



The Editor Writes

My constant aim when producing *In Touch* each month is to bring you interesting articles on a variety of topics. I hope you will agree that this issue is a good example of what an old newspaper colleague used to call, 'a good read'.

As well as the regular coverage of Legion activities, we have details of a wartime commemoration and, by way of complete contrast, our very own Shepherdess writes a lighthearted account of life down on the farm in the hectic lambing season. These stories are contributed by members, and I am very grateful to them and everyone who helps me fill this newsletter each month.

And on that subject, at the risk of boring you, I am making yet another plea. I should like to have your memories, anecdotes and photographs about VE Day. Where were you and what were you doing when the war in Europe came to an end? No matter what age you were at the time or whether you were in the Services or civvy street. Get 'in touch' soon, please, and watch out for some of your stories next month.

Once again, thanks to the enterprise of dedicated officials of our branch, there are interesting developments to report. Brian Marshall has taken our affiliation with the ATC Squadron and Army Cadet Detachment a step further and a presentation ceremony was held at the April meeting.

Tom Ashmore introduced Sophia Ramcharan from the BBC, a most welcome guest at the meeting. As Tom explains in his article on page 3, the BBC's aim is to set up a national archive of people's wartime memories. So, you see, it is not just me after your stories!

There are many activities, locally and nationally arranged for the 60th Anniversary of VE Day and I hope you will be able to enjoy some of the events.



Cementing a Happy Relationship

Members of the Market Harborough Detachment of the Army Cadet Force and 1084 Squadron of the Air Training Corps received shields and certificates in recognition of their affiliation to the Legion. The presentation, which was an expression of the high regard and esteem in which the cadets are held, was made by the Market Harborough Branch Vice-Chairman, Brian Marshall, in his capacity of County Youth Officer.

Market Harborough Branch has led the way in Leicestershire in cementing relationships with the cadets and President, Peter Wilson, praised Brian Marshall for his achievement.

"He has built a close bond with the local cadets", he said, "and

we wish him well in his efforts to arrange further affiliations in the County.

"The Air Training Corps Squadron became the first in the County to be affiliated in September 2003 and the Army Cadets soon followed."

He went on to thank the cadets for the valuable assistance they give during the Poppy Appeal and at coffee mornings.

"We only have to say the word", he said, "and willing volunteers are there to help."

Flt Lt Valerie Smith and Staff Sergeant Marriott responded on behalf of their respective units, thanking the Royal British Legion and expressing willingness to help whenever required.



On parade for the presentation ceremony. Back: Sgt Andrew Marriott, Thomas Harrald, George Fleming, Georgina Wilford and Liam Cockerill. Front: Lauren Bickley, Brian Marshall, Matthew Gorman and Flt Lt Valerie Smith.



Coffee Morning Another successful event resulted in a handsome profit of £321 and thanks are extended to all helpers.

‘Victory Party’ It has been suggested that a party be held in July with Members, Cadets and their families invited. A 40s-style fancy dress competition and dancing to popular wartime music were among possible attractions mentioned.

Market Harborough Carnival Brian Marshall outlined plans for a joint float with the Cadets. A space for the marquee was to be sought and there would be a display in association with the BBC’s People at War project. 60th Anniversary packs had been order for use at the Carnival.

Lunches and Dinners The Christmas lunch will be held at the Angel Hotel and an informal Autumn Dinner has been arranged at the Golf Club to the same format as last year.

Membership Tony Johnson reports that the number of branch members has now has once more achieved a total of 130.

National Annual Conference The Branch delegate is Mark Hudson and he will be attending the conference to be held in Torquay on 27 May. Extracts of proposed Motions will be published in the next issue of *In Touch*.

Branch Membership Directory

Please note the following amendments:

We welcome two new members:

01858 433695 Green Mr A G (Alexander)
24 Granville Street, Market Harborough LE16 9EX.

Marshall Mr J V (Joseph)
38 Brooms Park, Walton, Stone ST15 0BQ.



The Diary

Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143. Joan welcomes your ideas for events, outings, etc.

