

THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity No. 219279

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106

Founded in 1923



# Annual Report

for the year

1st October 2009 to 30th September 2010



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

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### Introduction

It is a pleasure to again introduce an Annual Report of the branch's activities. All show that the Branch continues to thrive, but here I draw attention to just some of them.

As members of the multi-organisation Armed Forces Day Committee, Branch representatives played a very active role in arranging and presenting a successful Armed Forces Day event in July. Members also took part in the Flag-raising Ceremony a week previously.

For the tenth successive year, the Garden of Remembrance was again created thanks to the efforts of willing members, but it is now time to consider how the event can be continued in the longer term.

The Cadets have continued their involvement with the Branch and the Poppy Appeal in which they again contributed to a successful Launch..

In contrast to the progressive decline in membership numbers in the Legion as whole. This branch continues to attract new members, ten of whom joined during the year.

As mentioned on page 12, several individual members enjoyed personal success during the year and can take pride in their achievements. I congratulate them. On a personal level I have been honoured to be invited to a Royal Garden Party, was privileged to lay a wreath at the Menin Gate at the First Ieper Tattoo and to have been elected President of the Kettering Sea Scouts.

But it is with sadness that I recall my six member colleagues who have died this year. We miss and will remember them.

Mark R Hudson, Chairman

November 2010

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## Highlights of the Year



**New Branch web-site launched**



**Sainsbury choose the Poppy Appeal as their Charity**



**Armed Forces Day event stands - RNA, Police, RAFA, St John, Branch**



**Christopher, Branch mascot, was in the party visiting the Guards Museum.**



**Sunset Ceremony cornet players Jack and Ellie**



**George's last In Touch after seven years as Editor**



**Kay Callaghan, Head of RBL Internal Communication, presented George Seward with the Director of Communication's Certificate**



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### About the Branch

- Formed on 20th March, 1923 at a meeting of ex-servicemen called by a war-time Army Chaplain.
- Centred on the South Leicestershire market town of Market Harborough, it serves some 20 villages in a rural area of about 45 square miles, west and north of the Northamptonshire border. The 2001 Census quotes the population of the town at 25,826 and of the villages, 5699.
- The nearest RBL Branches are in Northamptonshire.
- There are local branches of Royal Naval Association and Royal Air Force Association with which we maintain close and collaborative contact. Some of our Members belong to them.
- All three local Cadet units, Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps and St John Ambulance, are affiliated to the Branch.
- The Branch does not have a Club and General and Committee meetings are held monthly in a hired room at the Market Harborough Conservative Club.
- New members continue to join the Branch and resignations are few. Despite losses through death, membership numbers have increased by a third in the last ten years to 169, of whom 58 were women. Many had not served in the Forces. We are still a fairly small Legion branch.
- The Branch is strongly represented at County events and has three members on its Executive Committee. An elected delegate usually attends the Royal British Legion Annual Conference but did not do so this year..
- The Branch produces a monthly newsletter, *In Touch*, - appreciated particularly by those members who are unable to attend meetings. A Large Print version is also produced.
- The Branch has two web-sites:  
[www.in-touch.ukvet.net](http://www.in-touch.ukvet.net) is an archive of the first 14 years of the on-line version of *In Touch*.  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough) provides information about all branch activities, and includes all post-archive issues of the newsletter. It was launched in June.
- The Branch produces an Annual Report of its activities. Copies are held at RBL County Office, Market Harborough Library and Leicestershire Records Office and on the Branch main web-site.
- The Branch has an enviable reputation both within the RBL, having received awards at county and national levels, and in the local community.



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## Branch General Objectives and Philosophy

**General Objectives**, based on those set in January 1997, are to,

1. Foster a sense of comradeship amongst all members by encouraging members to participate in Branch activities.
2. Carry out fully Local Welfare responsibilities by developing further the work of the Welfare Team.
4. Increase still further the Branch's contribution to the Poppy Appeal.
5. Work to ensure the Branch's long term survival e.g. through greater involvement with youth and the community, increased effort to improve public awareness of Branch and Legion

**Specific Objectives** based on the current Branch Plan include

1. Strengthen the Branch Committee to ensure strong leadership to members.
2. Strengthen our links with RAFA, RNA and the Cadets.
3. Improve the way new members are introduced to the Branch and Legion.
4. Improve the publicity given to Branch and Legion activities.

