

Editorial

November is always a busy month for the branch with the Poppy Appeal, planning for the Week of Remembrance and then the AGM.

We now have a new Chairman and a new Treasurer. I am sure you would wish me to offer our congratulations and thanks to Mark Hudson and John Standish respectively for taking on these offices, and assure them of our support.

The Festival of Remembrance at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, would appear to have been successful in spite of all the wrangling which preceded it. Yet while one of our members who had attended the event reported it as a really enjoyable evening, a correspondent in the Leicester Mercury stated that if this year's formula is to be repeated, he would not bother to go again! Who would be an organiser!!

The Garden of Remembrance this year was set up for the second year in succession under the direction of George Fleming, and once again I know you would wish to thank George and his small band of helpers for their efforts. Unfortunately, due to unfinished on-going work by the District Council, the area could not be floodlit this year, but even so it again drew many complimentary comments.

In this edition I have included a poem which had appeared in the monthly magazine "Yours". It had been submitted by a reader Patricia Franklin of Shrewsbury who, after being asked by the magazine on our behalf, has kindly given permission to reproduce it here.

Ω



At the Helm

As a result of the elections at the AGM the **Office Holders** are

President	Peter Wilson	MH 464585
Vice President	Ken Stimpson	MH 585820
Chairman	Mark Hudson	MH 434436
Vice Chairman	Tom Ashmore	MH 433108
Hon. Secretary	Betty Ramsay	MH 434923
Hon. Treasurer	John Standish	0116 240 4170

Committee Members are

Irene Blissett	MH 431789
John Cox	MH 434983
Vida Edwards	0116 279 3729
Bob England	MH 454288
Charles Freer	MH 467167
John Liddell	MH 465003
Sam Shutt	MH 461632
Stephen Simpson	MH 432762
Barry Thorpe	ex-directory

Delegate to County Conference Tom Ashmore

Continued from p 13

In his first address on taking the chair, Mr Mark Hudson said he would take his new office seriously and among the aims he hopes to achieve are planning further ahead and getting more of the youth of Market Harborough involved in the RBL. He called for the continuing support of the committee; and above all, he wants to ensure that everyone enjoys being a member of this branch.

The meeting was then followed by an excellent buffet, prepared and donated by Janet & Les Sewell.

& in the Engine Room!

Appointments made or confirmed at the Branch Committee meeting on 28th November

Membership Sec.	John Standish	0116 240 4170
	(mobile)	07710 799595
Standard Bearer	George Fleming	MH 462711
Deputy Std B'r	John Cox	MH 434983

Welfare Committee

Welfare Officer	John Liddell	MH 465003
	Irene Blissett	MH 431789
	Vida Edwards	0116 279 3729
	Charles Freer	MH 467167
	Tom Jeacock	MH 466829
	Stephen Simpson	MH 432762
	Barry Thorpe	ex-directory

Social Team

Leader	Tom Ashmore	MH 433108
	Irene Blissett	MH 431789
	John Cox	MH 434983
	Stephen Simpson	MH 432762
	Barry Thorpe	ex-directory

Communications Team

Leader	Tom Ashmore	MH 433108
Editor	Bob England	MH 454288
Press Officer	Con Halsall	MH 465314
Webmaster	Mark Hudson	MH 434436

Poppy Appeal Organiser

Andrew Marriott MH 434805
Subject to confirmation by County & HQ

Other appointments will be made later and will be announced in In Touch.



The AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the branch took place on Wednesday, 14th November.

The meeting, which was attended by some 45 members, first heard a short address from the President, Mr Peter Wilson, who thanked the branch officers, committee and members for contributing towards another successful year during 2001.

The retiring Chairman, Mrs Connie Halsall, said it was with a tinge of sadness that she was giving up the chairmanship, but felt that fresh faces in office with fresh ideas was the way forward for the branch. She extended her thanks to the members and committee who had supported her so wholeheartedly during the past, very busy, year.

