

Editorial

I am sure members will join me in congratulating the indefatigable Bob England and Tom Ashmore on the excellent quality of your monthly newsletter, In Touch. I have to admit, however, that I am full of admiration for the Branch Communications team for yet another reason.

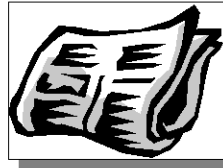
Although I am a brand new member of the branch, and indeed the Royal British Legion, no time was lost before I was ‘worked upon’ by Bob and Tom. Suffice to say, they made me an offer I couldn’t refuse! As a result, I have joined the team as editor-elect of In Touch.

As you may imagine, I take up my new duties with some trepidation. After browsing through back numbers, I realise what a difficult task I shall have in maintaining the extremely high quality achieved by the In Touch team.

The aim of the editor of any publication is to produce ‘a good read’. In order to achieve this, I shall call upon you to contribute items of interest for In Touch, which is, after all, *your* newsletter. So, if like Max Bygraves you want to ‘tell me a story’, just let me know. We’ll get together and you can do the telling while I do the writing!

My name, incidentally, is George Seward and, in Market Harborough terms, I suppose I am still a ‘newcomer’, because I am a Londoner and have lived in Charles Street for only fourteen years! Regrettably I lost my wife, Evelyn, in 1993, but I have a son, a daughter and two lovely granddaughters, all living in Gloucestershire.

After an interesting and varied career, includ-



What the Papers Said – in 1917

The Harborough Advertiser dated 6th March 1917 quoted at some length the proceedings of the Market Harborough Rural District Tribunal dealing with appeals against call-up. *(Is any member able to pass on information about these Tribunals, please?)*

There were nine members, including a military and an agricultural representative, and a secretary, all, needless to say, of the masculine gender. Here are a few excerpts from the article dealing with applications for exemption from military service.

“A Theddingworth farmer appealed for his son, a shepherd aged 21 and single; and also for his married shepherd, aged 33. Both are passed for general service. The latter case came before the Tribunal owing to the Military requesting that the married man’s ‘star’ should be withdrawn, they claiming that two shepherds were not necessary on one farm. A member enquired if they were going to take men off the land now. He knew where general service men who had gone from the land had been sent back by the Authorities. The son was given conditional exemption, and the other man to April 15 (final).

“A Kibworth butcher and grazier appealed for his 18-year-old and single son, passed in the C3 Class, and who assisted him in the business. The father said his son had been delicate all his life. Six months exemption was given conditional on the son joining the V.T.C., and doing two drills a week.

“A Slawston farmer, occupying 180 acres, with 30 arable, appealed for a 17-year-old single employee. The applicant said that he wanted the man particularly for the spring sowings. The Military Representative

asked if he would be willing to accept a substitute. The Applicant replied, ‘If you can let him off to May 1st I am willing to let him go’.” The Slawston farmer immediately entered the good books of the Military Representative who told him, ‘You are setting a very good example. I wish more would follow your example’. As well as this pat on the head, exemption to May 12 was given.

THE LATE NEWS COLUMN

A Police Message . . . We have just received a police message. You are warned to be on the look out for Joseph Gomez, a Spaniard, last heard of living in Tooting, whose mother was a nun in Barcelona. A one time flautist with a symphony orchestra, he is wanted for looting in Haifa, where he sometimes worked on a farm.

The police are urging people to look out for a Haifa looting fluting tooting son of a nun from Barcelona, part-time ploughboy Joe.

February 1923

Mrs Johnson had a son. Happy Birthday , Tony!

The London and North Eastern Railway introduced a new scheduled train service between London Kings Cross and Edinburgh Waverley. The powerful ‘Flying Scotsman’ locomotive was capable of achieving 100 miles an hour.

It is not known if any comment was made by Symington’s following an announcement by French fashion designer, Coco Chanel, that corsets were gone forever. Coco’s new woman of the twenties was young and free with bobbed hair, short skirts, sweaters and low heels – but, no old fashioned foundation garments!



Sid's Story

When you talk to Sid Read it is not long before he comes out with some episode of his service in the Royal Engineers. "Why don't you write or record some of your experiences for

In Touch", he was asked . . . and asked . . . and . . . then one day last August, Sid took his tape recorder to his summer house and the Branch now has both the tape and, thanks to his daughter Pauline, a full transcription (less a few deleted expletives!) of his "Memories of the Second World War".

Here, just as he spoke, is how the story begins,

Hello to all and everyone that knows me, I have been asked to talk about my experiences through the war.

