

For Your Diary

- 9th Jun Branch Meeting. See p17
- 12th Jun* Market Harborough Carnival. Help and contributions needed.
- 26th Jun* Poppy Race Day at Newmarket - Coach leaves Conservative Club Car Park at 8am. Still a few seats available.
- 30th Jun Branch Committee Meeting
- 6th Jul* Branch Lunch - venue to be announced.
- 14th Jul Branch Meeting + "Characters & Coincidences" - a chance to swap stories of interesting people and happenings.
- 24th Jul* Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre
- 31st Jul Royal Tournament - Seats may be available on County Standard Bearers' outing. If interested, ring Bob Hendry on 0116 260 9296
- 4th Aug* Grass Rink Bowls & afternoon tea. A chance for novices to "have a go" & the experienced to enjoy a game.
- 11th Aug Branch Meeting + Games
- 14th Aug* Coach Trip to Shrewsbury (on day of Flower Show) - Early booking advised.
- 7th Sep Branch Lunch
- 17th Sep* Long Alley Skittles evening
- 15th Oct* Annual Dinner at MH Golf Club

* For more information please contact Bob England (MH 464288 between 4.30 pm & 8pm)

HELP!

Please spare a couple of
hours on 12th June

on our

CARNIVAL

Stall

Offers please to

Tom Ashmore MH 433108 by 10th June

Tombola Items also required.

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.

At the next meeting, on 9th June, there will be a talk on Medals and Decorations and an exhibition from the presenter's collection. A finger buffet will follow. RNA & RAFA have been invited to join us.



Reg. Charity No. 219279

The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



In Touch

Issue 19

May, 1999.

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Branch Internet Web site at
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Editorial

The puzzle insert accompanying the March Issue was an overwhelming success. One member, Bob Bond, rang with the correct answer within 3 hours of delivery. One other member rang with the wrong answer a week later. Otherwise response, to put it mildly, was muted. Anyway, well done Bob, and hope you enjoyed the wine. And thanks to those who found Adolf but did not tell me and to those who tried but for whom the paper refused to fold the right way.

As mentioned in *In Touch, Too*, Tony Johnson has had to give up the organising of the canal trip and occasional lunches owing to pressure of other work. I know that Tony produces a magazine for his fellow ex- P.O.W. aircrew from Stalagluft, and a highclass job he makes of it. Thanks Tony for those "do's" you arranged for us - most enjoyable. The pattern of events which you established will continue and I hope you will be able to join some of them.

George Fleming is back as Hon. Treasurer, and thank goodness for that. Looking after money in the meticulous way required is not everyone's cup of tea and George does it with admirable efficiency.

At long last the winter is behind us, and we can look forward (and hope) to the balmy days of summer. All we need now is loyal support for the social activities organised by the hardworking committee to see us through in good spirits to the Millenium!



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Spring

The shades of winter have now fallen behind
and the cycle of life begins to unwind.
The rhythm of the seasons must endure
for a man to enjoy the fruits of nature.
In Bluebell Wood there is a carpet of blue
and primroses, violets and anemones make a tapestry of
varied hue.

A sea of daffodils waves gently in the breeze
nodding their heads as if to please.
Tulips embroider the gardens in a colourful blaze
against a background of lush green haize.
The wind in the willows sets the catkins a-dancing
so pretty, so enchanting.
Blossoms are flowering as they should in May
Pinks, whites and reds beautifying the country in every
way.

The cuckoo has arrived and echoes its lonely cry
calling for a mate across the open sky.
Birds are frantically finishing their nesting in hedges and
woods


creating the home in which to raise their broods.
Lambs are gambelling as they do every year
Spring could never be the same without them here.
The squirrels are bestirring themselves to take a peep
as they awaken from their winter sleep.
Suddenly, the trees are donning their mantle of green
and relieving the bareness of the winter scene.

The chattering of meows disturbs the Sunday rest
but lawns must be tended to look their best.
The swallows have returned to that nest under the eave
from which last Autumn they took their leave.
But how did they navigate that journey from Morocco?
I do not know! I do not know!

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A Cooperism
One of Tommy Cooper's famous gags.

