

Editorial

Every so often there comes a time when I sit down to write an editorial and wonder what on earth I can write about. This month was such a case.

Then at the branch meeting we were informed that we had WON THE HAIG CUP. This means we are the best branch in the country!

Every member in the branch is to be congratulated on making this come about, as without your support this achievement would not have been possible.

Special thanks are also due to Tom Ashmore who put our entry together for submission to Pall Mall. Believe me, this entails a lot of time and effort.

I believe the Social Committee are to present an after-meeting talk and slide show at the next branch meeting concerning our entry. Don't miss it! I think very many of you will be surprised at all it entails.

Our thanks, Tom, and well done.

One thing I have overlooked during my spell as Editor is to thank the band of volunteers who every month deliver In Touch through your doors. Winter and summer they turn out to get your copy to you within a few hours of it coming "hot off the press".

If this task was left to the communications team (just the three of us) it would indeed take us many hours. Our thanks to each and every one of you, please know that your efforts are much appreciated.

Continued from p7

Each location is awarded a code letter but without the book they can convey very little. I am hoping to obtain a copy of this book, which should prove very interesting. In the meantime, do you recall anyone local who has ever spoken about these crashes? Were they enemy planes or our own returning to one of the many bases in Leicestershire at the time? If you do have any information, please let me know. *Editor* Ω



Save the Fearless

The aim is acquire the HMS Fearless and convert her to become a floating

exhibition and veterans' centre and the focal point of a museum dedicated to the Falkland Islands Campaign and other amphibious operations since the First World War. It would accommodate examples of weapons, vehicles and equipment used in such operations.

The Royal Navy's most venerable warship, HMS Fearless returned to Portsmouth in March, ending her Royal Navy career spanning 36 years of notable historic events. The first multi-purpose, specially built assault ship to be designated Landing Platform Dock (LPD) she became the longest serving of the Royal Navy's active warships and its last steam-powered vessel.

HMS Fearless gained honours in the Falklands War and, on a lighter note, was on hand to rescue James Bond (in the film *The Spy Who Loved Me*). In response to the tragic events of September 11th the ship remained in Middle Eastern waters. Then in the New Year she undertook maritime interdiction operations in the Arabian Gulf in support of UN Security Council resolutions. Working alongside naval ships from the USA, Australia and Canada, she monitored and



A Jubilee Spectacular?

A splash of colour and measure of Pomp and Circumstance on Sunday afternoon 16th June will again put the Legion in the public eye in Market Harborough. The occasion is the Leicestershire and Rutland County Standard Bearers' Association Rededication Parade and Service. This is held each year in a different part of the county and we are proud to be the host Branch in this Golden Jubilee year. Do try to spare the time to support our colleagues from the other branches.

The programme is as follows:

Parade musters in Commons Car Park at 2 pm and led by the Band of 1084 Market Harborough Squadron ATC will march to the Parish Church. The Service which starts at 3pm will be conducted by our Branch Chaplain, Rev. Chris Moody and the Lesson will be read by our Chairman, Mark Hudson. At about 3.45 pm the parade returns to the Car Park via the War Memorial. Participants will then adjourn to the Kingfisher Lounge above the Working Men's Club (there is a lift) for a buffet provided by the Branch.

Help is needed in preparing and setting out food and serving tea and coffee for an estimated 150 people. Volunteers please sign the clip board at the June meeting or ring Tom Ashmore (MH433108). Ω

A Confession!

The Diary has implied some exciting Jubilee event. *Under Wraps* really meant "Haven't a clue!". We had no plans of our own but would have joined in other e.g. town events if asked.



On the Grand Prix Circuit

By Ken West

As we are into the season of Grand Prix motor racing, it brings back memories of a miss-spent youth at the Monza circuit in Italy.

During the winter of 1945-46, our company had been detailed to guard the VRD (Vehicle Reception Depot) at the Monza racing circuit, where thousands of ex-WW2 vehicles were stored. My job, with three other signallers, was to maintain communications with our HQ in the town, via phone cables, to and within the huge VRD.

Working the army routine system of two hours on duty and four hours off became very tedious, so, tongue-in-cheek, we suggested to our Company Commander that a 24 hours on and 48 hours off would provide a better repair service over all. With some reservation he agreed to a month's trial.

We quickly settled into a smooth routine which meant that with Milan being a mere 15 minutes train ride away, we could spend many happy nights and days swanning around that beautiful city; staying late to see the top class shows at the Forces Theatre near the Piazza Duomo, then on to the Victory Club for tea and wads, and to phone HQ to check how things were.

