

# In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996



## The Royal British Legion

Registered Charity No. 219279

Shoulder to Shoulder with all who Serve

### Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



years of caring in the  
local community



### Next Monthly Branch Meeting

7.30 pm Wednesday 12 June

Committee 6 June

Function Room, Conservative Club,  
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Issue 176

May 2013

## Branch News

### Social event at Peaker Park.

We were welcomed to the Care Village by Hotel Manager, Phillip Wright to whom Branch Chairman, John Standish gave our thanks for being able to join the residents on this special Legion occasion. We then stood for The Act of Homage.

About 30 members were present to enjoy the Home's hospitality with an excellent buffet and drinks and entertainment in the attractive Beer Garden or the adjoining dining room. Kilted Piper, Graham Pryor and his drummer friend provided colour as they gave us Scottish music from their repertoire at the beginning and end of the evening. Between these sessions, Kyle, a delightful, very accomplished young lady singer got most of her audience to join in with some of

her old-time songs.

Yes, it was an excellent, relaxed alternative to the meeting it replaced!

**Carnival Float** celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Branch. We need helpers in the evenings over the next month to build it (under the guidance of Paul Whitlock), on the Friday 7 June before the carnival to assemble and on Saturday to dis-assemble it. The theme of the float is based on 1923 and 2013 and we are looking for a few volunteers dressed as people from that era eg wives, mothers, fathers, husbands and also people to walk alongside the float again dressed in 1923/2013 clothing depicting poppy appeal collectors.

Volunteers please contact John Standish (0116 240 4170) and if you need period clothes state height, chest and waist size, urgently as we are trying to source appropriate clothing.

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## Legion News

Progress on the 'Pathway for Growth' project (see March *In Touch*) includes transferring Legionline to Connect Assist call centre in Cardiff, the first specially designed Area 'Walk-in' offices about to open in Leeds, all 16 Area Teams to be functioning in July and some staff role changes having already taken place. County level plans are still evolving.

Meanwhile, nearer 'the coalface', Leics. and Rutland has spent £94,059 on Welfare so far this year, their Poppy Appeal income is down, as it is Nationally but locally remains about as last year. Volunteers are still vital.

## Cadet News

We congratulate 1084 Squadron ATC on its outstanding success in the Wing Marching Band Competition on 21st April. More details in July issue.

Cover Photo Edited version of photo on *The Full Wiki* website of the signing of the German unconditional surrender documents on 7 May 1945.

## Obituary

Our oldest branch member, Charles (Charlie) Catling, died on 12<sup>th</sup> April a month before his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. George Fleming carried the Standard at the funeral and four other of his branch colleagues attended the Service, conducted by our Chaplain, Rev. Richard Brant. In the address we heard that as a South Yorkshire lad he went down the pit at age 14 and joined the Navy before the War. Serving on Aircraft Carriers he was employed as a photographer. In 'civvy

street' he and his wife had settled in Market Harborough, where he became well known for the many weddings at which he was the photographer and as an active member of St Dionysius Church. He worked at Tungstone Batteries and was a retained Fireman. Charlie was a keen gardener and until a few years ago an active member of our branch.

We extend our condolences to all members of his family.

## HMS Ark Royal

A quite large collection of Charlie's Navy Photographs are now in the branch digital archive. Although they are not annotated several images indi-

cate his particular interest in the Ark Royal and we now know that he was a crew member in the successful operation to deliver Hurricane fighters to Malta. Returning to Gibraltar the Carrier was hit by a torpedo. Thanks



to the magnificent rescue by escort and other ships including HMS Legion, only one life was lost. Some of Charlie's pictures appear to show the last moments of the Ark Royal when she keeled over and sank at 0600 hours on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1941. Charlie had made sure his camera with him when he was transferred to one of the rescue vessels!

