



Editorial

Here we are into September and the darker evenings are once again upon us. But to cheer us up somewhat, we have the Annual Dinner to look forward to next month and, of course we are making our plans for the Memorial Gardens and the Poppy Appeal in November.

On the Annual Dinner, I understand that there are still places available, so if you would like to come (it is being held once again at the Market Harborough Golf Club, on Friday, October 18th) please get in touch with Tom Ashmore, a.s.a.p. (MH 433108). (See the enclosure).

On a less agreeable note (!) may I remind members that annual subscriptions are due in October (now £11) and also that the Social Committee would appreciate payments for the Annual Dinner.

It is with regret that we must announce the resignation from the branch committee of Mrs. Irene Blissett, due to health reasons; and Mr John Cox has stated that he does not wish to serve on the branch and social committees after the AGM.

I am sure that all members will join with me in thanking these two members for all the valuable time and effort they have put in for the benefit of this branch over a number of years.

Don't forget to get those nomination papers in so that these vacancies can be filled at Annual General Meeting.

In this issue, our Welfare Officer, John Liddell passes on a timely warning from the County



The Appliance of Science

By Jim O'Brien

This is a wartime story that very few people know about. It has been under wraps in top secret files for all these years.

During the war the high-ups of the Army soon discovered that the tanker lorries could not get through to supply their tanks with diesel because they were always getting stuck in the sand dunes. Then the scientists bred a camel with three humps, the third hump being hollow.

The tribesmen took advantage of this and would trek to all the ports, where they would fill the hollow hump with diesel fuel which they nicked from Navy ships, then trek back, fill up the Army tanks and so rob the Army of their money. These men became known as "Camiknickers", and this is how the word "camiknickers" was derived – known to us as a garment of underwear.



Mighty Mouse

Following the article in the July issue about the largest tank ever built, one of our members, Tom Jeacock, recalls that while he was serving in Germany in 1946 (he thinks it was at Padderborn) a building in their barracks was put out of bounds while "top secret" work was being carried out there.

Many rumours were going the round as to what was going on there, but he believes it could well have been that this tank was being examined for anything that could have been of use to our own military boffins.

Has anyone got any information as to what finally happened to this vehicle and where it is now? Ω

But! The Navy, being full of intelligent (*sic. – Ed.*) men finally realised what was happening and formed their own "Long Range Algerian Camel" Attachment, and in charge of this attachment was Able Seaman Jim O'Brien. He had the honour of training four camels for the Queen, and received a certificate in recognition for his services for hazardous duties while attached to the Camel Group.

Now when Geoff Chester, RNA, went to the palace to receive his MBE, the Queen said to him: "Oh, you are from Market Harborough; do you know Jim O'Brien?"

"Yes, Ma'am," replied Jeff.

The Queen then said: "Will you thank him for training my four camels, they have never spat at me once."

Now tell that to the Marines!!!

Come on, Jim, who is going to believe this. I mean, just FOUR camels to supply the whole of the Eighth Army? Take more water with that grog. – Ed. Ω



Money Matters

The recent County Newsletter reported that the Poppy Race Day in June attracted 14,000 Legion members and supporters benefited Legion funds by more than £25,000 through ticket sales and fundraising on the day. 70 standard bearers were in attendance.

This publication also issued the Poppy Appeal figures for 2002 (for the Hughes Trophy).

Among the lists for Pence per Head of Population in Borough or District Councils, Harborough was not in the first 50. And in the list for Counties, Leicestershire came 50th (a drop of three places from last year) with a figure of 35.30p per head. The national average was given as 39.14p per head.



Distraction Burglary and Help for the Elderly.

By John Liddell

County Welfare has asked that you be made aware of this form of crime. While you may think that everyone knows it exists, are you as careful as you should be in dealing with those you do not know arriving at your door or appearing in your garden? Just as important, do you know of others who are not as careful as they should be, who could be warned and helped?

While it is not the intention to add to anyone's problems about day-to-day living, it is the elderly (and some younger vulnerable people) who are at risk. Your help and support may avoid a situation developing.

Basically a distraction burglary is a crime where entry is gained to premises by any offender who pretends to be a person who would normally be expected to gain entry to those premises, with the intent of stealing.

