

Diary

- 31st Jan Branch Committee Meeting
14th Feb Branch Meeting & Talk (see p 17).
24th Feb Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre (see box below)
28th Feb Branch Committee Meeting
14th Mar Branch Meeting + social event to be announced
20th Mar Branch Birthday Dinner - details later

Note! Another Poppy Race Day is to be held at Newmarket on 4th August. Please let Andrew Marriott (MH434805) know if you would like him to arrange an outing.

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FOR THE COFFEE MORNING

24 FEBRUARY - HARBOROUGH THEATRE

OFFERS OF HELP PLEASE TO ANDREW MARRIOTT OR A SOCIAL TEAM MEMBER.

The Communications Team

Tom Ashmore MH433108 Team Leader, newsletter Publisher & chief advocate of the importance of Communication within and outside the Branch. Keen to encourage the greater use of computers and IT by members for the future benefit of branch & Legion.

Bob England MH464288 **In Touch** Editor, branch Press Officer and normal link with the news media. Keen to research Branch history & to encourage members to provide material for stories of their experiences - he enjoys writing.

Mark Hudson MH434436 Branch IT expert, main branch link with the "e-world", runs the Website & shares copy with the newsletters. Keen to put branch archives into electronic form.

Sam Shutt MH461632 Role still to be confirmed, but likely to be concerned with developing and maintaining branch archives.

Meetings

Regular 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 14th February. The social event following the business session will be a talk by Andrew Marriott on his Pedal to Paris adventures in September last year.

Miss C C A Windsor
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LE16 9QA



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The Royal British Legion
Market Harborough Branch
Founded in 1923

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75
Years of Caring

In Touch

Issue 29

January 2001

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

Branch Website - www.mktharborbl.ukvet.net

Editor's Ramblings

JANUARY-- and we have arrived at that time of year when Christmas is becoming just another fading memory and the "pop" of champagne corks on New Year's Eve is just a distant fading echo (and an editor is allowed to become a little lyrical!!).

Whether you subscribe to the theory that the 21st century began on January the 1st, 2000 or 2001, we are now unarguably into the 21st century.

A quick glance back over the past 100 years is indeed a mixture of the good and evil. Great progress has been made in social conditions and health conditions for the masses; medicine and science has seen giant strides, and man has set foot on the moon; and the great class divide, so prevalent in the early part of the century, as all but been eradicated.

But the negative side was all too obvious; there have been many, many wars and conflicts. As we entered the 20th century the Boer War was in progress, then came two World Wars, Korean Wars, Vietnam, Falklands and the Gulf War. The threat of the Cold War between the Western nations and the Eastern bloc hung over us for many years and there have been armed conflicts in many parts of Africa and Asia, and the Irish problem is still on-going. Even as I write there is serious fighting taking place in Israel and Palestine, with many deaths resulting...

A sad reflection on mankind (or is it just the politicians?).

Continued on page 3

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On the Briny

By Ray Tyler

WHEN I was a youngster I lived very close to Southampton Water and regularly watched the large Liners, such as the Queens, heading for Southampton or out to sea. My great joy was to cycle along to Gosport and watch the Navy Ships coming and going. Ships like the Rodney, Nelson, Hood, Illustrious, the Exeter, the Belfast, and so many more would come and go, and I knew them all by sight.

The other day I was wondering just what had happened to them. I know that some went to the bottom of the briny and I supposed the rest to the scrap yards. I have now discovered that our old friend the Cruiser H.M.S. Belfast is still afloat.

She was launched in 1938 and had enjoyed a wonderful career until 1963 when she was sent to the scrap yard, but was saved by a group of people, and since 1971 has been open to the public on the Thames near Greenwich. She is now owned by the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum.

She was damaged in 1939 by a magnetic mine and was out of service for about two years. In 1943 the Belfast was part of the fleet that sank the German Battleship Scharnhorst, and later helped to cripple the Tirpitz. When Japan surrendered the Belfast was heading for the East and ferried many survivors of Japanese P.O.W., and civilian internment camps between Shanghai and Hong Kong. She bombed shore targets between 1950 and 1952 in the Korean War.