### **Our Philosophy**

We believe that success with the first General Objective leads to success with the others, but that this in turn reinforces the sense of comradeship, interest and members' pride in their Branch. The more we do with and for our members, the more they benefit from their membership and the more the Branch and Legion prospers.

We consider that a branch of the Royal British Legion should be,

Active, Caring, Friendly, Innovative, Outward Looking

These are the criteria which have continued to guide the direction of Market Harborough Branch and we believe lead to a high standard of service to our members, the Legion and the community for which the Legion exists.



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## Legion in the Community

### Doing what is expected of us.

It is now taken for granted that the Branch will take a prominent part in the local community calendar. The Branch organises the Remembrance Parade and Services, creates the Field of Remembrance, arranges a Remembrance Concert with the Harborough Band, has a Poppy Stall in the Market Hall and usually has a presence at the Town Carnival. Having become involved with the District Council, and other organisations in commemorating Armed Forces Day, no doubt it will be expected that the Branch will continue to have a prominent role each year.

The Branch is also regarded as the local authority on military and ex-Service matters by the Library, Museum, local Council, schools and individual members of the public who from time to time seek our opinion, advice and help.

### Armed Forces Day Event on Sunday 4 July



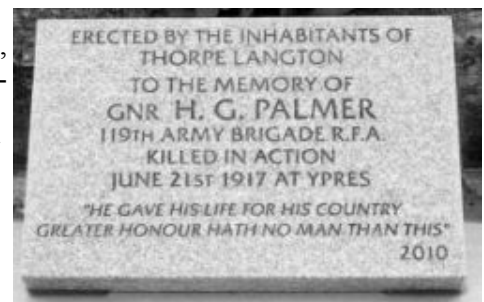
ATC 1084 Squadron Band displayed their marching skill during the event. They also led a parade including the ACF Cadets for the Sunset ceremony which formed the event's finale.



Display stands included the County Recruiting Trailer.

### Other Involvement.

The Branch is a member of Voluntary Action Leicestershire (previously known as South Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Service) of many years standing and the more recent Harborough District Compact in which Voluntary and Community agencies work together. From time to time, the Branch is represented on other bodies or is involved in events such as Church services, funerals and other organisations' functions. In May this year, our Standard Bearer and some other members assisted in a village ceremony to dedicate this Memorial Plaque at Thorpe Langton Church.





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## Poppy Appeal

This is the first time in which the Appeal Year is the same as the Legion Year, 1 October to 30 September. The last accounting period covered 16 months, from 1 June 2008 to 30 September 2009. This at least partly explains why the **£22,214.51 raised this year** was rather less than the last total. On the basis of the 2001 census, the total equates to a nominal 70p per head of the population of our collecting area. This compares with 84p per head in the 12 months June 2006 to May 2007.

Factors which will have affected this decline obviously include the prevailing economic climate, but there was **difficulty in recruiting volunteers** especially for street collections. This is very disappointing, especially in view of the increase in branch membership of 23% in the last four years.

Efforts to **increase public awareness** of the Appeal have continued. There was another eye (and ear) catching launch when again members of the Northampton Pipe Band played on The Square accompanied by standards from RAFA, RNA, the Cadets and the Branch. Then, as in this 2008 photo, Cadet “Barrow Boys” and “Trolley Dollies” then set off to deliver poppies to shops and other static points in the town centre. A “mini forum” at the Angel Hotel in July to recruit new collectors also gave publicity to the Appeal.



**Fund raising activities** like the Coffee Morning at the Harborough Theatre and the Annual Remembrance Concert again publicised the Appeal as well as contributing useful funds. The same is true of the **stall in the Market Hall** which acts as a “sales” and information point and as a “control centre” for the Street Collectors on the four days the hall is open. Already providing support for next year’s appeal, was the announcement in June that **Sainsburys** have adopted the Poppy Appeal as their nominated Charity in Leicestershire.



**Wreaths** are dealt as a designated activity in which a branch member has clear responsibility. He has been successful in increasing the number of organisations and individuals requesting wreaths and obtaining profitable donations from them.



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## Communication

### Branch Newsletter - *In Touch*



After seven years as Editor, George Seward retired from the post in February. His professionalism and artistic flair was formally recognised when he received the RBL Director of Corporate Communication's Award. Kay Callaghan, Head of Internal Communication came to the February Branch general meeting to present the framed certificate personally. This was, she said, only the second time the award had been made, and showed the high regard for *In Touch*, "a shining example" of good communication in the Legion and a credit to the Branch. Well done George!!

