



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Royal British Legion Dickleburgh and District Branch NEWSLETTER

May 2021

Keep Calm and Carry On - Edition 17

How quickly time seems to fly; it seems only a week or so ago that I had my first job (though actually it was early March!), but today I had my second one, this time in Harleston (rather than Norwich), less than a mile away, so with an 8.45am appointment, I was out before I was due in and home for breakfast before 9am! Wonderfully efficient and friendly service as ever. Similarly, thinking about time, it seems the Royal British Legion has always been here, and indeed for most of us living today, it has, as it celebrates its centenary this month. Six months after the unveiling of the Cenotaph in Whitehall and the solemn procession taking the Unknown Warrior to his final resting place in Westminster Abbey, four laurel wreaths were laid on the Cenotaph, representing the four associations which came together to form the Royal British Legion. Our own branch will be celebrating its centenary in 2023, so we will be looking to celebrate 100 years of local service then.

My thanks to Norman and John for their contributions this month.

A Message from our Chairman

Hello All

I hope everybody is keeping safe and well and enjoying a bit more freedom now. We should see a big difference on 21 June if all goes according to government plans, but we must not be too complacent as cases of the Indian variant of Covid are rising, and have been notified in neighbouring Suffolk.

In today's issue (24 May), the Eastern Daily Press features an annual memorial service in Dereham, commemorating the massacre by the SS of members of the Royal Norfolk Regiment at Le Paradis, France on 27th May 1940. It was good to see some of our standard bearers on parade again.

With all the pain and heartache that Covid has brought to us, I thought that the interview Sally Nugent (BBC Breakfast) carried out this morning with Rob Burrow, Stephen Darby and Doddy Weir was a powerful and heart-warming piece about their fight with Motor Neurone Disease.

The committee met by Zoom meeting on 5 May, looking at how we can restart branch activities again as the vaccination programme continues and Covid regulations ease. As well as restarting our Bun, Cuppa and Chat get-togethers as soon as we safely can, we are planning to start our branch meetings, with a target date of Thursday 22 July, but this has yet to be confirmed. In future, we would like to focus more on the social aspects of branch meetings, with just a short business meeting, and include an illustrated talk each month, either from an RBL member or external speaker. Guests, as always, are welcome at our meetings. If you would like to give a talk or know someone who might be willing to do so, please let Rosemary know (contact details at the end of the Newsletter). Topics do not have to have a military theme, just a subject that will inform or entertain members and guests.

Please take care and stay safe. **John**

Norman's Chuckle Corner

- ✚ A sign on a gate to one of the farmers' fields read 'Trespassers may enter free, the bull will charge later'.
- ✚ A boy asked his granddad if he could help him with a sum that he found difficult. "I could", said granddad, "but it would not be right, would it?" "I don't suppose it would be", said the boy, "but have a shot at it anyway".
- ✚ A couple went into a rather shabby restaurant and the waiter asked what they wanted to drink. One asked for a coke and the other said, "I'll have the same please and make sure I get a clean glass". The waiter took the order and five minutes later he returned with the drinks, "Right, now, who asked for the clean glass?"
- ✚ A man on holiday in North Africa was lost in the desert. The temperature was over 100° and he was desperate for water. In the haze he could just make out a Bedouin tent, so he staggered over to it, gasping, "Water, I must have water". "I am sorry" said the Bedouin, "I don't have any water, but I do have ties". "Ties," said the exasperated man, "Ties!! What do I want a flaming tie for I need water"! "If you really want water", said the Bedouin, "There's another tent three kilometres away and I know that they have water." The weary traveller set off half walking, half crawling. The journey took him over three hours, but he eventually reached the tent. A second Bedouin saw him coming and met him as he arrived "Can I help?" he said, "Water! Water!" gasped the man "I must have water". "Sorry Sir" replied the Bedouin, "You can't come in without a tie."

A Job that Cannot be Done? Part 2

By Norman Steer

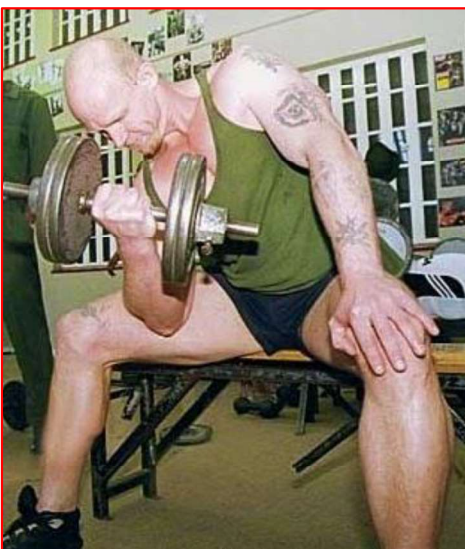
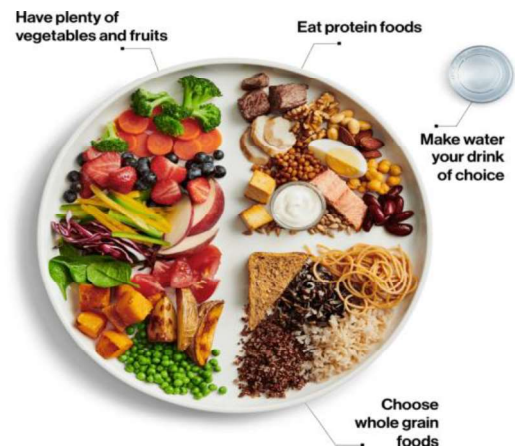
Last month we left Norman wondering how he was going to tackle his new job of Probation Health Co-ordinator at HMP Blundeston.

