

**MARCHAM EX-SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

Dear Ed

A very late thank you to those good people who did anything, however small, to make the centenary celebrations go so well. It's hard to believe that not so long ago some people were crying out for this 100-year-old building to be knocked down. It was a pleasure to see so many people visiting The Institute, and thanks to the Ex-Servicemen's Association who are always ready to lend a hand. As I have just mentioned the ESMA let me tell you how it came into being.

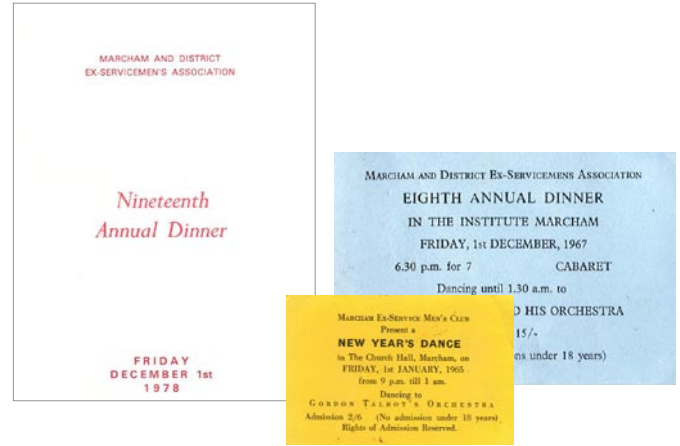


Mighty oaks from little acorns grow. It was formed with eight pounds and ten shillings, in today's money £8.50. Peanuts by today's standards but over 40 years ago it was a week's wages for many people. 2 brothers decided it would be a good idea to form an ESMA. They approached a third person who also agreed and straight away you had a chairman, secretary and treasurer.

The word went around and in a short time the number had grown to 14, the next step was somewhere to meet. The old club room was suggested, which due to the war years 1939-1945, had not been used for a long time. We all met the vicar the Rev. Crawford and looked over the club room to see if it was suitable, all that was in the room was an old tortoise solid fuel stove, a few wooden folding chairs (most of them broken), a case clock, and a few well-grown spiders! It was agreed that the room would be OK. However, money was required to start a big clean-up plus repairs etc., and we had not got any money. A dance was held in The Institute but at the end of the evening we had not taken enough money to pay the band in full, what could we do? A local lady, still with us today, suggested holding a bingo, but at bingo you had to give prizes and you also had to have money to purchase the prizes and there wasn't any. After much debating a whip-round produced eight pounds and 10 shilling (£8.50).

We now had money to buy bingo prizes so 2 people would go bingo shopping one Saturday and 2 the next, depending who had the time and transport. For the first 2 or 3 weeks the prizes were purchased from Bob Mays shop in St Helen's St, Abingdon. The bingo went from strength to strength and more money became available for better value prizes. It was while bingo-shopping in a very crowded shop in Witney that I had 2 or 3 very embarrassing seconds. 18 months prior to this myself and 2 others local lads were working on a small private housing estate on the edge of Witney. 2 of the houses were occupied, a lady came home after a morning's shopping to find that she had left her key in the house. As luck would have it, a bedroom window was open so I shot off to get a ladder. On my return it was suggested that as I had collected the ladder, it was only right that I should go up it. I got one leg in the bedroom when the lady said "Look out for my dog!". I need not have worried - it was one of those very small dogs, you know the kind I mean, crossed between a wire brush and the mop, run on Duracell batteries, never stops barking, every time it takes a breath you think it is going to collapse! A million apologies to any one owning

a little dog looking like the one I have just described. I opened the door and let the lady in, cups of tea all round and everybody happy. Here I am 18 months later in this very crowded shop when the lady just in front of me turned round and in a very loud voice said "Oh, you're the man who got in through my bedroom window". Was my face red! A sea of faces all turned in my direction. The look on the ladies' faces read "You filthy swine"; the look on the men's faces read "How did you get on, mate?".



Money was now available for cleaning materials, paint etc. As the club was only just getting started the first 2 or 3 annual dinners were held at the REME depot at Shippon but later they were held in The Institute followed by a dance. I can well remember at one dance, a gentleman was wearing a kilt and a lady who was a bit of a character had her walking stick with her and as the man danced nearer, she got ready with her stick and said "I will see what that b\_\_\_'s got under that kilt!", but luckily she was prevented from doing so, or there could have been uproar.

It all continued to grow and over the years a lot of money has been spent on the clubroom and the car park to bring them up to the standard you see them in today. A thousand thanks to those founder members and early volunteers, and thanks to the present-day chairman, secretary, treasurer, committee and volunteers who keep it very much alive today. It's not just there as a meeting place, or somewhere to go for a drink and chat, it's also there as a memorial to those men and women who left the village to go to war not knowing if they would ever return.

Thanks to you all  
**M SHEPHERD**

**FORTHCOMING ENTERTAINMENT**

- April 17th - Music by Danni
  - May 22nd - Race Night
  - June 19th - Charity Dance (In the hall)
- All start at 8.30pm - all are welcome, please come along.

**BROADBAND4MARCHAM**  
**NO MORE REGISTRATIONS NEEDED!**  
 We have hit the BT target and are now waiting to find out the date that Marcham exchange will be enabled.  
 You can still register your interest in broadband at  
<http://www.broadband4marcham.net>  
 Registering does not necessarily mean that you have to take up the service!

*If you have a story to tell, contact the editor on 391725*