

## For Your Diary

- 28th Jul Branch Committee Meeting
- 31st Jul Royal Tournament - Seats may be available on County Standard Bearers' outing. If interested, ring Bob Hendry on 0116 260 9296
- 5th Aug\* Grass Rink Bowls and Afternoon Tea. Meet at Welland Park Bowling Green at 2pm. A chance for novices to "have a go", the experienced to enjoy a game and spectators to see how it's done?
- Note new Date!!
- 11th Aug Branch Meeting + Games (See p17)
- 14th Aug Coach Trip to Shrewsbury (on day of Flower Show). Insufficient demand for a group booking but if you wish to go, contact LOROS charity shop in Coventry Road, or Lutterworth Coaches (Tel: 01455 553353)
- 25th Aug Branch Committee meeting
- 7th Sep Branch Lunch - venue to be announced
- 8th Sep Branch Meeting
- 17th Sep\* Long Alley Skittles evening - at the Railway Inn, Kibworth. £3.75 including buffet

1st Oct Subscriptions due for 1999/2000

15th Oct\* Annual Dinner at MH Golf Club

\* For more information please contact Bob England (MH 464288 between 4.30 pm & 8pm) or John Cox (MH 434983)

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### 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.

Following the business part of the next meeting, on 11th August, there will be a social session of light-hearted games (eg. cards, dominoes, bar skittles, or anything you wish to bring along).



Reg. Charity No. 219279

**The Royal British Legion  
Market Harborough  
Branch  
Founded in 1923**



# In Touch

Issue 20

July, 1999.

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Branch Internet Web site at  
<http://members.xoom.com/MktHarbroRBL>

## Editorial

On Thursday, 17th June, 1999 in the High court, the soldiers involved in the "Bloody Sunday" affair on Sunday, 30th January, 1972, won their case to remain anonymous before a special tribunal set up to investigate the shootings. All servicemen, past and present, will greet this decision with satisfaction.

As those involved go from one deadline to another, it would be quite wrong to pass any comment which might not help in finding a solution. We can only hope that common sense and respect for one's fellow human beings, of whatever race, creed or colour, will finally prevail.

A wonderful day out was had at the Poppy Race day at Newmarket, and one or two even managed to find a winner - congratulations! The Entertainments Committee under Bob England moves from strength to strength, and this augers well for the future. Well done Bob.

The Editor has received a most interesting letter from one of our members, Tony Mullin, who contributed the article "Food for Thought" which covered three issues of *In Touch*, writes to tell me that the Prison Reform Trust printed an edited version in their magazine, "Prison Report". Also he has been visited by the Head of RBL Benevolent Department and his article has been forwarded to General Sir David Ramsbottom, Chief Inspector of Prisons. Tony is surprised at the interest shown in his article and has promised to keep me posted of further developments. At *In Touch* we have received many interesting comments on his thoughtful article.



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## Champers

*With acknowledgements to "The Wine Society News, June 1999" for the following story by Col. P M Castle-Smith, which was spotted by Tom Jeacock.*

On 3rd September, 1945, the Guards Armoured Division entered Brussels, followed closely in support by 231 (Malta) Brigade. A signal received that day said "Collect Champagne from ..... a map reference" (in appropriate code). My unit, 295 Field Company Royal Engineers, looked through all the codes to see what "Champagne" was the code for, expecting engineer stores such as explosives or bridging, and finding nothing, sent two three-tonners. The two vehicles returned full of Moët & Chandon, the labels of which were surcharged, "Für Wehrmacht".

The first three ton load was distributed to all ranks.... but as the company was in a caserne in Brussels for the night, no harm befell us. .... My memories of a tumbler of Champagne drunk before stand-to, which was always an hour before dawn, will always remain.

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## Puzzle Corner

### WHICH WAY?

You find yourself in the strange country of Everywhere and have lost your way. You could be in the town of Here or of There. All the inhabitants of Here speak the truth, but the inhabitants of There always tell lies. As you walk down the street you see a man approaching and you know that he is either from Here or There. What one question would you ask him to find out where you are?

The name of the first person to ring the Editor (on MH 465314) with the correct answer will be published (with the solution) in the next Issue. There might even be a prize!!

### Food for Thought

Death is no big deal.  
The least of us can accomplish that.  
Living is the trick.