SOME DATES TO KEEP FREE

- 11 Jun Harborough Carnival
- 17/19 Jun Railways at War, Gt Central Railway, Loughboro’
- 4 -10 Jul Veterans Awareness Wk & 60th Ann. End WW2
- 9 Jul Musical Extravaganza, Beaumanor Hall
- 10 Jul Concert & Thanksgiving Service, Beaumanor Hall
- 27 Aug Poppy Race Day at Newmarket
- 5 Nov Branch Coffee Morning
- 19 Nov Remembrance Concert, Baptist Church

The date of the next meeting is May 1th

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room at the Conservative Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Committee meets in the same room on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.00 pm



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net

In Touch

Issue 79 April 2005

In Touch on-line

www.in-touch.ukvet.net

Editor

George Seward : 01858 433873
18 Charles Street,
Market Harborough, LE16 9AB
e-mail : g.seward@btinternet.com

Branch Contact Numbers

Welfare

Vida Edwards : 0116 279 3729

Hon. Secretary

Betty Ramsay : 01858 434923



The People's War Tom Ashmore Reports

At the Branch meeting on 13th April, the chairman announced that we had a mystery guest, whom later, I introduced as our speaker for the evening, Miss Sophia Ramcharan, the BBC Learning Projects Manager, East Midlands.



*Sophia Ramcharan with
Tom Ashmore.*

Sophia explained that the BBC is developing a National Archive of memories of people who had lived during World War Two, related by themselves and covering all aspects of life at that time. The project had been launched in October 2003 and already over 15,000 stories had been obtained and made available for all to see in the form of an internet website (www.bbc.co.uk/ww2). It was important to preserve these experiences to show younger generations how the war affected everyone living in what was a unique period of this country's history: it was the People's War and that is the name given to the project.

Many more stories were needed and many different organisations are helping to obtain and add them to the website. Sophia was impressed by what the branch had done to produce such a good collection of stories contributed over the years by members and others for *In Touch* and she hoped that we too, could work with the BBC. She appealed to everyone to add their memories or those of family members and to encourage others to do the same.

Clearly, Sophia's talk sparked off a lot of interest, judging by the number of people who spoke to her or took away the literature she had brought. Even after she had left some

members were still saying, "Do you remember . . . ?" and "I've just thought of . . . ". And the first story reached Editor George Seward the following day: memories of a member who was 18 months old at the beginning of the war!

Miss Ramcharan's talk was the sequel to a meeting she had on 29th March with Mark Hudson, George Seward and myself following an enquiry I had sent to the BBC. From our discussion it was clear that the experience the branch has in obtaining, editing and publishing stories could be used to help the BBC project. It was suggested that the Branch become one of the nationwide network of Associate Centres acting as channels through which the Archive is being developed.

The Branch Committee accepted this idea on 7th April and we now await confirmation from the BBC that our application for registration has been accepted. Meanwhile over 40 stories have been selected for adding to the archive but we will not submit anything an author does not wish to be published on the BBC website.

New stories are now more welcome than ever so start jotting down those half forgotten wartime experiences, trivial or profound, whether as a child or adult. Don't say you can't write essays – we will tidy up your efforts (within reason!). Please say if you do not wish it to be published in *In Touch*. Something typed or in electronic form is preferred but we will try to cope with handwriting.

If you would prefer to submit your story to the BBC directly, by all means do so, but note that this will mean accessing their website. Market Harborough Library is a registered Associate Centre and provides free internet access and advice but does not have the resources to edit or transcribe copy on paper to the computer for you. They are organising a story-gathering event on 18th May and a WW2 display later. We are co-operating with the Library in both events.

P.S. We believe ours will be the first branch in RBL to work with the BBC on this project.

The 60th Anniversary of Operation Varsity 24 March 1945

With the task of suppressing German artillery and small arms fire, which would have opposed the 21st Army Group's crossing of the Rhine, some 14,000 airborne Allied troops were landed on the enemy-held side of the river.



Included in the large force of aircraft were 14 Hamilcar gliders, towed by Halifax bombers. One of the Hamilcars was piloted by Captain Bernard Halsall.