## VE Day 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945

The actual act of 'Unconditional Surrender' took place at General Eisenhower's Headquarters at Rheims in France, in what had been a school room. This was in the early hours of 7<sup>th</sup> May but it was not until there were simultaneous broadcasts by Churchill, Truman and Stalin announcing the surrender the following day that 8<sup>th</sup> May was officially the end of the War in Europe.

The surrender document (which can be accessed at [http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/act\\_military\\_surrender.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/act_military_surrender.htm)) had been prepared in English, German, Russian and French. It was signed by General Alfred Jodl on behalf of Admiral Doenitz,

German Fuehrer since Hitler's death, Lieutenant General Beddel Smith representing General Eisenhower for the Allied Forces, General Ivan Susloparov for Russia and General Francois Sevez for France.

After he had signed General Jodl said, 'I want to say a word. With this signature the German people and the German armed forces are for better or worse delivered into the victor's hands. In this war, which has

lasted more than five years, they both have achieved and suffered more than perhaps any other people in the world. In this hour I can only express the hope that the victor will treat them with generosity.'

The BBC's Thomas Cadett, who watched the official signing, said it was carried out "on a cold and businesslike basis." There was no saluting and the Germans left the room. Those who remained in the 'war room' celebrated with champagne drunk out of mess tins.



The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, made his broadcast to the nation from 10 Downing Street, followed by a statement in the Commons. He then led a procession of MPs to St Margaret's Church for a service of thanksgiving.

Other church services were held at St Paul's with the boys' choir, just returned from Cornwall where they had been living during the war years. The restriction on Sunday morning bus services, introduced because of the war, was temporarily lifted to allow people to get to church the following weekend.

The war in Europe was over but the war against Japan continued for another four months.



## VE Day 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Nationally, the Government said that rather than celebrating the Allied victory over the German forces, the events should be dominated by civilian celebrations. In London these included a service in St. Paul's Cathedral attended by Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor.

Here in Market Harborough, a Committee of relevant groups, lead by the RBL branch, had prepared a programme of activities for the Bank Holiday weekend of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> May. There was a VIP attended Anniversary Dinner at the Masonic Hall on the Saturday and a commemorative Service and Parade (led by the ATC Band) the following day. The Square was a hive of activity on the Monday, with stalls, entertainment and a collection of old military vehicles.

A raffle in aid of the Poppy Appeal offered generously donated 'big prizes' to the winners.

The Harborough Mail that week did report on the annoyance expressed by Branch President, Peter Wilson and Secretary, John Sutton that the public toilets in the commons car park were closed during the weekend, that The Square had not been

cleared of litter for the Monday events and the lack of Police at the time of the Parade on Sunday. Nevertheless, John Sutton's statement to the mail ended, 'It went marvelously really, considering. We are generally pleased.'

As part of the celebrations Tom Jeacock had searched for and found two VE Day Babies, born on 8<sup>th</sup> May, one in 1945 and one in 1995. Each was presented with a set of commemorative coins.



VE Day Babies - Top right and bottom left!

The Harborough Museum set up and ran during the summer, an exhibition of WW2 memorabilia, including items lent by Branch members. Those present at the opening included Branch standard bearers, other members and two Far East prisoners of war.



## Memories of a Firefighter

by John Black

In the late 60/70s the people of Birkenhead trusted their Firemen, except perhaps on Bonfire night. If you were on duty that night you could expect trouble. I was always on duty bonfire night.

This articular night we got a call to a bonfire, Dock Road, Birkenhead. We turned out, and found on a bomb site (yes they still had bomb sites) the mother of all bonfires, it was huge, made up of packing cases, wooden beams, furniture, tyres, etc, it was well alight, and all the smoke and sparks were flying over dock-land.

You might think that if we knew it was such a rough area, well we perhaps should have just checked it and gone on our way, but you see, between dock-land and the bonfire was a railway marshaling yard, and for some reason, unknown to us, in the middle of the yard was an ammunition train. So the Sub Officer in his wisdom, said put it out lads, that was when the bricks, bottles and other nasties came at us, the hoses were slashed and we were in trouble. The Police came along in a Morris Minor Panda car, that immediately got turned upside down. What happened to the Policemen I don't know, but we left as quickly as we could to lick our wounds.