The new occupant of the Editor's chair is John Standish. To simplify production, the more usual A5 booklet format was introduced, but it is still recognisably *In Touch* and John's appeals for copy are also an echo of the past.

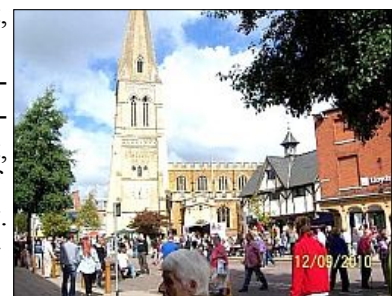
Another change in the role of the editor is segregating the editorial function from that of distribution, which is now the responsibility of the leader of a team of volunteers who deliver by hand to all but the more distant branch members. They can be the personal contact for those who do not attend meetings and they can alert the Welfare Team of problems.



### New Branch Web-site

After several years without a dedicated place on the Internet, a new branch web-site was launched in June as [www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough). It uses the RBL corporate style and has been continuously developed to promote the branch and to describe fully its past, present and known future activities. It makes generous use of photographs to convey its message in a visually attractive way. It also provides access to the new format *In Touch* for those who wish to read it on screen.

The previous *In Touch* web-site is still available at [www.in-touch.ukvet.net](http://www.in-touch.ukvet.net) but now acts as an archive of all the first 14 years issues.



This on the home page illustrates the site name

### Branch Archives.

Archives can be regarded as a form of communication - with the future. The loss of virtually all records of the first 50 years of the branch has emphasised the need to preserve current and surviving past information. Paper documents can now be kept securely in the Branch storage Cabin and are being organised by a nominated Archivist, Bob England. Much data in electronic form is already held on the two Branch web-sites and more is being added. How to preserve that on the Branch or members' computers has yet to be decided.





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## Social, Fundraising and Other Events

Many social activities have become established in the Branch calendar but there are others in which members participate. In May, one of our more recent members, John Morley, organised an interesting and enjoyable trip to London visiting the **Guards Museum and St Clements Danes, the RAF Church**. Our RNA friends again invited our members to join their **cheese and wine evening** held in the garden of one of their members in June. Later that month, a village pub, the Red Lion at Welham, generously invited members of RAFA, RNA and RBL to a free **lunch to celebrate Veterans Day**. The pub and staff had created a wartime atmosphere. Fortunately, there was no evidence of rationing!! A very different occasion was the **County Veterans Day Service** in Leicester Cathedral which a few members including our standard Bearer attended.



Regular **monthly luncheons** have continued at The Angel Hotel. There has been a welcome increase in numbers attending particularly of newer members. The informality attracts some who may not regularly come to Branch meetings. It is hoped it may encourage more to become involved in other branch activities. The January event was again shared with our RAFA and RNA friends and celebrated as a belated **Christmas Luncheon** with all the trimmings.

The **Autumn Dinner** was again an informal occasion held at the Market Harborough Golf Club for members and their guests. In March a somewhat more formal **Anniversary Dinner** celebrated the 87th year of the formation of the Branch. It was a welcome return to our calendar after being omitted last year, although it lacked official guests and music for dancing. At both events raffles added to the fun of the evening and useful pounds to the Social Fund.

After Meeting events include **Buffets** which are much appreciated by members but increased cost has meant having only three instead of four during the year. Putting up the so called "mess fee" had been rejected. On other occasions there are **Talks by outside speakers**, but members also enjoy just the chance of a drink and chat.



Two **Coffee Mornings** are held each year; that in October is in aid of the Poppy Appeal and in February funds raised allow small Christmas gifts to be made to widows and widowers in recognition of their spouses' service to the Branch, whilst On each occasion ACF and ATC Cadets provide valuable assistance on stalls and in the kitchen.

