



# Royal Naval Association

## End of line for 'Blue Funnel' hospital

**CLOSURE** of the former naval hospital at Great Yarmouth brings the curtain down on a building steeped in naval history.

St Nicholas's stout portals admitted generations of patients and their selfless carers. The first to be treated there — wounded sailors returning from the Battle of Copenhagen — were visited by Nelson.

Shipmate Harry Larner, chairman of the Great Yarmouth branch, said Nelson — a Norfolk man and deeply concerned about the welfare of sailors — played a key role in establishing the hospital which is now up for sale.

Work began on the building in 1800, on 270 acres of reclaimed sand dunes known as the Denes. It was completed in 1811 at a cost of £120,000.

At one stage it was used to confine French prisoners of war, whose craft work is on show at the local maritime museum.

When in 1844 the military lunatic asylum at Rochester was found to be unsuitable, the hospital was converted to house them, and by the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854, the hospital catered for all mentally ill Servicemen.

After the Army pulled out at the end of the 1860s the hospital catered for

the mentally ill of the RN and RM and later became known — and dreaded — by Servicemen as "The Blue Funnel Hospital."

During the Second World War patients were evacuated, the building renamed HMS Watchful and used as a naval base.

In 1958 it was transferred to the National Health Service, and renamed again as St Nicholas's.

Despite its changing roles St Nicholas's Hospital has never lost its distinctive naval character. Although the site now occupies only 11 acres, the chapel and clock tower remain virtually unchanged and the wards still

boast the names of famous admirals such as Nelson and Rodney.

Nor is it surprising to know that the hospital has generated its own collection of ghost stories, one of its most distinguished wraiths being a naval captain who is seen doing rounds at night in full ceremonial dress!

Ghosts or not, the Great Yarmouth branch is sad that the town's historic link with the Navy is now in the hands of auctioneers. Before they took over, members of the branch attended a de-consecration of the hospital chapel and honoured the memory of RN patients treated there and the staff who cared for them.

## Haverhill's happy new year

**DISGUISED** as Santa Claus, Haverhill branch secretary, Shipmate Gerry Plumridge, helps to raise funds for the Children's Ward of the West Suffolk Hospital.

The branch manned the Santa grotto in Haverhill shopping precinct in the run-up to Christmas, proceeds going to the children's ward which specialises in treating leukaemia.

Haverhill is a new branch which has recruited 37 members since its formation on October 5. Its commissioning came about through the efforts of five former members of Sawton branch who tired of making the 40-mile round trip to attend meetings at Sawton.



## Homage

# MPs back ex-Service care plea by Legion

**YEARS-LONG** campaigning by The Royal British Legion has come a step closer to success with the support of an all-party group of MPs for better Government co-ordination of care for ex-Service people.

Twelve cross-party MPs were the original signatories to a Commons Early Day Motion which called for a Sub-Department of Ex-Service Affairs within an existing Ministry.

At present ex-Service people have to deal with any one of 17

*Smartest bearer*

## Br li

Trafford m  
10 Area p  
Flixton, U  
hulme car  
£150 for a

## Book p

David S  
commission  
on the mari  
mementos e  
lished at t  
branches h  
inclusion w  
sung. Point  
ford Haven

## VIP gu

President  
miral Sir  
was guest o  
dance orga  
wood bran

## Dahlia

Shipmat  
who serve  
during the  
visited Ch  
on holiday  
model of D  
mate Trevi  
Lowewood  
don. The s  
Cheshunt i

## Ypres

A movin  
members o  
scribe their  
Remembra  
wreath-lay  
ing their st  
to war cer  
trenches on

## Down U

Weymouth  
only one fr  
play at a T

83: J Brownsword  
ould like to hear from

SI and LCA, Omaha  
6 1944: M D Roberts,  
herland, Liverpool L21  
ar from old shipmates  
to Normandy.

fast) FAA (1943-44):  
onks Way, Eastleigh,  
. 0703 391975) would  
one who served in the  
particular anyone who  
Belfast Lough during

: Ex-LRO George  
1 Rd, West Cornforth,  
ie to hear from LSTD  
ew to a get-together  
Charlie and George.

ort carrier (1944-46):  
rence Rd, Four Oaks,  
ILU would like to hear  
om Mess 19, in parti-  
lob Lewer, Les Drake

16: R Armstrong, 56  
ark, Sherburn Village,  
Y (tel. 091 3720111)  
om members of the  
which won the Ber-  
ar Dickerson, Swain-  
iken, Service, Edney.

Sims, 26 Inns Lane,  
bys. DE55 7LW (tel.  
ke to hear from survi-  
who served with H W

109 (1944-45): An-  
toles Blvd, Apt 602,  
JY 2RB Canada (tel.  
8) would like to hear  
i, in particular Sid  
ge Grayson, George  
sd Geordie Tate.  
t, Class 274, Sept.  
Holy Bank, Duddon  
r CW6 0HG (tel. 0829  
hear from old ship-

head, LSI, SS Empire  
stilla RM LCA (1943-  
nard Dr, St Albans,  
27 867243) would like  
Royal Marines with  
s year.

41: Mrs D E Twells,  
in, Derbys. DE7 8US  
n anyone who served  
Nelson.

istmas Island, Grap-  
i, Doverhay, 87 Peas-  
Devon would like to  
ates with view to a

Division, 1935: Nor-  
Brae, Liverpool L18  
8) would like to hear  
particular instructor  
Gunnery PO Teddy

IS Warfield, SS Elk-  
merson, 273 Grovely  
ingham B31 4PS (tel.  
like to hear from old