

The Editor Writes

In an effort to give as much publicity as possible to the Poppy Appeal, the front cover of *In Touch* has been given a colourful floral make-over.

The launch of the Appeal is imminent; Duggie McMeeken has almost recruited his army of Collectors and, dear reader, I am sure you are preparing to do all you can to help our Branch raise “loads a money!”

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My father was a London bus conductor and in the late twenties and early thirties often worked on open-top buses. He was on the famous central London route 11 which for some ninety years has followed the same roads through the City and West End.

I recall him telling me about passing the Cenotaph in Whitehall when all male passengers raised their hats and many on the top deck stood to attention. These touching marks of remembrance lasted for many years after the war, but were largely brought to an end, I suppose, when all buses were fitted with roofs.

At Dad’s funeral back in 1961, the procession left the house at walking pace and an elderly gentleman stood smartly to attention as the hearse went by. He lived nearby but certainly did not know my father. I spoke to him later and learned he had spent most of his life in the Royal Navy.

These examples of respectful actions were once almost universally taken for granted. Unfortunately many young men today would consider them to be less than ‘macho’ and would no doubt cause them to be the butt of sarcastic comment.

We must be thankful, of course, that today’s young men and women have not had to endure the horrific hardships

Two Years in the Army

Bob England looks back

Most people who have contributed articles to *In Touch* recalling their service days, have had tales to tell of derring-do. My own experience certainly contained no ‘derring’ and as little “do” as I could contrive to get away with.

I was called up in June 1953, just four days after the Coronation of our Queen - so I was truly one of the first soldiers of the Queen since Queen Victoria! I was ordered to report to the RAOC Training Battalion at Deepcut, in Surrey. There we were given assessment tests to decide whether we were worthy of being trained as Storemen, Drivers, Clerks or General Duties.

In the test I scored 100% in mathematics, so I was informed that I would receive training as a Pay Clerk. So after six weeks basic training and square bashing (during which time I attained a marksman’s badge -- but no medals!) I was sent to the seaside for six weeks!

This was heaven, six weeks at Southsea, near Portsmouth, where I was to train as a Pay Clerk. This was during July and August and the weather was so perfect, that whenever possible our instructors would conduct their classes on the beach. Here I learned to type, do accountancy and learn all about Army forms, and forms, and forms. I am sure we could have drowned our enemies in them! It was a good life here in the Army.

Then came reality - a posting back to my training battalion as Permanent Staff member of HQ Company. I became Pay Clerk to Clerks’ Company (in which, believe it or not, they actually trained clerks). Day in and day out I was dealing with soldiers’ pay, allowances, allotments, savings accounts, leave and embarkation pay for those trainees posted abroad, and mess accounts. The tedium was only relieved by the odd guard or patrol duties and fire picket about once a month.

But more enjoyable times were the non-military activities, like the table tennis. It was a sport I had been playing since I was about 15 and our battalion had a team playing in the local league. Eventually I became captain of this team (this is not a boast - read on). I knew that the football, rugby, cricket and boxing teams (Henry and George Cooper were in our battalion) had one afternoon off every week for team training. So I thought I would try my luck.

As captain of the team, I approached my Company Commander and explained that our team was not doing terribly well in the league and I felt it would be a great help if we could have exclusive use of the table tennis table in the NAAFI during an afternoon when, of course, it was not in general use. He agreed! What a military manoeuvre (but still no medals). Seven team members with an extra afternoon off every week!

Further time was gained when an amateur dramatics society was formed on the camp. We rehearsed in the evenings in our own time, but after giving performances in the camp theatre for two or three nights, we would take the show to local hospitals or village halls, and this always required two or three days for preparations!

While I was there, I performed in *Edward My Son* (as the private detective), *Middle Watch* (a Chinese Naval Batman!) and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (can’t remember). I cannot speak for the audiences, but we in the society had some really hilarious nights—and parties following the shows (but again no medals - or Oscars!).

I was demobbed in May 1955 and now, almost 50 years later, I can look back and think: “Well that wasn’t very exciting, was it?” So I have never thought it worthwhile (or worthy) to send for my National Service Medal.



Branch Coffee Morning

Helpers are requested to assist on the sales stalls, and items for the tombola and the bric-a-brac tables are urgently required. Please contact Joan Mc Mil-

lin on 462143 if you can help in any way at this important fund-raising event.

Poppy Appeal - House-to-House Begins 26 October

If you do not have your poppies and collecting tin, please contact Douggie McMeeken on 01858 463203.

Poppy Appeal - Town Centre Collection

There are some vacant slots for collection positions in and around the shopping centre. If you have an hour to two to spare, please contact Douggie on the number above. A market stall will serve as a base for Collectors.