It is good to hear that this old Navy ship is still afloat on the briny (or at least on the Thames!). Ω

An Unusual Find

THE son of one of our members was starting on renovations to an old cottage. Behind a fireplace he discovered an old bake oven. When the oven was opened up it was found to contain old bits of paper, among which was found a copy of the British Legion Journal for May 1953.

The magazine is, naturally, in a poor condition, but still readable in the main. Some Leicestershire branches are mentioned on the pages (alas, not Market Harborough) and one of the articles concerns the winning of £150 in a fishing competition by the Birstall branch of the British Legion.

Hopefully our member will allow us to examine this journal more fully and if so we will be able to bring you the news and events that were interesting the Legion members of the 50's.

Watch this space!!!

Ω

War Pensions Increase

THOSE in receipt of a War Pension should be aware already of the 3.3% increase to be made from April 2001. This is in line with the annual increase in the retail price index.

We Will Remember Them

Lt. Col. James Potter TD

It is with sadness that we have to announce the death on 1st January of our oldest member, Lt. Col Potter. Although he will not have been known to many of you, Colonel Potter took a great deal of interest in the progress of the Branch and was full of praise for its success. For many years he led another highly successful branch, Evington which won the Jack Quain Trophy 9 times in the 1960's and '70's, but he could never be persuaded to talk about this or his Army Service.

His funeral on 9th January was followed by a Service of Thanksgiving at which the Branch was represented by our President, Chairman, Vice Chairman and John Cox who carried the Standard.

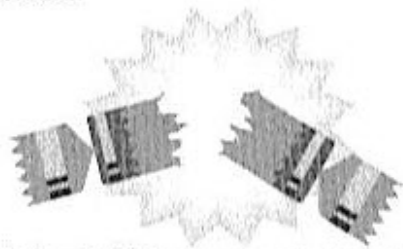
Mr Chris Blenkinsop

As we go to press we learn the sad news that Chris died on 15th January. Born in 1916, he served in the Royal Leicestershire Regiment from 1940 to 1946. He has not attended meetings for some years but he will be remembered by Harborians as the one time landlord of The Red Cow in the High Street. His funeral will be on 24th January.

We extend our sympathy to the families of both our late colleagues.

Christmas Dinner

TWENTY-ONE members and guests gathered at the Countryman, Great Bowden, on Friday, December 15th, for the branch Christmas Dinner. Everyone enjoyed a good meal together with convivial company. Tony Johnson entertained us with some of his jokes, which unfortunately I cannot print in case of prosecution!!



Bob England told the company that this was the last event for which he would be responsible for organising as Social Secretary and thanked those present for their support of the Social Committee during his term of office, and expressed the hope that even more members will add their support of the new committee.

Before the guests left, each was handed a small Christmas gift of chocolates and it was voted a good evening by all and a fitting end to the year.

Continued from page 2

It would have been wonderful if we had progressed into the 21st century with peace the world over. We can but hope that before the year 2200 arrives even the need for any country to have a defence budget will have become defunct.

But, coming back to present time, may I wish you and yours, somewhat belatedly, a very happy, healthy and prosperous New Year and a year in which all your hopes and aspirations may come true. Ω

County Conference - 2001

by Tom Ashmore

THE CONFERENCE is the County's AGM. Like our Branch AGM, there are reports from President and Chairman, submission and approval of accounts, election of Officers and Committee. It differs in that only nominated delegates (one or two from each branch depending on size) may vote - others present are "Visitors". It is also a filter for resolutions that branches wish to put forward to National Conference. A greater degree of formality (and a longer agenda!) reflects the higher level in the organisational hierarchy. A guest speaker addresses those present on some appropriate topic. And sandwiches are served during an interval, unlike our buffet taken after the end of the business meeting!

Wigston RBL Club was the venue on Saturday 20th January for this year's event. Market Harborough was well represented by George Fleming in his capacity as County Deputy Standard Bearer (contributing to the formality), myself wearing my unnamed delegate badge, and Con Halsall, Betty West and John Cox segregated in the "visitors" area. Most of us found it an interesting afternoon from which I've selected a few items to report back to you.

