



## Editorial

The recently acquired photograph of Winston Churchill and past President Lt Col Hignett, apart from its obvious significance for the Branch, immediately conjures up memories of wartime days. Not just for those who were part of such scenes, but for others who were transported to battlefronts by the cinema, newspapers and magazines.

As in most aspects of life, war is full of varying circumstances and emotions. In the midst of the bloodiest of battles, something humorous will occur to lift the awful tension - and the sheer severity of the situation makes the contrasting feeling of relief all the greater.

However, even in unstressful circumstances, a touch of humour can have an amazing effect. I am reminded of an example which still brings a nostalgic smile to my face.

Picture the scene: an RAF camp cinema, with a packed audience of servicewomen and men watching 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'. It is a tense moment in the story and poor Uncle Tom is forced to leave his hut. As he packs his few belongings into a bag, emotions are riding high and there is hardly a dry eye in the house. Suddenly a voice rings out, "He's been posted!" The breaking of the emotional tension resulted in gales of laughter. Of course, for those who were wallowing in the sentimental story, the film was utterly ruined.

I have to offer a word of apology to Tony Johnson for not thanking him in the last In Touch. As those of you who were fortunate enough to be in his audience at the June meeting will know, Tony gave a very entertaining talk. His description of the early days of the Regional Crime Squads was both colourful and funny, particularly his adventures in

## Veteran Pays Tribute to Iraq Conflict Dead

I recently was privileged to accompany Stan Snow to the Great Easton War Memorial to lay a tribute to the six RCMP soldiers who were brutally slain carrying out their duties in Iraq.

Stan, off his own bat, constructed a memorial of RBL crosses, individually named, to these young men who laid down their lives in the service of their country.



It was most humbling to me as a mere former national serviceman to share with a WW2 veteran with a service record which includes D Day landing to the Ardennes and beyond, quietly and respectfully paying his tribute to the young soldiers of today. Surely it is moments like this which fully epitomises the spirit of the RBL and those now immortal words "We will remember them".

*John Cook*

## A Fascinating Talk

A most interesting insight into the history of the Victoria Cross was given at the July meeting by Derek Seaton, author of 'Leicestershire VC Heroes'. Interspersed with some military 'mood' music, Mr Seaton told of the medal's introduction by Queen Victoria, whose choice of the inscription, 'For Valour' was her wish rather than the originally suggested, 'For Bravery'. The true democracy of the award, being open to all regardless of rank, was emphasised by Mr Seaton. The thanks of the meeting were expressed by the Chairman.

## County News

At each Branch Meeting the Secretary reads and comments on the most relevant items from the latest County Circular which is then left for people to browse later. The July Circular arrived after the meeting but here are the highlights.

Reminders from County Secretary about Royal Albert Hall and De Montfort Festivals tickets. Photo and Congratulations to Sir Tim Brooks on his knighthood. (Betty Ramsay had previously written to Sir Tim and his personal reply to the Branch was read at the July meeting). Chairman's Letter. Jim Rowlinson was concerned at the small attendance at the Half-year Conference, which echoed the lack of interest of members in many branches. (MH fielded four representatives out of a total of 50 from the 42 main and 16 Women's Section county branches). Remembrance Day at the War Memorial A thoughtful poem we may ask to reproduce. Recruitment and Retention. A page by the County Recruiting Officer (CRO), our George Fleming, drawing attention to the newly acquired marquee in Legion livery as an eye-catching aid to recruitment. There is also a picture of its inaugural use at the Melton Mowbary Show. Half-year Conference Report.

Poppy Appeal 2002/03 Totals – County £315,970.00. National £21,138,007.07

Report on the National Conference.

CFO report - High level of Welfare debt and benefit advice cases. Good co-operation with SSAFA. County Poppy Appeal Launch using "Poppy People" to get more collectors.

Women's Section Report covered County and National Conferences.

Warning about Distraction Burglary—still a serious crime mainly against older people.

*For more information about any of the above contact the Editor*

## In Memory

By Jim Livermore

We were thirty-one souls  
Thrown together by mutual choice  
To prowl the battlefields of France  
Not by stealth or deadly intention  
But to see the results of years ago,  
Of man's inhuman regard for his neighbours.  
The rows of white headstones,  
Pierced the sunlit skies.  
Birds were now singing  
Not as in those days of yore  
When men not by choice  
Although perhaps by loyalty  
If not to his country  
Certainly to his comrades  
'Who together stood; shoulder to shoulder  
To prevent the evil steam roller  
Of an evil enemy, from pressing its evil will  
Upon a people eager to lead quiet lives  
To live in peace within its community.  
The relics of war still laid strewn about  
Complete gas shells, uncovered by the plough  
Large dangerous shells, its fuse still intact  
Lay by the side of the road awaiting collection  
Fragments of hand grenades lay rusting still  
Upon the farmland, ploughed from then on  
Except for the craters and the trenches  
Some still preserved for the likes of us  
To see, wonder and offer a silent prayer  
For those whose tomorrow never came.