These people usually work as part of a team and try to distract their victims into another part of their property, inside or outside, leaving their door unlocked, so their partner can enter and steal anything of value.

The offenders may pretend to be Water, Gas or Electricity Board employees, council workers, door-to-door salesmen, property repairers, gardeners or even Police Officers.

What should we do?

- Be aware.

- Identify possible target victims and help/advise.
- Door chains should be fitted and used.
- Identification cards should be expected and inspected.
- Entry should only result from planned and pre-arranged visits. Requests for a visit at another time can put off the potential offender.
- If circumstances are obviously suspicious, ring 999 and request police assistance.
- Take interest in anything unexpected at the home of an elderly person and especially those who are alone.

It is suspected that many more of these crimes are committed than reported for one reason or another. The elderly may feel ashamed, foolish and/or embarrassed by being deceived; so much so that they do not report the crime.

LET US TRY TO REDUCE THE RISK.

~~The Trouble with Wheelchairs~~

Our Welfare Officer has been informed through the County Field Office that a wheelchair should not be supplied or loaned to anyone unless it was obtained and maintained by dealers/suppliers specified by Pall Mall. This leaves the problem of what we should (or could) do with the electric and the manual wheelchairs which this branch has.

Although it seems ridiculous not to be able to make use of these aids, the Branch Committee has decided that until clarification is obtained, our two wheelchairs must not be used lest the branch became liable for personal damage claims should an accident occur involving a chair on loan from us. Ω

Field Office about distraction burglaries. Although most people are aware of these crimes, we do tend to get a bit complacent and take the "it couldn't happen to me" attitude. But bear in mind that the perpetrators are very clever and slick in their approach, so please take heed of John's note.

Also in this issue is an announcement of a very rare event for this branch—can you spot it? Ω



Branch News

In Touch **BREAKS NEW GROUND.** For the benefit of any

of our members who have problems with their sight, we are now able to reproduce the monthly In Touch in a large print version. If you would find this an advantage, please contact either Tom Ashmore or Bob England and we will see that you receive this new format.

Just incidental to this and as a matter of interest, I have been informed that from 2003 all these kinds of information sheets and newsletters will be required by law to be available (if required) in a large print format and also in Braille. So once again our branch is ahead of developments!

BADGES. It is normally the Branch President who has the pleasant duty of presenting new members with their badges but he was unable to be at the September meeting. In his absence Chairman Mark Hudson did the honours and to the applause of 44 of their fellows, five recently joined members received their badges. They were Mrs. Glenys Hocking-Davies,

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Mr. Eric Gilbert, Mrs. Pat Middleton, Mr. Mike Middleton and Mr. David Whitehead.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE Standard Bearer, George Fleming and eight other members represented the branch to support our RAFA friends at this year's service on Sunday, 15th September. Four standards, RAFA, RNA, RBL and ATC were paraded to and from the church led by the ATC band and followed by a contingent of other cadets of the squadron.

BRANCH LUNCH at The Bell at Gumley was attended by 28 members and partners. This excellent turnout, in a popular pub, did highlight the need to book accurately the number of places required. Three people turned up whose names had not been put on the clipboard or notified by phone with the result that two who had, but arrived last, had to sit in another part of the bar completely separated from the main party. So, if you wish to attend any event, always make sure that the organiser knows.

CONGRATULATIONS. On behalf of all members, we extend our heartiest congratulations to Jane and Andrew Marriott on the birth of a daughter, Megan Florence, on 5th September. Our best wishes for all three of you. Please encourage her to join the branch in 2020!

COFFEE MORNINGS 2003. Such is the demand for the use of Harborough Theatre lounge that applications for bookings have to be made up to a year ahead. We have been fortunate in securing two dates from the list of alternatives which Joan McMillin put forward. They are 29th March and 25th October. By avoiding a date in June there should be no clash with the Carnival next year.



A Remarkable Story

Recently I came across a remarkable wartime story of an RAF man from Loughborough who jumped from a Lancaster bomber at 18,000 feet without a parachute, and lived to tell the tale.

Flight Sergeant Nicholas Alkemade was 21 years old and a rear gunner on his 13th bombing mission, on this occasion to Frankfurt, on 24th March, 1944.