"So I was in my car, and driving along, and my boss rang me up, and he said, 'You've been promoted.' And I swerved. And he rang up a second time and said, 'You've been promoted again.' And I swerved again. He rang up a third time and said, 'You're Managing Director.' And I went into a tree. And a policeman came up and said, 'What happened to you?' And I said, 'I careered off the road.'"

From the Chair

It was with some anxiety - and a little pride - that I took the job as Chairperson. During the first few months I have been through stormy seas, as well as calmer waters, but happily most problems seem to be resolved. The Treasurer, George has returned with full support. Bob England has undertaken to organise the social side, and Betty West has settled admirably into her role as Hon. Secretary. It seems all is now shipshape, so "Full speed ahead".

E. C. Husbell

Quorn Branch Newsletter

The Editor acknowledges with thanks the receipt of the Spring issue of "The Quorn Legionnaire", in which is mentioned an ambitious event organised by Quorn Branch, "Music for a Summer Evening with grand firework finale". This takes place in the idyllic surrounds of Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse, near Loughborough on Saturday 10th July starting at 7.45pm. Tickets at £10.50 are available at the Market Harborough Tourist Information Centre.

The concert is of a type which has become popular in recent years, where everyone brings along their own (often quite elaborate) picnic taken in the open air in the grounds of some stately home and accompanied by popular light classical music performed by a highly acclaimed orchestra. Tom Ashmore says his 75th birthday, celebrated with his family at such a concert last year, was most enjoyable.
(Social Committee please note!)

News

Coffee Morning. Branch members supported the event on 1st May very well. Thanks to all who donated items for the Raffle and for the Cakes, Tombola, Books & Cards and "For Sale" stalls, to those who added to the coffers, but especial thanks to those who gave their time before and during the morning. Your efforts and the paying public resulted in a magnificent net income of £274.

Jack Quain. After the Branch won the trophy the question was asked, "Who was Jack Quain?". County Office did not know, but one of our own members did. The first award was in 1962 and made to Evington Branch. At that time our Lt. Col. Potter was a member of Evington and remembers Jack Quain as the long serving County Secretary in the early post war years. The trophy was almost certainly donated as a memorial to him.

Hobbies Evening. It was fascinating to see the varied talents of some of our members. George Fleming won first prize with his model of the de Montfort Hall Stage. Other interests included painting, tapestry, calligraphy, soft toys, word games, cookery, welfare work, newsletter production, poetry, and the Internet.

Le Légion d'Honneur Video. At the ceremony held in the Council Chamber last December, the proceedings were recorded by members of Market Harborough Movie Makers. They have now kindly presented the Branch with very well produced video film of the event. This will be shown at a suitable branch meeting.

Reflections

by Hotspur

Last month was my 78th birthday. I was sent the following verse.

In life's forest you must be
a well preserved, established tree
and though some leaves have blown away
you still look pretty good today.
In autumn years the nights grow dark
and you've got wrinkles on your bark
but you've survived through thick and thin
and kept your roots alive with gin.
Sometimes you've soaked your trunk with beer
which can't be bad 'cos you're still here.
Yes - you've outlasted other trees
and stood up proud in wind and breeze.
The weather sometimes takes its toll
but you are such a "hearty" soul
- so turn another birthday page
and take a bough - but not to age.

Most of us are around the "80" mark by now - we are called "pensioners" or "Wrinklies" by our juniors, but if we were Americans we would be called "Veterans" Realistically of course we should be called "Survivors", because on reflection that is what we all are.

We were born towards the end or just after the 1st world war, when very few families were spared the loss of one or more of its members. Born into a country "fit for Heroes to live in" we grew up in years of mass unemployment- and a General Strike. Jobs were few and far between and to join the ranks of employment was a major achievement. Then, just as everything seemed to be improving we were at

war again, and changing into uniform. Whether one was actively engaged or not I am certain that none would forget those dark and ominous days and months that followed Dunkirk. At one stage there seemed no hope, no way forward. But in the end we saw it through. We had survived. I clearly remember Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister announcing the end of the war to a capacity House of Commons and then inviting Members to follow him to the church of St. Margaret's across the road for a Prayer of Thanksgiving, which they all did - How times have changed.

