

## **The Kipling family of Bradford and the British Legion**

My grandfather, John Spencer Kipling, was an active member of the Legion in Bradford, West Yorkshire, from at least 1930 until his death in 1982. His younger son, my father Robert Furze Spencer Kipling, was also active in the Legion in Bradford for many years.

Spencer Kipling, then a junior bank clerk in Bideford, Devon, had volunteered at the outbreak of the Great War, joining the 5th Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. He saw service in India, Palestine and France, never rising above acting lance-corporal, being wounded and invalided home in mid-1918. He rejoined the bank and after starting a family in London, moved to Bradford around 1930 to take up a more senior post. He was for many years the manager of the 'overseas' branch of Lloyds Bank, and a respected figure in the export trade in what was then still a world-leading wool manufacturing city.

Known to his friends and colleagues as 'Kips', he became Treasurer of the Legion's Bradford Central Branch from 1930 to 1935 and later served as branch chairman and president. He was Treasurer of the Bradford Group 1934-45, also having a leading role in Air Raid Precautions during WW2. In 1948, he became Bradford Group President, a position he occupied until his death 34 years later. He was appointed County Vice-President for the West Riding in 1960, again a post he occupied until his death. He was made a life member in 1949.



**Presentation of the British Legion life membership to Mr. J. Spencer Kipling at the annual dinner in Bradford last night. Left to right: Mr. R. Potter (chairman), Mr. Kipling, Capt. H. F. Bursey (president), Mr. Harry Mallinson (treasurer), and Mr. C. Lingwood (secretary).**

*Bradford Observer - Thursday 03 March 1949*

In the newspaper report below contains an example of his campaigning on behalf of ex-servicemen (he was also for many years Chairman of the Branford and Shipley War Pensions Committee).

**Pensions protests**

Pensions for disabled ex-Servicemen were described as "scandalous," "miserable" and "mean" by speakers at Saturday night's 32nd annual dinner of the Bradford branch of the British Legion, held in Busby's Café, Manningham Lane.

The first comment came from Mr. J. S. Kipling, a senior vice-president. Proposing, "The City of Bradford," he declared: "It is an absolute scandal that ex-Servicemen with 100 per cent. disablement should be fobbed off with a miserable 55s."

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Angus Crowther) replied to the toast. He said, "I think it would be nothing less than mean ingratitude if we did not recognise the need of any man who has saved this country from disaster and preserved it from the assault of the enemy."

Finally, Mr. M. Woodhead, President of the Bradford Branch, said that the pension payments were a scandalous shame when one realised how wages and salaries had advanced.

Captain S. H. Hampson, Chairman of the British Legion, replied to "The British Legion." Colonel Sir Alfred Mowat proposed, "The Armed Forces," to which Lieut.-General G. C. Evans, GOC-in-C Northern Command, replied. "Our Guests," was proposed by Mr. G. Fishwick, Chairman of the Bradford Branch. Captain C. Leach responded.

*Yorkshire Post 23 November 1953*

Come rain or shine, he would be found at Bradford's annual Remembrance parade. The picture below, from 1939 (note gas mask holder straps on many participants and one in uniform), shows him (arrowed) in the very long parade of those years.



Below we see him in a more prominent role at Bradford's cenotaph, probably in the 1960s, this time wearing his War and Victory medals.



He is pictured below laying a wreath in 1969 at the Bradford cenotaph.



In the picture below, from 1966, he is unveiling a memorial to Cecil Lingard, another active legionnaire who had died in 1964, at Bursey House, the Legion's Bradford HQ.



In 1971, he was present at a dinner in Bradford to celebrate the Legion's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As he was by then widowed, he was accompanied by his grand-daughter, Mary Vanessa Kipling (my cousin). My father and mother are also in the same picture.

*Above:* The Earl and Countess of Yarborough and the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bradford (Alderman and Mrs. Herbert Moran).

*Above right:* Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Tully and Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Markham.

## AN ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The Bradford Group Joint Committee of the British Legion recently held a dinner at the Midland Hotel in Bradford. This was to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the British Legion and special guests at the dinner were the Earl and Countess of Yarborough and the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bradford.

*Photographs by Gordon Hodgson*

*Right:* Mrs. D. O'Neill (chairman, Keighley Group) and Coun. and Mrs. Norman Shackleton (president, Keighley Group).

