

### Contacts

Matters Concerning	Contact	Phone
Welfare, War Pensions, War Graves & other	Peter Wilson (President)	464585
Service Committee Matters	Connie Halsall Ken Purdy	465314 469034
General Branch affairs, & RBL	Tom Ashmore (Chairman)	433108
General Branch & RBL matters	Tom Jeacock (Vice-Chairman)	466829
Information from HQ & Region, Meetings.	Dick Fulford (Secretary)	431515
Membership, Subscriptions, etc.	George Fleming (Membership Sec.)	462711
Branch Finance.	George Fleming (Treasurer)	462711
Public Relations, the Media, etc	John Sutton (Public Relations Officer)	464532
The Newsletter	Dick Fulford (Editor) Bernard Halsall (Asst. Editor)	431515 465314
Poppy Appeal	Peter Wilson Dick Fulford Renie Fulford	464585 431515 431515
Standard Bearers & Ceremonial	George Fleming (Standard Bearer) John Cox	462711 434983

Other duties and responsibilities will be published from time to time.

### URGENT REMINDER

to those who have not yet paid their subscriptions

Subscriptions (£6.00) must be paid on or before the next meeting on 13th February.

The Membership Secretary, George Fleming, has to return to Headquarters before 1st March, any new Membership Cards which have not been issued and paid for. After that membership has lapsed.

If you would have any difficulty in paying by the due date please contact George urgently on M H 462711

### Meetings

Regular meetings are held on the **Second Thursday** of each month at 8 pm in the downstairs Function Room in the Conservative Club Building, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The next meeting will be on **13th February**. We hope that you will be able to attend and stay for Part 2 to hear the result today of four unrelated events over 40 years ago.



## In Touch

The Newsletter  
for  
Members  
of  
**Market Harborough Branch  
The Royal British Legion**

Issue No.5

January, 1997

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Market Harborough, LE16 9ED.  
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## Editorial

Our AGM held at the end of 1996 produced some new names elected as officers and committee members. Since then various tasks concerned with the smooth running of the Branch have been defined and the names of those who have accepted these responsibilities are listed on page 16.

Some members of the new Committee, attempting to find their way into their new jobs uncovered one notable complication. Our branch was not formed in March 1922 as previously thought, but in 1923, so our 75th Anniversary celebrations have been held over to March 1998. The search for our roots promises to be a fascinating exercise. We devote the two main articles in this issue to what has been discovered so far.

Our new Chairman "sticks his neck out" in the next two pages where he is bold (or foolish?) enough to state the objectives he has set himself for his term of office.

We are delighted to have received two "Letters to the Editor" and also two short, light-hearted pieces based on recollections of Service days. Between us, there must be hundreds of such tales, so please jot down anything which we could use in future issues.

As usual, we keep you In Touch with items of news from meetings you may have missed, or from elsewhere.

Finally, may we, Dick Fulford and Bernard Halsall, wish you a happy and peaceful New Year.

## News from Meetings you may have missed

The magnificent results of the Poppy Appeal in our area were mentioned in the last issue and £8862.03 has now been sent to H Q. There is still a good chance that over £9000 will have been raised by the end of the accounting year.

Remembrance Sunday at Hallaton was marked by our oldest member, 97 years young Mr Robert Cramp reciting the Act of Homage and laying a wreath on their memorial. Concern has been expressed at the very short time before the wreaths were removed from the Market Harborough memorial and the Secretary has been asked to write to the District Council before next Remembrance Day to ensure this does not happen again.

To help those who find it difficult climbing stairs, we have been able to arrange this year's general monthly meetings in the Function Room which is on the ground floor of the Conservative Club building. This will cost the Branch £10 a meeting, but we have been offered the upstairs lounge for committee meetings or other functions free of charge.

The meeting on 9th January repeated the format tried on two occasions last year with the evening divided into two parts. The first part was the normal business meeting and Part 2 was an unstructured, unminuted session. Those who wished to stay heard about and discussed the mystery of our history (referred to in the two papers on pages 5 to 9) and saw some of the few archives which still exist. Future meeting will adopt the same idea and suggestions for topics for "Part 2" are welcome.