Organising the annual **Remembrance Concert** was again the responsibility of the Social Team. An excellent programme of popular music, performed by the Harborough Band, provided an enjoyable evening and a useful contribution to the Poppy Appeal. A group of members attended Festival of Remembrance at de Montfort Hall arranged and taken by a social team member. Thank you, Les!,



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## Remembrance

**Remembrance Sunday** took the same form as in previous years but starting earlier with a parade to the Parish Church where the Service, conducted by the Branch Chaplain, was attended by a very large congregation including Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Mr Richard Everard, and Edward Garnier, QC, MP. They took the salute when the parade returned to The Square for the wreath-laying ceremony and brief service held before the many members of the public gathered there. The changed timing was in response to requests to allow the Two Minutes Silence to occur at 11 o'clock



The ATC Band, having led our parade so capably, was then whisked away to Oakham to perform the same duty for an afternoon Remembrance occasion there. Our Standard Bearer, George Fleming was also in great demand and attended village services at Lubenham and at Foxton.

**Armistice Day** observances followed the now established routine of wreath-laying at the small memorial in Welland Park (seen on right), followed by that at the gates to the Memorial Gardens. The two minutes silence, signalled by firing maroons, was reverently observed there by a large gathering of ex-service people and members of the general public. Similar respect for, and understanding of, the Silence was shown in shops and other places.



**The Remembrance Concert** was held again at the Baptist Church with the Harborough Band performing an enjoyable programme of popular music. Two cornet players and the Standard Bearers positioned high above the pulpit, created a fitting setting for the Last Post and Reveille.

**Garden of Remembrance .** For the tenth successive year, members again created this tribute to the 326 local men and woman who lost their lives in the two world wars and whose names appear on the nearby war memorials. Again, it was much appreciated by members of the public, many of whom placed a remembrance cross near the large cross bearing a family name.



The Garden formed a fitting setting for the daily Sunset Ceremony involving the parade of the Branch Standard, preceded on the last day, by a lone piper, lowering the Union Flag, sounding the Last Post and Reveille, reciting the Exhortation and Kohima verse and two minutes silence.



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### Welfare

The Branch has a Welfare Team of three Caseworkers: John Liddell, Rt Revd John Morley and Betty Ramsay who is designated Welfare Officer, having taken on the role following the death of Vida Edwards whose quiet but effective work is remembered with gratitude. The team have all attended relevant National Caseworker Courses; been checked by Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and have been issued with Identity Cards – prerequisites of working as a Royal British Legion Caseworker or Hospital/Home Visitor. Generally cases will come from the County Office in Leicester for the local volunteers to contact the applicant and arrange a visit. Final decisions and any awards are made in Leicester. From time to time the Branch will be asked to contribute financially to a local case from its Welfare Fund. Last year we did this on one occasion.



Alderson House Dining Room

During the past year, the Team has dealt with some 6 applications for holidays at a Legion Poppy Break Centre – Alderson House, Bridlington in the case of successful applicants from this area. This can provide a break for serving and ex-Service people, their partners, dependants and carers. It is means-tested but consideration is always given to a social as well as financial need.

We have also dealt with 6 applications for assistance which have required the completion of a Form A. Where an applicant is not in receipt of a means-tested benefit, this form will enable County Office to decide that there is a financial need.

In 2009 in the County, some £254,000 was outlaid with £98,000 being recouped from other sources and therefore income to the Poppy Appeal (almonisation). This represented some 265 ex-Service and dependants being helped.

In addition, numerous visits are made to the housebound, those in hospital or simply just keeping in touch. Speaking of which – the distribution of our monthly newsletter *In Touch*, is an important part of 'Welfare' and the Welfare Team is grateful for feedback received from the 'paper boys'.

Another form of welfare is the Poppy Calls service which helps those in need with small household maintenance jobs. The fitter for this area is a Branch member, John Faulks, who is also the regional senior fitter.





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### Ceremonial

The Branch has two excellent standard bearers, George Fleming and a deputy, John Cox. A younger, lady member, Hilary Brazil, is undergoing training as a another reserve.

Due to family health problems, George Fleming has had to limit his activities but during the year was still able meet the demand for his service on **33** occasions. He carried the Branch Standard at the Poppy Appeal Launch, Anniversary Dinner, the Remembrance events of Parade, Services, wreath-laying, Sunset Ceremonies and Concert, and at the Armed Services Flag Day and the Armed Forces Day events also had the dual duty of Parade Marshal.

At County level George again took an active part in the Festival of Remembrance, the ANZAC Day commemoration and the Armed Forces Day Service in Leicester Cathedral. .