*Above:* Mr. and Mrs. P. Harland and Mr. and Mrs. H. Kitching.

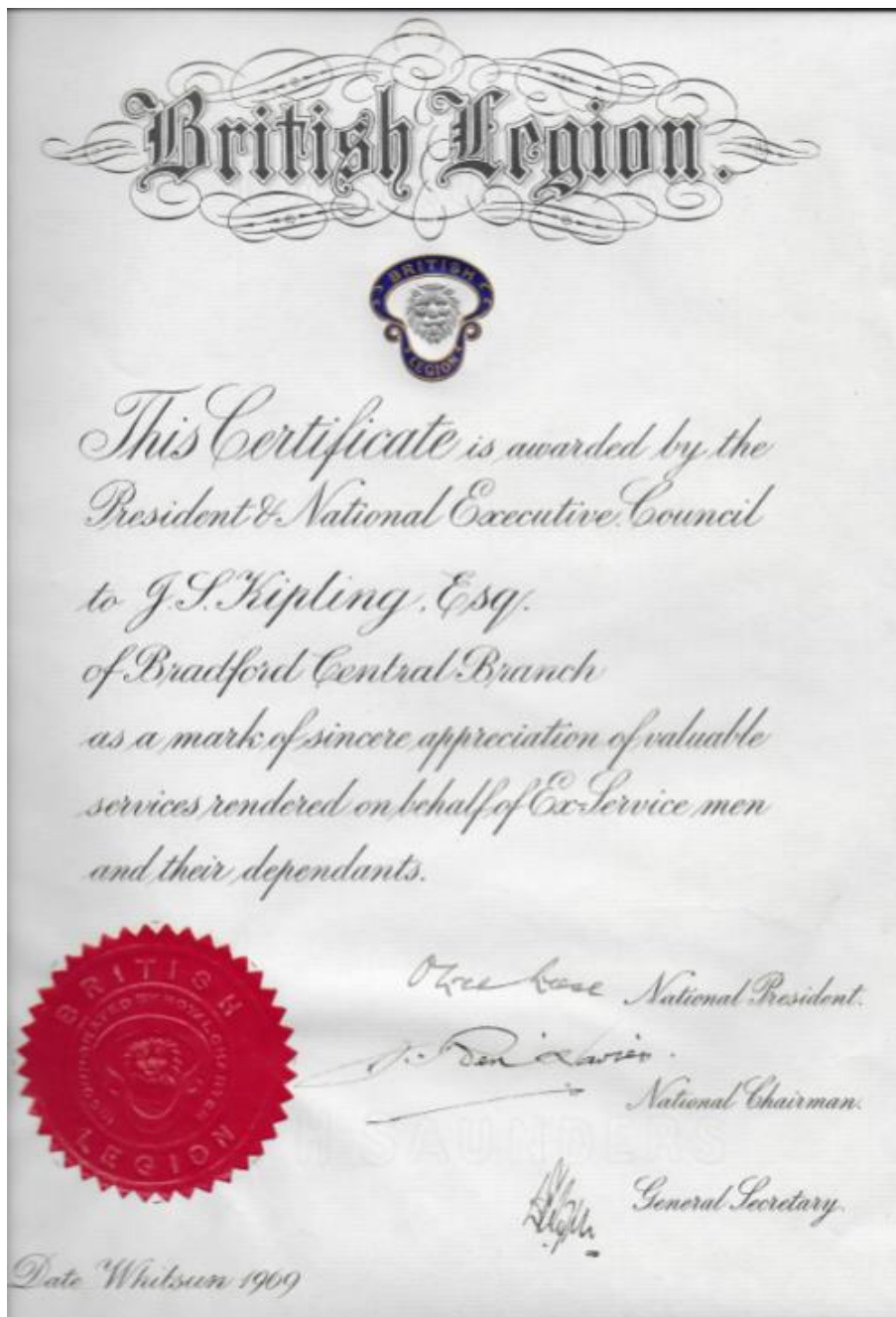
*Above:* Mr. J. S. Kipling, Miss M. V. Kipling and Mr. and Mrs. R. Kipling.

*Left:* Coun. and Mrs. R. N. W. Bishop and the Rev. and Mrs. C. B. Hollis.