There had been a satisfactory outcome of the campaign about the Cottage Hospital War Memorial, and she thanked the sub-committee who had worked hard to achieve it. Of the many social events the highlight for her was the Race Day at Newmarket, and she added "I hope we can do it again next year". There had been many favourable comments about the Garden of Remembrance once again and Connie expressed her thanks to those responsible.

Examples of members being involved in RBL matters outside the branch included our Welfare Officer who had attended a Welfare Caseworkers' course; our Secretary a Branch Management course; and George Fleming an Independent Examiner's course. Connie herself had attended together with the branch Secretary,

Betty Ramsay, County Conferences and meetings and also the RBL Annual Conference in Bournemouth. George Fleming retained his position as County Deputy Standard Bearer and was involved in many ceremonial events.

The Treasurer, Mr George Fleming, then presented the annual branch accounts of which each member present received a copy. He pointed out that owing to the growing membership having passed the 100 mark, this year the accounts had had to be professionally audited for the first time, and added that the auditor had not charged a fee for this work. George said that although he was retiring from the office of Treasurer, he could assure the branch that the accounts would be in more than capable hands when the Treasurer-elect, John Standish, took over.

Following this, the President made a presentation of small gifts to both Connie and George, and on behalf of the branch, thanked them for their excellent work in the past.

The Welfare Officer, Mr John Liddell, gave a short report on the year's work and hoped that in the near future, this branch could be held up as a model for others to copy. (See John's article in this issue).

Next on the agenda was the election of officers. The President and Vice-President were both re-elected. The members voted unanimously for Mr Mark Hudson to be the incoming Chairman, and Tom Ashmore remains as Vice-Chairman. Our Secretary, Betty Ramsay, indicated that she was willing to serve another term and was duly re-elected.

The present committee was returned en bloc with the addition of Stephen Simpson; and Tom Ashmore was re-elected as County Delegate.



Branch News

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

This impressive display of honouring the local war dead again attracted most favourable comments and there is surely a wish that it should become tradition in the town. The new cenotaph which George Fleming had built to replace the one vandalised last year was positioned differently and within a surrounding low barrier. Another innovation was the large RBL Pause to Remember 11-11-11 flag stretched out on the rear wall of the Market Harborough Building Society building.

POPPY APPEAL

Fears had been expressed that the problem of finding a new Appeal Organiser would jeopardise this year's result. In fact, at the time of writing, the amount collected last year has been equalled. When donations and other monies which may still be received are taken into account, a very satisfactory final total is likely to be achieved. This success is thanks to the hard work and dedication of all the helpers, branch members and non-members and especially Betty and Tom Jeacock who at the last moment agreed to "run the show" again. It was particularly gratifying to have cadets from the ATC working with us this year and we hope they will wish to do so again next year.

With Andrew Marriott having already volunteered to become PAO (subject to the formality of HQ accepting the branch recommendation), and his obvious enthusiasm, we can look forward to the coming year with confidence.



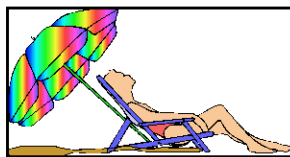
REMEMBRANCE CONCERT

About 170 people attended the event on Saturday 10th November and enjoyed an outstanding performance by the Harborough Band. It was an attractive and varied selection of music played at the high standard which has put the Band amongst the best in the country. The very moving remembrance aspect of the programme came towards the end with John Williams' *Hymn to the Fallen*, The Act of Homage & Kohima Epitaph recited by Peter Wilson and Col D.A. Pope's *Nightfall in Camp*, with Standard Bearer, George Fleming standing high above the Band at the front of the church.

Harborough Band, thank you! Our thanks, too to members of the Baptist Church for the use of the Church and for the refreshments, to all who sold tickets and to those who bought them. The result—over £350 for the Poppy Appeal!

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The problems of having the traditional Parade and Church Service and the two minutes silence on The Square were overcome by having a shortened Service starting at 10 o'clock, ensuring a prompt move to The Square and having the Salute and March Past at the end of the ceremony. None of the solemnity or the significance of Remembrance was lost due to the changes and public support appeared to be greater than ever: seldom has the Church been so well attended, or the gathering around the War Memorial so large and respectful. With traffic stopped the Silence was awesome (but for the whimper of a small child frightened by the maroon.)



