



## Editorial

It used to be joked that Grandad couldn't switch on his video recorder without the help of his five-year-old grandchild. There was probably some truth in that, but it has become a popular misconception that Oldies are unable to cope with the electronic wizardry that has become part and parcel of our everyday lives. If it hasn't happened already, it surely won't be long before computers will be found in a majority of households. Although at first they can seem to be rather daunting, older folk in particular are finding that, when they get to know them, computers are really quite friendly creatures. Making your way onto the internet is a simple first step – it really is, ask any 'silver surfer' – but it is only a fraction of what you can enjoy as you get to know your electronic friend.

Someone who is on extremely good terms with his computer is our vice-Chairman, who (with all due respect, Tom) is not exactly in the first flush of youth. Amongst other things, Tom has become a real expert in the art of desktop publishing. This newsletter is a fine example of Tom's expertise, along with the well-designed, high-quality literature, signs, notices, etc., which he produces for the branch. The superb presentation document that so impressed the committee, who selected this branch for the Haig Cup, and the excellent book, 'Memories are Made of This', were designed, printed and bound by Tom, in conjunction with Bob England.

Age, then, is certainly not a bar to entering the fascinating world of computing. So, if you have the opportunity, why not give it a try? But, a word of warning, once you get on good terms with your computer, you will find you have acquired an absorbing hobby that is very addictive!



## RBL Press Release

### ACTRESS PENELOPE KEITH SHOWS SUPPORT FOR UK FORCES GULF FUND

In response to increasing demand, a charitable fund has been established to channel donations from the public to those members of the UK Armed Forces, attached civilians and their dependants, involved in the conflict in Iraq. Penelope Keith OBE is one of the many voices supporting the initiative.

She said: "I have nothing but admiration for all our troops in the Gulf at the moment. They are undertaking an extremely difficult task with the utmost dedication and humanity and I, for one, am delighted there is now an easy way to show our forces just how appreciative we are of the job they are doing."

The UK Forces Gulf Fund is the official charity for Forces in the Gulf. Three of the key Armed Forces charities (The King George's Fund for Sailors, the Army Benevolent Fund, and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund which, between them, work with almost every other service charity in the country, including The Royal British Legion and

SSAFA - Forces Help) established the Fund drawing on experience gained in earlier conflicts.

Ian Townsend, a spokesperson for the Fund said: "During the Falklands campaign and the previous Gulf War we saw a similar demand from members of the general public for a charitable fund that could simply and efficiently allow them to show their support for Armed Forces and their families affected by the conflict. As the present operation involves all three Services, a joint fund was established to allow the Benevolent Funds to operate in conjunction with the framework of support that is already in place for those affected by military service in Her Majesty's Armed Forces."

Those wishing to make a donation to the fund may do so using debit or credit cards by  
Telephone - 0800 107 0200  
Internet - at [www.UKForcesGulfFund.org](http://www.UKForcesGulfFund.org)  
Post - UK Forces Gulf Fund, FREEPOST TN2257

## The Gulf

### Legion support for Local Service Families

Following the article in The Harborough Mail on 27th March, 'Soldiers' families wait for news,' and a statement from HQ in the April LegionLetter, it was agreed by the Branch committee that families of local Service people should know that the Legion is able to offer them support.

A statement was prepared for the Press and appeared in The Mail on 10th April. It said that those in the Services deserve to know that their families are being supported in our community. The main, direct family support is provided by the MOD, the Armed Forces and SSAFA Forces

Help. There is a need to help those to whom this type of help is not immediately available. These can include the families of reservists who have been called up, often with little notice, and the parents whose daughters and sons have been deployed to the Gulf.

These people will have questions to which they need answers and may wish to talk to others, in a similar situation, to provide mutual understanding.

The Royal British Legion stands ready as ever to support the families of those who serve. For help or information, please phone 0116 254 4099 or write to The Royal British Legion, 94 New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7EA.



## John in Iraq.

One of our members has a special interest in what is happening in Iraq. In October 1951 John Liddell was ordered to take his unit from Jordan to Iraq. The unit was 2 Troop of 19 Topographic Squadron, 42 Survey Engineer Regiment, RE.



