



The Editor Writes

A story about a little dog and another about trains! Is *In Touch* 'dumbing down' you may ask. The answer, of course, is no. I am sure you will find these stories to be interesting, even if they are about serious subjects.

However, in the wider world, and I admit to writing as a Grumpy Old Man, there seems to be an awful lot of so-called 'dumbing down' these days. Mind you, I'm probably out of step with viewers who enjoy interminable 'make-over' shows, programmes about looking for and moving to new homes, and buying and selling rubbish - to make a profit to pay for that 'holiday of a lifetime'. And it's not just the telly, they've got rid of Desmond Carrington on the wireless on Sunday afternoons and replaced him with a younger, better-known (female) celebrity. And, I've just learned that Jonathon Ross is standing in for Wogan - the thin edge of the?

There, I feel much better now that I've got that off my chest!

As we approach Poppy Appeal time, I hope you will support the fund-raising events that are publicised in this issue. The Gala Evening at the Harborough Theatre, with a performance of R C Sherriff's famous play, *Journey's End*, the annual Remembrance Concert by the Harborough Band and, naturally, our Coffee Morning, - they are all not-to-be-missed occasions for you and your friends. A lot of effort goes into these events and your support is the only reward sought by those doing the hard work.

As announced elsewhere, The Angel hotel has placed a restriction on the number that can be catered for in the room they have available for our lunches. Unfortunately, there is no alternative venue in the town and, for the time being anyway, we are stuck with the situation.



The Poppy Appeal 2004/05



Organiser **Bob England**
Reporting from the new Appeal H.Q.



Many thanks to those Members who have pledged their support - but, I still need more help!

So, please, don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to do your bit.

Help raise much-needed funds for a cause which, as a Member of the Legion, you know only too well.

Get your friends involved - even if it only for a couple of hours during the Appeal, because every little helps.

A particularly busy day will be
Saturday, 6th November.

Not only is this a prime time for collecting in the town centre, but it is also the occasion of the Branch Coffee Morning.

The local Cadet units normally provide willing volunteers to help, but they may not be available due to their commitments in Leicester at the Festival of Remembrance.

Dougie McMeeken, who is organising house-to-house collections, will give details next month of his plans for a rendezvous of Members not formally signed-up as Collectors on the two weekends prior to Remembrance Week.

To sum up, I am pleased to report that, overall, good progress is being made.

But so much more can - and will - be achieved with your help.

**You can contact me on
Market Harborough 464288.**



From the RBL Chairman of Fundraising. "I am sure you are aware that the Poppy Appeal has achieved a record result for 2003 of £21,697,387, a 7.4% increase over the previous year. May I take this opportunity to thank you for your help."

County League Table. The national average donation per head of the population was 39.03 pence. The county of Leicestershire's result was 35.01 pence.

Decks cleared for action. Tom Ashmore has completed the fitting of shelves, cupboards workbench, etc., in the Portakabin.

Appreciation. Special thanks to Frances and John Swannack for their hard work in the Portakabin refurbishing collecting boxes.

This takes the biscuit. They taste scrumptious and are said to be the world's best 'dunkers' - and now there is an extra reason to buy Anzac biscuits. Made in Australia, they have been on sale in the UK since June 2003. Each month the manufacturer donates 4% of sales to the British Legion and, in the run up to this year's Appeal, a special promotion will raise more money. For every Poppy cut from packs of Anzac biscuits and returned by November 15th, 5p will be donated. Look out for the blue packs at Sainsbury's branch in Market Harborough.





Annual General Meeting. The AGM will take place at the Branch meeting on 10th November.

Membership Subscriptions now due.

The Branch Treasurer, Tony Johnson, will be most grateful if Members who pay by cash do so at the next meeting or, if unable to attend, send a cheque promptly. Tony's address is 31 Rupert Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9LT.

Gala Evening at the Harborough Theatre. Tickets are now on sale and will be available from Joan McMillin at the next meeting. Proceeds from the Evening on 6 November will go to the Poppy Appeal and further details appear on page 6.

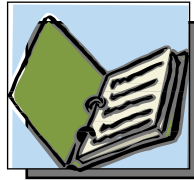
Branch Remembrance Concert. Enjoy an evening of musical entertainment at the Methodist Church on 13th November. As always at these popular events, there will be a programme of light music by the Harborough Band. Tickets cost just £4.50 and, as ever, will be available from Joan at the next meeting, or may be ordered from her by telephoning MH 462143.