Integration of the Women's Section with mainstream RBL was again strongly advocated by the County President, and formed the substance of a Resolution from Melton Mowbray carried by Conference and was supported by County Women's Section. Difficulties include differences of constitution, objectives, finance and National level opposition. HQ initiatives for closer links with SSAFA were welcomed and are already operating in local welfare work. At County level some acceptance of change and the use of new approaches to communication were evident judging by the laptop computer on the top table controlling a digital projector.

CFO Peter Locket reported that the Poppy Appeal national target of £20m is very likely to be met and the County figure is well above last year's. He also mentioned that local Welfare courses would be held on 2/3 and 9/10 March (John Liddell please note!).

The retirement of Mr Tony Griffith from the County Chair was marked with the presentation of a County Certificate of Appreciation and tributes to his seven years of hard work, helpfulness and achievement. He is succeeded by the previous Vice Chairman, Mr Jim Rawlinson.

The County affiliation fee paid by branches will be £14 per 100 members from 1st October 2001.

The Jack Quain Trophy for Endeavour for 1999/2000 was won by Croft Branch (they must have done very well to have beaten us!).

Guest speaker Mr David Greenway, who some will remember as East Midlands Organiser, spoke of his new role as one of the three-man Internal Audit team which exists to review RBL systems and organisation to ensure that Legion assets are protected from malpractice or fraud. It is impartial and independent of any HQ department and has wide ranging powers of investigation throughout the whole Organisation.

The second speaker, Mr Mike Seabourne from RBL Attendants Company gave a talk about this not widely known aspect of the Legion's activities. This is a separate entity with its own charitable status which developed from the many small units created in the late 1920's to provide employment for ex-servicemen as car park attendants. It now has a broader business base, an annual turnover of £30m, a payroll of 1650 and a non-charitable subsidiary, Legion Security plc. It also provides training grants to help ex-service people improve their job prospects. (John Liddell has details). Ω

Making your Sub go Further

WHEN you received your membership card for the current year (2000/2001), you were asked to complete the Gift Aid form to which the card was attached. If you pay Income Tax (even that deducted from interest on a savings a/c) then as a Charity, the RBL can claim from the Inland Revenue the tax you have paid on an amount equal to your sub. If you did not return the form & still have it, please complete and send it off now. If you have destroyed it, please ask Treasurer, George Fleming (MH 4627110) for a replacement. This extra cash for the Legion costs you nothing but helps to postpone another increase in fees. Ω

By Popular Demand

Most members will know the name George Gamble and those who have been fortunate enough to have listened to one of his talks on Medals will not be surprised to learn that he has now enthralled audiences a total of 28 times and already has 8 bookings for 2001. George makes no charge for these talks but does invite donations to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to which he has now been able to send £780.

It is hoped that he will be able to fit into his busy schedule, another visit to Market Harborough this year. Watch the Diary!

Remembrance ?

Bob England Muses

THE Festival of Remembrance Service planned for the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, last November was cancelled. Was this really due to organisational difficulties, or a prelude to something else?

We were informed that only some 350-odd tickets were applied for. Did this signal the beginning of the end for the annual remembrance service of two world wars? Is it just time passing by?

Consider for a moment: How many of us remember, visit (or even know) where our great-grandparents are buried? Very few people even have memories of family beyond grandparents. And now the veterans of the Second World War are of that great-grandparent generation.

We do not especially commemorate any other wars or battles prior to 1914. Is this because we no longer have any personal (family) connections with these events? And now the two world wars are falling into this category with our present generation and just becoming no more than additions to our history books.

Is this the beginning of the end for the services of remembrance as we have known them for the major part of the 20th century?

Let me know your views, via "Letters to the Editor"; I feel sure there is an interesting debate here. Ω

Social Committee

AT THE time of putting together this edition of *In Touch*, Andrew Marriott, our Social Secretary, was away with the Army Cadet Force and therefore unable to contribute to this column. We believe that he has an outline programme that includes some new ideas as well as repeats of events which were enjoyed in the past. However, we do know that we have a Coffee Morning booked at the Harborough Theatre for Saturday, February 24th. So can we as usual call on members once again for their support by way of donation of raffle and tombola prizes, cakes, bric-a-brac, and most of all by your attendance on the day?