After one such evening, we casually rang the duty man to check that all was well, to be told by a highly agitated Lance Corporal Jack Natrass that there had been an armed raid on the

VRD, resulting in two civilians being killed. He had managed to keep wireless contact but all the phone line were down. "Get back here—Prontissimo".

A 15 cwt truck awaited us at Monza Station with our tin hats, rifles and line repair kit. We set to work in the pouring rain to re-establish communications. Fortunately the raiders had retired during the heavy rain, but it was 4 am before we returned to billets, soaked to the skin, with our best BDs a soggy, sorry sight.

In the morning we were summoned to Company HQ where, with some trepidation, we stood before the Commanding Officer awaiting a severe rocket. Imagine our surprise when he congratulated us on the way we had carried out our duties under such wet and dangerous conditions, proving that the one day on and two days off rota really did work. "Well done, chaps. Carry on." We saluted and marched out.

He'd been "conned", but everyone was happy. The rota continued, Lance Corporal Nat got preferential choice of days off and the MT driver had free beer for a week . . . and we sighed with relief. Ω

Information Required

Last month the Leicester Mercury pre-viewed a book entitled Bird's Eye Wartime Leicestershire. It included a map which, among much other information, showed where planes had crashed during the war.

Recently the branch was represented at the unveiling of a memorial to commemorate the crew of a bomber which crashed at Foxton. But this map shows that there were also planes brought down or crashed in the areas of Gumley (1), Foxton (3), Theddingworth / Husbands Bosworth (2). A further four are marked in the triangle made up of Foxton/Lubenhams/Great Bowden. Continued >>>>



Branch News

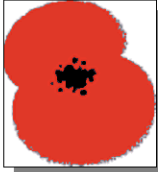
ANNUAL CONFERENCE. So that our delegate, Chairman Mark Hudson, could democratically represent the views of the Branch on 25/26 May, motions listed in the agenda were read at the May meeting and members' opinions were recorded.

NEW MEMBERS. We have discovered how to attract new members—produce a Membership Directory! Within a few days it is out of date and needs a significant addition of names and addresses!! A warm welcome to you all.

WELFARE. Three new cases have been dealt with during the month. Now we now have three trained caseworkers, thought is being given to how best to discover local members of the ex-service community who may need our help. If you are aware of such cases, please contact a member of the Welfare Team (see Directory).

COMMUNICATIONS. In future the publication date of In Touch should be more predictable: 9/10 days after the Branch meeting. There is still a steady flow of visitors to the main Web Site. The new site, www.in-touch.ukvet.net has been further developed and will now be more widely publicised. Although In Touch is reproduced on-line, sensitive material like members' phone numbers or addresses is omitted.

THE STANDARD. George Fleming will be one of the three Standard Bearers who will represent the County in the Golden Jubilee Parades in London on 2nd & 3rd June. Congratulations, George. Please make sure you have the Haig "Scroll of Award" sewn on to our Standard—we want the world to know we won the Cup!! Ω



Memoirs of a Jubilee Poppy Walker

By Hilary West

I don't think I woke up that 5th May Sunday morning until Mum and I were standing outside The Savoy with Mum asking "Which way now?"

We had registered at 10am in Covent Garden to take part in this 10-mile walk in aid of the Poppy Appeal to find them handing out Mars Bars, maps, a sheet of questions, T-shirts and bottled water... all we wanted was a cup of tea (this came later at Pall Mall).

During our Walk we saw some sights of London that neither of us had seen before, including the Legion HQ and my employers — The Home Office.

With our map in one hand and list of questions in the other we ambled around London chatting and taking in the sights, stopping for a spot of lunch. (You didn't really expect us to be making a race of it, did you??!!)

We eventually handed in our completed question sheet at 3pm, having only got lost a couple of times and one of these was when Mum inadvertently identified the AA Offices as Legion HQ — several other walkers were following us at the time! We then walked back to St Pancras for the train home (No, I said, we can't take a taxi!) »»»
P.S. by Betty Ramsay



Monty's Double

Researched by Bob England

Lieutenant M. E. Clifton James was at his desk at the Royal Army Pay Corps in 1944 when he received a telephone call from film star Colonel David Niven who was serving with the Army Kinematograph section during the Second World War.

