

Editor's Ramblings

SPRING IS COMING and changes are afoot with your In Touch. Commencing with the April issue, In Touch will become a monthly newsletter instead of the present bi-monthly arrangement. It will be slightly smaller (12 pages instead of 18) but the editorial team feel that a smaller edition every month will enable us to better keep the members up to date. This does mean, of course, that In Touch, Too will be discontinued, so the Edition that you received in February will be the last (keep it - it may turn up in the Antique Road Show one day!!).

In the last edition of In Touch, we printed a piece by Ray Tyler who wondered what had happened to some of the ships he remembered seeing as a youngster in Southampton Water. He went on to give a part history of HMS Belfast. By coincidence it turned out that one of our members, John Chamberlain, had served on HMS Belfast and was able to fill in some more of the ship's story. Pictures and text from the Imperial War Museum website add to this (See page 5). So now you know, Ray!!!

David Grove has sent us another story from his time with the Leicestershire Regiment in the Korea. Less serious than his piece in the July 1999 issue, it does deal with obtaining some relief from the pressure of war.

On the back page you will find the Calendar of Events (Diary). As you will see, the Social

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March

By Tom Ashmore

I'M NOT WHAT YOU would call a "Birthday person" unlike my wife who seems to remember everyone's. There are a couple of birth dates that do stick in my mind - 08/08/08 was my dear old Aussie friend Mike's and 20/3/23 was school chum Geoff's.

For we members of Market Harborough RBL **20/3/23** is most significant for it is when a group of local ex-servicemen met in the old Assembly Rooms and decided to form a branch of the British Legion. What would they think of our stewardship of their creation? And what would they have made of some of the March events since their day? For example,

19/3/41 "Vegetable sausages are to be mass produced at 8d a lb.

3/3/42 "Clothing styles to be restricted to save cloth - shorter skirts, no double breasted coats, no turn-ups"

5/3/42 "Civil Servants' pencil sharpeners withdrawn to conserve pencils"

27/3/42 The St Nazaire Raid (see In Touch Nov 1999 for a story of "The Greatest Raid of All")

19/3/44 "Spectacular glider landing 200 miles behind Japanese line and the creation in 12 hours of an Airstrip for a fully equipped fighter squadron"

24/3/44 "General Wingate killed in air crash"

24/3/45 the day Bernard Halsall landed his enormous Hamilcar Glider in that tremendous Airborne Operation Varsity. Unknown to Bernard until less than a year ago, there was, in the Halifax (towing a Horsa Glider) which took off just 7 minutes after he did, a Harborough man, Fl/Sgt William Lawrence, the Wireless Operator /Air Gunner. His plane was shot down before reaching their objective. He is commemorated on the memorial gates and in the Books of Remembrance, for which new pages have just been produced recording this curious connection.

24/3/48 I became a father. Happy Birthday Janet — I've remembered this year!

22/3/50 Plans announced for a New Town at Corby.

10/3/52 The start of David Groves' Korean story in this issue.

21/3/52 "Oscar for best actor to Humphrey Bogart in "The African Queen"

27/3/52 "Cheese ration cut to 1oz per week"

1/3/54 "TV licence fee to be increased from £2 to £3"

15/3/61 "Dr Beeching appointed head of British Railways"

16/3/71 "Henry Cooper retires after losing titles to Joe Bugner"

30/3/81 "Assassination attempt on President Regan"

16/3/01 Market Harborough Branch RBL 78th Birthday Dinner (see page 4)



Coffee Morning

GAIN WE had a very successful morning at the Harborough Theatre on Saturday, February 24th with a record profit of £304.24 which included several cash donations. The Social Committee would like to thank all members who helped with this success -- those who provided prizes for the raffle and tombola; those who supplied a mouth-watering array of cakes for sale; the ladies who made and served the coffee, the stall holders and all those members who attended on the morning. Well done everyone!! Ω