Incidentally, the Social Committee have now taken on the responsibility for the "after meetings events", so if you feel you could give a talk of any kind, about personal experiences or explain/display your interests or hobbies, I am sure Andy would be very pleased to hear from you. Ω

Donations

TWO generous donations have been received during the past few weeks. One was from the Market Harborough Choral Society for £71.60 raised on the occasion of their November concert. It has been credited to the Branch Trust/Welfare fund. The other was a cheque for £137 from Arthingworth Parish Church following their Remembrance Sunday Service and has been passed to the Poppy Appeal. Ω

Over the Net

Someone Knew the Answer

LAST November a subscriber to the Legion Electronic Mailing List asked questions concerning the motto on the Royal Artillery badge, and to clarify the difference between RHA and RA. It elicited the following reply from another subscriber in Windsor. You may find it of interest.

The motto of the Royal Regiment of Artillery (RA) is in Latin: "Quo Sas et Gloria Ducunt", which is translated as "Whither right and glory lead". The RA also share another motto with the Corps of Royal Engineers: "Ubique", which is translated as "Everywhere", marking the Universal deployment of those two large corps.

The Royal Regiment of Artillery (RA) is a large and ancient element of the British Army, known colloquially as the Gunners. There have been gunners ever since the invention of guns in the 13th century, and the first official gunners were appointed in 1485 as part of what became the Board of Ordnance. Throughout the next 400 years the forts around Britain had master gunners permanently appointed by the Board of Ordnance. Trains of artillery were formed for campaigning both home and abroad, equipped with guns and the men to serve them.

The Royal Regiment was formally created in 1716, under a Royal Warrant. Two companies of artillery, each of 100 men, were formed at the Woolwich Warren (later the Royal Arsenal) to ensure that a regular force of gunners was available when needed. Woolwich has been the

spiritual home of "The Gunners" ever since that time, although the regiment had moved to its famous barracks on Woolwich Common by 1805.

The Gunners were organised into companies and troops, the term sometimes being interchangeable. Today most Royal Artillery Regiments are organised with three batteries. Overall, out of all the 16 regiments in existence today, there 56 titled batteries who trace their histories to famous battles or engagements. Five batteries trace their histories to the original establishment of 1716; they are believed to have served in some, if not all, of Marlborough's campaigns.

The Royal Artillery was once split into several branches. At the turn of the century the regiment was divided into the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) using light guns in support of the cavalry, the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) providing the main elements of the fire support for the infantry in the trenches, the Royal Mountain Artillery (RMA) and the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) that manned the static guns defending forts and coastal bases. Ω



Editor- We wanted a picture of a R A badge but we are not sure if this is it. Have we any ex-Gunners who can put us right?

e-mail from Helen

by Tom Ashmore

"I am a student at the University of Central Lancashire studying journalism", was how the e-mail started. Why was a young lady in Preston writing to me and how did she know my address? The rest of the message explained that as part of her course she had to write an article based on interviews with people about their experiences of WW2. Someone had suggested that she should contact the RBL for help and on the Internet she found the Market Harborough website which gives my name as Vice Chairman and my e-mail address. Intrigued to know how she had found our site and why she thought someone in Leicestershire would help her with interviews, I discovered that she lives "just down the road" in Saddington, was home on Christmas vacation and had therefore searched for a local branch.

The result of her initiative was that she had interviews with three branch members with very different wartime experiences, Bernard Halsall, Glider Pilot, *extraordinaire*, Tony Johnson, RAF Bomber crew, POW escapee and myself, school-boy, college student and UK based REME technical bod. I wonder how she will condense that into 350 words and if her tutor will be suitably impressed. She said she would send us a copy of what she writes - I hope she keeps that promise.

Of course she could cheat and copy from the "Members' Stories" pages on the website!! I'm sure she won't and perhaps we can publish her article.