*This poem is from "Little Boys are not Afraid of Germans", one of several collections by local poet, Jim Livermore.*

### Well, It Does Make Sense

A man rang the Leisure Centre and asked, "Is that the local swimming baths?" The reply came, "Well, it depends where you're calling from".



## The Poppy Appeal 2003/04 Appeal Organiser, Douggie McMeeken Reports

Years of unstinting devotion to the raising of Poppy Appeal funds in Market Harborough will be recognised at an event planned for 11th October, publicly to launch this year's Appeal. Guests including local Collectors, along with RBL County personnel, will be invited.

Being a comparative newcomer, and in the absence of past records, I am appealing for the names of Collectors who have been giving their services for ten years or more. Please call me on MH463203 if you are, or someone you know (not necessarily a RBL member) is, a long serving Appeal stalwart, so that our records can be updated and recognition given where due. More details will follow next month.

I am most grateful for a flying start to the 2003/04 Appeal by a large donation from the Columbo family in Wilbarston.

### It Happened in July

- 1829 First horse buses ran in London
- 1847 Adhesive postage stamps launched in USA
- 1899 James Cagney born
- 1901 Barbara Cartland born
- 1909 Louis Bleriot first to fly English Channel
- 1915 Yul Brynner born
- 1916 Distinctive Coca-Cola bottle introduced
- 1929 First Popeye cartoon appeared
- 1930 First soccer World Cup in Uruguay
- 1935 Boeing B17 Flying Fortress first flew
- 1937 999 emergency number introduced in UK
- 1938 First Spitfire delivered to RAF Duxford
- 1954 Food rationing finally ended in Britain
- 1966 England won the soccer World Cup

Essex, an area not unknown to the criminal fraternity. We look forward to more entertaining insights from Tony and, indeed, other members who have an interesting tale to tell.

With summer holiday time upon us, I am reminded of something from the Swinging Sixties. The editorial staff of the Sunday Times had a competition to find the most entertaining message sent to the office on a holiday postcard. Apparently, Jilly Cooper was the winner with her characteristically saucy entry, 'A great time - - being had by all!'

And on that note I'll take my leave of you with best wishes for a pleasant summer and, if you are going away, I hope you have a super holiday.

### Our People

**Bob England** was looking remarkably well at the July meeting following his pace-maker operation.

Despite three visits from Branch friends in one day, **Irene Blissett** is still on the mend!

Best wishes to **Charles Freer** who is still suffering from problems with his leg.

Heartedly welcomed at his first branch meeting this month was new member **Steve Pearson**.

Grateful thanks have been paid to **Barry Thorpe**, who has been forced to resign from the Branch Committee because of ill-health. Barry had been a member of both the Welfare and Social teams and was responsible for the successful meals enjoyed at the Bull's Head, Clipston.

Barry's place on the Committee has been taken by **George Seward**, editor of In Touch and branch press representative.

***Did you really think it was all Wizard Prang!  
and Brylcreem in the RAF?  
Our correspondent gives a humorous insight  
into the life of an ordinary airman serving  
his country as a National Serviceman.***



**It was'nt  
easy, but  
somebody  
had to do it**

**By 3106180**

I regret I am unable to bring you a story of wartime bravery, hardship and exciting adventure. That sort of thing didn't come the way of this National Service erk in the Royal Air Force just after the war. Nevertheless, my Mum was proud of me and cherished the photograph of her bespectacled, pale-faced, eighteen-year-old firstborn in his new RAF uniform. On the other hand, my Dad took one look and said, "Thank God we've got a Navy!"

I didn't get much in the way of mail in those days, so I was quite excited when the postman delivered an envelope, in an attractive shade of brown, when it wasn't even my birthday. There was a nice chatty letter inside which said, *'In accordance with the National Service Acts, you are called upon for service in the RAFVR and are required to present yourself on Monday 14 July 1947 between 9am and 12 noon, or as soon as possible thereafter on that day, to No. 3 RAF Recruit Centre, Padgate, Nr Warrington, Lancs. A Travelling Warrant for your journey is enclosed.'* What a kind invitation, I thought, and so attractively worded. After checking my diary to ensure

I had nothing more important to do on that day, I decided to accept.

My friend Denis was also called up to the RAF and, being a week or so older, arrived at Padgate before me. He sent me a postcard asking me to look out for him in the NAAFI canteen. Accordingly, soon after I arrived at the Recruit Centre, I entered a vast room seething with new RAF entrants, most sampling life away from home for the first time. I wondered how on earth I would be able to find Denis in this noisy throng when I heard a piano. I looked across and there, seated at an ancient, beer-stained, vaguely out-of-tune instrument, were three inexpert pianists playing a distinctly weird, almost unrecognisable, rendition of the famous Duke Ellington classic, C-Jam Blues. The one in the middle was Denis.

The winter of 1947 had been pretty grim, but by way of compensation, the summer was brilliant. I spent eight weeks square bashing in the sunshine at West Kirby initial training camp on the Wirral Peninsula, and to help make it almost bearable, I enjoyed luxurious Sundays on the beach at Hoylake.