*Red Smith,  
late Sports Columnist of The New York Times.*

**Mr B**

The Barber

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## News

Newmarket - This was no ordinary race meeting, but a the Authority's Charity Day, which this year was for RBL, hence the "Poppy Race Day". HQ had done a great job in publicising the Legion and in supporting the many members who attended. Pre-race attractions culminated in a parade down the course of 163 Standards led by the RBL Band. We were proud that the Market Harborough standard was one of these and carried our so smartly by George Fleming, but disappointed that none of the other 66 Leicestershire & Rutland Branches appeared to be present. One member in the parade received a special mention from the commentator - he was 80 years old and had been his Branch Standard Bearer for 40 years!!

July Branch Lunch - Continuing the idea of trying different venues, the Social Committee arranged this event at the Old Red Lion, at Welham. Those who attended enjoyed the meal but some would have preferred the single long table layout. Nevertheless, much convivial chat was in evidence so, overall another successful social event.

Visit by the CFO. Peter Locket had been invited to meet members of the Branch Committee at their meeting on 30th June. He outlined his role as County Field Officer for Northants, Leicestershire & Rutland and in answering questions on Welfare and Fund-raising, allayed a number of concerns expressed by members. It was gratifying to hear his praise for some aspects of the Branch's activities, especially welfare case paperwork and the production of *In Touch*.

## *News (continued)*

July Branch Meeting. Thanks to the the CFO's intervention, HQ had responded to an outstanding query from the Treasurer about the payment of interest from the main Branch Trust Account. A letter of thanks had been received from the Secretary of the Stroke Club for the loan of the Wheelchair. The Chairman had also received a letter from Mrs Cramp thanking the Branch for its support before and after the death of her husband..

At the end of the social part of the evening, there was a showing of the Video film made by Harborough Movie Makers of the Civic Reception and Presentation Ceremony for Robert Cramp's Légion d'Honneur. The video is available for loan to members on application to the Chairman (Tel: MH464314).

Prior to the showing there was an interesting and often very amusing session of anecdotes by several members concerning "Characters" they had known and "Coincidences" in which they had been involved.

Dunkirk Veterans. Jock Stuart survived the evacuation, but are there any other members who did? If so, a Mr R. M. Beattie, a teacher who will be doing some work on the event next term, would like to hear from you. His address is 77 Toton Lane, Stapleford, Nottingham, NG9 7HB.

Charlie James. The death has been announced of Market Harborough's other recipient of the Légion d'Honneur at the great age of nearly 102. We salute his memory.

I had been towed by A-V, Pilot F/Lt Johnson, and we were airborne at 0725.15).

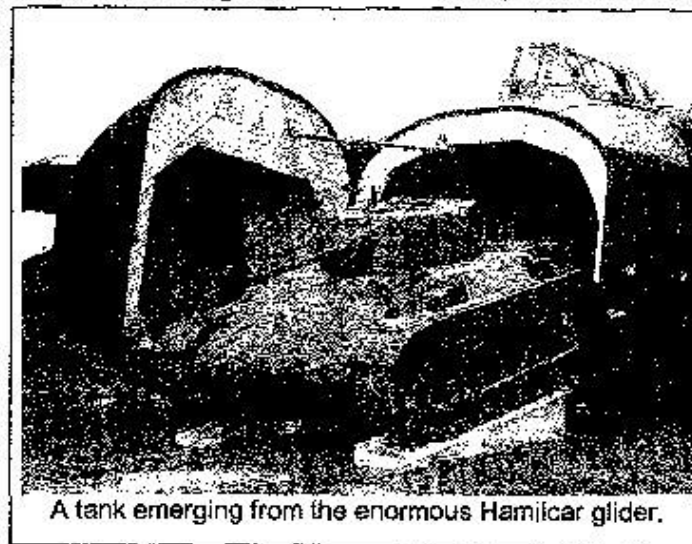
As I read through this scrap of paper I was taken back the full 54 years to relive, once again, the excitement, and the tension, and the fear.

NA. 337 went missing returning from a successful dropping mission, code name Crop 17, on the mountain near Groe, 80 miles NE of Oslo. NA337 was hit by flak at the head of Lake Mjosa around 0130 hrs on Tuesday, 24th April, 1945. Only the Rear Gunner, F/Sgt Tom Weightman survived. The Pilot was F/Lt Alexander Turnbull, D.F.C. The crew lie buried in the War Cemetery at Lillehammer.

## *Operation Varsity*

In the early morning of March 24th 1945 a force of 440 gliders of the Glider Pilot Regiment towed by 440 tug aircraft of the RAF, took off from airfields in southern England.