The object of the operation was to produce maps of some areas as agreed between the Iraq Government and the British Foreign Office. The work involved producing on the ground a control triangulation, for the aerial photographs, which had been flown by the RAF. This information and the ground interpretation could be turned into maps by the Regiment in Egypt.

Most of the work was carried out in the mountains in the north, in winter. At that time the area was divided, as far as the Iraq Government was concerned into three tribal areas, Kurds, Armenians, Yoseide. Other work took place further south, including Kuwait.

The photographs of part of the troop are a record of an odd situation. The only British Troops, apart from the RAF, allowed into Iraq, then a Kingdom, was a small Signals section attached to the British

Embassy. The diplomatic answer to this was that the 'Sappers' had to wear civilian clothes. To achieve this 'demob' clothing was issued from the U.K. including sports jackets, trilbys and brown shoes, but not overcoats. Photographs were taken in uniform for military purposes and then in civvies, so that passports could be issued prior to leaving for Iraq. The photographs were taken at the Arab Legion base, in Ma'an. The Squadron O.C. appears in the second photograph but he did not go to Iraq.

At work in the mountains, the troop wore army boots, regulation greatcoats over the civvies in the winter. They drove standard military vehicles, with full regimental and command markings.

John, the troop officer, was 19 at the time and held a national service commission. He does not wish to make any comments about what may happen now but he is bitterly disappointed that many of the refugee camps that he saw in Jordan, still exist.



John Liddell front row third from left

*Some members may remember the talk John Liddell gave at the January 1999 Branch meeting about his unusual two years of National Service. These photographs from that time are in sharp contrast to the images now appearing from Iraq.*



## Branch News

**BADGES.** At a pleasing ceremony at the April Branch meeting, President, Peter Wilson presented badges to Pam England, Wendy and Jim Osborne and George Seward.

**THANKS.** Chairman, Mark Hudson had received many messages of condolence following his mother's death and he thanked members for their sympathy and support. (Eleven members attended the funeral at Kettering Crematorium.)

**CUPS RETURNED.** After being on display at the Anniversary Dinner, the Jack Quain Trophy and Standard Bearers' Cup are now back in the display cabinet in the HDC offices reception area.

**POPPY STORAGE.** We are grateful to the ACF for the space they have provided for the past several years for storing Poppy Appeal material. This is no longer available but thanks to the enterprise and persistence of PAO, Douggie McMeken and the generosity of the Kibworth Rugby Club, we now have a readily accessible, secure storage space at the Northampton Road ground. Thanks too, to Dave Harrald for the transfer of the stock.

**YEAR-ROUND POPPY BOXES.** If you know of anywhere that would display one of the new Poppy Boxes, please contact Dick Fulford (MH 431515).

**COFFEE MORNING.** Another very successful event. Thanks to Joan McMillin and Mary Symon for organising it, to the many members who provided items for the stalls and raffle and to those who helped during the morning. Special thanks to the three most willing and efficient ATC cadets. The joint efforts of you all was a profit of £262!!

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**GEORGE NOT IN LAND ARMY!** We said last month that it was hoped to have a speaker from the Women's Land Army at the April Branch meeting, but illness prevented this. At short notice, George Seward agreed to fill the gap with a talk about life as a Newsagent 50 years ago. Thank you George for an amusing story full of reminders of those early post-war days.

**2003 ANNUAL CONFERENCE** at Torquay 24/26 May. The Branch delegate will again be Chairman, Mark Hudson but this year he will be accompanied by George Fleming, who will take part in the Parade of Standards.

At the May Branch meeting members will be asked to brief Mark on how to vote on motions that will be put before the Conference

**DUNKIRK VETERANS' FUND.** Following the report in our last issue, Welfare Officer, John Liddell has helped one widow with her application. If you know of anyone who might be eligible for a grant, please ring John on MH 465003.

**APRIL PUB LUNCH.** Unfortunately several cancellations resulted in a much smaller gathering than usual, but the eight people who did go to the Countryman at Great Bowden on Tuesday, 15th April, had an enjoyable meal.

**A MESSAGE.** "I am overwhelmed with good wishes, cards and phone calls", said a remarkably cheerful, and very courageous, Glenys Hocking-Davies. She asked us to pass on her grateful thanks to all those who contacted her during her recent poorly spell and she looks forward to seeing you soon around the town or at a branch meeting.

