

Second World War veteran Reg still ‘soldiering on’ at 107

A man who saw action in Singapore and India during the Second World War is still going strong at the age of 107 and celebrated his latest birthday on Tuesday, 7th April.

Reaching and passing milestones in life is a bit of a habit for Reg Lewis, who now lives at the Forder Lane Care Home in Dartington, where he enjoys gentle exercise and leisure time with family.

Reg worked until he was 93 and in his lifetime has seen all manner of historic events, including:

- being born a year before the start of World War One
- living through the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic
- reaching 21 as Hitler came to power in Germany
- living under 21 UK Prime Ministers...
- and four British monarchs!

Unfortunately, due to the current social distancing rules, his relatives were unable to be with him as he celebrated his 107th birthday with residents and staff at the Forder Lane House Care Home, managed by South Devon Rural Housing Association (SDR).

Born in Shropshire in 1913, Reg went on to run his own butcher's business in the county until he was called up to serve in WWII with the



Royal Devon Yeomanry artillery brigade out in Singapore and India.

He survived the war and on his return to England received a telephone call from the officer he served under in Singapore, offering him the chance to manage the local farm in Holne, a village on the edge of Dartmoor. Reg managed the farm for 20

years until it was sold, at which point he returned to working as a butcher in the Torbay area – not retiring until the ripe old age of 93.

He became a resident at Forder Lane House in 2018. He enjoys taking part in daily activities including Tai Chi and also plays cards with family and other residents in his spare time.

Reg has three children – daughters Gill, aged 75, and Sylvia, aged 70, and son Mike.

Christine Candlish, Chief Executive of SDR, said of her organisation's oldest resident: "Everyone is fond of Reg and we're delighted to see him tick off another year in his amazing catalogue of personal milestones."



DEVON YEOMANRY IN ACTION DURING WWII

From field to plate - it doesn't happen by magic

Well it seems to have begun. The answer to a problem that we possibly didn't know we had. As someone said once, 'only those that knew, knew'.

We, this country, usually get a lot of agricultural workers, labourers, pickers - by whatever name, from other countries especially from Eastern Europe. People probably knew that we got 'some', but not the many tens of thousands required. Add to that sickness and self-isolating by local workers and you'll see that there is a need. So - problem - they can't fly in to do the crop picking to keep the fields fresh and the shelves stacked. But the word has got out, certainly it has been aired a couple of times on our telly but, by whatever means: the nation hath responded.

One job search website has reported 50,000 searches for farming jobs in just one recent week alone. It seems that workers who have been laid off or are unable to work because of the rules, are looking for alternative employment.

Searches online for 'fruit picker' or 'farm worker' have grown, have doubled, have trebled. There are no laurels to be rested upon though as many more are needed. What also needs to grow is the 'can do' attitude. Seasonal work and food processing, it's all available apparently. Millions of people have been furloughed from their normal jobs we have rising unemployment and students have been sent home from their schools, colleges and universities.

A spokesman from the Country Land and Business Association has said that there are encouraging signs, people are coming forward via the recruitment campaign because they want to work and they understand the need. Schemes for younger people, especially some who might otherwise be in other countries experiencing other cultures and working at the same time, are being put in place. There is a Feed the Nation scheme to help with picking. It's also getting interest from carpenters, chefs, hospitality workers and many, many others. But there's probably room for a few more...

Okehampton to Exeter rail link UPDATE

While *The Moorlander* awaits official confirmation from the Department for Transport as to the future plans to recommission the Okehampton to Exeter railway link, the following information was posted on 13th April by Rail UK Forum member Tony Hill on the forum's website (Infrastructure & Stations) and is most revealing.

"I was part of a Network Rail (NR) track walkout from Coleford junction to Okehampton over three days March 3rd - 5th.

"The purpose of this exercise was to look at infrastructure condition and see what will be needed to reopen the line for regular passenger use and with a view to the line being transferred into NR ownership.

"There were representatives from Pway [Permanent Way], S&T [Signalling and Telegraph], level crossings, telecoms, drainage, earthworks, structures and special projects. The infrastructure is in generally good condition, but as you would expect some areas are in need of remedial works.

"One of the issues is line speed, not just where track/drainage quality is poor but the user worked crossings which are not equipped with any form of warning or telephones, these restrictions have the ability to make journey times uncompetitive. Overall though it was informally agreed that a basic service could be introduced relatively easily."

Tony added, "This is very enlightening, particularly with regard to the proposed transfer of the line in due course to NR.

"Not sure subsequently where any negotiations are in respect of ownership transfer, but expect things will now be delayed with the current virus situation."



As can be seen from the above, whilst work is under way, if NR do get their hands on the line, speed limits will likely be imposed at each of the user worked crossings. These are not foot crossings but where tractors can be driven across the railway, like at the Wind Farm for instance.

This will either require telephone connection to Crediton from each crossing, or slower speeds over the crossing. This happens on the Newquay branch line for example. Given this, the reopening of the entire line would circumvent this and mean the investment needed would be made.

Otherwise there is a fear that the slow timings, longer than now, coupled with no direct trains to Central [Exeter Central Station] will impact on the numbers of people who use the line. However, the virus situation may well delay things somewhat plus more people could start or continue to work from home.

THEMOORLANDER

Local news from across Dartmoor

SALUTES ALL THE LOCAL SHOPS