The word was out, the die was cast, and now I had to deliver what could not be done.

I was primarily employed as a Probation Health Coordinator to deal with issues around HIV/AIDS and to help staff and inmates understand the condition and prevent its spread, but just as importantly to dispel the myths and incorrect information which were widespread, both in and out of the prison. This was causing a lot of problems, especially for drug addicts and the known homosexuals in the prison, with violence, ostracization and general unrest. As part of the medical team, I worked with substance misuse, alcohol, sexual health, phobias, anger management and stress related behaviours. Just as I was beginning to make some headway, the governor decided that Blundeston should enter the nationwide Promoting Health in Prisons award scheme and that working on this should be included as part of my remit. While I appreciated that a more holistic approach would benefit everyone, I did feel that the job that could not be done had just got a lot more difficult! So, more thinking, communicating and planning, fuelled by lots of cups of tea (essential as those who know me well will understand!).

I had good feedback from the first visiting inspectors who realised that this was work in progress and the result was a surprising silver award. Filled with enthusiasm, I rashly promised the governor that it would be a gold award the following year! During the next year, the prison began to metamorphose itself, with every department talking about what it could do to make Blundeston a healthier institution, with a mix of general initiatives involving the whole prison, such as health awareness days for prisoner and other for staff and their families, encouraging staff to walk or cycle to work, a listening scheme, reducing smoking, healthy eating, fitness and wellbeing, meditation, tai chi, Reiki and yoga, to some specific projects and challenges involving selected prisoners and some outside agencies.

Back in the 1990s, before the national smoking ban in public and many workplaces, most prisoners smoked so shared cells could be an issue for the non-smokers. We discussed the dangers of smoking, and as well as helping prisoners to kick the habit, it was decided that smoking would not be allowed in shared cells where there was a non-smoker, with time given for the smoker to leave the cell for a smoking break. During the day, smoking was only allowed in specified areas or in the grounds. This worked reasonably well and was generally accepted by the prisoners. It was the prisoners themselves who decided they would have a non-smoking visits day, and when I put my head round the visits room door, not one person was smoking. I also worked with the kitchen staff to produce healthy eating options in both staff and prisoners' canteens and dining rooms.



No, this isn't Norman!

For many prisoners, the gym provides an important break from the routine of prison life, so many were keen to be involved with organised fitness training provided by the prison's physical training instructors (PTIs) and the chance to achieve City and Guilds qualifications. I took the City and Guilds course myself so that I could help assess, instruct and advise. The Governor, a dedicated fitness enthusiast, challenged prisoners and staff, 'Can you get fitter than this keep fit critter?' The fitness level of those rising to the challenge was tested at the start of the project and then again after 12 months, and measured against the Governor's level, with prizes for the best achievement amongst both prisoners and staff.

Perhaps the most powerful of the various initiatives was a collaborative project between the prison, a special school in Lowestoft for children with learning and mobility disabilities, and Dance East. Ten prisoners were selected to train in dance and movement techniques with Dance East to enable them to offer the pupils a two-hour weekly session. I also trained with the company and

with Ballet Rambert to help with this project and became an honorary member of Dance East; I even did one or two gigs with the company! Dance is considered influential in the development of young people's creative, imaginative, individual, and communicative skills. The use of dance within a classroom increases physical fitness, enriches motor skills, coordination, and enhances social skills. Dance also increases muscular endurance and builds balance. Study supports that dance is a positive influence on students with special needs. The project also helped to build the prisoners' confidence, self-esteem and fitness as they supported and helped the children.



Dance East is currently working with the East Anglian Children's Hospices (EACH) with patients and families from the Treehouse Hospice in Ipswich

Each year HMP Blundeston developed as a healthy prison, and after the probation funding for the post ran out, the prison itself employed me as Health Co-ordinator. Eventually retirement caught up with me, and I was proud to say to the Governor when I left, "You gave me a job that couldn't be done and with the help of the prison staff, the prisoners and partners, I found it was a job that **could** be done"! And did Blundeston win a gold award? Yes, three of them!



Governor Stuart Robinson and Health Promotion Co-ordinator Norman Steer collected the gold award for HMP Blundeston



*Unashamedly taking advantage of my roles as the Newsletter Editor and Norman's wife, I must add that Norman was nominated by his prison colleagues for a national honour for his work at HMP Blundeston, giving me an opportunity for a new hat when he was awarded the MBE in the 2000 New Year's Honours List. I did warn you that there would be family photographs if I were not sent enough copy for the newsletter! **Ed.***

The RBL Dickleburgh Family

We were sorry to learn of the death of Graham Jenkins, one of our members and a stalwart of Bun, Cuppa and Chat. Graham was over ninety, ex-services and unfailingly courteous with a mischievous sense of humour, which always cheered everyone up. He always made light of his mobility issues and would happily wait while we cleared up around him until one of us could take him and his wheelchair home after Bun, Cuppa and Chat. We will miss you, Graham.