Taking the Birthday competition seriously at the March Branch Meeting

(Continued from page 1)

(Continued at foot of page 2)

Committee are proposing a range of events; but in order to carry them through they need your support. Can you let the committee know which events you are interested in, so they can go ahead with arrangements. They really need to know if it is worthwhile booking coaches for a visit to Duxford and the race day at Newmarket (there



Welfare

ATTENDED THE recent 2-day welfare officers' course, John Liddell now says (with tongue in cheek), "I am trained!". No doubt the other members of his team will also benefit from what he learned but all members have a role to play in welfare. If you know of any ex-service person or dependant who appears to be in need of support, not necessarily financial, do contact one of the welfare team -

John Liddell MH 465003
Irene Blissett MH 431789
Vida Edwards 0116 279 3729
Charles Freer MH 467167
Tom Jeacock MH 466829 Ω



Situation Vacant

Marriott has resigned & there is an need for a new Social Secretary. If you would like to take on the job or want more information, please ring Chairman, Con Halsall on MH 465314



Membership

I'd like to welcome to the Branch, new members -Mrs. Betty Potter, widow of the late Lt. Col. Potter; Mrs. Frances Cotterill; Mr. John Swannack.

But it is with regret that Mr. Stuart Ferns, Mr. John Marshall our Ohio, USA member, & Mr. Albert Adams who left the district due to illness, allowed their membership to lapse.

In the last six months 11 people have joined us but sadly 4 have died. The branch now has 112 members (85 Ordinary & 27 Associate) of whom 33 are ladies. Ω

I turned to look at my platoon, leaning over the sides of our rusty, dented, well worked American Dodge Troop Transporter Dressed— despite the clean underwear— in the combat clothing they had worn in the front line since November 1951. Grinning under their woolly cap comforters, their white shaven faces shining from their morning bath, they waited with eager anticipation for the expected exchange.

I spoke in a very stern voice "Which one of you — over the vehicle?" As one loud voice they chorused "Me Sergeant!"

I turned back to *'The Figure'* "My men are certainly on their first day of rest for over a week in a proper manner at the front. Orders clearly state a vehicle is to be used on a pontoon bridge. I am sure this combined with the muddy ground resulted in my thought my explanation *'The Figure'* seemed not to be "Who are you? Where are you? You are placed on a disciplinary

'The Figure' did not in the game was up! I stood to attention and stated, "I am 14474163. Sgt. D.G.Grove. "A" Coy . 1st Battalion The Royal Leicestershire Regt. Within the next three days I will be moving back into the front line of area PT227. If you wish to attend Company Orders you will find me there, Sir." I saluted—which was not returned— and climbed back aboard the rusty old Dodge, which moved off accompanied by loud cheers from the men of my platoon.

About a month later in April 1952 an Army Form 252

Signed by Captain Anonymous arrived at "A" Coy Headquarters dugout.

"14474163 Sgt. D.G. Grove is charged under section 40 of The Army Act Conduct Unbecoming To A Non Commissioned Officer, in that he was in charge of soldiers who were under the influence of alcohol."

Ordered back to Company HQ from the platoons forward defensive position, to answer to the charge, I gave an explanation to my Company Commander. The Form 252 was supported by written evidence. Captain Anonymous had not to visit the combat area.

was accepted as the boundary between North and South Korea.

Korean War (1950-3), war fought between North Korea and China on one side, and South Korea, the USA, and United Nations forces on the other. From the time of their foundation in 1948, relations between North and South Korea were soured by rival plans for unification, and on 25 June 1950 war finally broke out with a surprise North Korean attack that pushed US and South Korean forces far south towards Pusan by September. In the temporary absence of the Soviet representative, the Security Council asked members of the UN to furnish assistance to South Korea.