*Below left:* Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Packett and Mr. and Mrs. A. N. Patchett.

*Below:* Mrs. G. Kendrey, Mrs. E. N. Croft-Foulds and Mrs. M. H. Law-Green.

In 1973, he was awarded a national certificate of appreciation.



In the 1973, a block of Legion flats for the elderly in Bradford was named 'Kipling Court' in his honour.



Below he is standing is next to the commemorative plaque on the opening day.



And here delivering a speech, listened to by, amongst others, the Lord Mayor of Bradford and my father (one row back, at his left elbow).



He was also very active in the Poppy Appeal each year, always standing with tin for some time, even if also involved in the organisation. Here he is with the Lord Mayor launching the appeal in 1973.



He died in 1982 and the picture below shows the unveiling of a memorial plaque at the British Legion's Bradford HQ the following year, with my father on the right.

## Memorial to 'Kips' unveiled

**PLAQUE** commemorating Mr. John Spencer Kipling's work for the Royal British Legion in Bradford and West Yorkshire was unveiled and dedicated last night.

The ceremony was held at Turley House, Claremont, the Legion headquarters in Bradford. The plaque was unveiled by Mr. Frank Scott, president of Bradford Central branch, and the service of dedication was led by the Rev. Bernard Gribbin, branch

chaplain and Vicar of Bankfoot.

Mr. A. O. Gray, chairman of the Bradford group of branches, spoke of the "old world courtesy" which Mr. Kipling brought to all his Legion work and said they already missed him greatly.

Mr. Kipling, who lived at Toller Lane, Bradford, died last September aged 88. The plaque lists the offices he held at various levels of Legion organisation. It was paid for from donations received after an appeal launched in February.

Seen from left are Mr. Robert Kipling, Mr. Kipling's son and the Bradford branch treasurer, Mr. Scott, the Rev. Bernard Gribbin, and Mr. Jack Venner, branch chairman.

# Legion's last tribute to 'Kips'

THE following tribute to Mr. John Spencer Kipling, Bradford's Royal British Legion stalwart, who died last week, aged 88, has been sent by Mr. A. O. Gray, chairman of the Bradford Group, Royal British Legion.

On Monday, we paid our last respects to "Kips", as he was known to those of us who were honoured to call him friend. As a young man, he saw action in the 1914-18 conflict to such effect that he seemed apologetic that he should have survived unscathed.

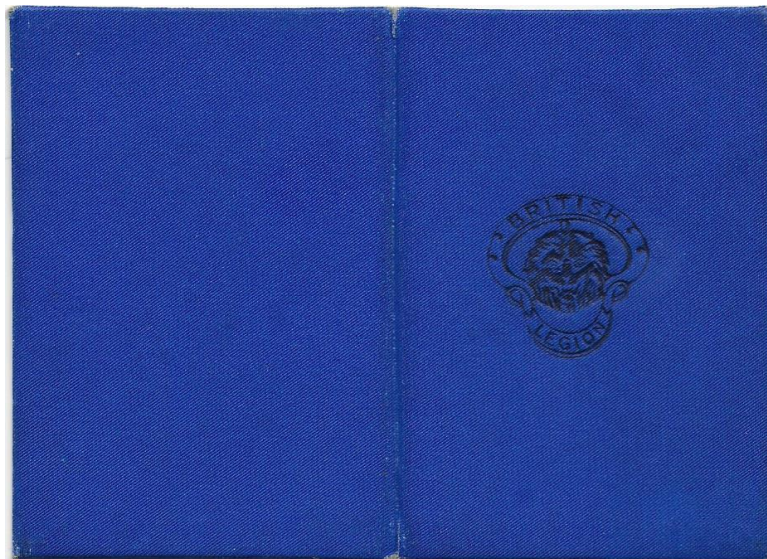
To this end, he devoted himself to assisting the ex-service community via the Royal British Legion from its inception in 1921. His particular interest was in war pensions and he gave unstinting service to the Bradford and Keighley War Pensions Committee.

He was a leading figure within the Royal British Legion, holding office at branch, group, district and county levels.

His tolerance, understanding, loyalty and dedication were, and will remain, an example to us all for he displayed these qualities with old-world charm and in such a gentlemanly manner that we will always remember him with honour and affection.