How many of you have visited a Royal British Legion branch or meeting overseas, when you had the opportunity? During a visit to Spain recently I decided to visit a meeting on the Costa del Sol. The nearest branch was in Fuengirola, but there are ten or eleven along that coast.

This branch meets twice a week at a bar/restaurant just off the sea front. Meetings start at 11.30 hours and finish at 15.30 hours. In addition they organise at least one, and often two, trips a week, as well as other social events. The day following my visit there was to be a trip to Seville.

My visit was short, as with the sun shining I did not wish to spend too long indoors. As I entered, the area on my left appeared to be occupied by the windows; on my right was the bar. Next on my left there was a row of tables and at each one there were one or two members. The tables were labelled for membership, subscriptions, social, welfare and fundraising. Beyond these the President and Chairman sat facing each other at a table containing a bingo device. In the main area of the room were tables for four or six people, some of which were marked reserved.

My understanding is that there are over 300 members at this one branch and they are very active. In addition to visits to the bar waiters were serving meals and sand-

that she travelled to various countries to explore the possibilities of having artificial poppies manufactured.

In September of 1921, an officer of the British Legion went to Paris to meet Madame Guerin, and it was confirmed that a manufacturer could produce a large number of poppies in time for the 11th of the 11th. The Appeals Department had just six weeks in which to distribute millions of poppies. They went on sale at 3d (old coinage) each.

Another World

by John Liddell

wiches, while members moved about dealing with arrangements and business. As far as Welfare was concerned, I learned that the one welfare officer who had held that office for a number of years had had enough and resigned. Further that a very recent member who they thought would take over had changed his mind. They were worried about succession and there is a large demand for support, much of it relating to local circumstances. It appears that the British Consul in Malaga makes use of the branch as an agency for problem solving.

I was made very welcome by the officers and members. When I expressed surprise that they had started their poppy appeal earlier than was the situation in the UK, I was told that their poppy appeal lasted 365 days each year.

I left after a beer or two and constant discussion, and before the bingo started. While it was clear that cliques existed and some people sit with the same group at every meeting, it was clear that the branch provides a focal point for a lot of people.

I enjoyed the visit and would go again, but I did realise that in Fuengirola they live a very different life, almost in a different world.

The story goes that the idea was so popular with the general public that even single petals were selling for as much as £5 each in Smithfield Market. Today, of course, the Royal British Legion has its own poppy factory which produces 31 million poppies, 86,000 wreaths and 600,000 crosses annually.

The first poppy laid on the Cenotaph on November 11th, 1921, by Earl Haig is now held by The Green Howards' Regimental Museum in Richmond, North



Some thoughts on Welfare

by John Liddell,
Welfare Officer

My experience of welfare work in the RBL is limited. In fact it adds up to ten months experience and a Caseworkers' course. However it appears appropriate at this time to question whether we have the right structure in place in the branch to deal with the future. With a very variable workload the pressure on one person can, or could be, overwhelming. Further, the build-up of experience will be limited and the operations will be reactive only to those situations that occur and actually get reported.

If the branch deserves proactive welfare support, more people will need to be involved, as well as more training. The RBL Service and War Pensions Guide clearly defines branch responsibilities as reacting to requests for help and in seeking out those in need from the ex-service community within the branch catchment area. Further it defines the need for a committee with its own chairman, secretary and caseworkers. The latter being trained to do the work involved.

This may sound bureaucratic but my own experience is that one person, unless working full-time, cannot do all the work however willing the committee is to support the process.



Thanks to the Ladies

Although it was due largely to Field Marshall Earl Haig that the British Legion was formed in 1921, from an amalgamation of various ex-service-men's associations, did you know that the idea of using the poppy as a symbol of remembrance was actually that of an American woman? Moved by a

I would welcome a Committee Chairman, who can deal with policy, while the committee can liaise with other ex-service organisations and other welfare agencies on general issues; as well as organising selection and training. A Welfare Secretary may not be necessary as the current Welfare Officer, myself, is already dealing with the correspondence, the CFO, privacy and confidentiality.

