

## Welcome to the Royal Corps of Signals Association Manchester Branch History

A History of The Royal Signals Association (Manchester Branch)

Written and presented by **Mr Ron Taylor** Chairman RSA Manchester.

*Please note that this history is written using the minutes of the RSA Manchester Branch AGM notes so the author accepts no responsibility for any mistakes that may be made.*

The first entry in the book isn't dated unfortunately but I am led to believe the meeting was held in late 1945. The inaugural meeting was held 'for the formation of the Manchester and Salford Branch of the Royal Corps of Signals Benevolent Fund and Old Comrades Association'. **Colonels Ashby** and **Smith** were elected as Chair and Vice respectively and **Colonel Woods** was elected as Treasurer. An interesting comment made by the Chairman was 'on the subject of 42 Div that it would be better to work together and not separately' (*Authors note: What a forward looking chap he was*). From this first meeting a **Mrs Smith** was elected to act as 'a soldiers friend, inspection of families, committee'?? It was also agreed to approach the local press (*Authors note: Has Gen. Boyle stolen his ideas??*) and the Chairman asked for an artist to do programmes for the meetings. A final question was on how to address each other at meetings and on the advice of the Chairman all officers would be addressed using their ranks whilst all other ranks were to be addressed as Mr. Subscriptions collected at this meeting were 94 @ 2 shillings, 7 @ 5 shillings, 5 @ œ1.10 shillings and 3 @ œ5 (one would guess that the subs were set according to rank).

The second entry in the book again isn't dated but the meeting was held at the Grand Hotel in Manchester. It would appear this wasn't an AGM but a follow up committee meeting so was probably held a few weeks later.

The Chairman insisted that the committee find a suitable venue for further meetings and they had approached Norton St Barracks. The committee had insisted on there being a committee room, a canteen, a clubroom and a room for an office.

The secretary stated that he had worked hard to find a suitable venue and had already approached the Apollo dance hall as the only place in the area. He was tasked to approach the manager to obtain a price for a Hot Pot supper to be held in February.

It was decided if Norton Street barracks couldn't accommodate the Association then the local Royal British Legion would be next on the list.

An employment committee was also formed (the author assumes this was to help ex Royal Signallers to find work) with a **Colonel Smith** as the Chairman.

The first dated entry in the book is entitled 'The AGM held at the Drill hall, Norton Street, Brookes Bar on Tuesday 22nd October 1946. There is no record of numbers attending but the previous subs shown earlier give some indication of how strong the Branch was. There were in fact 19 committee members with a strong welfare section included in the numbers. It was decided to hold an annual dinner in the New Year but the price was not to exceed 5 shillings and that ladies would be invited to attend.

**1940's- 1950**

1947- 1st President elected **Col. W.B. Ashby** OBE TD. He went on to explain that HQ R.S.A. had collected sufficient funds to purchase 2 private holiday homes, one in Bournemouth and one in Scarborough for for past and present members of the Corps and their families.

1948- Hon Sec stated that since 1946 grants and loans to the value of œ144 have been given to members. The membership stood at 455 of which 149 still owed subs.

1949- A new?? R.S.A. memorial hotel was due to open in Colwyn Bay. Membership stood at 300 with 150 having been removed for non-payment of subscriptions.

### **1950' s-1960**

May 1950- a half yearly meeting was held to present the balance sheet, as it wasn't ready for the AGM on 1949. There was a huge change in committee members due to ill health and retirement. The Chairman reprimanded all members for turning up at the annual party unannounced and eating all the hot pot supper! His remarks to the members were 'Please don't do it again as the Entertainments officer was very annoyed!' The name of the memorial hotel in Colwyn Bay was to be Mercury House. At the AGM there is the first reference to a Branch Secretaries AGM to be held at Easter in London.

1952- The Chairman announced a reduction in functions due to the death of King George VI.