Rationing was slow to disappear - but we survived. Korea, Suez, Northern Ireland to mention a few - but we survived. Then just as we were getting "our act together" as they say today, came Redundancies! 50 and over and you were the target to be made redundant- the same group that had filled the ranks in 1939 - and still we survived. As we approached retirement they changed the rules for the Pension - tied it to "inflation" from "wage increases" - After reaching 70 years of age we had completed the allotted span and were on borrowed time - and still we survived.

Ah well! Happy birthday to you too!!

If, as you grow older, you feel you are also growing stupider, do not worry. This is normal, and usually occurs around the time when your children, now grown, are discovering the opposite --- they now see that you aren't nearly as stupid as they had believed when they were young teenagers. Take heart from that.

Margaret Laurence

From the Social Secretary

As you will be aware, a Social Committee has been set up by our branch. The main purpose is for members to get to know each other in convivial get-togethers. Fund raising by this committee is secondary and incidental (although welcome as profits will go to branch funds).

When I joined the branch, I knew only two other members and this was the case for many months when I attended the monthly branch meetings. Through attending the bi-monthly luncheon gatherings and going with other members and their wives and husbands on a 3-day trip to Edinburgh, I got to know many more.

The Social Committee can arrange coach trips to the coast or places of interest, theatre outings, or within reason any suggestions branch members may come up with - but the success of any venture rests with support and participation by sufficient members. For example: The hire of a 33-seat coach costs about £350, £11 per person if all seats were taken. If there are fewer people, there are 3 alternatives (none desirable) - (a) increase the cost per seat; (b) subsidise the cost; or (c) cancel the event and disappoint those members who wished to go.

This need for adequate support holds for all events except Coffee Mornings and others specifically for fund raising; but even these occasions rely heavily on members for their help on the day and donations of cakes, prizes, etc.

So please, support the efforts of your Social Committee and meet your fellow members socially. This kind of bonding can only strengthen the feeling of goodwill and fellowship of our branch and make it a warmer, friendlier place for all.

Bob England

War Pensions.

It has been mentioned in these pages previously that eligibility for War Pensions does not require that an injury or disability occurred in wartime or as a result of combat. It is thought that many people who have some disability arising from their service in the Armed Forces, are not receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled. If you or someone you know could be in this position and need information or advice, you should contact the Branch Welfare Officer, Ken Purdy (MH 440623) or Service Committee members, Tom Jeacock (MH 466829) or Charles Freer (MH 467167).

Stroke Club

For people who have suffered a stroke, there is a Stroke club which meets every Thursday, at the New Horizons Hall, Baptist Centre in Manor Walk. The Club is open from 10am to 2pm, and transport can be arranged. Coffee and biscuits on arrival and a light lunch snack is provided around mid-day. New members would be most welcome - as would any volunteers to give an hour or two to help. Further information from the Club Organiser, Mr. Ted Mantle, Phone No. MH 464858.

Cheap Coach Travel

Did you see (Legion Magazine Apr/May p 37) that RBL has teamed up with National Coaches to give some very attractive coach travel deals? If you have lost the Magazine, Betty West (MH 434923) has the information.

Travelling Standards. It may have come as a surprise for some members at the May meeting to hear that permission must be obtained from County to take the Branch Standard outside the county. To take a Standard outside the country there must be Legion HQ approval. These rules will apply when George Fleming takes the Standard to Newmarket next month and when John Cox goes to Belgium with the County Standard Bearers' Association.

Poppy Appeal. The Appeal's financial year ends on 31st May. Our Poppy Appeal organiser, Peter Wilson reports that the year 1998/9 total for the Market Harborough area was £10,500.

Millennium Matters. How should the Branch celebrate the Year 2000? As you will know various organisations in the Town have each undertaken to provide a series of public events for a designated week of the year. Our week is 6th to 12th November and ideas are needed for suitable activities.

In addition, there is the possibility of obtaining grants to do something of more lasting benefit to the community. Information has now been received and is being studied about the conditions under which grants of up to £5000 would be made. Again your ideas would be welcome. Please contact Secretary, Betty West on MH 434923 or any committee member.