On several ceremonial occasions, George has been joined by Standard Bearers of other organisations, as in last year's Drum-head Service or those of other Legion branches as at ANZAC Day.



The Branch makes it known that the Standard would be carried at the funeral of any ex-service person if so requested. There were three such requests during the year and in appreciation of this



service, bereaved families made donations to Legion funds.

Each of our Cadet Affiliates now has its own standard and is showing keenness and pride in its use. The Branch is anxious to foster this and has investigated how this may be done in a way which more closely links them to the Branch and Legion.

In a very different setting, George gave a talk about the significance of the Legion standard to a Womens' Institute Meeting in Kibworth.



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### **Meetings and Membership**

During the year there were twelve meetings open to all members, one of which was the AGM and ten Branch Committee meetings. All were held in a hired room at the Market Harborough Conservative Club, the former on the second Wednesday of each month and the latter six days earlier.

All were well attended. Average attendance of the main meetings was 39 but there were 50 or more on three occasions. Even in the very bad weather in January, 19 people braved the snow to attend. Of the twelve-strong Committee, the average attendance was nine.

Looked at against the size of the Branch it appears that only a quarter of membership attend meetings but if one takes into account the apologies for absence, about one third would have attended. The absence of the remainder can be due to health or transport problems (about 20 live in other parts of the country or abroad), dates or times of meetings being unsuitable, or a dislike of meetings. It would be helpful to know if and why anyone disliked our meetings.

All, but a very few, have an interest in the Legion and the Branch and only four people did not renew their membership. The Branch has a good record of attracting new members, having won the County Edwin Powdrill Cup for increased membership, for the third successive year. This year, ten people joined, offsetting the losses and at year-end the Branch had 169 members.

### **News of Members Achievements**

Two members, Chairman, Mark Hudson and Barry Peck, had the honour of attending a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Valerie Smith received a Harborough Mail award for her dedication and outstanding service as Commander of 1084 Squadron Air Training Corps.

For the fifth time the "Ramsay Walkers" successfully completed the 10 mile London Poppy Walk. This year it was the full team of Betty Ramsay, daughters Helen West and Hilary Brazil and grandson Christopher. The Poppy Appeal greatly benefited from their exertions.

As reported on page 7, George Seward was awarded the Director of Corporate Communications Certificate for his work as Editor of In Touch.

Tony Johnson was invited to become involved in the Bomber Command Memorial Appeal and assisted at prestigious fund-raising events.

Betty Ramsay was elected to the County Executive Committee

Sadly we record the death of six members during the year; Welfare Officer, Vida Edwards, David Whitehead, Bill Tasker, John (Jack) Ballard, Stan Snow, and Bertie Thorold.



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## Involving Young People

As in previous years, cadets from our affiliated units have been involved in many Branch activities although school hours may limit their participation to weekends.



We especially appreciated the efforts of two young musicians, Ellie and Jack Hughes to be at the Garden of Remembrance by 4 o'clock to play the Last Post and Reveille in the **Sunset Ceremony** each afternoon during Remembrance Time.

Cadets turned up in force for the **Remembrance Sunday** Parade, Service and Wreath Laying. As usual, the 1084 Squadron ATC Band led the parade to and from St Dionysius Church. ACF cadets and those from the ATC not in the band, formed detachments in the parade, each of which had its respective officers and instructors. St John cadets marched with their Seniors. Each cadet unit had its own Standard Bearer.

All three Cadet units were involved in the **Armed Forces Day Event**. The ATC put on excellent displays as a Marching Band and the ACF showed off their drill and marching skills. Both units took part in the impressive Sunset Ceremony which formed the finale of the Event. The ATC and ACF units also had static displays and the St John Ambulance stand included their cadets.



The **Poppy Appeal** again involved the ACF and ATC cadets. They took part in the Appeal Launch and the delivery of poppy trays and collecting boxes to shops and businesses in the town centre. They also helped with the Street Collection.

It is at **Coffee Mornings** that the cadets come into close contact with members of the public who appreciate the courtesy and helpfulness of those from the ACF on kitchen and table duty or the ATC cadets selling tickets on the Tombola stall. These occasions are very popular and there is no shortage of volunteers.

The Branch is proud of these young people and members are always pleased to hear of their normal Cadet activities. We are fortunate in having the ACF and ATC Commanders and the ACT senior training officer as Branch members to keep us in touch and so strengthen the affiliations.