That was bonfire night Birkenhead style. The next day everything was as right as rain.

## Miscellany

### Looking Back

The May 1997 issue of In Touch 'For your Diary' included

14 th June - Market Harborough Carnival. Please support the Float and stalls. (Still relevant. See p8 in this issue!

### Quizz (Answers are on page 8

What gets wetter and wetter the more it dries?

Paul's height is six feet, he's an assistant at a butcher's shop, and wears size 9 shoes. What does he weigh?



### May Headlines

1913 Suffragette bomb found in St Paul's Cathedral.

1923 International Congress of Dancing Masters condemns the Foxtrot and Tango.

1933 Traffic lights being installed in London at the rate of one set a day.

1943 The 'Wings for Victory' savings campaign starts.

1953 British POWs arrive home from Korea

## From HQ

The Spring 2013 issue of Poppy Press commemorates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dambusters Raid on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1943. Officially known as Operation Chastise, one of the most daring raids of WW II, it was carried out by 617 Squadron, RAF under the command of 24 years old Wng Cdr Guy Gibson, DFC. Only two of those who took part in the raid are still living, a New Zealand pilot, Flt Lt Les Munroe and a British bomb aimer, later, Sqd Ldr George 'Johnny' Johnson, now in his 90s. He relates, "We had six weeks low level training but didn't have the foggiest idea what it was about." It led to him bombing the Sorpe dam.

The Poppy Press article is a well illustrated account of the background to the operation with Dr Barnes Wallis's proposal to use, and the successful development of, the 'Bouncing Bomb'. The military and political success of the mission was achieved at the cost of the loss of 53 crewmen (and of very many more lives in the Ruhr Valley).

With each copy of this issue of Poppy Press was included a special message card for the recipient to return, with a donation to the Poppy Appeal, 'remembering the bravery of the 'Dambusters crews - and every man or woman who has served in our Armed Forces.' The cards will be displayed at the National Memorial Arboretum.



**MEET IN THE BAR AT NOON  
4 JUNE**

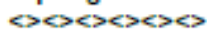
for good food and good company

### Menu

Gammon steak topped with  
pineapple with Maris piper chips and  
garden peas

Supreme of chicken on a bed of  
mashed potatoes with chunky  
tomato sauce and vegetables

Pork pie, Scotch egg and cheddar  
ploughman's



Lemon roulade with raspberries  
and mini jug of cream

Chocolate mousse with strawberries  
and shortbread biscuits

Fresh fruit Salad  
with fruity Sorbet



Coffee and mints

£8.50 Pay on the day

To book, ring Les Moore (01858  
463112) before 28 May. To cancel a  
booking you must phone The Angel  
(01858 462702) before 10 am on the  
day or you will be charged.



## What's Going On?

### Forthcoming Events

- 18/19 May National Annual Conference, Llandudno
- 19 May HMS Stevenstone Service-11am. Foxton
- 22 May RNA visit- Greyhound racing Ring 01858 465502.
- 2 Jun Standard Bears' Rededication Thurmaston. 3pm
- 8 Jun M H Carnival - Float and stall. Helpers please.
- 12 Jun Branch Meeting and a Quiz
- 22 Jun AFD Coffee morning - Harb' Theatre
- 22 Jun AFD Service and Parade Leicester Cathedral
- 30 Jun M H Armed Forces Day Event- Helpers please
- 20 Aug Visit to Poppy Factory. For a place please contact Betty Ramsay ASAP

### Welfare

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

**Betty Ramsay**  
01858 434923

### Coming Next Month

'D Day', 'Operation Overlord', a 'Weeping Cross' in S.Africa, news, etc.

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#### Branch Website

[www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough)

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