



The Royal British Legion



Market Harborough Branch

Reg Charity 219279

In Touch

Issue 138

March 2010

The monthly newsletter (founded 1996) of the Market Harborough Branch of the Royal British Legion.

Remembering

Vida Edwards

**15 February
2010**

**Next
Monthly Branch
Meeting
Wednesday
April 14th**

Function Room,
Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd,
Market Harborough
7-30pm



Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of *In Touch* under my new editorship. I would like to pay tribute to George Seward for the sterling work he has done over the last 7 years as editor and the invaluable help he has given me in taking over.

I am pleased that George will still be involved on the distribution side.

I would also like to say thank you to Tom Ashmore who has also helped me in setting up the new format.

I feel a bit like Chris Evans must have felt taking over from Terry Wogan.

George, a seasoned and well loved veteran with a loyal following his own unique style and sense of humour that cannot be matched. Hopefully I will not be seen as 'loud' as Chris Evans who has been accused of upsetting the TOGS, and demands for his sacking grow louder each week.

You will see there is a new style to the newsletter. I know the original style set up by Tom Ashmore was well loved and I didn't take the decision to change lightly. The reasons are mainly practical in that the new format saves much work in printing and stapling.

I strongly believe that this is your newsletter and it is an integral part of branch communications.

If you have any suggestions for improving *In Touch* then drop me a line. Contact details are on the back cover.

I hope you grow to like the new look and that the magazine will be seen as a worthy successor to those produced under the expertise of the previous editors.

Editor

Help - I need Somebody

So went the famous Beatles tune, and like them I too need somebody. All editors depend on reporters to find stories and articles, for *In Touch* you, the members, are my 'reporters'. They say everyone has a book they want to write but in this case just a few lines will do, I will expand it to the 'story' if you wish. It doesn't have to relate to the services or the British Legion, I am sure if you find something interesting then so will others. You don't have a story? - so what about practical topics eg how the branch be improved, visits or social events you would like to happen, household and gardening tips, sales and wants, stories and jokes—the list goes on. Too shy - Just enclose your name and I will respect requests for anonymity or the use of nom-de-plumes.

I am offering affiliated youth groups a regular section, perhaps on a three month rolling programme so they can let the branch know what is happening. Likewise if the RNA and RAFA wish to let us know what they are up to then I will find space for them. So over to you.

Editor

Welfare

If you are aware of any one who qualifies for, and who may benefit from, the Royal British Legion welfare services please contact

Betty Ramsey
01858 434923

Branch Directory

Members may recall that in the past the Branch has produced a directory of members giving names, addresses and telephone numbers..

The last directory was issued in 2008 and the Committee are considering issuing another one as it proved useful to many members.

Entry in the Directory is optional and if any member does not wish to be included will they please let the Editor know before 1 May.

It has been suggested that in this electronic age those members who have e-mail addresses may like to have them included in the directory. As they are not held on file if you would like your e-mail address included in the Branch Directory please send it the editor before 1 May.

It must be emphasised that the directory is produced for branch purposes only and information therein must not be disclosed to anyone outside the branch.

E-mail addresses will be included on the strict condition that they are not used for mass circularisation of funny stories or similar 'spam' mail..

WW2 - Youngest To Die

Reggie Earnshaw has been confirmed as the youngest casualty of World War 2. Reggie was so desperate to

join his friends in the Navy they went in that he about



to war in 1941 when he lied about his age

in order to sign up as a cabin boy on the SS North Devon. Reggie was

tragically killed months later when the ship came under attack off the Norfolk coast as it made its way to Tyneside. He was buried in an unmarked grave, and until the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) recent discovery, was recorded as a 'boy aged about 15'

If it wasn't for Alf Tubb, a machine-gunner who served alongside Reggie, his identity might never have been known.

Alf, aged 86, set about finding out where Reggie was buried. He eventually tracked him down in Edinburgh, and launched a nationwide appeal for information. Reggie's sister came forward, and she and her great niece marked Reggie's birthday with the laying of flowers in Comely Bank cemetery. The CWGC have placed a headstone at the grave and Reggie is recognised as the youngest WW2 casualty aged 14 years and 152 days

The youngest soldier to die in World War 1 is officially recognised as John Condon who was 13 years 11 months when he was killed at Shell Trap Farm, (later known as Mouse Trap Farm) near Ypres on 24 May 1915.

In recent years much controversy has arisen after a group disclosed their research which strongly suggested that not only was John Condon aged 19 but he is not the soldier currently lying in the grave at Poelcappelle Cemetery. They claim the soldier buried under the headstone of John Condon is Rifleman Patrick Fitzsimmons. He was killed in action on 16 June 1915.

The oldest casualty in WW1 was Lt Henry Webber who died on 21 July 1916 aged 68. He is buried at Dartmoor Cemetery, Becodel-Becourt.