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and it picked out a German aircraft which was just *Continued from page 9*

coming in to bomb the harbour, (a Junkers Ju88, I think). The minute that the searchlight picked the aircraft up all the other searchlights in the area homed in on it and all the guns anywhere near were firing at this aircraft to shoot it down. And we were cheering 'Shoot the bastard down, shoot the bastard down!'

"But what we had forgotten, all of us, was that there was something coming our way. And it was, it dropped in the yard about 15ft away. I heard the 'whoosh' and dropped down behind the wall and then I was 'barking like a dog' to get rid of the mortar and everything else that had come out of the woodwork! It was funny, but it was dead serious, if you know what I mean. It did for three men standing in the doorway at the top of the steps. My little mate, 'Wrighty', a lad the same age as me, early twenties, walked up to me crying "I've broke me legs, I've broke my 'effing legs. I said 'Don't talk like a b\*\*\*\*y fool, you're walking on the b\*\*\*\*s'. He said to me 'It's alright for you'. And then someone else came to me and said, 'Is that blood, is that blood?', pushing his arm in front of me, but it wasn't, it was water! When we had recovered we looked at one another and realized we'd made it again, we'd escaped."

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### Was Your Grandfather a Soldier?

The Leicester Mercury reported recently that a computerised archive is about to be launched containing the history of more than 27,000 Leicestershire soldiers. Historians have worked for three years to complete the archive, entitled 'Was Your Grandfather a Soldier?' Its aim is to tell the stories of everyone who served in the Leicestershire Regiment in the last 315 years, and Leicester's New Walk Museum staff and volunteers have indexed 80,000 references. A touch-screen presentation has been set up in the Museum's Royal Tigers' Gallery.



### What the Papers Said -in 1928

To the Editor of the "Market Harborough Advertiser & Midland Mail"

Dear Sir,

At a general meeting of the British Legion of Ex-Service Men it was unanimously resolved that some effort should be made to have this large body of men officially represented on the Urban District Council. Two nominations have been made: Mr J Rhodes for the West and Mr W R Reynolds for the South Ward.

The committee trust that all who served their country in the Great War, and relatives of ex-Service men will give their united support to these gentlemen, who are standing as Independent candidates, and who will certainly put forth their best efforts for the benefit of the town in general. Signed by the committee.

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### Ex-Service Men in the Rabbit Boom.

The British Legion colony at Preston Hall, near Maidstone, is making a good thing out of the boom in rabbit farming. The invalid ex-Service men there are busy building hutches and portable buildings of all kinds and descriptions for use in connection with the rabbit industry. The business is expanding so rapidly that one man is travelling over the country doing nothing else but book orders and plan lay-outs for the farms which are springing up everywhere.

They have Angora rabbits of their own on the estate, and as practical men, they are constantly inventing aids for the industry. One ingenious contrivance was a revolving stool on which a rabbit is placed while his coat is cleaned with air pumped from bellows.

Qu  
are



## Sid's Story

Sid was posted to the Eighth Army and set sail from Scotland in the Queen Elizabeth for twenty-eight days. "We called at Freetown, Simonstown and then up the

Red Sea to Port Taufiq and I was sent to a place called Ismailia under canvas. We were sent there to be hardened off, to get used to the heat and the sun, and I can assure you that it was not a very pleasant experience."

From there Sid was posted again and took four men to Haifa in Palestine. "I can remember taking these four men over the Suez Canal to a place called El Qantara... (where) we had to change our currency from Egyptian to Palestinian money. We got on a train for, I think, three or four days. We went over the desert and I can remember Jaffa (and) Ben Jamina, where we stopped and had food – biscuits and 'corned dog', because that's all we ever had."

When Sid and his companions arrived in Haifa, they stayed at an army camp in Sarafan. Sid worked as a checker in Haifa docks until he was posted back to Mustafa Barracks in Egypt. After a few weeks he was posted to Haikii where "we had to wait until Montgomery was ready to make the push. I remember going up the desert on a lorry with the rest of the Company. We used to call it 'up the blue'.