1954- RSA Manchester made a presentation of a framed picture of H.M. Queen to the T.A. centre at Norton Street Manchester 16.

1955- The first mention of moving the meetings to Sgts Mess TA Centre at Norman Road Rusholme.

1957- The year this author and present Chairman was born. The AGM was held in the Post Office Social Club in Manchester.

1958- The first record of an AGM held at Norman Road in Rusholme. The Branch begins to raise funds for a Branch Standard.

1959- **Mr Jimmy Birchall presented** the Branch with a standard in memory of his wife. The standard was dedicated at Catterick Reunion. A branch member by the name of **Bill Brennan** went to Yugoslavia and tried to open a branch there. Apparently **Marshall Tito** intervened and said he could only open a branch if he (**Marshall Tito**) could be President, Chairman and the whole committee!!! Apparently **Brigadier Firth** was not happy about it!!! The first mention of our oldest member **Mrs Ida Harvey** being elected to the position of Treasurer.

### **1960's-1970**

3/1/1960- An emergency general meeting was called to report on the sad death of the current Chairman **Mr W.E. Brennan**. **Mrs Ida Harvey** becomes secretary.

1961- **Mrs Harvey** stands down as secretary due to ill health. It was decided to invite ex R.E. members to our Branch reunion.

During the 1960's the branch suffered from poor membership and support and over the years several attempts were made to recruit new members although the branch remained financially

strong it was the efforts of the few that kept the branch going. In 1969 there was a mention made of a **Mr Griffin** attending the meeting (was that our own **Peter Griffin** now Vice Chairman). Another emergency general meeting was held in August 1969 to discuss the Corps Jubilee in 1970. Tentative arrangements were discussed regarding the Corps Band, a service to be held at Manchester Cathedral and a march past by the Regiment and Association members. The Annual dinner was to be renamed the Jubilee dinner and a **Lord Rhodes** was to be invited. Apparently the Jubilee dinner was a great success held at the Mersey Hotel there was 160 members present but there is no mention of the guest of honour, a service took place at the Cathedral.

### **1970's-1980**

1971- Shock horror.... due to the behaviour of certain members of the branch at Norman Rd their membership was withdrawn and their papers sent to London. It would appear that **Cpl P Griffin** and **Sig W Bryning** were elected onto the branch committee. **Pete Griffin** and **W (Bill) Bryning** are still active within the branch to date.

### **1980's-1990**

The early 1980's continued to see the branch going through many changes in personnel and in 1983 saw our present Vice Chairman **Mr Pete Griffin** elected into the role of Treasurer. Many different things were tried during this decade to raise the profile of the branch but although members were prepared to pay their annual subscriptions it was difficult to coax them along to meetings.

### **1990's-2000**

1990- At the AGM the present Chairman, **Mr Ron Taylor**, was elected into office and **Mr Pete Halford** (our present standard bearer) was elected Vice Chairman. All officials were elected in for a period of 2 years to allow some stability and continuity to the branch. The monthly Branch meetings were to remain at the Royal British Legion (Ladybarn Branch)

1994- An organised trip to Blackpool for the weekend was a great success and had certainly whetted the Branch's appetite for more social functions. **Maj. Jack Holmes** had presented a new standard to the branch with the old standard being laid up in Norman Road TA centre.

1995- The present incumbent **Mr Harry Ferguson** elected into the post of secretary. **Mr Harry Jones** and **Mr Albert Hitchen** were nominated to meet The Princess Royal at Blandford.

1997- **Maj (Retd) J.Holmes** elected as Life President. Ladies accepted into the branch as associate members. Hon Life membership proposed for **Ian Ashworth-Davies** for all his work carried out for the branch (awarded at the 1998 AGM).

1998- **Maj Gen Sprackling** attended Xmas dinner dance.

### **2000-2010**

**Watch this space with interest and if you fancy getting your name included on the web site why don't you contact the B.I.M. or in fact come along to one of our monthly meeting.**