It won't be the same! Members of the Conservative Club will miss the cheerful presence of **Jan Sewell**, who is taking 'early' retirement. A presentation was made to Jan in appreciation of her thirty-odd years working at the Club.

Coffee Morning - 6th November. All proceeds will go to the Poppy Appeal so shopaholics will be especially welcome. And, so that there will be plenty of stuff on offer, your donations of prizes for the raffle and tombola are required, please. Joan and Mary will gather in your offerings at the next meeting.

Dining at The Angel. The hotel will be unable to cater for more than twenty people in future and, as that number is approximately the usual attendance, regulars will be given the first opportunity, with any vacancies being offered to Members on a reserve list.

Memorial Garden. George Fleming will outline proposals for Remembrancetide arrangements in the next issue of *In Touch*.



The Diary

Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143. Joan welcomes your ideas for events, outings, etc.

SOME DATES TO KEEP FREE

- 2 Oct Branch Annual Dinner - MH Golf Club
- 6 Nov Festival of Remembrance Concert - De Montfort Hall
- 6 Nov Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre
- 8 Nov Poppy Appeal Gala Evening - Harborough Theatre
- 10 Nov Branch Annual General Meeting.
- 13 Nov MH Band Remembrance Concert - Methodist Church

The date of the next meeting is October 13th

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room, Conservative Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.30 pm in the upstairs Committee Room at the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Branch Website
www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net



In Touch

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By Royal Command...
Jerboa relates an heroic 'shaggy dog' story

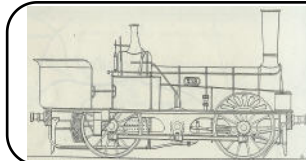
While browsing through my notes on Great-Grand-dad's military service in the Second Afghan War, I found a reference to the heroic defence by the Kandahar garrison of Maiwand, a small town some 12 miles west of Kandahar.

On the 27th July 1880 the Afghans, led by Ayub Khan, completely overwhelmed our forces, under the command of Brigadier-General Burrows. Part of Burrow's command was the 66th Foot, soon to become the 2nd Battalion, Berkshire Regiment (and latterly the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment) who were to take the small village of Khig. They suffered grievous losses and only a few made it back to the citadel in Kandahar.

Among the survivors was a Sergeant Kelly. Kelly had a pet dog by the name of Bobby, who was regarded as the Regiment Mascot, and where the Sergeant went so did Bobby. After the battle Bobby could not be found, and it was presumed he had perished. A few days later Bobby limped into Kandahar covered in blood and with a light wound. He soon recovered, from his ordeal and was able to return to England with the 66th, where he was feted and became a celebrity. News of Bobby's adventures reached the Queen and she commanded that Bobby be brought to her at Osborne House where she awarded him the Afghan War Medal and personally placed it round his neck.

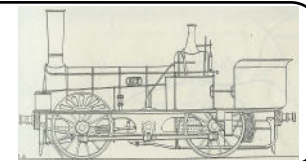
Sadly, Bobby died soon afterwards under the wheels of a hansom cab. He was stuffed and placed in the Regimental Museum. The inscription on the case reads:

Bobby owned by Sgt. Kelly. Pet of the 66th, survived the Afghan Campaign, 1879 and 1880, was wounded at Maiwand 27th July 1880. Came home with the battalion Feb. 1881 and was decorated with the Afghan Medal by Her Majesty the Queen at Osborne June 1881. Was accidentally killed at Gosport Oct. 1882.



The Unsung Heroes

Bob England



Think about the Crimean War (1853-56) and one instantly brings to mind the Battles of Balaclava and the Charge of the Light Brigade, Alma and Inkerman. But there were also some heroes who are rarely mentioned or even known of.

In 1854 as the Russian Winter set in, Lord Raglan's forces were laying siege to Sevastopol and the only road to the harbour was becoming virtually impassable and supplies were getting desperately short. Troops were getting hungry and medical supplies were low.

A member of Parliament, Martin Pelo, who was also a railway builder, and his brother-in-law, together with a Mr. Brassey, offered to build a railway to supply the troops at no profit to themselves.

They proposed a team of 250 navvies, 30 gangers and masons, 80 carpenters, 20 blacksmiths and 10 engineers. All these were to be formed into a Civil Engineer Corps.

Parliament agreed and the party left Liverpool on

December 21st. They were followed by 23 other ships carrying more men and supplies to Balaclava. They took everything they needed: cranes, piledrivers, picks, shovels, ropes, rails, wagons and engines.