*The fascinating story of 2140410 Sid Read's Second World War experiences in the Royal Engineers, began in February's In Touch. The story continues now with edited extracts from Sid's account of life in the Eighth Army.*

*Further extracts from Sid's Story will appear in In Touch. A copy of the full transcript is available on loan from the Editor.*



I can remember when all the guns started to go, the 25-pounders. I slept on the ridge that night at El Alamein when the Germans had fallen back."

After moving on to Merza Matruh and Bardia, Sid moved up to Tobruk. "The next morning we were woken at dawn and told that the Germans were falling back that fast that we couldn't keep up with them, so we were called on parade and went in convoy up to Benghazi. When we got to Benghazi we went into a bombed-out hotel where the Germans had been which

was about half a mile from the docks. We had to bed down in the hotel for the night to sleep on the floor, or anywhere we could find. There was a smell in the hotel I shall never forget, a smell that told us the Germans had been using it."

Sid worked in the docks ferrying supplies to the advancing troops. "We worked all day and that evening when it was dark we had our meal – corned beef, hard biscuits and tea. The moon came up and you could read a newspaper because it was really bright. We were told that as soon as it got to that stage the German aircraft would come to bomb the harbour, and sure enough this is what happened.

"The boats that had got into the harbour loaded with all the supplies must have known what was going to happen, and eight blasts on the siren was enough to let us know that aircraft were approaching. We stood in silence on the verandah of the hotel, about four or five steps down. I stood looking over the wall about two feet up and all of a sudden we heard the drone of aircraft engines and we knew the planes were there somewhere. Suddenly a searchlight went straight up into the sky



## Humour in Court

If the circumstances of the recent court case concerning the 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' televi-

sion programme seem a little bizarre, how about this one from the 1920s? In the Bloomsbury County Court, the wife of the famous advocate, Mr Marshall Hall, KC MP, was sued for eleven guineas for the making of a coat, a skirt and a blouse. The plaintiff, rejoiced in the almost fictional name of Alphonse Lamine, of Great Portland Street. Mrs Marshall Hall said the garments did not fit.

The delightful newspaper account goes on:

'At the request of Judge Bacon, she retired to the back room of the court and later, attired in the garments, returned and took a place on the steps of the Judge's bench while he began his inspection of the clothes. "Now don't talk," was his first injunction, followed by "Don't wriggle about." The Judge measured each seam of the long coat, and then directed that it should be taken off. This was more easily said than done, for the usher, unversed in the tailor's art, pulled vigorously at the sleeves, and moved the lady right and left. In the end the Judge said "There are things in the making of it that will prevent the coat and skirt ever being made right. The diagonal material is cut in such a way that it can never be made to fit." He therefore gave judgement for Mrs Marshall Hall with costs.'

**Quote** – It's not hard to meet expenses. They are everywhere!

## A Special Occasion

The 80th Anniversary Dinner on 21st March was held at the Wellington Suite, Market Harborough with catering by The Langton Arms, Church Langton. The Principal Guests were HDC Chairman, Councillor Mrs Beryl Jones and Mr Jones and RBL County President, Lt. Col. Peter Roffey. A total of 78 people were present including County Secretary, Mo Watson and her husband, friends from Desborough and Husbands Bosworth branches, representatives of RNA, ATC, ACF and Harborough Band and Branch members and their guests.



Peter Roffey, Kwan & George Fleming, Mr Jones, Kathleen Noble, Cllr, Jones and Peter Wilson

The Loyal Toast was proposed by Hilary Brazil, and Peter Wilson proposed the Toast, "Our Guests. The Toast, "The Royal British Legion" was given by Peter Roffey

Dave Hawke provided music as background and for dancing, Hilary Brazil and John Cox raised £162 in the raffle and Betty Ramsay acted as photographer.

Mark Hudson sent a message apologising for his absence and wishing everyone a very happy evening. We did not know then that his mother had died that afternoon.