Their contribution towards the invasion of Germany was to capture and hold the town of Hamminkeln along with three vital bridges over the River Issel. Their loads included 3380 troops of the 6th Air Landing Brigade, 271 Jeeps, 8 Locust Tanks, 2 Bulldozers, and more than 50 Anti-tank guns with ammunition.



A tank emerging from the enormous Hamilcar glider.

offensive, six miles away, many of the gliders failed to reach their allocated landing zones. Of the 402 gliders which reached the battle zone, 37 were destroyed by fire and only 88

remained undamaged. 102 glider pilots were killed (42 GPR and 60 RAF) and 102 wounded, most of these casualties occurring within the first 55 minutes of the battle. Many of the tug aircraft of 38 and 46 Group RAF were also shot down or damaged with the loss of 43 aircrew killed and 153 wounded.

Due to concentrated anti-aircraft defences and the drift of the smoke screen covering the land

Varsity was the largest airborne operation in history and has been described as the most successful.

*The above is reproduced from the Order of Service for The Glider Pilot Regiment Operation Varsity Service of Remembrance on 24th March, 1999. This annual event is held at The Marks Hall Obelisk Memorial, Coggeshall, Essex.*

## ***A Scrap of Paper***

By Bernard Haisall

Some 12 years ago I was able to visit the RAF Museum at Hendon, and a worthwhile visit it was. On leaving. The commissioner asked me if I had enjoyed the visit, and I told him that I had, although the aircraft I most wished to see was not there. Without prompting he said, "You mean the Halifax?". "Not one remained that could be repaired", he said, "although I believe they have found one in a fjord in Norway. But it will be difficult to salvage." I heard nothing more of the Halifax and presumed it had not been recovered.

Then, three months ago, I received a letter that got me involved again personally with a Handley Page Halifax Bomber. The letter reported that the Halifax had been salvaged successfully - what remained of it after over 50 years at the bottom of the lake - and had been transferred at great expense to Trenton, Ontario. This task was undertaken by the Halifax Aircraft Association (H.A.A.) in Canada, which then set about reconstructing the plane. Scarce parts have been sought, manufactured or bought from many sources, but mainly from UK. The project is due to be completed in 2001, and is to become a memorial to the 10,000 Canadians who lost their lives whilst flying a Halifax with Bomber Command.

The letter went on to say this particular aircraft was numbered NA 337 and had been delivered in March, 1945 to RAF 644 Squadron at Tarrant Rushton. Furthermore they had found that it had been used to pull a Hamilcar Glider on the Rhine Crossing (Operation Varsity - see p 11)

for its first operational flight. And the letter went on to say that the glider was one of twenty, each carrying a 17pdr A/T Gun, its lorry and crew. These twenty carried Chalk Nos. from 239 to 258. The Canadians were keen to find out the name of the Glider Pilot who was pulled by NA337. I looked up my old log book - my Chalk No. had been 248 - but there was no record of the name of the Tug Pilot.

I still have one or two contacts, and I put out appeals without much hope - it is all so long ago. Last week I received a sheaf of Photostats, none of which gave me the answer. But amongst them was one foolscap sheet, all hand written, obviously as events occurred, from the Control Tower, and headed "Special Mission - 24.3.45". It listed the Aircraft Flight Number, the Pilot's name, take-off time (to the nearest second), ETA to target, Release time and return time to base.

There had been 38 Halifax and 36 Gliders lined up for take-off - 2 Halifax were "spare". Each glider weighed just over 21 tons. Take-off was fixed for 0730 hrs. All tug engines would be fired by 0710 hrs - all 152 of them! - and the first "train" is recorded on the sheet as "Take-off 0719 hrs. By 0725 hrs, 05 seconds 16 trains were airborne, and the lift off was completed by 0739 hrs 50 seconds.

The Control Tower record sheet also included such entries as "Tug returned to base 0745/45 starboard outer U/S", "Returned early with rope - no glider", "Burst tyre on landing" and three "Did not Return". From all these entries I found P-X 337 was flown by F/O Turnbull, who pulled Chalk No. 253 - but no entry of any Glider Pilots' names. (Incidentally, I found that

## ***Balls***

By Hotspur

Now here's a good question - who invented the ball? Most of us are familiar with more notable inventors - wireless, telephone, electric light and various others spring to mind more or less immediately, but who invented the ball. No doubt it was an American, but whoever it was he has a lot to answer for!

From cannon ball to eyeball, from meat ball to fire ball the list is almost endless. And undoubtedly the greatest influence the ball has had is in the sporting world. Soccer, rugby, cricket, hockey, handball, netball, rounders, golf, tennis and croquet are but a few of the many sports involving balls.