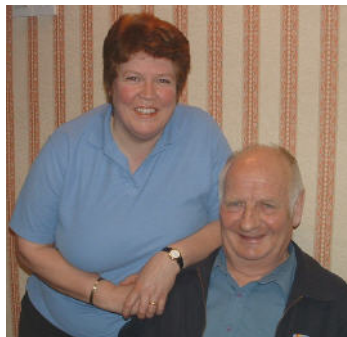
To mark the 60th anniversary of the operation, code named Varsity, a service of thanksgiving and commemoration was held at Royal Air Force Shawbury. Con and Bernard attended the ceremony, along with their daughter and her husband.



*Con looks on as Bernard chats with Field Marshall
Montgomery's grandson.*

Lambing Time is Here Again
A Day on the Farm
with Shepherdess Pat Walker

The sheep are kept in a big barn with plenty of space and dry bedding and they give birth to their lambs wherever they like. Afterwards they are then put into individual pens along with their lambs so that they can bond.



Pat and John Walker

The day starts with John or I getting up at 6am to see if any lambs were born during the night. Yes, there are a few and we make sure they are alright, spray their navels with iodine to stop any infection, and put them in a pen with their mothers.

It is now feeding time for the ewes and we prepare for the morning stampede! The troughs are out in the yard and it is advisable to get out of the way of the mass exodus as the sheep rush to get at the food. If you don't move a bit sharpish, you are likely to go with them - which is not to be recommended as their breakfast is nothing like a full English! We then make our own eating arrangements and return to work about nine o'clock.

We start by checking to see if any more lambs have been born. Not this time, so we check the water buckets to make sure they all have enough to drink. Then I come to my favourite job! After tailing all the new lambs, castrating has to be done within a few hours of being born. (*Chaps of a nervous disposition shouldn't read the next bit, Ed.*) It entails putting an elastic band around their scrotum, which will eventually wither and drop off.

We keep a watch on all the new lambs to make sure they suckle within the first few hours as their mothers' milk is very beneficial to their immune system. Next comes bedding down to make sure they all have nice dry beds and plenty of fresh hay. The new born lambs are let out of their pens with their mothers in to a larger pen until they are strong enough to go out into the fields.

Then it is back home for a few hours rest - and other jobs - until we arrange the evening stampede to the troughs at 6pm. We have to check the sheep every four to five hours to make sure there are no ewes in difficulty. When there is, one of us



has to put a hand inside the ewe to help the lamb be born. What is it like, you may ask. Well, it's not unpleasant, like putting your hand into a bowl of warm jelly. (*Please don't try this at home, Ed.*)

The satisfaction you get from seeing the lamb survive is great knowing that you have helped it on its way. Lambing time is very hard, tiring work but, when you see the lambs skipping about the fields, it is all worthwhile.

60th Anniversary of the
End of WWII
Veterans Awareness Week

This year the first Veterans Awareness Week will be held from 4th to 10th July. The idea is to raise awareness of the contribution made by veterans of all conflicts in which the UK has been involved. Events in London will be centred in and around St James's Park and full details can be found on the National Calendar of Events website www.veteransagency.mod.uk. The following are among the events scheduled to take place.

The Living Museum with displays and re-enactments reflecting wartime life in Britain.
 Display of Vintage Military Vehicles parked along The Mall.

A Memorial to the Women of World War II in Whitehall will be unveiled by the Queen on 10th July.

The Veterans Centre in St James's Park will provide rest areas, bars and refreshments for WWII Veterans. Sunday 10th July, falling roughly halfway between VE and VJ days, will be National Commemoration Day.

Regulations in the Royal Charter
Branch Subscriptions
(P 28 No 48 May 2005 Edition)

The following clause was brought to the notice of the Branch meeting by John Liddell.

'When a person, who has been an ordinary member for 20 years or more, becomes entitled to Old Age or Retirement pension, the Branch may allow him or her to remain a full member without paying the branch subscription for the rest of his or her life.'

Clause 49 goes on to say that the branch is responsible for paying the Affiliation Fee for any Member excused from payment of the branch subscription.