The rigours of the Russian winter were nothing new to many of the navvies, who had come fresh from building railways in America and Canada. In the first ten days they had built an encampment of wooden huts and laid five miles of track.

A keen stamp collector, Bob tells us that the Crimean War is to be commemorated with a set of stamps being issued by the Royal Mail on October 12th.

Within six weeks they had laid a double track line from the harbour to the hills overlooking Sevastopol. Including branch lines to outposts, the total length of track totalled 29 miles. When completed it was handed over to the Army.

The trains, drawn by horses, steam engines and stationary engines hauling wagons by wire ropes, carried 112 tons of food a day, plus ammunition and medical supplies.

By April Lord Raglan's army was saved, and in September the Russians withdrew from Sevastopol.

THE HARBOROUGH THEATRE
presents

A Gala Evening

In aid of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal
 (Reg.Charity 219279)

7.45 pm Monday 8th November 2004

A performance of R C Sherriff's famous play

Journey's End

Followed by a complimentary buffet

Enjoy a great evening - and support a worthy cause
Tickets cost £10 each, including the buffet.

They are available now from Joan McMillin on
Market Harborough 462143

Coldstream Memorial **Bataille de Normandie**

Whilst on a visit to France, Branch Member John Walker photographed the Memorial Stone and gleaned the following background information from an Internet website.

St Martin des Besaces was one of the initial objectives during Operation Bluecoat, which was launched south of Caumont on 30th July 1944. German resistance in this area was considered weak, and three British Army Corps were allocated to attack here. VIII Corps on the right was to advance on Hill 309, just outside St Martin, XXX Corps had as its objective Mont Pincon, and XII Corps was to take Villers-Bocage.

The advance south from Caumont was led by 15th (Scottish) Division, supported by 4th Guards Tank Brigade, and elements of the 11th (Armoured) Division. Hill 309 was captured by 7pm on the 30th July by the 4th Coldstream Guards under Major Sir W. Barttelot, who was given command of the Brigade as a result of his unit's epic battle here. (He held the post for less than two weeks, until he was killed on 16th August.)

11th (Armoured) Division was then sent in to take St Martin des Besaces, which they entered on 31st July. By this stage, VIII had created a salient five miles deep into enemy held ground and, inevitably, counter-attacks followed, from 21st Panzer Division. Heavy fighting revolved around St Martin the next day, but with heavy losses to both sides the Germans withdrew, and meanwhile reconnaissance elements from 11th (Armoured) had found a bridge intact across the La Souleuvre river into Beny Bocage, and the fighting continued.

The full story of the fighting here is related in the Musée de la Percée du Bocage, in the centre of St Martin des Besaces. Elsewhere in the village is the Rue de la XIeme Division Blindée Britannique, and on the road east from the village is Hill 309.



*The Memorial Stone to commemorate
Brigadier Sir Walter Barttelot and the
capture of Hill 309 on
30th July 1944.*



Our thoughts are with **Robert Brewer**, whose wife Angela passed away earlier this month.

We send our good wishes to all members not enjoying the best of health at present. **Gary Farnsworth** is back in the Leicester Royal Infirmary for further treatment. Also in hospital is **Brian Marshall**, and **Bertie Thorold** is about to commence treatment.

John Liddell has announced that he will have to stand back from his caseworking activities, and urges Members to support Vida Edwards in her welfare work. The Branch Chairman expressed much appreciation to John for his invaluable contribution and wished him well in the future.

County Review

Items of Interest from the Leicestershire & Rutland RBL County Circular

The 60th Anniversary of VE and VJ. Next year's celebration will be marked in Leicester by a service in the Cathedral on the afternoon of Sunday, 10th July, followed by a parade to the Mayor's office led by the Quorn Pipe Band. There will be nothing organised at County level on the Saturday, which will leave the day free for local branch activities.

Mark Melaugh. On 19th August, a presentation by the Chairman was made to the former County Field Officer in recognition of his hard work and dedication to the County.

Gift Aid. Tax-paying Members are urged to make sure they have completed the Gift Aid declaration in respect of their membership subscriptions. It costs nothing and is worth £2.80 per annum to the Legion.

The Legion in the Community. Everyone is welcome to join in the fun when the Oadby Branch opens its doors for an Open Day from 10.30am until 4.30pm on Saturday, 28th September.