Branch Remembrance Concert

Your support is requested to enjoy this fine evening of entertainment at the Baptist Church. The programme is not available as we go to press but it is sure to be the familiar mixture of light music so well performed by the Harborough Band. Tickets (£4) are on sale at ABC Music, 3 St Mary's Road, Jeacock's, 10 Coventry Road, and the Council Offices.

Branch Lunches

The enjoyable monthly lunches will be held on the Tuesday following the Branch meeting at the Angel Hotel. There is always an interesting menu and at £6 for two courses, the meal is excellent value. The lunches are pleasant social occasions and it would be nice to see some new faces. So, if you haven't been before, why not come and join us?

Timely Tip

If you haven't done so already, it is advisable to call as soon as possible at your doctor's surgery for the annual flu jab. You know it makes sense!



The Diary

Some dates to keep free.
Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143

- 23 Oct Poppy Launch at the Walkers Stadium, Leicester
- 25 Oct Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre
- 26 Oct Poppy Appeal - House-to-house collections begin
- 1 Nov De Montfort Hall - Festival of Remembrance
- 2 Nov Poppy Appeal - Leicester City v Blackburn Rovers
- 3 - 11 Nov Garden of Remembrance open
- 8 Nov Branch Remembrance Concert, Baptist Church
- 9 Nov Remembrance Parade and Service
- 11 Nov Acts of Remembrance and Two-Minute Silence
- 12 Nov Branch Annual General Meeting
- 18 Nov Branch lunch at The Angel - 12 noon for 12.30
- 19 Nov Quorn Branch RBL Poppy Appeal Concert
- 16 Dec Christmas Lunch at The Angel - 12 noon for 12.30
- 2004
- 21 Feb Mountbatten Concert with MH Royal Naval Assn.
- 26 Mar Branch Anniversary Dinner

MEETINGS

The next meeting on 12th November is the AGM.

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

The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.30 pm in the upstairs Committee Room at the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Branch Website
www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net



In Touch

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Branch News

Cup Fever

Loud applause greeted the announcement at the October meeting of **George Fleming's** great success on winning the County Standard Bearers' Competition.

The handsome cup, which will be displayed at the Harborough Council offices, returns to the Branch after it was won in the prestigious County Competition by **John Cox** in 1993/94. There will be more about this honour for George and our branch next month.

Annual General Meeting

The Chairman reminds Members that this important meeting will take place on 12 November.

Mr and Mrs Sewell once again volunteered to provide the buffet at the meeting.

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Nominations are particularly required for this post which **John Standish** has been forced reluctantly to vacate.



The Welfare Support Team

Welfare Support Committee Charter

A Charter, as proposed by the Support Committee and unanimously agreed by the Branch Committee, was presented to Members. The definitions contained in the document had been taken from the RBL Charter as required by a Welfare Service Committee and Members agreed unanimously to its adoption.

Caseworking

John Liddell has recently attended a Caseworks Update Course and will pass on the papers to Vida Edwards, who was unable to attend.

The Poppy Appeal Collectors' Long Service Awards

Saturday, 11th October 2003 at the Working Mens' Club, Market Harborough



Mrs Tooley presents medals and certificate to Charles Freer



Flt Lt Valerie Smith accepts the ATC award from Lt Col Roffey



Over 50 years service in Lubenham by Mrs Madderver was rewarded.

The presentation of long service awards to Appeal Collectors was described in the Harborough Mail as the "Legion's Poppy Oscars!". If the Academy Awards, or Oscars, are the film industry's most prestigious awards, then we can surely liken them to ours. Our presentations showed recognition of the years of dedication to the annual Appeal by Collectors in the Harborough District.

Many Branch members and friends attended the ceremony when Council Chairlady, Jan Tooley, presented the awards. Framed certificates, medals and bars commemorating years of service were graciously handed to each recipient by Mrs Tooley - plus, if they were lucky, the bonus of a kiss for the chaps! A special award for the Harborough Air Training Corps Squadron was received by Flt Lt Valerie Smith.

Also in attendance were Lt Col Roffey, President of the Leicestershire and Rutland RBL, the County Field Officer,

Mark Melaugh, and County Poppy Co-ordinator, Mrs Jean Atton

Appeal Organiser, Douggie McMeeken, who made all the arrangements for the event, acted as master of ceremonies. He introduced those present who qualified for awards, including some who had been collecting for over fifty years.

Mr McMeeken said that many of the recipients were reluctant to attend because they did not seek recognition. However, he pointed out that publicity for the good work they have done would be of tremendous help to the Appeal.

Some very tasty refreshments were prepared and served by Vida Edwards and Margaret Whitehead with help from Betty Ramsay.