I was a militia boy. I don't know how many people today would know what that means. I had to go to Ullverscroft Road in Leicester by train from where I lived, to register and then I had to wait until I was called up. I can remember that letter arriving with O.H.M.S. on it and I shall never forget it - you can't forget these things because I knew what that meant to me. It meant that I'd got to say goodbye to my wife and my little boy. I adored them both but there was nothing I could do about this. I had to leave them.

I went to Derby where I was supposed to go to join, and when I got to Derby they told me that I had been posted to the Royal Engineers which I served in. We went from Derby to Castle Donnington where I did my training and after I had finished my training at Castle Donnington I was posted to 162 Railway Construction Company. They were sta-

tioned just outside Derby at a place called Melbourne. I joined the company and we stopped there for quite a while and then we moved down to Abbots Leigh just outside Bristol. We were sent then to work in St. Philips goods yard in Bristol railway station. Because it had been knocked about so badly by the German bombs we had to try to clear it all up, which we did. We spent quite a lot of time there, and from there the company was posted to West Weybridge and I was in Weybridge when they told me that I had been posted out of the company and I had got to go to a place called Woolmer just outside Longmoor.



Pte. Sidney Read, R E

When I got there they told us that they were making a company up and we were going to be posted out of the country. We didn't know where we were going to go or what was going to happen to us but then they said, "You've got to go to the Quartermaster's Store and pick up all your K.D. kit."

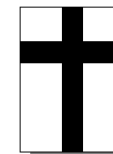
Well we knew then when we got this kit that we were going out to the Middle East, somewhere where the fighting was taking place at the time. I was given a fortnight's leave to come back and say goodbye to my wife and little lad. At the time my wife had had a little daughter and I can remember having to say goodbye to her with my little boy hanging on her skirt and the little baby in her arms, and that was the last time I saw them for two years.

A copy of the full transcript is available on loan from the Editor, but selected extracts will be published in In Touch from time to time.

The tape and transcript is to be donated to the East Midlands Oral History Archive at the University of Leicester where a large collection of recordings of people's memories is being assembled.

ing National Service in the RAF but mainly in newspapers, I joined Travelsphere in 1989. Although I reached retirement age five years later, I still 'do a bit' for them, which keeps me in contact with the company and many good friends.

I look forward to getting to know you - and, of course, hearing your fascinating stories that will help me fill the columns of In Touch.



In Memorium

Sadly, we report the death of Robert Monk on 2nd February, aged 81. Bob joined the Leicestershire Regiment, went to France with the BEF and was taken prisoner in the withdrawal to Dunkirk. He and his wife Betty joined the Legion less than three years ago but both became active and well liked members of the Branch.

The Standard and eleven branch colleagues attended the funeral at Gumley Parish Church.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Betty and their family.

Branch Meeting Snippets

Concern about a new seat near Memorial Gates.

Satisfaction at near record(?) attendance of 46.

Congratulations on the occasions of their Diamond Wedding Anniversaries to Joyce & Stan Snow and Ivy & Bert Thorrold

Thanks to Joan, Mary and Terry for the excellent Buffet.



Branch News

MORE SUCCESS. A Certificate to confirm his appointment as County Recruiting Officer and a cup as Second place winner in the County Standard Bearers' Competition were presented to George Fleming and the Jack Quain Endeavour Trophy was awarded to the Branch at the County Conference. This is the eighth time in nine years that a Standard Bearer award has come to Market Harborough and in each of the last five years the Branch has received either a County or a National award. This is all very gratifying and shows that we have active and dedicated members but it creates an enormous challenge to "stay on top". But together we can and we will!!

PUBLICITY. In the hope of getting coverage of our success, press photographer, Andrew Carpenter had been asked to take pictures of our impressive array of silverware: the Haig Cup before its return to HQ, the Jack Quain Trophy and the Standard Bearers' Cup, on display at the Branch meeting.

Also in the photographs was the Standard, now enhanced with the Haig Cup Scroll as well as the Lister Certificate of Merit Star on its bottom panel. There is still room for more honours!

RECOGNITION. When the Harborough District Council was asked if the Haig Cup could go on show in the council offices, Mark Hudson suggested that a facility should be provided available to any Community Group in the District to obtain public recognition of some outstanding achievement, by displaying the prestigious trophy it had been awarded.

This was agreed and our branch had the honour of being the first Group to use the display cabinet in the reception area. Later the East Midlands in Bloom Cup awarded to the Town joined the Haig Cup.

We have now won another important award, the County Jack Quain Trophy. The Council agreed that this merits public display and it was installed on 18th February, when the Haig Cup was removed for return to HQ. The occasion was used by the Council to publicise through the Press, the wider availability of the display facility.

