source and dismantle the trade networks.

• Illegal wildlife trade threatens some of our most iconic and beloved animals, like pangolins, elephants and tigers.

• A terrible human price is being paid too as people are exploited through this trade – but the traffickers will stop at nothing.

Over the last 50 years, illicit trade in wildlife has become one of the greatest threats to our natural world. Bandwagons of traffickers are exploiting our wildlife in developing areas, driving down to illegally hunt down animals for their body parts. These criminal networks only pay a tiny portion of the final price they get for the animals they receive. Poorer animals are reduced to gory heaps of skulls, bones and hooves, then shipped off to far-flung markets.

Angry? We've barely started yet. The animal parts are being shipped along with weapons, drugs, even people – those here these traffickers don't care about the devastation they cause. Live animals are consigned during transport with no thought for their survival. Many of them don't make it. Perhaps life is easy when they choose to kill and focus the animals before hiding them in cargo containers the size of a small bus. Because that's the industrial scale they're working on: it's not one or two animals here and there – it's entire species that we are seeing driven towards extinction, lost forever from our global heritage. And for one reason alone. To put more money in the pockets of these criminals – whatever the cost.

"If you value the natural world – if you think it should be protected for its own sake as well as humanity's – then please support Fauna & Flora International."

Sir David Attenborough,
Fauna & Flora International
vice-president



Credit: Sir David Attenborough

Ruthless doesn't come close to describing them. Organised criminal networks are taking advantage of people desperate for a quick cure. Trading on fears and desires, they ply their products at a hefty price – exploiting insecurities to fatten their wallets. You see, these people will stop at nothing to turn a profit.

Now we all pay the price. COVID-19 has affected us all. It's spreading our economies. It has made us up in our homes, and is attacking the most vulnerable among us. In a short period, almost every person on the planet has been affected – and we still don't know the full toll.

The source could well be these criminal networks. We don't know for certain how the pandemic started. Some scientists suggest that the disease might have been transferred to a person from a pangolin being traded illegally in one of these markets – these are the most

trafficked wild mammals in the world, with over a million consumed by the trade alone 2019. Yet we would never have imagined that these markets for body parts of wild animals would affect us in this way. It's time to say "enough".

Illegal wildlife trade must be stopped. The governments of the world are doing what they can. But while laws are put in place, the despicable individuals driving the trafficking will try to use their illicit networks to keep selling. Bring their products until they are stopped. It's precisely because this is a trade that happens in the shadows, that we must stop it at source. That's why FFI is raising funds – to help put a stop to this vile trade. To do so, they are making members of the public to make an urgent contribution today.

Act now to stop the traffickers. FFI are seeking to stop illegal exploitation of wild species – supporting governments to collect vital evidence that can help convict traffickers, disrupt their networks and bring them justice instead of profits. FFI are also helping dedicated rangers going – stopping the trade at its very source.

There's not a moment to waste. We must act now to save countless animals from this grim, common, all-consuming market. Please cut the coupon and return it now, and you could help save beloved creatures like elephants, tigers and pangolins. If the coupon is missing, please send your cheque payable to FFI to: Freepost RTHH-TXTL-A-66K, Fauna & Flora International, The David Attenborough Building, Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3RQ by 28 July.

How you could help stop the trafficking

Your gift could help stop illegal wildlife exploitation at its source and dismantle trafficking networks. Here's how your support could help:

£5,000 could help build a case against a wildlife trafficker, collecting vital evidence needed to secure convictions.

£1,000 could help train rangers to tackle poaching threats in the field. The first line of defence, these brave people respond immediately to poaching incidents.

£500 could help pay for DNA analysis of important evidence, helping us to understand the trading networks so we can focus our efforts where they matter most.

£100 could help pay for an important item of equipment for a ranger, like a first-aid kit.

£50 could help pay for monitoring equipment like camera traps and GPS units, helping us run patrols in the highest-risk areas.

Any donations, large or small, will be received with thanks and could help stop this vile trade.

Just some of the animals suffering from the illegal wildlife trade:



Elephants
slaughtered
for their skin
and tusks



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killed for
meat and
scales



Tigers
reduced to
a pile of skin
and bones

Cut the coupon and return it with your gift to FFI, and you could help stop illegal wildlife trade. Alternatively go to www.stopwild.org or call 01223 749019. Thank you.

Please accept my donation of £____, which could help save iconic and beloved animals

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Address _____

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☐ I would like to donate regularly to Fauna & Flora International

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Card No. _____

Security code: _____ Expiry Date: _____

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We make our work possible – or prevent it – because you feel passionately. We need like-minded people who understand the value of protecting our planet and its wildlife. We need people who are passionate about the future of our planet. If you're not yet, please join us.