And where is all this leading you may well ask. It is to draw your attention of those who may not be familiar with the sport of the greatest game of all. You can start playing from about 8 years old. These days the champions are usually under thirty but only a decade or so ago the world champion was around 50 years of age and people are playing in Market Harborough who are well into their 80's. The game, of course, is Bowls. The balls are called "woods" and have a bias, making the whole thing appear easy, but in fact is extremely difficult. Ladies play on a level pitch with men, and the whole game is played, generally, in a friendly and dignified manner.

The Leisure Centre has a super indoor rink. Why not try your hand at it?

Also note in the Diary column on page 16, the Bowls & Afternoon Tea Event on 5th August.

## ***A Vote of Thanks to the 8th Hussars.***

By David Grove, MBE

The year 2000 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. I was there in 1951-52. Age 23 years. 14474163 Sgt. D. G. Grove, 1 platoon, "A" company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Leicestershire Regiment. The British Korean Veterans Association will remember those they left behind and celebrate with those who, happily, have survived. The coming anniversary causes me to recall incidents, from those furious battles which could not, all, be recorded in The Regimental History.

At first light on the morning of the 5th November The Kings Own Scottish Borderers had been forced back under pressure from the ridge line PT 317. The 1st Battalion The Royal Leicestershire Regiment was ordered to retake the hill feature. The Battalion went into attack at 1400 hours and immediately came under heavy artillery and mortar fire. It was a Guy Fawkes Day to forget! "A" company closed the objective and became engaged in close quarter battle with a zealous enemy, well prepared and in superior numbers. Despite the odds the attack pressed forward and the objective, a hill feature known as "United" on point 317 was reached. "A" company sustained heavy casualties and it became obvious that it would be unable to hold its objective that day. At last light the order was given to withdraw.

My platoon commander had been wounded earlier and I received the order to take the wounded off the hill. As darkness fell we searched and cleared the ground of wounded survivors. Still under fire as we did so, more

casualties occurred. It was a difficult withdrawal

It seemed, almost, to be a miracle when, at the base of the spur, we met two Centurion tanks of the 8th Hussars, withdrawing from their support positions. The tank commanders were pressed to wait and take our severely wounded on board. The tanks now came under fire and received hits, some of the injured took secondary wounds and as he helped us to load up, one of the tank commanders was wounded! We pulled slowly back to, what had been, that mornings "Start line" and the wounded were transferred to the Regimental Aid Post.

On the morning, 6th November, I called the full platoon roll, 37 names. 17 men stood to answer! We re-grouped and went back into the line.

I never saw the tank commanders again, or knew their names, or thanked them for their gallant help to my platoon. If any former 8th Hussars Tank crew should read this today and if he is one of those who, at last light on the 5th November 1951, was in a pretty nasty situation in the vicinity of the hill feature Kojankari Saemel, and delayed his withdrawal to help "some chaps from The Leicesters", I thank you now.

*David Grove, a friend of Tom Ashmore, was relating one of his experiences of active service in the Korean War and how he was anxious to get news of two gallant tank crews of the 8th Hussars. Tom suggested that he wrote his story as an article for **In Touch** and offered to circulate it on the Legion Electronic Mailing List to see if anyone had knowledge of the action he described or could suggest how he might find out what became of those who*

*risks their lives to save his wounded comrades.*

*Within a few days Tom received the following e-mail:-*

*"Dear Tom,  
Hope this helps -*

*In 1958 the 8th Hussars were amalgamated with the 4th to become the Queens Royal Irish Hussars and our Regimental Association including all who served in the 8th and 4th is thriving.*

*I have faxed a copy of your email to our Regt Secretary for info - suggesting he put it in the next Newsletter. I am hopeful the Regt History will shed more light and/or some people may recollect the event.*

*Should Mr Grove wish to ring the Regt Association they can be contacted on 0171-387-3471 asking for Major Timmy Timmons. Timmy has access to all the Regimental Histories so would be a good starting point. He is a great chap.*

*Regards  
Guy Voice  
ex-QRIH 1981-1986"*

*David Grove, now a member of Tenerife Branch of the RBL will shortly be transferring to Market Harborough Branch. He will let us know the outcome of contact with the QRIH Regimental Association.*

### **Footnote**

The Korean War broke out on 25th June, 1950, and technically has not yet ended although an armistice was signed on 27th July, 1953. Britain was involved as part of a United Nations Force which included units from fifteen countries. 600 British Service personnel lost their lives.