One Man's Story

by John Standish

This is the story of one man's war. Lance Sgt William Laurie Paton was a soldier in the Great War serving in B Company, 1/6 Kings Liverpool Rifles. My interest in L Sgt Paton started a few years ago when my step father passed onto me his family medals including those his uncle L Sgt Paton. There were also some letters and my step father told me he was christened Laurie after him.

Willie, as he was known to his family, was born in Seaforth, Liverpool on 13 December 1893. He served as a Territorial before the war and on 1 Sep 1914 found himself leaving Liverpool Lime St Station for an unknown destination.



This turned out to be Redhill from whence the battalion was despatched to guard the London & South Coast Railway. Not the sinecure it seems, they patrolled the lines in pitch darkness, eight soldiers were killed in the seven weeks they undertook this work.

On 29 October the battalion moved to Canterbury and started training. Pte Norman Ellison, who served alongside Willie in B Coy wryly comments that they removed the sacking from a dead horse to try to keep warm

in the freezing conditions. The next day Battalion Orders recorded the death of the horse followed by a statement that the next day a ration of sausages would be issued to all troops.

Training continued until February 1915 and on the 24th February at 1700 they boarded the SS City of Edinburgh for France docking at 1700. On the 26th they were transported in cattle trucks (with the infamous 40 men or 8 horses written on the side) to Baillieu arriving 21 hours later. On the 4th March Willie marched up to Ypres. The town was practically in ruins with the Cloth Hall and Cathedral mere shells of buildings and the habitants living in cellars. Rumours of spies were numerous and any suspicious nuns were ordered to be rounded up as it was believed that Germans were dressing up in nun's clothes.

On the 8th March B Coy recorded its first casualties. A group of soldiers were frying bacon on a brazier when a shell from a Belgium battery fell short and landed nearby killing two of them.

Willie spent time around the infamous Hill 60 where bitter fighting took place during late April to early May. On 17 April he witnessed the explosion of several mines and on the 5th May he had his first experience of chlorine gas. Later that day he was involved in an attack on Hill 60 which cost the lives of 2 officers and 20 ORs (other ranks) with 2 officers and 68 ORs wounded.

Life became a succession of serving in the front line trenches with spells in support. Each night in support they carried ammunition and mining supplies to the front line at Hill 60. Over

burdened with coils of wire, sleepers or baulks of timber, stumbling in pitch darkness over sleepers and shell holes, the soldiers at the front of the line barely moving while those at the rear ran to keep up. Shells landed regularly at danger spots and the swish of machine gun bullets overhead were a constant threat.

On 19th July the Battalion was moved to a Rest Camp near Renninghelst and soon after left the Ypres Salient arriving at Morlancourt. (France) on 3 August 1915.

The Battalion war diary records B Coy providing working parties for the Royal Engineers.

A seemingly innocuous but in reality a most unpleasant task. Crawling on hands and knees along narrow tunnels twenty feet underground, choking with dust, blinded with sweat, dragging sandbags filled with spoil to the surface. The air became rank and candles would go out, the ground trembled with the explosion of shells above them. There was the constant knowledge that the enemy was counter mining and listening posts were manned to try to detect what was happening. Tunnels were occasionally breached and vicious underground hand to hand fighting took place. It was a matter of luck which side 'blew' the other's gallery first.

On 2nd Sept the Battalion took over the line near Vaux.

Here the River Somme meandered and enclosed an area of marshland, and channels with occasional 'islands'. A few narrow footpaths crossed the marsh but a frontal attack was impossible and normal trenches could not be used.

On the 5th September Willie was promoted to Corporal.



Whilst this was a relatively quiet sector patrols were frequently sent into the marshes and on 25 Sep a patrol was fired on by the enemy. Lt Blackledge

rushed up to provide support and found the patrol officer Lt Greenhalgh dying and the bodies of the Sgt and one private. A L/Cpl could not be found and was presumed prisoner. In mid November the majority of the Battalion was withdrawn to Bertrancourt where they remained in reserve until 25 January 1916 providing daily working parties to the front line. Several moves were made until they arrived on Ficheux on the 15th Feb 1916.

The weather was bitterly cold. Here they alternated spells in the front line with the 5th Liverpool Battalion until 5 April.

Time in these trenches is recorded as relatively quiet but casualties were still being inflicted by the ongoing shell fire.

On 8 May the war diary records 'one OR accidently wounded'.

This wounded soldier was Willie, a flare gun had fired and caused a severe wound to his left hand.

Such was the fear of trench warfare by some soldiers it was not unknown for men to inflict gunshot wounds to their hands or feet. Some even held their hands above the trenches hoping the enemy would shoot them.

