

## President's Message 2015-16

As I write this, I am just finalising details for the UK & ROI Brigade Conference which as you know, is being held in Wolverhampton for the first time. I did have a phone-call from one person who was sure we had hosted the 'Council' before, but she was recalling the old 'District' meetings which were always very big affairs. In fact, I'm guessing that the District Meeting we hosted probably had more delegates than we will get for the 2015 National Conference! There are two reasons for the drop-off in numbers of course, one is that we are not such a big organisation numerically as we were in the 1950s & 60s, and the second is the massive improvement in communications which has taken place, particularly since the coming of the internet. This, as we know, means better contact for virtually everyone and less need for meetings. Hopefully, Conference will raise our profile just a little, in the city.

'Communications' was the name of one of our awards at one time, but sometimes we still don't quite get it. Many of us 'oldies' can remember the days when we told the world, usually as they were just having a lay-in on Sunday morning, that the BB was in the locality...as the company Band led a parade around the streets. I meet too many people who say to me: 'Boys' Brigade...do they still exist?' To have a successful company you need to be both a part of your church and a part of your community. In my visits around the Battalion I am usually heartened to find out just how much we do get right when we make the effort, but we cannot be complacent. I see BB members taking church services, packing bags in local supermarkets, cleaning-up their local area, raising cash for local charities... in other words, maintaining a high profile. Please keep on doing this. The start of a new session is just the time to ask the question...what are we doing to let the Church/community know that we exist? A good example of 'showing the flag' happened literally... In the recent televised 'VJ Day' 70 yr. celebrations and commemorations in London there was a very prominent BB colour on show on Horse Guards Parade. The on-going WW1 commemorations offer a great chance for members to get involved with the community... and maybe qualify for a badge as well. Our new Brigade Secretary Andrew Johnston, who will meet many BB colleagues for the first time when he comes to Wolverhampton, is very keen to raise the public awareness of the Brigade.

On the question of numbers, it has been very pleasing to see increased numbers in some of our companies, quite significantly so, in some. You must be doing something right! Sadly, we lost the 1<sup>st</sup> Madeley Company, and I thank the leaders for all their work over the years. On a brighter note we welcome the start of the new 1<sup>st</sup> Wolverhampton Coy., part of the RCCG 'Fountain of Grace' Church in Central Wolverhampton. I ask you all to offer your prayers, and if possible practical help, to the company as it begins its adventure.

I wish you all every success as you work in the Lord's name!

Rob Bolton

President