



British Legion Memorabilia Collectors Club

British Legion Volunteer Police Force

No your eyes are not deceiving you, it is the British Legion Volunteer Police Force. It must surely be the shortest lived Police Force of modern times.. However it did have its moment or should say ten days of glory on the International Scene, during the crucial months which led up to the outbreak of the second world war.

The Force was formed on the 6th October 1938, and was entitled THE BRITISH LEGION VOLUNTEER POLICE FORCE (BLVPF) It was disbanded on the 15th October 1938 some ten days later.

To set the formation of the BLVPF into context it is necessary to briefly mention the International affairs on the go at the time. The Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia was about to be claimed and annexed by the German Chancellor Adolf Hitler and to this end Hitler had demanded the withdrawal of all Czech troops and Police by the 1st October 1938 this alarmed the other European countries and after discussion Hitler agreed to a Plebiscite controlled by an International Commission. Several plans were put forward which ended by the British Government authorising the British Legion in agreement with Hitler to organise a force of Legionaries to Supervise the voting, and its anticipated transfer of the territory to Germany.

So on the 25th September 1938 The British Legion HQ in London began preparations to form what was described as a "Volunteer Police Force " to police the plebiscite area. Personnel had to be found equipped and prepared for overseas travel. It was suggested that 1000 members of the Legion would be required and a further 200 would be required for transport and support tasks.

Legion HQ. Circulated all ten Area Branches asking for lists of men who would be prepared to serve in the new Police Force, and the first two floor of Olympia in London were taken over to provide a mobilisation centre. Where the Volunteers would enrol on the 6th October.

The BLVPF Commander was named as Major Sir Francis Fetherston — Godley OBE. DL The then National Chairman of the British Legion. The volunteers were to be paid £3.15 shillings per week for married men and £3 per week personnel had been sworn in and for the they were instructed as to their expected

it was essential that all



example, (sic) hats. consisted of were

dark blue three piece suits as worn by Civilian Municipal employees of the time. They were issued with white soft collar Shirts, two pairs of boots and a kit bag. Ties were either Regimental or British Legion pattern. A special British Legion cap badge was produced for the force with lapel, shoulder of epaulette badges for wear with a greatcoat. An armband in the Legion colours of blue and gold was also issued.



for single men. By the 7th October 1938 all 1200 next week they were quartered in Olympia, where duties.

The British Ambassador in Berlin had stated that personnel should be uniformly dressed in :— For Police blue peaked caps and greatcoats which provided by the London Metropolitan Police, and

Thus equipped the BLVPF was a scheduled to proceed to the Sudetenland on the 12th October 1938. They were taken to Tilbury Dock where they embarked on two ships, The MS Naldera and the MS Dunera to sail to Bremen. Where they were to be conveyed by train to the Sudetenland. The boats anchored off Southend to await further instruction.

On the 13th October. Hitler's representative on the International Commission openly declared against a plebiscite. The Czechs having always opposed the idea, concurred and the plebiscite was formally abandoned. On the following day the British Government gave instructions, that its services being no longer required. The BLVPF Should be disbanded. The two ships returned to Tilbury and the Legionaries disembarked and dispersed to their homes on the 15th October 1938. On disbandment



the men handed in their caps, overcoats and kit bags. They were however allowed to keep their other items including their badges.

The BLVPF cap badge [top of the page] comprised the British Legion silver and enamelled lapel badge emblem superimposed on a gilding metal star Surmounted by a Victorian Crown. The badge had a very long narrow slider fitted on the back. For the greatcoat a very much smaller version of the cap badge was designed and had for some inexplicable reason a Kings Crown atop the star with loop fittings on the back. The normal British Legion membership emblem was worn in the left lapel button hole.

A version of the cap badge was produced after the second world war for use by British Legion members employed as Commissionaires Car park attendants etc. But the central device on this badge is much smaller than the version used by the BLVPF, and the slider fitting is wider. [see British [Legion Memorabilia Collectors Club](#)]

The volunteers received much praise for their sense of duty, public spiritedness and disciplined bearing. The German Government expressed their thanks for their contribution towards the settlement of the Sudetenland question and expressed the hope that the volunteers would make a holiday visit to Germany as guests of the German Ex Servicemen's Association sometime during 1939.

Quite few volunteers did visit Germany over the next six or seven years, through NOT ON HOLIDAY! Just for the record three members of the BLVPF did reach Czechoslovakia. They were the advance party who flew out to the Continent whilst the rest of the force mobilised at Olympia, By luck they changed planes en route at Brussels, for their original plane Later crashed killing twenty passengers.

And so ended the shortest reign of a Police Force in Modern times.

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