The rear gunner in a Lancaster bomber sat in a perspex bubble with so little room that even his parachute has to be stowed in the fuselage behind him.

After the bombing run had been completed and the pilot turned for home the plane came under attack from a Junkers 88 which caused an explosion and a fire in the Lancaster.

Flt. Sgt. Alkemade did manage to shoot down the enemy plane before he realised he would have to bail out. But to his horror he discovered that he could not reach his parachute.

Faced with the prospect of being burned to death, he made the decision to jump from the plane as a more preferable death. He said that he felt so resigned and calm during his fall that he even calculated that falling from 18,000 feet to the ground would take about 90 seconds – then he passed out.

He awoke to see stars shining through the trees and was amazed to realise he was still alive; he had a twisted knee and some bruising. It was apparent that the trees had broken his fall and a fall of fresh snow some 18 inches deep made a final softer landing.

The local Volksturm arrested him. He was taken to hospital and then to Dulac Luft P.o.W camp, where nobody would believe his story and he was treated as a spy.

A Lieutenant of the Luftwaffe examined the wreck of a Lancaster which was found not far from where Flt. Sgt. Alkemade was found and discovered a badly burned parachute, with the lift webbings still tied down near the rear of the plane. The evidence supported his story and the camp commandant stated that the sergeant's survival was a miracle.

But Nicholas Alkemade's story of a gifted life did not end there.

After the war he went to work at a chemical factory in Loughborough, where a 224 lb. girder fell on his head. He was pulled out from underneath it for dead – but he walked away with just a bruise scalp! On another occasion he was drenched with sulphuric acid. He then had an electric shock which threw him into a hole in which he lay breathing in chlorine gas for a quarter of an hour – and again walked away.

Do you believe in Guardian Angels? Ω



Poppy Appeal Organisation

For personal reasons Andrew Marriott is unable to continue as branch PAO and arrangements are now being made to ensure that this year's Appeal in our area is again a record. With your help this can be achieved!!

As a temporary measure, Doug McMeeken will act as Poppy Appeal Organiser. Although Doug is new to the Branch he served as PAO in his previous branch, Weymouth. Please give him your support. See Notice on p 10.



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Payment may be made by post to MHRBL Treasurer, 5 Manor Road, Fleckney, Leics. LE8 8TN, or at the October meeting.

Cash should not be sent through the post. Make cheques payable to "Royal British Legion". Please pay promptly—overdue subs cost time and money to collect.

The easy, no hassle, no need to remember, way to pay, is by Direct Debit. Ask the Treasurer for a form for next year.

HUSBANDS BOSWORTH 75TH

You are invited to join our friends "down the road" at their Anniversary Dinner at Kilworth Springs. Details from Tom Ashmore.

POPPY APPEAL

Volunteers are needed for house-to-house and street collecting, for preparing and distributing trays, collecting boxes and wreaths and to man the market stall. Please sign the clipboard at the October meeting or ring Doug McMeeken (MH 463203) who is acting as temporary PAO (see p5), or Tom Ashmore (MH433108).

REMEMBRANCE CONCERT

Please note it will be a week earlier than in previous years. Details & clipboard at the October meeting.

BRANCH AGM

Please make every effort to attend. If you are nominating any one for office return the form no later than 11th November.



Diary

Reminders for October with some other dates to keep free .

- 1st Oct Subscriptions (£11) become due
- 3 Oct Branch Committee Meeting
- 9 Oct Branch Meeting
- 13 Oct NPFT Museum, with MH Photo Society
- 18 Oct Annual Dinner—see enclosure
- 25 Oct Husbands Bosworth Anniversary Dinner
- 26 Oct Poppy Appeal House-to-House starts
- 2 Nov Branch Remembrance Concert
- 2 Nov De Montfort Festival of Remembrance
- 4 Nov Garden of Remembrance opens
- 10 Nov Remembrance Parade and Service
- 11 Nov Armistice Day Ceremonies
- 13 Nov Branch AGM and buffet
- 13 Dec RNA Xmas dance
- 20 Dec Xmas Dinner (details later)

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 9th October and will be concerned with preparations for the Poppy Appeal.

The Branch Committee meets on the **Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting, in the upstairs lounge of the Conservative**



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch



Founded in 1923
Winner of the Haig Cup 2002

In Touch

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