**KIPLING.** — On September 21, at his home, John Spencer, aged 88 years, the dearly-loved husband of the late Daisy Kipling, a dear father, grandad and brother. Service and cremation on Monday, September 27, at Nab Wood at 3 p.m. Friends please accept this intimation. By request, family flowers only please, but, if desired, donations in lieu may be sent to The Royal British Legion, 9 Claremont, Bradford 7. — H23

Turning to my father, he had served in the RAF in WW2. He was for many years Treasurer of Bradford Central Branch, a role his father had once held, and also the Poppy Appeal organiser, assisted frequently by my mother and, in some of my teenage years, by me too. Here's his membership card from 1950.



Name of Branch BRADFORD  
 Member's Name Robert F S. Kipling  
 Address 3, Howarth Grove, 11, Duchy Gr. Wroce, Stopley, Bk 14  
 Badge No. A. 503117. Date of joining 12 Oct 1950  
**ENTRANCE FEE ONE SHILLING, PAID.**  
 Signature of Member } R. Kipling ★

★ IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE MEMBER SHOULD SIGN HERE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BRANCH SECRETARY, AND OFFICIAL FEE STAMP RECEIPT FORM INSERTED COVERING THE PERIOD OF SUBSCRIPTION.

**PRINCIPLES AND POLICY OF THE BRITISH LEGION.**

(a) The Legion shall be democratic, non-sectarian, and shall not be affiliated to or connected directly or indirectly with any political party or political organisation.

(b) The Legion shall be created to inaugurate and maintain in a strong, stimulating, united and democratic comradeship, all those who have served in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Air Force, or any Auxiliary Forces, so that neither their efforts nor their interests shall be forgotten; that their welfare and that of the dependants of the fallen may be safeguarded; and that just and equitable treatment shall be secured to them in respect of the difficulties caused in their lives as a result of their services.

(c) The Legion shall exist to perpetuate in the civil life of the Empire and of the World the principles for which we have fought; to inculcate a sense of loyalty to the Crown, Community, State, and Nation; to promote unity amongst all classes; to make right the master of might; to secure peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy, and to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual service and helpfulness.

**The attention of the holder of this card is specially drawn to the following extracts from Rule 2.**

(c) Any person accepted as an Ordinary Member shall be deemed to be a Member so long as his name remains upon the Membership Register provided that the said Member has not resigned or died and that his membership has not otherwise lapsed or been determined for good and sufficient reasons by the decision of the Branch to which he belongs. Any Member whose arrears of contributions do not exceed the amount represented by three months contribution shall be deemed to be a financial Member and as such shall be entitled to vote and otherwise take part in the affairs of the Legion.

(g) Any Ordinary Member who is three months in arrears in respect of his contributions under Rule 2 (E) shall be liable to have his Membership determined by the decision of the Branch of which he is a Member.

(h) No ordinary Member holding an Official position of any description in the Legion shall be in arrears with contributions under Rule 2 (E) except upon pain of forfeiture of the position held by him.

(i) Any Ordinary Member producing satisfactory evidence to his Branch that he is unable through unemployment or ill-health to maintain his contributions may be permitted to remain a full Member notwithstanding non-payment of such contributions for such period and upon such terms as the Branch Committee may determine.

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Here we see him in a Poppy Day launch photograph in 1970.



And in a 1981 Remembrance parade, passing the saluting base on the steps of Bradford city hall.



And here are a couple of certificates he was awarded for his service.



And even my other cousin, Ray Kipling, had a brief involvement with the Legion.

The lifeboat *RNLB Royal British Legion* which was provided by Legion members to celebrate the Legion's jubilee year, has reached the end of her lifesaving career after 19 years of impressive service. In her tour of duty in the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's relief fleet she served at 14 different lifeboat stations, was launched on service 56 times and saved 50 lives. As the lifeboat has now been sold her builder's plate, and a plaque



recording the naming of the lifeboat by Her Majesty The Queen at Henley on Thames on 17 July 1972 has been mounted by the, RNLB for display at Legion head-

quarters. Mr Ray Kipling, left, Deputy Director, RNLB presents the commemorative board to the General Secretary of The Royal British Legion, Lt-Col Philip Creasy.

**Mike Kipling**  
**March 2021**