GETTING INVOLVED. ~~More members~~ are taking on tasks and responsibilities in running the branch. For example, Douggie McMeeken has agreed to remain in post as Poppy Appeal organiser for at least the whole of the next Appeal Year and to be co-opted to the Branch Committee.

Brian Marshall has accepted the new post of Youth Officer (more about this later).

Joan McMillin and Mary Symon have taken on the leadership of the Social Team and are co-opted to the Branch Committee.

George Seward is now Editor of In Touch and a member of the Communications Team. Others have offered to help with sick and hospital visits and providing transport.

Being involved is interesting, rewarding and adds vitality to the Branch as a whole. If you would like to **do** something instead of watching others "get on with it", please speak to any Committee member.

The ~~BRANCH was REPRESENTED~~ at the Service held in Leicester Cathedral on 11th February to mark the retirement as Lord Lieutenant of Mr Tim Brookes and the installation of his successor. Mr Brookes remains the RBL County Patron.



County Conference

25th January at Wigston RBL Club

Six MH members including delegate, Tom Ashmore and George

Fleming as County Recruiting Officer, attended. 28 of the 42 County branches were represented. Addresses were given by the County President, County Chairman, the Women's Section Chairman and the new CFO. The Guest speaker was Mr Terry English, Director of Welfare. The following were among the many points made: -

- Attracting young people still difficult
- County Poppy Appeal £5000 up on last year
- Special thanks to Jean Atton for 34 years as County Coordinator.
- De Montfort Festival very good but it still lost £2000. More support essential if to continue.
- More men should attend Women's Section County Events
- CFO to hold meetings of branch PAO's and Service Secretaries
- Demand for welfare increasing
- More trained Case Workers needed.
- RBL homes being upgraded at a cost of £m15
- Cooperation with SSAFA increasing but full integration a long way off.

Our book, "Memories are made of this" was on display but only three copies were sold.

Membership

We are pleased to welcome two new members: Pamela England, Bob's wife and Valerie Smith, O.C. 1084 Squadron ATC. Unfortunately, we have lost nine members due to resignation or allowing their subscriptions to lapse. Thus as at 12 February, the Branch has 122 members.



Leicester Mercury. Tour starts at 12.30 pm. Be in Reception (Entrance in St Georges Street) by 12.15.

Anniversary Dinner. A few places are still available. Ring Tom Ashmore (MH 433108) to book. If you have booked, your ticket(s) and menu is enclosed. Please return the slip with your menu choice no later than 12th March.

Coffee Morning. If you can help but did not sign the clip-board please ring Joan (MH 462143). Bring Tombola, Bric-a-brac & Raffle items to 12th March meeting but Cakes, etc., to Theatre by 8.45 on the day. If you need help ring Joan.

National Memorial Arboretum. The date chosen is that of the unveiling of a new National Service Memorial but there is much else to see and do in this unique 150 acres of developing woodland. Details later but ring MH 462143 if interested.

Military Tattoo. Seats still available on this RNA organised day trip for the afternoon performance of this indoor spectacular (remember Earl's Court?). Inclusive cost £28. Ring Michael Petch RNA on MH 446435 for details and to book (even if you signed our clip-board).

Edinburgh Tattoo. Contact Market Harborough Travel (MH469137).

Please note that it is important to inform the Membership Secretary, John Standish (0116 240 4170) promptly of any change of address, etc. so that Branch and HQ records are kept up to date.



Diary

Reminders for February and March & some other dates to keep free

- 25 Feb Visit to Leicester Mercury
- 20 Mar 80th Anniversary** of Branch formation
- 21 Mar Branch 80th Anniversary Dinner
- 29 Mar Coffee Morning—Harborough Theatre
- 4 Apr RNA Spring Dance
- 15 Apr Pub Lunch. Venue to be arranged.
- 24/26 May RBL Annual Conference
- 28 Jun Visit to National Memorial Arboretum
- 29 Jun Military Tattoo Manchester. With RNA
- 3/5 Aug Trip to Edinburgh Tattoo
- 19 Sep Autumn Dinner (to be confirmed)
- 17 Oct RNA Trafalgar Day Dinner
- 25 Oct Coffee Morning—Harborough Theatre
- 1 Nov de Montfort Festival of Remembrance
- 8 Nov Remembrance Concert—Baptist Church

Meetings

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 next meeting is on 12th March and will be followed by a film show.

The Branch Committee meets on the **Thursday preceding** the Branch Meeting in the upstairs meeting room of the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion



Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch



Founded in 1923

In Touch

Issue 53

February 2003

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

Branch Website - www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net
In Touch on-line - www.in-touch.ukvet.net