15 September US and South Korean forces, under



**Korea—
Years Ago**
G. Grove MBE

THERE WERE TWO kinds of soldiers serving with The Commonwealth Division in North Korea. *“Us and them!”* On 10th March 1952 The 1st Battalion Royal Leicestershire Regiment was relieved in the line by The 2nd Battalion The Royal Canadian Regiment. We moved to the Kanvass Line, two miles to the rear, for three weeks. This was the first and incidentally the only time, that I moved into reserve during my tour in Korea.

While in reserve I was ordered to move my platoon to the battalions “B” complete rest day. We arrived at 0900hrs and discovered Fairy Lane a complete change of underclothing, chairs and knives and forks, a meal. The Paymaster was there to buy such luxuries as chocolate, cigarettes and beer, cans per man allowed for the day.

At 1600hrs I left the Sgts Mess where I had spent my day of luxury. I found my platoon dressed and ready to move as ordered. They were grouped in a large marquee tent, sitting on empty ammunition boxes, clutching their personal weapons, watching in complete silence a 30mm black and white movie of Peter Pan! It was a moment of pure magic for me! The men appeared to be in a Never-Never Land of their own, and Walt Disney’s, making

On the return journey to “A” Coy headquarters

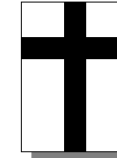
we crossed the Imjim River, over a very long pontoon bridge. American MPs guarding the North side stopped my vehicle, stating that a vehicle behind was flashing its lights. I ordered my driver to pull off the track and waited for the vehicle, still flashing its lights, to close.

As the vehicle drew near I saw that it was a jeep. It gleamed with polish in a pristine ‘ready for inspection’ condition. The driver was wearing a clean smart battle dress, a blanched belt and on his head a blue beret with a brightly polished cap badge! As the jeep came to a halt ‘A Figure’ stepped from the front passenger seat.

command of General MacArthur, launched a counter-offensive at Inchon, and by the end of October UN forces had pushed the North Koreans all the way back to the Yalu River, the frontier with the People’s Republic of China. Chinese troops then entered the war on the northern side, driving south to recapture the South Korean capital of Seoul by January 1951. After months of fighting, the conflict stabilized in near-deadlock close to the original boundary line (the 38th parallel). Peace negotiations, undertaken in July 1951 by General M. B. Ridgway (who had succeeded MacArthur in April of that year), proved difficult,

amazement— in a spotless, belted, pleated, creased smooth trousers; wearing brown kid gloves and a peaked cap. He was wearing a Royal

“Are you in charge of these men?” badge of rank was visible and I as an officer. ‘ Just look at them! They are they have urinated over the tail it has splashed over my vehicle, I demand an explanation!’



**The Books of
Remembrance**

The research was being done and after the Books appeared in the Museum, a great deal of information and memorabilia was provided by members of the public. Only recently has it been possible to analyse and copy much of this. As a result a number of errors have been corrected and new pages with photographs and letters produced. Look out for some of this fascinating material in future issues of In Touch. Ω



**Hospital War
Memorial**

The team set up to formulate proposals for the preservation of this memorial has had its first meeting and its members are each examining specific areas of background information upon which practical recommendations can be based for consideration by the Branch Committee before being put before the full Membership. Ω

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Birthday Dinner

members and guests were present on Friday 16th March at The Bull’s Head, Clipston to celebrate the Branch 78th Birthday. Pictures and more about this excellent occasion next month. Ω



Letter

from John Chamberlain
(ex-Royal Marines)

READ THE last issue of "In Touch", two articles caught my eye. The first was about the Royal Artillery in which the RMA was described as the Royal Mountain Artillery. There was another RMA--the Royal Marine Artillery, which existed before they were amalgamated into the Royal Marines. Before that time the RMA provided detachments to the Royal Marines.

During my service (1947-54) one could express a preference to serve "Sea Service" or in "The Brigade" (which meant becoming a RM commando). I chose the sea service, which brings me to the second article.

From 1949 to 1950 I served aboard HMS Belfast, stationed in Hong Kong, when we got caught up in the Yangtse Incident.