The December meeting was also in two parts, in this case the second half was a Buffet. It is hoped the change of format and of venue will help to make the sessions more interesting and useful and that we will see more of you at our meetings.

As required by Legion Rules, at the first Committee meeting after the AGM, a "Service Committee" was elected. Its three members are listed in "Branch Contacts" on page 16.

Although the 75th Anniversary will not be celebrated until 1998, our new Standard is to be dedicated this year. The ceremony has been arranged for 8th June and details will be given in our next issue.

We are entering a float in the Harborough Carnival next June to help publicise the Branch. Our Treasurer is organising our entry and we thank him and look forward to giving him and his float the deserved admiration.

## Other News

The Royal Naval Association is arranging a Bric & Brac Sale on the Charity Stall in the Market on March 22nd. The Senior Service looks forward to having your support!



When in town on the morning of a 4th Saturday of a month, please remember to drop in for coffee at the Harborough Theatre where the Royal Air Forces Association will be pleased to welcome you.

## Lively Letters

Bill Cotton has written to us following our articles on First World War casualties:

My Uncle C.S.M. W.(Bill) Gore was killed at Lens in 1917.

A few days after the capture of "Vimy Ridge" by the Canadians the 5th Leicesters made an advance on Lens.

B & C Companies came up between 5 & 6pm, they were seen from the top of "Hill 65". As B Company passed south of Ri-aumont Hill the Germans opened a heavy fire on the trench - and dropped a shell on Company Headquarters. Capt. Wynne was untouched but C.S.M. Gore and Pte Ghent, the runner, were killed. Capt. Wynne worn out with fever and hardly able to stand, still stuck to his company, but was killed the following day.

Bill Gore was a well known Harborough Water Polo player; he won more than nine medals playing Polo.

He follows with another interesting letter about his mother's wartime contribution in 1916 & it certainly seems that she could have been one of the original WAAFs.

In 1916 my mother - Maud Cotton (nee Maud Gore) joined the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps. After being kitted out in the UK they were sent to France to help out the Army. In the Spring of 1917 she transferred to the R.F.C. to train for maintenance of aircraft. The training took place at Rouen. After training she

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was stationed at an airfield near the Somme. It was not far from the front as they could hear the gunfire. In late 1917 the R.F.C. became the R.A.F. so I suppose they were the first WAAFs!

On arriving home in 1919 she found her father had moved to Leicester with no forwarding address so she stayed in Harborough and later married.

*Thank you Bill for sharing these items of great interest with us.*

*Other letters are always welcome.*

*Editor*

### Obituaries

We much regret to announce the death of two of our members

Mr Sandy Vials  
Mr Eric Parkin

Sandy was a Paratrooper who survived the Arnhem action. His father before him was an Old Contemptible and, as an active Chairman of this famous Organisation, left their Chairman's Gavel (with Block) to Sandy who generously gave it to John Sutton who makes it available for our meetings. It is an honour that now it should be used by our Chairman.

Eric was an Associate Member who although not in the Armed Forces, served in the Fire Service.

We will remember them.

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## A Message from your Chairman



In each of the first four issues of In Touch, I wrote to you as Editor. This time I do so wearing a different hat! As you know, I believe strongly that it is most important that all mem-

bers should feel that they belong and owe allegiance to, the branch even if they are unable to attend meetings.



In Touch was intended to help this sense of belonging. From the many comments received, I think it has begun to do just that.

Your new Editor, Dick Fulford and Assistant Editor, Bernard Halsall are fully committed to building on the success the Newsletter has had so far. I am confident that with your support they will see that it lives up to its name and will develop it still further. I wish them well in their endeavours.

At the first Committee meeting after the AGM, I pledged to carry out to the best of my ability, the duties of a Branch Chairman of the Royal British Legion, and to accept the responsibilities as required by the Legion's Royal Charter and Rules.