Please do get in touch with me if you would like to support the armed forces community locally, by joining the RBL and the Branch, or indeed volunteering to become a local Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO) in Dickleburgh or Long Stratton, or even both. You do not need to be a service veteran to be a member of the RBL, women **and** men are most welcome, and we also have several youth members (aged from 12-17).

The Poppy Appeal Organiser's main tasks are to order the relevant materials online in the summer in preparation for the November Poppy Appeal, take out and pick up the collecting tins around the local area in the autumn and then count the contents, complete the paperwork and bank the proceeds (we can usually find help with the counting!). The Poppy Appeal is organised by the RBL's Norfolk Community Fundraiser, who we can put you in touch with if you are interested.

And finally, if you or someone you know is a service veteran, whether national service, territorial or regular, and would like to be involved in our Bun, Cuppa and Chat events, again please contact me. **Rosemary Steer**

Brainteasers

1. How many birthdays does the average man have? **One – the rest are all anniversaries of his birthday.**
2. Why can't a man living in York be buried west of the River Trent? – **Because he is still alive (ie living in York).**
3. One month has 28 days. Of the remaining 11 months, how many have 30 days? **All of them, though seven have an additional day.**
4. How far can a dog run into the woods? **To the middle – after that he will be running out of the woods.**
5. A farmer had 17 sheep; all but 9 died. How many had he left? **Nine**
6. How many animals of each species did Moses take onto the Ark? **None, it was Noah's Ark.**
7. Is it legal for a man to marry his widow's sister? **No, as he would be dead if he had a widow.**
8. If a doctor gave you three pills and told you to take one every half hour, how long would it be before you ran out of pills? **An hour, eg if you took one at 10am, one at 10.30am and one at 11am.**
9. If you have two coins totalling 11 pence, and one of the coins is not a 10 pence piece, what are the two coins? **A 10p piece and a 1p piece – only one of the two coins is not a 10p piece, the other is.**
10. How much earth is there in a 2' by 2' by 4' hole? **None, just air.**
11. If there are two sheep, one facing east and one facing west, how many miles must they walk before they come face to face, assuming they walk straight ahead. **None – they are already facing each other, with one facing east and the other west.**
12. A woman declares her grandfather is only five years older than her father, can this be true? **Yes, he is her maternal grandfather, not her paternal grandfather.**
13. There is a house with four southern exposures; there is a bear running towards the house. What colour is the bear? **White – the house is at the North Pole.**

Well done if you got all or most of these right; if you didn't, please don't blame me, I didn't set the quiz! (Ed)

The Massacre at Le Paradis, May 1940

Further to John's remarks about the memorial service at Dereham, I was interested to learn that Ray Pigg from Pulham St Mary, was one of the 97 victims of the massacre, and also that a permanent memorial to the men who were killed has just been unveiled in Norwich Cathedral Close.

As allied troops were retreating towards Dunkirk in May 1940, some units had to stay to try to hold off the German advance; one of these was the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Norfolk Regiment. The Norfolks, together with men from the Scots Guards, set up their HQ at Duriez Farm in the village of Le Paradis, eventually being forced out of the farmhouse into a cattle shed. Out of ammunition, they surrendered to an SS Division. The men were marched to a neighbouring barn, lined up against the wall, and shot in cold blood. The Germans then bayoneted any men that were still alive. Miraculously, two men survived – Bill O'Callaghan who was shot in the arm and survived when a dead comrade fell on top of him, and Bert Pooley, who had a shattered leg. Eventually, they were picked up by the Wehrmacht (not the SS); Bert was repatriated and Bill spent the rest of the war as a prisoner of war.

Ray Pigg's name appears on the Pulham St Mary war memorials together with that of his younger brother Ernest, who died in Burma in 1945. Ray, who still has relatives living locally, is buried in Le Paradis cemetery. For further details of the massacre, and information about those who died, see the excellent website: <http://www.leparadismassacre.com/>.

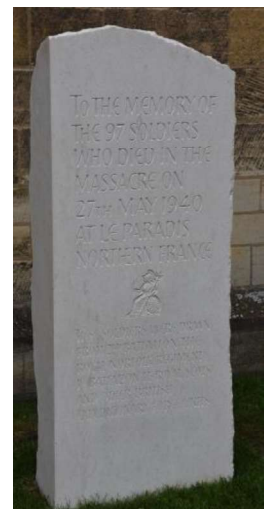
Rosemary Steer



The site of the massacre



Ray Pigg



Dedicated 27 May 2021, Norwich Cathedral Close

Contributions or comments, please, to the Editor, Rosemary Steer, tel.: 01379 854245; email: rosemary@steerfamily.plus.com

If you have received this Newsletter, but are not involved with the Royal British Legion, don't worry, we just wanted to spread a little fun and humour around the area!