You may recall that on April 20th, 1949, the Chinese Communists fired upon British ships in the Yangtse-Kiang River. Some of the ships, including HMS Charity, Cossack and London made a dash for freedom, but the Amethyst was trapped in the river for some 14 weeks.

The Belfast was dispatched to the river mouth and was on station there for six weeks until the Amethyst made its dramatic dash to escape.

HMS Belfast was on a courtesy cruise around Japan when the Korean War broke out and so we also got involved in that. Stationed at Sasebo, Southern Japan, the ship made five-day sorties to bombard the Korean coast and also covered the American landing there.

At the time the Belfast was due to return to the UK, I had become friendly with a Japanese family with an open invitation to their home; so when a marine on board HMS Jamaica wanted to return to the UK for compassionate reasons, I swapped places with him and remained in the Far East for a further 10 months. Ω

Continued from p5

peace-keeping duties in the Far East. Following her first peacetime refit, HMS *Belfast* returned to the Far East in December 1948 as flagship of the Fifth Cruiser Squadron.

Korea

HMS *Belfast* was amongst the very first British ships to go into action off Korea, bombarding in support of retreating South Korean and American troops only eleven days after the North Korean invasion. Her service in the Korean War, during which she spent no less than 404 days on active patrol, was as long and arduous as that with the Home Fleet during the Second World War.



HMS Belfast firing a salvo at shore targets off Korea in 1951. She subsequently fired so many salvos that she wore out her 6-inch guns.

On 27 September 1952, she sailed for home, having fired her guns in anger for the last time. Ω

The information and pictures are reproduced from the Imperial War Museum website <http://www.iwm.org.uk/>

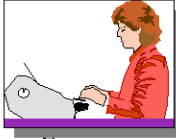
H M S Belfast

The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 hastened the surrender of Imperial Japan before HMS *Belfast's* arrival in the Far East, she was still able to perform much useful work in helping to evacuate the emaciated survivors of Japanese prisoner of war and civilian internment camps from China, and until the autumn of 1947 she was fully occupied with



HMS Belfast near Tower Bridge before being moved to her present home at Greenwich.

Continued at top of page 7



The Branch

WING is reprinted from the Isle of Wight and is a timely reminder to all of us of what membership of the RBL should be all about. We can all give it some thought.

When you join an association or guild,
Just pause for a while as your form's being filled
And think what becoming a member entails--
Don't turn out to be a member who fails.

It's not just the cost of your annual fee,
But attending the branch instead of TV,
Of actively helping to arrange the club's "do's"
And not opting out whenever you choose.

Don't say all decisions are made by a few,
Get on the committee and state your own view.
Don't slate club officials from behind their backs,
Be honest and face them when "grinding your axe".

Drum up fellow members when interest lags;
Don't say "Not tonight, it's too much of a drag",
Or "There's gardening and painting and lots more to do"
A branch is made up of such members as you.

Remember that comradeship when found on board?
With that--and hard work--the future's assured.
So please do your bit, be it large, be it small,
Without you, my friend, there'd be no branch at all.

Filler sophy
[we are put on earth to help others,
What on earth are the others put here
or?
Hard work never killed anyone,
although
it scares some people to death.



Diary

Reminders for April
with some other dates
to keep free.

10 Apr Branch Lunch—12.30 Coach & Horses
Kibworth—Booking not necessary

11 Apr Branch meeting—see below

25 Apr Branch Committee Meeting

.....
9 Jun Coffee Morning

12 Jun Branch Lunch— details next month

18 Jun Duxford —If sufficient support

7 Jul RBL 80th Anniversary Open-air Con
cert—Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse

4 Aug Poppy Race Day—Newmarket

12 Oct Branch Annual Dinner—MH Golf Club

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 11th
April. Following the
business session there will
be a social event.

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

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March 2001

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

Branch Website - www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net