I "stuck my neck out" still further by stating the specific objectives I had set myself to be achieved during my term of office.

Page 2



My aims are,

- To encourage a greater sense of comradeship amongst all members.
- To encourage more members to participate in Branch activities.
- To ensure the Branch fully carries out its local Welfare responsibilities.
- To help to increase still further, the Branch's contribution to Legion funds
- To help to improve the prospect of the Branch's long term survival

To achieve these objectives, I need your help and cooperation. I welcome your suggestions and your (constructive) criticisms. If you are concerned about some way in which the Branch is being run, write or phone me.

Tom Ashmore,

9 The Pastures, Market Harborough  
LE16 9EA. Tel: M H 433108

## The Brotherhood of Man

by A Former Naval Person

Funny stories of incidents in the Services abound. The long suffering Sergeant Major is often the Army's subject (see page 4). In the Navy the character is Stripey, the 3 badge A.B.; too wise to seek promotion after 15 years or more service; always prosperous and always able to act dumb, thus avoiding detection of any wrong doing, and very popular with his Shipmates.

Stripey, with his brush, knew that he was safe if he kept moving: he was the duty Parade Ground Sweeper.

The Commander of the Barracks, noted as a most unpleasant 3 Ringer of doubtful parentage, challenged Stripey one day with that well used Naval question - "What are you?"

Stripey had been to Church Parade the morn-



emphasising the brotherhood of man and assuring all, including 3 badge A.Bs that in the sight of God all men are equal. ing before and heard the Sin Bosun (Chaplain)

These good words appealed to Stripey, so he found it a simple matter to answer the Commander's question - "What are you?" "I'm your brother Sir"!

## BRITISH LEGION

A Meeting of ex-Service Men will be held in the Small Assembly Room Market Harborough on Tuesday, March 20th, 1923 when an address will be given by Mr Councilor S A Barber (of Mansfield), Vice Chairman of the East Midlands Area Council and Member of the National Executive Council of the British Legion.

Chair will be taken at 8pm by the Rev H J Eacott, Hon. Chaplain to H M Forces.

The object of the meeting is to form a Branch of the Legion in Market Harborough.

## BRITISH LEGION

### Branch formed at Market Harborough

On Tuesday evening a meeting was held in the Assembly Rooms at Market Harborough for the purpose of endeavouring to form a branch of the British Legion.

The Rev. H J T Eascott presided. He said he had been looking through some of the pamphlets issued by Legion and the facts therein simply left one aghast.....

Councilor Barber of Mansfield said the Legion had been formed by the amalgamation of four chief organizations - the Officers Association, the Comrades of the Great War, the National Federation and the National Association. The Legion was democratic, non-party

politically and non-sectarian. It was intended to look after ex-service men in every place. ....They were, said the speaker, far from satisfied with the administration of war pensions in this country today, but nothing could ever be done unless they made themselves into a powerful body. That was one reason why Market Harborough and other bodies outside should join up. The administration expenses of the Legion were very low. In conclusion, the speaker said they found amongst members of the Legion that spirit of comradeship amongst officers and men that existed in the war.

Many things could be done for ex-service men by a powerful organization which they could never hope to achieve as individuals.

Captain Clark .....proposed that they formally establish a branch of the Legion for Market Harborough. Ex- Sergeant Major Pierce seconded and the resolution was carried unanimously.

The first officers of the Branch were elected as follows:-

Chairman, the Rev H J T Eascott, C.F., Secretary, Mr Wright, Treasurer, Mr J Goldsbrough; Committee, Major R Tombson, Captain Knighton, Captain Steadman, Messrs. Edgehill, G Freeman, Warner and Heggs.

Mr Barber said the minimum subscription to the Legion was 2s.6d; eighteen pence of this was remitted to Headquarters and of that eighteen pence, sixpence was remitted back to regional headquarters.

The meeting ended with votes of thanks to the speakers and the chairman.