### Gentlemen, your attention please!

Glasses had been raised to the toast "Our Guests" and we sat back to await the introduction of the next speaker. Then from nowhere a gavel sounded and in stentorian tones this unseemly command was heard. Another ethereal voice continued,

"Good evening gentleman. My name is Rev. Eacott and I am pleased that so many of you have responded to the notice in last Friday's Midland Mail and have come along to the Assembly Rooms tonight. We all know the terrible problems that are facing many of our wartime comrades and I have asked Councillor Barber to tell us what the newly formed British Legion is doing to help them. Councillor Barber."

We imagined the ghostly guest speaker rise as he began, "Mr Chairman, Gentlemen. I am the Vice-chairman of the East Midlands Area Council and also a member of the National Executive of the

British Legion. The Legion was formed nearly two years ago by the amalgamation of the four major ex-service groups, the Officer's Association, the Comrades of the Great War, the National Federation and the National Association.

"We are far from satisfied with the administration of war pensions in this country today. We are pressing the Government hard to make improvements but nothing will be done unless we become a much larger and more powerful organisation. This is why it is important for you in Market Harborough and ex-service men throughout the country to join us.

"The Legion is democratic, non-party political and non-sectarian. Its administrative costs are low and membership subscription is just two shillings and sixpence per year. Of this, one shilling is retained by the branch, with one shilling for Headquarters and sixpence for Regional Headquarters.

"Mr Chairman, thank you for inviting me here today."

Another voice. "Mr Chairman. My name is Captain Clark. I am sure we have all listened with great interest to what Councillor Barber has said and I propose that a Branch of the British Legion be formed here in Market Harborough."

Then the parade ground voice again. "Mr Chairman. I am ex-Sergeant Major Price and I second Captain Clark's proposal."

Rev. Eacott, clearly the Chairman, gets down to business and says, "All those in favour please show. *Pause.* Anyone against? *Pause.* Carried unanimously and I formally declare that the British Legion Market Harborough Branch is formed here tonight, the 20th March 1923. There is much to be done and I look forward with confidence to the future. We must now form the committee."

By now those who had read the back of the Dinner programme realised that this had been a recorded but summarised re-enactment of the meeting at which the Branch had been formed 80 years and one day before.

*Those taking part in this little diversion were Mark Hudson (Sgt Maj. Price), Tom Ashmore (Rev. Eacott), George Fleming (Cllr. Barber) and George Seward (Capt. Clark). The script was based on the Midland Mail report of the meeting.*



**The Carnival.** It is hoped to have a stall on The Square rather than in the Recreation Ground as in earlier years. Volunteers will be needed so please offer your services to Joan McMillin MH 462143.

**National Memorial Arboretum.** This will be a car-sharing outing. Please add your name to the list at the May or June Branch meetings or ring MH462143 and say if you need or can offer a lift.

**Music for a Summer Evening.** Picnic on the lawns, enjoy the popular classical music played by the Heart of England Orchestra and featuring the Quorn Branch Pipe Band, admire the Parade of Legion Standards and Sunset ceremony and join in the "Last night of the Proms" chorus before the Fireworks spectacular finale. Tickets £14. See clipboard at next two meetings for details or ring MH 462143.

**Poppy Race Day.** Previous occasions at Newmarket have been popular and much enjoyed. It is hoped there will be sufficient demand to hire a coach so put your name on the list ASAP.

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**ATC VISIT TO BELGIUM.** In another annual trip with Lutterworth Branch RBL, members of 1084 Squadron placed crosses at the graves of Market Harborough district men in the War Cemeteries they visited. They also took part in the Menin Gate Ceremony.



## Diary

Reminders for May & some other dates to keep free

- 8 May Branch Committee Meeting
- 14 May Branch Meeting & buffet
- 24/26 May RBL Annual Conference
- 7 Jun MH Carnival—We will have a stall
- 28 Jun Military Tattoo Manchester. With RNA
- 29 Jun Visit to Arboretum
- 12 Jul Open-air Concert —Beaumanor Hall
- 2 Aug Poppy Race Day—Newmarket
- 3/5 Aug Trip to Edinburgh Tattoo
- 22/26 Aug Holland with Standard Bearers Ass'n
- 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.

Following the next meeting on 14th May there will be a buffet.

The Branch Committee meets on the **Thursday preceding the Branch meeting** upstairs in the Conservative Club building.



## The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market  
Harborough  
Branch



Founded in 1923

# In Touch

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