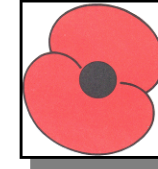
What is clear is that two further caseworkers are needed, at least one of whom should be a woman. The RBL plans to start training courses again next year; the 2nd and 3rd of March have been earmarked for a local course, but the location and venue are not known at the time. On this basis, no caseworker should be overloaded; they might even be needed only from time to time. Then the chairman and committee can be free to take a broader view of welfare policy.

The current committee, plus the two people who have volunteered but so far have not been used, include some who may take on more responsibility. With one or two additional volunteers we should achieve the necessary framework. Add to this the setting up of a Welfare bank account, a benevolent fund and legitimate expenses, then this branch should have a positive and flexible approach to welfare for the future. Ω

The Editor would welcome general comments on this topic but offers of help or specific queries should be addressed directly to John Liddell. Call him on MH 465003.

poem she had read, written by an Army doctor (Col John McRae), Moira Michael, who was an overseas war secretary employed by the YMCA, purchased 25 red poppies and sold them to her work colleagues in order to raise money for ex-servicemen's charities.

A French secretary who was also employed by the YMCA, Madame Guerin, was so enthused by this idea



WHY ARE THE POPPIES RED?

Why are the poppies red, Mummy?
Why are the poppies red?

The poppies are red, my daughter,
To remind us of those who are dead.
But why are the poppies red, Mummy?
I really wish you would say.
The poppies are red, my darling,
In mem'ry of those gone away.
As red as the blood that was shed when they died,
As stoic as their women at home who cried.
The sweet Lord looked down from high above
And gave us the poppy as a sign of His love.
For He does not approve of the horrors of war
And promised our loved ones will be with us once more.
So run through the poppies as you play in the sun,
Then kneel down and pray, "Thy Kingdom Come!"
Where in place of each flower that grows tall and red,
Will stand all our loved ones, no longer dead.

Patricia Franklin

Colonel John McRae' famous poem

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That marks our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe,
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' fields.

1st October 2000

A Year in the Life of Market Harborough Branch

30th September 2001

October

Coffee Morning raises £200 for Poppy Appeal.
George Fleming wins 2nd place in Annual County Standard Bearers' Competition & retains his position as Deputy County Standard Bearer.

November

Millennium Festival Week—hectic!
Presentation of Books of Remembrance
RBL Exhibition at the Museum
Garden of Remembrance
Opening with ACF Pipes & Drums
Daily Sunset Ceremony
Public acclaim but outrage at vandalism
Remembrance Concert by Harborough Band
£200 raised for the Poppy Appeal
Welfare, Social & Communications teams appointed

December

Military Medal of WW1 Harborough soldier given to the Branch & loaned to the Museum.
Christmas Dinner at The Countryman Inn
Each member gets a Christmas "card" from Chairman
Mulled wine & hot mince pies after Branch Meeting

January

5 Branch members attend Annual County Conference. Jack Quain Trophy **not** won this year!

February

Hospital Memorial Sub-committee formed
Coffee Morning raises a record £304
At Branch Meeting (on 14th), Chairman presents each lady member with a Valentine Rose
Final issue of In Touch, Too produced – In future InTouch to appear monthly

Page 5

March

John Liddell attends a Welfare Caseworkers' Course
Birthday Dinner at The Bull's Head, Clipston

April

Pub lunch at Coach & Horses, Kibworth - poorly attended
Branch Standard Bearers attend 75th Anniversary of Cranford, Kent branch
Hospital Memorial Campaign gets good press coverage

May

Chairman and Secretary attend Legion Annual Conference
Branch receives Lister Cup Certificate of Merit—a Legion-wide award for performance

June

Coffee Morning makes £203 for Social Fund
Very well attended pub lunch
George Gamble gives another talk on medals
Branch represented at ATC Anniversary Dinner
4 members attend County half-year Conference
A talk about Legion & Branch given to town new-comers.