## Memories by Hotspur

By any standard the parade ground at Gujarat Barracks, Colchester, was impressive. To an 18 year old Officer Cadet, seeing it for the first time it was awesome. Tucked away in a corner of this vast arena stood the squad of about twenty Officer Cadets under the command of Company Sergeant Major Walldock, expert without equal in all forms of Army drill. His imposing presence was matched only by his stentorian voice. Some said his words of command could be heard as far away as Ipswich.

He had called the squad to attention about four times before he was satisfied. Then came his next command, "SQUAD - NUMBER!". Anyone familiar with this particular operation will know that it never goes right the first time. "AS YOU WERE!" echoed round the barracks and the surrounding countryside. Coldly and cynically, the C.S.M. repeated his command, "SQUAD - NUMBER!". Again it went wrong.

I suppose the Sergeant Major understood or appeared to do so. He was dealing with idiots, imbeciles masquerading as potential Officers. He would have to explain to them in detail what they were being ordered to do.

"Stand Easy, and pay careful attention to me. Numbering in the Army, Officer Cadets - ALL you has to bloody do is add one to the number what the man on your right has shouted out, then shout that number out if you can".

"SQUAD NUMBER!"

## History's Mysteries

It has been common knowledge for years, that the Branch began in 1922. Imagine our surprise when we found in an old file a report of the formation of the Market Harborough Branch of the British Legion at a meeting held on 20th March, 1923.

The report was in the "Midland Mail", a forerunner of the "Harborough Mail", on 23rd March, 1923 and the document in the file was a print from a microfilm. With the aid of a magnifying glass, the report was read and transcribed.

Copies of old local newspapers are held in the Market Harborough Library on microfilm so presumably that is where the print was made, but unfortunately there is no indication of when or by whom.

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Can anyone throw any light on this mystery? Was the person methodically searching for a reference to our origin, having begun from the supposed formation year, 1922? Did someone already know that 1923 was the correct year but wanted to check on the exact date? If it was a Branch member doing the research, why did s/he not do the obvious thing of asking Headquarters to consult their records?

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Another possible explanation is that someone possibly not connected with the Legion at all, came across this report (it is in a prominent position on page 2) whilst searching for something else, and went to the trouble of having the print made and presented it to a Branch member. I am inclined to support this theory.

The Library also has microfilm copies of the other local paper at that time, the "Harborough Advertiser". It carried exactly the same report. In the "Midland Mail" the previous week there was in the Public Announcements column, a notice of a meeting of ex-Service men to be held on 20th March, 1923 "...to form a Branch of the British Legion in Market Harborough." There is no doubt that it was at this meeting that our Branch was born.

### A Quick Start

What was presumably, the first meeting of the newly formed branch was held on Monday, 23rd April. The "Midland Mail" on Friday of that week reported, ".....The branch already has several cases in hand in which it is endeavouring to extend help in various ways to local ex-Service men." They hadn't lost any time in getting to work!

### The succeeding years

Apart from the need to establish the date of the formation of the branch, it would be interesting to record for our anniversary year, what has happened in the Branch during its 75-year history. Sadly, apart from a very few isolated documents, Branch records prior to 1977 have disappeared.

### Luck

We have had one real bit of luck. Dick Fulford, browsing through papers of the Market Harborough Historical Society, found an article written in 1988 entitled "THE MARKET HARBOROUGH BRITISH LEGION CLUB" by Paul Robinson. It is based on information from Minute Books from 1931 to 1959. Dick has made contact with the author but he has no more information than appears in his article.

It is interesting that the author states that the Branch was formed in 1922 so if he obtained that information from the minute books, the misapprehension about the date has existed for over 38 years.

### Help!!

We may have to read through many years of local papers to see if they continued to report on the branch's activities.

I would be most grateful to have volunteers for this task. It involves sitting in the Library at one of the microfilm readers. The screen displays one frame of the film at a time and each frame is a page of the newspaper. You "turn the page" by moving the film forward (or backward). It is very simple and I would be happy to get you started.

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On the following two pages are extracts from the "Midland Mail" for 16th and 23rd March, 1923.

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