It is with much regret that we report the death of **Jock Stuart** following a short illness. The Branch was represented at his funeral by Mark Hudson, Tony Johnson and Charles Freer. It is hoped to include an obituary in the November edition of *In Touch*.

Gary Farnsworth is still in the Leicester Royal Infirmary but is recovering well after his latest operation.

The **Ramsay Ramblers** left early on Sunday morning, 21st September for Covent Garden, the start point of the Poppy Walk.

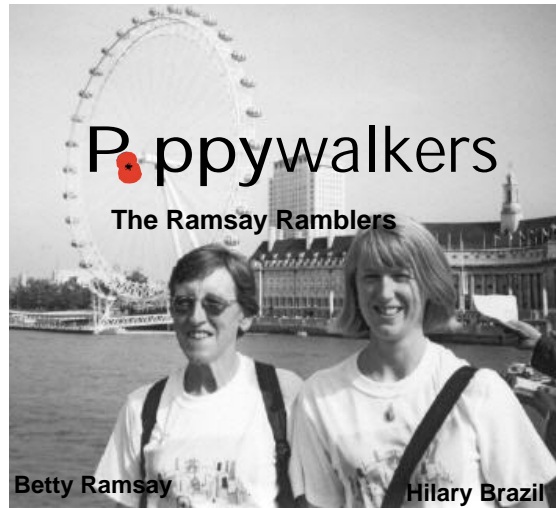
We set off in high spirits, weather good and with strict instructions that I was not allowed to shop until we had finished! We headed out of Covent Garden (wrong direction to begin with!) towards The Strand and Fleet Street and St Paul's Cathedral.

We seemed to cross the Thames so many times that I completely lost my bearings but, lucky for us the sun was shining and so with mum directing us via 'Sun rising and sun setting' we managed to get to Katherine's Dock for our first coffee break!

By now the streets were getting full of tourists and heading towards David Blane in his little glass box it was bedlam!!!! But there were no crowds as we crossed the Thames (again!) this time, as we went up and over the top of Tower Bridge. The views were amazing and we watched as the bridge opened to let a tall ship through.

We walked along the Thames until we got to Westminster Bridge and then we made our way towards Buckingham Palace. The Queen was in, but we really didn't have time to stop for a cuppa and so we made our way through the parks and onto Piccadilly. Then there was the walk back to The Embankment and the finish. We had all our answers to the Quiz and seen all the sights along the

way. All that was left was a nice sit down and a cool drink. The sit down was near the bandstand listening to the RBL band (mum purchased a CD) and the well-deserved drink was found at a local establishment!!!



Weary and tired, we made our way home, happy to know that thanks to everyone's support, the Market Harborough Poppy Appeal was over £450 the richer.

Hilary Brazil

Memorable October Dates

1st	1936	BBC Television service began.
2nd	1950	Peanuts cartoon strip first appeared.
3rd	1959	Post codes introduced in Britain.
4th	1883	The Boys' Brigade founded.
5th	1930	The airship R101 crashed in France.
6th	1895	First Sir Henry Wood Prom Concert.
8th	1952	Train crash in Harrow killed 112.
13th	1925	Margaret Thatcher born.
14th	1939	Royal Oak sunk in Scapa Flow.
23rd	1915	Death of cricket legend, W G Grace.
25th	1854	Charge of Light Brigade in Crimea.
27th	1939	John Cleese, aka Basil Fawlty, born.

that beset their parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, we should be aware that their perception of life is often very different to that of their forbears - including we 'Oldies'. It is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, for the young and the old to understand each other's point of view. However, that's nothing new, it's called the generation gap!

There will be many young people attending Remembrance ceremonies and services throughout the country and, as always, we shall be honoured in Market Harborough by the presence of our friends in the local cadet corps.

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They say that good news doesn't sell newspapers, but as *In Touch* is not on sale, I don't have to worry about such things. So I can cheerfully comment on and heartily congratulate our very own George Fleming. Not only is George the proud Standard Bearer of the Market Harborough Branch, he will soon be bearing even more proudly the Leicestershire County Standard!

And there's more! I am sure you will join me in offering congratulations to those responsible for the great success of Harborough in Bloom. This is yet another good reason why our area deserves the recent exposure it has received on television. We've had archaeology, antiques, a tour of the town on Anglia News and most recently a local house was featured on one of those property programmes.

Our town on the telly is nothing new, of course. Tom Jeacock told me about a visit by the BBC cameras in the early nineteen fifties. Tom was secretary of the Market Harborough Boxing Club and in his photograph album there is a picture of the televised match commentator - a very boyish-looking Harry Carpenter.

By the Way

Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity but I am not sure about the universe.

Einstein.