July

Visit to Covert Warfare Museum at Harrington.
Branch represented at HDC Civic Service
Branch Secretary attends RBL Branch Management Course
Successful outcome of Hospital Memorial Campaign

August

Trip to the *Poppy Race Day* at Newmarket. Our Standard Bearer (only one from Leicestershire) is in the Parade of RBL Standards.

September

George Fleming qualifies as an RBL Independent Examiner
Visit to Ironbridge & the RAF Museum at Cosford.
Pub lunch at The Countryman Inn well attended.

Page 6

During the year

15 new members joined the branch
5 members died
3 members allowed their subs to lapse

Total membership at 30 September 2001
114 of whom
36 were women
29 were associates

Average attendance at Branch meetings
40 (36%)
Average attendance at Committee meetings
11 (73%)

Branch Fund-raising produced £790 of which
£250 was for Poppy Appeal

Poppy Appeal Total for year ending 31 May 2001
£13,158.81

Branch Website
international award as "A Best Military Website"
total visits to site exceeded 2700 at 30/9/01

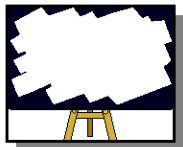
Branch Newsletters produced
In Touch, Too—3 issues, 365 copies
In Touch – 3 old style issues, 375 copies
6 new style issues, 750 copies
(using 3115 sheets of paper!)

Branch Standard Bearer attendances

Competition	1	Branch	14	Carrying
Training	10	National	2	County Standard
Funerals	5	International	2	Queen's Colour
			5	

involving 1574 miles of own car travel

Page 7



Notices

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Friday, December 7th, at 7.30pm. The Countryman, Great Bowden. £13.25 per head. Fully booked but to be put on the reserve list (in case there are cancellations) telephone Tom Ashmore (MH 433108).

SOCIAL & OTHER EVENTS 2002

We have come to expect some social or other event in addition to business meetings in most months during the year and the diary on page 17 give dates for events either fixed or proposed during 2002. Based on the experience of the last few years the most popular events have to do with eating: evening dinners, pub lunches and after meeting buffets. The Social Team will arrange these again.

There is also much to be said for establishing a regular pattern or tradition to some events e.g. a Birthday dinner on the Friday on or next after 20th March, the Anniversary of the formation of the Branch. Circumstances may not always allow the pattern to be followed and occasionally pre-arranged events may have to be changed, but attempts will be made to make most events regular and predictable.

Outings have had mixed success—will there be sufficient interest to make hiring a coach viable? Other possibilities like joining outings organised by other groups or coach operators, car sharing or self-drive mini-bus hire will be considered and so will your suggestions on where to go & how to get there. So pass your ideas to a Social Team member.



Diary

Reminders for December with some other dates to keep free. (see also page 10)

- 7 Dec Xmas Dinner—The Countryman Inn
- 12 Dec Branch Meeting + Punch & mince pies
- Note—No Committee meeting in December**
- 9 Jan Branch meeting
- 15 Jan Pub Lunch - Coach & Horses, Lubenham
- 30 Jan Branch Committee meeting
- 2 Feb Coffee morning—Harborough Theatre
- 22 Mar Birthday Dinner—venue to be announced
- 27 Mar Jaguar visit (with Photo Soc.)—fully booked
- 16 Apr Pub Lunch—provisional
- 2 Jun County Standard Bearers' Service -??
- 15 Jun Coffee Morning— Harborough Theatre
- 18 Jun Pub Lunch—provisional
- 18 Oct Annual Dinner—venue to be confirmed
- 2 Nov Remembrance Concert -to be confirmed

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 December

The Branch Committee meets on the **Last Wednesday** of each month (except December).



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch



Founded in 1923

In Touch

Issue 38

November 2001

Editor -- Bob England
83 Cromwell Crescent
Market Harborough, LE16 9JW.
Tel: 01858 464288

Branch Website - www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net