One of the bonuses of being a National Serviceman was the opportunity to meet people in all walks of life from throughout the United Kingdom and, in those days, the British Empire. It was a wonderful mixture, a human equivalent of Bassett's Liquorice Allsorts. At the end of each day, for example, I went to bed in the company of Glaswegians and Geordies, who carried on a nightly battle of insults, spat out in their distinctive accents. Their command of the art of imaginative cussing was truly awe-inspiring. There was, it seemed, a mutual understanding that each participant in the war of words was born out of wedlock.

I survived square bashing and, for a while at least, I was the fittest I've ever been, with muscles I never knew existed. I was quite excited, too, because I thought I would be going abroad. I had misheard, however, and instead of Cologne in Germany, my posting was to Colerne in Wiltshire. What a culture shock I experienced on my arrival: the contrast between life at the initial training camp and a real RAF station

was unbelievable. I got off the bus from Bath and walked along a road, quite open with no hedges, through an expanse of grassland. Then I came to a short stretch of high wire fencing, a gate and a hut. It must be 'Much Binding in the Marsh', I thought. I came smartly to attention in front of the corporal at the guard post only to be told that I should relax. It seemed that corporals were only tin gods at square bashing camps.

The station was a large Maintenance Unit (M.U.) where aircraft flew in to have modifications carried out. There was a much smaller unit, No 218 M.U., which was tucked away across the airfield and attached to the main unit as a lodger. It was mainly concerned with storing and supplying equipment, and this was where I was posted. I don't think it was anything to do with me, but soon after I arrived it was decided to close down the unit. It was a phased operation and personnel were being gradually posted away. I was the office assistant to the corporal who assisted the adjutant. When the commanding officer was posted, the equipment officer became C.O. Then he was posted and the adjutant became C.O., the corporal became acting adjutant and I became acting corporal. We continued to go round and round in ever-decreasing circles until we all finally disappeared. It was a short life, but a fairly lucrative one for me. One of my jobs was to arrange the documentation for personnel being posted away. One of the forms was a record of the amount of leave taken and, for a mere half crown, I would happily ensure that an airman's form was torn up and substituted by another which showed that he had taken no leave all year!

*You have been warned!*

Scene: Frankfurt Airport 1960  
Air Traffic Control to BEA Vicount captain who appears to be uncertain where to taxi after landing:  
"Have you not been here before?"  
Captain: "Yes, in 1943 but I did not stop!"



**Your Annual Subscription** for the Legion year 2003/04, due on 1st October, will be £11.50. The 50p increase on the current year is because the Branch fee is to be raised to £1.50. This is the first increase for over five years but the fee is still very much below the cost per head of running the branch.

**D-Day Anniversary**

The Legion is pressing the Government to give greater support to the 60th Anniversary commemoration of D-Day in 2004.

**Coffee Morning**

The next bi-annual Branch fund-raising event at the Harborough Theatre will take place on Saturday, 25th October. Always the most popular attraction, it is hoped that the Tombola table will be groaning under the weight of prizes donated by you. Start collecting suitable items now please, say .Joan and Mary.

**Our Web Sites**

'Hits' recorded by surfers visiting the main Branch site have just passed the 4000 mark. *In Touch-on-the-Web* continues to grow as back numbers and each monthly issue of the newsletter are added.

**New Welfare Committee**

The four members have now been appointed. They are John Cox and Barry Peck as well as Brian Marshall and Douggie McMeeken who were nominated by the Branch Committee. Their first meeting is due as we go to press.

**Successful 28 June Outing with RNA**

The enormous Manchester Arena was ideal for the Military Tattoo with its impressive, well staged displays by ex-service associations, Cadets, regular Army, police and fire service teams.




Diary

**Reminders for August & some other dates to keep free**

- 2 Aug Poppy Race Day - Newmarket
  - 13 Aug Branch Meeting and buffet
  - 19 Aug Branch Lunch- 12 for 12.30 Angel Hotel, MH
  - 22/6 Aug Holland visit - Standard Bearers' Association
  - 24 Aug Husbands Bosworth Branch Flower Show
  - 19 Sep Branch Autumn Dinner - Bull's Head Clipston
  - 11 Oct Poppy Appeal Launch & Awards (see p7)
  - 17 Oct RNA Trafalgar Day Dinner
  - 25 Oct Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre
  - 26 Oct Poppy Appeal - start House-to-house collections
  - 1 Nov De Montfort Hall - Festival of Remembrance
  - 8 Nov Branch Remembrance Concert - Baptist Church
- Note. Details of all social events from Joan McMillin on MH 462143.


<b>Meetings</b>	
Branch meetings are held on the <b>Second Wednesday</b> of each month at <b>7.30 pm</b> in the <u>downstairs</u> Function Room, Conservative Club Building, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.	
The next meeting is on 13th August and will be followed by a buffet.	
The Branch Committee meets on the <b>Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting</b> 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

In Touch

Issue 58

July 2003

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