Keith and Ann Hardy. Mark Hudson says their son "visited" the branch web site recently & asks if anyone knows of them. If you do please contact Mark on MH 469527.

Food for Thought (Part 3)

by Melvyn Mullin

In this issue we print the concluding instalment of Melvyn Mullin's paper on looking after servicemen after discharge. The three parts have been extremely interesting and thoughtful and we thank Melvyn for allowing us to use his work. Anyone wishing to discuss the articles with him can do so through the Editor.

The MOD has known about Trauma Stress reaction since the 1st World War but has done little to address it as a whole. One only has to go back in history to see that with the 300 or so 1st world war men who were executed, supposedly for desertion, when really the majority were suffering shell-shock or PTSD. This has been a subject much in the news lately and now the MOD has expressed "deep regret" over these executions. The then Armed Forces Minister, Dr John Reid, said surviving evidence did not enable a formal, legal pardon to be granted for those executed in 1914-18, who were "victims, with millions of others, of a cataclysmic and ghastly war." Accepting that some injustices may have occurred, he hoped missing names would be added to books of remembrance and memorials. Some admission!, but it's too late, - they're dead.

What about their families and the stigma attached to their executions? PTSD is a serious condition. It is only since the Falklands that it has been recognised. In Ty Gwyn, Wales, Consultant Psychiatrist, Dr Dafydd Alun Jones has 1500 ex-servicemen on his lists. These are only the ones referred to him - how many more are there out there? Dr Jones uses a combination

of drugs; a mixture of anti-depressants, mood stabilisers and sleeping pills as his treatment for PTSD. Dr Martin Deahl of Barts hospital in London estimates that between 10% and 30% of ex-combatants suffer long term trauma. Dr Deahl further estimates that a third of all casualties in a conventional war are likely to be psychiatric and that such a figure will be considerably inflated in conflicts where there is urban guerrilla warfare, such as in Northern Ireland, Aden, etc.

Graphic war films such as "Saving Private Ryan" can trigger PTSD in veterans, according to a leading clinical psychologist, Dr Chris Allen, who works at Stoke Mandeville hospital and who was prompted to write to a national newspaper to voice his concerns. "There must have been through traumatic events and presumably most of them got on with their lives and do not have delayed trauma reactions", Dr Allen has said, "but there are a proportion who are having reactions a long time after the events and these people I have been seeing lately. What surprises me is how many people never talk about their experiences to their partners or even at reunions, etc. I wonder if those who have not coped so well are the same people who never discussed it. It may have been helpful earlier in their life to have talked about it and got some support. It may have been that they were not encouraged to talk about their traumatic experiences. PTSD in the armed forces is actually increasing no matter how much counselling has been given.

Some of us owe our lives to the men and women of the Armed Forces, we owe them

whatever we can do to quieten their nightmares and subdue their rage."

A potential recruit thinks he knows what is expected of him; that he will take an oath and sign a form to the effect that he will serve (and in the final analysis, die) for Queen and Country - as did those in Northern Ireland, the Falklands, the Gulf and Bosnia. In return the army will feed and shelter him and generally see to his welfare. He will also expect the army to give him its full support if he ever finds himself in politically tricky civil war areas such as Ulster, assuming he has acted as he believes his superiors would have wished.

Owing to the increasing number of complaints and claims, it appears that the MOD has finally launched an information Hotline for ex-servicemen and women. It is called the Veterans Advice Unit. (*See In Touch, Jan. 1999, p10*). The Armed Forces Minister, Doug Henderson, proudly stated "Britain's Armed Forces take a justifiable pride on being the individual serviceman's or woman's second family - in times of need, the service is there to provide guidance and support".

Speaking for myself, I can say that I enjoyed the time spent in the armed forces of this country, but I do believe that much more could be done for our ex-servicemen, especially since I found myself incarcerated in Her Majesty's Prison and seen for myself the number of ex-servicemen in here.

Melvyn Mullin's paper was written well before the article on PTSD appeared in the April/May issue of Legion magazine. Editor