Your support helps protect our planet and its wildlife. We need your support to protect our planet and its wildlife. We need your support to protect our planet and its wildlife.

Thank you for your support to Fauna & Flora International

FFI is a charity registered in England and Wales. No. 1044044. Registered office: 1044044, 1044044, 1044044.

Free return to Freepost RTHH-TXTL-A-66K, Fauna & Flora International, The David Attenborough Building, Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3RQ or go to www.stopwild.org to check instructions.



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LETTERS

Meet HMS Ark Royal's Wilf, the return of family medals and a Somme hero



Wilf the puppet with (from left) George Eyre, Colin Eyre and John Pooley

ARK ROYAL STAR WILF

One of our Ripley Branch members (3669 Ripley & District, Derbyshire), Chris Bateman, who is ex-Royal Navy like myself, runs a local Legion-themed pub, The Codnor Inn, with his partner, Viv, also ex-Navy. In residence, too, is 'Wilf', the famous puppet from HMS Ark Royal, who had his own TV show that aired any topic or gripe on the ship. This could come from his namesake the captain, Wilfred Graham, down to the lowest matelot, and could take an irreverent pop at any officer or rating without consequences.

Wilf's creator, John Pooley, whose work as an REM involved the ship's video and TV systems, already had Wilf when he started serving on the Ark. Wilf's big break came about when the duty midshipman was reading the news, and John and his crew switched cameras to Wilf's

face while the middy was still talking – a star was born.

The captain used to invite John over for tea and discuss any points he wanted to make to the ship's company, which could be done in a more informal way through Wilf.

When Admiral James Eberle came on board, John was asked if he could appear on *The Wilf Show*. Wilf also found fame in the BBC programme *Sailor*.

In 1997, Captain Graham put John's name forward to receive the British Empire Medal for services to morale, which was well deserved.

After a change of branch from REM to aircrew, John was drafted onto the *Endurance* and spent time in the Falklands, where Wilf entertained the Falklands schoolkids, who John reckons were harder to please than any matelots.

John now lives in Spain, but after an Ark Royal reunion at the Codnor Inn, Wilf decided to

live out his days back in Blighty.

Any ex-Ark Royal matelots who would like to meet Wilf again have only to find their way to the Codnor Inn, and Chris or Viv will happily show Wilf for the price of a pint.

Colin Eyre, by email

FINDING PRIVATE GOODING

For some time now, I have been in possession of two First World War medals: the 1914-1919 Great War for Civilisation Medal and the 1914-18 War Medal. I was always led to believe they belonged to my late grandfather. However, on closer inspection and after research on the internet, I have ascertained that they belonged to Private Edward Gooding, service no: SS/10766 ASC (Army Service Corps). I have since obtained copies of my own grandfather's war medals (duly inscribed) and would love to be able to return Private Gooding's medals to his family, should they exist. I am writing in the hope that somewhere, someone may be able to throw some light on my enquiry. I can be contacted at goddardredtr6@btinternet.com

Richard Goddard, by email



Private Edward Gooding's medals

BLACK AND WHITE AND READ ALL OVER

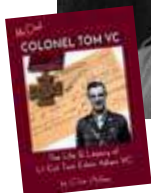
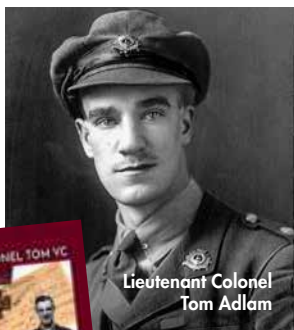
I am emailing after one of our members (Cleobury Mortimer Branch) commented on the difficulty he had reading some pages of the latest *Legion* magazine. These are pages on which the background of the page is grey and the text white, and the subject's name is in red. In comparison, the usual black print on white is fine. In view of the deteriorating eyesight of our older members (including myself!), we would be grateful if this was taken into consideration when preparing the magazine.

Mike Hermolle, by email

Editor's response: Thank you for contacting us about this – we will look to improve this for future issues.

HEROISM ON THE SOMME

For the centenary of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 2016, I was invited to speak at the Thiepval Memorial. I read out the words of my father, Lt Col Tom Edwin Adlam, describing his actions during the battle, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Nothing could have given me greater pleasure than to tell my audience and the millions tuned in to their TV sets about the outstanding bravery of my dad who, at just 22 years old, with his small band of 12 bombardiers, cleared the two enemy trenches defending the strategically placed village of >>



Lieutenant Colonel Tom Adlam

Thiepval. These trenches had defied capture even after seven previous attempts by the whole battalion.