Wounds to the hands and feet were invariably investigated hence the annotation of 'accident' in the diary. On 9 May Willie was admitted to 1/3rd West Lancs Field Ambulance and then via 37 Casualty Clearing Station, (Avesnes) to No 10 General Hospital, (Rouen). He was repatriated on 20

May on HMS Aberdonian and moved to No 4 Scottish General Hospital, Stobhill, Glasgow arriving on 22 May. The picture shows Willie with his left arm in a sling, 7th from the right and standing between two soldiers in uniform, his war over—for now.
To be continued



For the Silver Brigade

A little boy was helping his daddy weed the garden when he noticed for the first time that daddy had a few grey hairs round the temple. Being inquisitive, he asked "why are some of your hairs white daddy?" Daddy smiled and in the expectation that his son would say in future he would behave replied "Every time you do something naughty or make me unhappy, one of my hairs turns white" Daddy was taken aback when his son responded after a moment "So is that why all granddads hairs are white?"

Puzzle Corner

a bit of brain training for you

Which number is two numbers to the left of the number which is two numbers to the right of the number which is three numbers to the right of the number which is two to the left of the number immediately to the right of the number 4?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

(answer on back page)

Vida Edwards

It is said that women show men a thing or two when it comes to multi-tasking. But for Vida who has died aged 74, being an exceptionally able exponent of this skill was not nearly enough; she was also multi-talented. Vida was born in 1935 in North Shields and lived on Tyneside until she joined the Women's Royal Army Corps when she was nineteen. On her first posting to Gibraltar she met her first husband, Dick Roullier, a Corporal in the REME. Vida left the Army when they married in 1957, and a year later twins Carole and Martin were born. The young family was completed in 1960 by the arrival of Sharon.

After her first marriage was dissolved, Vida married another squaddie, Goff Edwards in 1977. When he left the Army, Goff became a game keeper, forming with Vida a successful husband and wife team. Promotion brought them to the Deene Estate near Corby. Unfortunately, in 1993, a stroke left Goff severely paralysed and Vida nursed him through a difficult three years until he died in 1996. Vida then built a new life becoming involved in her local community in Kibworth Beauchamp. She didn't confine herself to service on committees but showed her versatility by volunteer driving, organising whist drives and bingo calling.

Always cheerful and fondly regarded by Branch Members, Vida earned the gratitude of all for the help she unstintingly gave as a knowledgeable and understanding Welfare Case Worker. She enjoyed and gain fulfilment from this, as well as her many other roles. Her passing will be sadly felt by all.



Tuesday April 6

Contact

Glenys Hocking-Davies

01858 467835

before 30 March

to reserve your place

Menu

Baked Supreme of Chicken
with Bacon Roll, Sage and Onion
Stuffing, Vegetables and Gravy

Baked White Fish sat on Crushed
New Potatoes with a Dill and Prawn
Sauce and Vegetables

Pork and Leak Sausages sat on
Mash With Onion Gravy and Marrow-
fat Peas

Bread and Butter Pudding Served
with Custard

Crème Brulee Cheesecake and Clot-
ted Cream Ice Cream

Fresh Fruit Salad served with Ice
Cream

coffee & mints

Meet in the bar at noon

Only £7

What's Going On?

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 6 Apr | Lunch at The Angel |
| 10 Apr | RNA Coffee Morning.
Theatre 9am to noon |
| 14 Apr | Branch Meeting –
George Seward 'Shop
keeping in the 50s' |
| 17 Apr | Armed Services Cttee
Coffee Morning 9 to
noon. Conservative
Club. |
| 24 Apr | Guards Museum trip |
| 12 May | Branch meeting
Clive Langley—'Long
Term Care' |
| 12 Jun | Harborough Carnival.
Helpers needed,
Names to Betty or
Mark |
| 19 Jun | RNA Cheese & Wine
7 to 9-30pm 36 Luben
ham Hill, £5 includes
two glasses of wine |
| 4 Jul | Armed Services Day.
Welland Park. 10 to 4.
Helpers needed.
Names to Betty or
Mark |

Puzzle Corner—Answer

6

Clue—work from the end back to the

Branch Contacts

Secretary
Betty Ramsay
01858 434923

Treasurer & Membership

Secretary
Myra Grewcock
01858

Poppy Appeal
Dave Prior
01858 545612

Wreaths
John Liddell
01858 465003

Standard Bearer
George Fleming
01858 462711

Social & Fund Raising
Glenys Hocking-Davies
01858 467825

Editor - *In Touch*

John Standish
5 Manor Rd
Fleckney
LE8 8TN
Tel - 0116 2404170
in-toucheditor@hotmail.co.uk
Next Committee Meeting 8 April

And Finally

Romans signalled the death of a gladiator by putting the thumbs up (as in a drawn sword). If life was to be spared the thumb was tucked into the closed fist. In the Middle East and elsewhere 'thumbs up' is equivalent to our V sign.

*The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the Market Harborough Branch.
The editor reserves the right to decide what is to be published and to edit material and no part of In Touch may be reproduced without his prior permission.
An online version of the newsletter edited by Tom Ashmore is at www.in-touch.ukvet.net*