The call was the first thread in an elaborate web of deception intended to draw attention away from the imminent invasion of Europe. Lt. James, who had fought in the trenches during the First World War, was a peacetime actor who happened to bear an extraordinary close resemblance to General Montgomery, the C-in-C of all ground forces for the Normandy landings of 1944. Security chiefs hatched a plan to use James to impersonate Monty. Monty's double was then to be sent to Gibraltar and North Africa in order to delude the Germans that Monty was to lead an invasion from Southern France rather than from Normandy.

Under conditions of the utmost secrecy, James was posted as a Sergeant of the Intelligence Corps to Monty's staff so that he could study the General's voice, gestures and mannerisms; the way he saluted



With acknowledgements to the Royal Army Pay Corps Association

A most enjoyable and rewarding day out. I would like to thank all those who sponsored us. We shall be able to pass over £300 to our Poppy Appeal Organiser, Andrew Marriott. I am sure he will be happy to accept any late sponsorship. We now have all the answers to the quiz so if someone wants to try the Walk just let us know. Ω

for example, clasped his hands behind his back, or pinched a little roll of his cheek when thinking.

As an actor, James had little difficulty in mastering Monty's every movement, but he was more worried about his ability to capture Monty's personality. "It was so unique and overpowering," he wrote in his classic *I Was Monty's Double*, "that I despaired of ever being him. It was one thing to ape the outside of a man, but quite another to acquire something of his fire and forcefulness".

James underestimated his abilities. After several rehearsals he flew as General Montgomery to Gibraltar, where he was greeted by the British Governor and introduced—as if by chance—to several of Hitler's secret agents. A similar performance was then repeated in Algiers, where he was cheered by British troops. News of "Monty's" whereabouts travelled fast—transmitted by enemy agents back to the German High Command.

James's performance was as fine as any he had ever given and contributed in no small way to the success of what his British Secret Service handler described as "one of the greatest plans of deception that has ever been attempted". Ω

RBL Corporate Plan

Not exactly bed-time reading but should be read by those who are cynical about all things 'HQ'. The document shows that it is appreciated that modern attitudes, methods and professionalism are essential in the big complex organisation which the Legion is. More on this topic later? Betty Ramsay has a copy.



BRANCH SUNDAY "AT HOME"

The last of the 3 experimental events is in the Function Room of the Conservative Club at 2.30 pm on Sunday 26th May. These occasions

are also a good opportunity, especially for newer members, to learn more about the Branch. Please try to attend.

POPPY FACTORY VISIT –29th MAY

Reminder - Depart MH Market Hall at 9 am. Lunch at the Factory. Note revised menu - Soup, Fish and chips, and Semolina or Bread & Butter Pudding & custard. The guided tour starts at 2 pm & takes about 1½ hours. There is a small gift shop. Return MH 7.00 to 7.30 pm.

COFFEE MORNING—15th JUNE

We need Tombola, Bric-a-brac, Book & Cake Stall and Raffle items. Please bring to June meeting, take to a Social Team member or bring on the day by 8.45 am (or ring Tom Ashmore MH 433108). **Helpers needed** for stalls, kitchen & general duties. Please arrive by 8.30.

POPPY RACE DAY—30th JUNE

Seats still available. Non-members welcome - Tell your friends. Costs inclusive of travel and entry to the Grandstand £18 or to Members' Enclosure £22. Please indicate on the clipboard at the June branch meeting what grade of ticket you require (or ring Tom Ashmore on MH 433108). Final payment due 12th June.



Diary

Reminders for June (& late May) with some other dates to keep free (see also page 10)

- 25 May RNA Bric-a-brac Stall— Market Hall Please support our Naval friends.
- 26 May Branch Sunday afternoon "At Home"
- 29 May Poppy Factory visit.
- 3,4,8 Jun Jubilee Celebration— see bottom of p9
- 12 Jun Branch Meeting— see below
- 15 Jun Coffee Morning— Harborough Theatre
- 16 Jun** County Standard Bearers' Service **See page 9 for details.**
- 18 Jun Pub Lunch—venue to be announced
- 30 Jun Poppy Race Day—Doncaster
- 13 Jul Royal Jubilee Concert— Beaumanor Hall
- 18 Oct Annual Dinner—venue to be announced
- 2 Nov Remembrance Concert

Meetings

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

See the newly won Haig Cup at the next meeting on 12th June and find out how you won it!

The Branch Committee meets each month on the **Thursday** preceding the Branch Meeting at **7.30 pm** in the upstairs Lounge, of the Conservative Club Building.



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Founded in 1923

In Touch

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