After leading a dash across open ground, his small band of men had gained a foothold in the first enemy trench. Once there, he began throwing grenades directly along the trench. Running out of bombs, his men discovered plenty of German grenades left behind in their haste to escape. Using these bombs, they chased down the rest of the trench after the retreating enemy.

After I had spoken, I felt strangely disappointed. Not because I had not done justice to his words, but because there was so much more I would like to have told. Thinking about this later, it occurred to me that I should write a book about his life, when I would be able to include a full account of his actions. His life story, legacy and capture of the second trench, when he carried on in spite of bullet wounds in both his arm and leg, is now in the book *My Dad, Colonel Tom VC*, which can be purchased by emailing clivea31@btinternet.com
Clive Adlam, by email

THE KIKUYU WARRIOR

'Shoulder to Shoulder' in the November issue brought back a memory from the 60s. I was working in Kenya as an assistant estate (farm) manager with a local workforce, mainly Kikuyu. One afternoon, I was in the workshop trying (and failing) to reassemble a tractor gearbox. I became aware that I was not alone, and looked up to see Muriama, an elderly Kikuyu labourer, watching me.

After another failed attempt, I told him to try, somewhat scathingly (because what could an untrained local do that I couldn't?), and I awaited his failure. Within seconds, lo! The sprockets were on the shaft – springs and all. Embarrassed, I asked, "Where did you learn to do that?" He said: "Burma."

In disbelief, I asked him to explain. He said he was born illegitimately in Nairobi around 1900 to a landless mother, so he did the only thing

possible: he joined the Army. He was sent to India and was wounded at Imphal as a Company Sergeant Major, 11th Battalion, KAR.

In 1945, he returned to Mombasa and was dumped on the quay, unwanted and with nothing, as the required Army in Kenya was made up of recruits replacing those sent abroad. No medals, no pension, no pay, no job, no recognition, nothing. He had kept himself alive doing whatever menial tasks he could get and was now working as a labourer.

He was, of course, only one of thousands of loyal and effective native soldiers from umpteen countries who were used, abused and abandoned in 1945. I don't know the whole truth about these events but perhaps someone, somewhere does. Should this disgraceful episode be allowed to fade from the records?

David M Swindlehurst, via email



Ashanti troops in the Gold Coast Regiment



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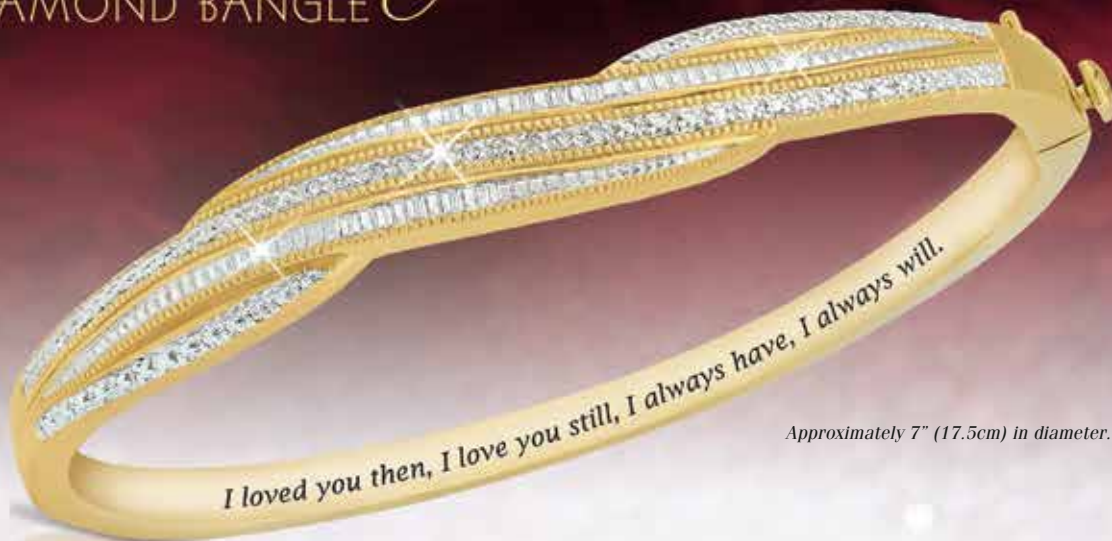
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