

# 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

**91**

Years of Caring



**2014: WWI  
Centenary Year**



With thanks to Prime Life Ltd, parent company of Peaker Park Care Village Market Harborough, for printing this issue.

Issue 185  
February 2014

**Next Monthly Branch Meeting**  
**7.30 pm Wednesday 12 March**  
**Committee 6 March**

Function Room, Conservative Club,  
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

## **Branch News**

### **January Branch Meeting**

It was reported that there is still no news of County or local WWI Centenary events but nationally the Legion has been urging people and authorities to plant Poppy Seeds from B & Q who are donating £1 to TRBL for every packet sold.

As part of the Legion reorganisation branches will not have a Welfare Secretary and Betty Ramsay will become a 'Welfare Volunteer'. She

will still make welfare visits but not be a Case Worker.

In a brief report of the County Conference, your delegate proudly displayed the Ron West Shield awarded to us as the County Branch 'with the best record of efficiency throughout the year'.

The 'After Meeting' social event was another of Tom Ashmore's games which members enjoyed sufficiently to ask for another at a later date.

### **Late Christmas Lunch**

The joint event was not as well attended as in previous years with the



**A general view as party hatted colleagues wait to be served.**



**Sara and Phil were not drunk, but I said I would publish the photo!**

disappointing result that the meal was not served in the Angel Hotel's attractive large dining room. The meal was of the usual high standard and the occasion was enjoyed by the RAFA, RNA and RBL members present.



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### **Cover Photo**

**A Hawker Hurricane Mk 4 (Tank Buster) of 6 Squadron being serviced at Foggia, Italy, prior to a sortie over the Adriatic 24 July 1944**

## ***Remember This?***

### **Where are they now?**

Where are the bombers, the Lancs on the runways  
Crouching, menacing, black faced and dour.  
Loaded with aircrew and window and ammo  
And 'cookies' and incendiaries to drop on the Ruhr.

Where are the pilots, the navs and air gunners,  
Wops and bomb aimers and flight engineers.  
Lads who were bank clerks and milkmen and teachers,  
Carpenters, lawyers and grocers and peers.

Geordies and cockneys and Wiltshire moonrakers,  
And little dark men from the valleys of Wales,  
Manxmen, Devonians, Midlanders and Scousers.  
Jocks from the Highlands and Tykes from the Dales.

Where are the Aussies, the sports and the cobbers  
Talking of cricket and sheilas and grog,  
Flying their Lancs over Hamburg and Stettin  
And back to the Lincolnshire winter-time fog.

Where are the fliers from Canada's prairies  
From cities and forests determined to win,  
Thumbing their noses at Goering's Luftwaffe  
And busily dropping their bombs on Berlin.

Where are the Kiwis who left all their sunshine  
For bleak winter airfields and fenland and dyke,  
And playing wild mess games like cockalorum  
And knocking the hell out of Hitler's Third Reich.

Where are they now those men of all nations  
Who flew not knowing what the future would send  
And the few who returned their missions completed  
That night in 'The Chopper' would toast absent friends.

*Anon -From February 2004 In Touch*



## ***FU/lt C B Black DFC***

by John Black

Born the 17th May 1917 in Gourock, Renfrewshire, he was the younger of two sons to Matthew Alexander Black and Elizabeth Margaret Brand, who had emigrated to Kenya in the very early 1900s. Educated initially at the Nairobi Primary School then onto the Prince of Wales High School. On the 1st June 1939, aged 22, he enlisted into the Kenyan Police as a 2nd Grade Assistant Inspector of Police, but he resigned this appointment on the 5th June 1941 to join the Royal Airforce. After training, he and his friend John Nicoll (known as Freddie) were posted to 208 Squadron. The squadron had been reformed in Egypt in 1920, and joined the war proper when Italy declared war in June 1940. A number of Hurricanes were received at the end of that year and Charles found himself flying reconnaissance sorties for the advancing troops as they moved through Cyrenacia (now Libya). He was promoted to Sergeant on the 9 May 1942, and Flight Lieutenant early 1944.



Charles in British Overseas Airways First Officer uniform

One place the squadron was based was the Kirkuk oil company outside Haifa. There, opportunities to go out were very few and far between, but one time Charles did go out he came back with a battered old accordion which he had acquired from somewhere. As he couldn't play it he gave it to Freddie, asking him to teach him to play, Freddie still has that accordion today. The sand surrounding KirKuk was saturated in oil, and Charles being a smoker, lit up and threw the still lighted match on the ground, which then started to burn. Luckily they managed to stamp it out!

August 1944 found the squadron at the Foggia airbase in Italy, from where many missions were flown using Mk4 Hurricanes. One such sortie which Charles took part in, was on the 15th October 1944. He was flying Hurricane KZ407 and fired rocket projectiles at a tank, but a piece of metal from the tank struck his aircraft damaging the tip of one propeller blade, the starboard Oleoleg and radiator fairing, but he managed to land safely. His son Douglas, I believe, has that piece of shrapnel at his home in Johannesburg.

Another incident which took place when they were operating from the Isle of Vis, off the coast of Yugoslavia, was on the 1st September 1944 at 09.05 hrs when he Freddie Nicoll in Hurricane Mk 4s and two other pilots, in Spitfires from 249 Squadron attacked two Siebel ferries (catamaran

type landing craft) near Lukova. A total of six strafing runs were made, under very heavy German flak, setting each ferry setting on fire and exploding ammunition. Fl/Lt Black with no ammunition left, checked he had enough fuel to get to Vis, then dived and jettisoned his long range fuel tank into one of the ferries nearest the shore, destroying it. On the 8th September 1944, the London Gazette announced his award of the DFC, probably not for just one incident, but a culmination of many. Freddie Nicoll also received the DFC at the same time. Charles was also made B Flight Commander.



After the war Charles returned to Kenya and got married. He also got a job with British Overseas Airways ,they sent him to train in the then Rhodesia. He was employed by BOA as one of their first pilots in East Africa, and then became a founder pilot for East African Airways, and there is a wonderful photo of an old De Haviland Dragon Rapide with all the signatures of the founder members of East African Airways. He was not happy with commercial flying and felt he was just a glorified taxi driver and was very bored with it so joined the

Gourock Rope Company as their East African representative staying with them until his retirement thirty years later.

He loved flying, and as one of his children said, 'we were virtually brought up at the Aeroclub', he was always in the air, just flying for the fun of it. On the 9th August 1958 Charles was again in the air, this time flying aerobatics for the opening of Embakasi (Nairobi) Airport by the last Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring, who was standing in for the Queen Mother, who had been delayed in Australia.

I found out at some point he joined the Kenya Regiment (The Charging Buffalo) and took part in a number of operations against the Mau Mau, who in the fifties were causing havoc in Kenya.

In 1987, after being diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease, he moved to a retirement home in Margate, KwaZulu, Natal, where he passed away aged 82 in December 1999.



*Acknowledgements and Thanks to*

*Sandra and Douglas Black,  
Johannesburg, South Africa, Lt. Col  
Bruce Rooker-Smith (Rtd) Kenya  
Regiment Association, South Africa and  
6 Squadron Royal Air Force  
Association.*

## East Midlands BC

Harborough Museum is rightly proud of some of its ancient artefacts but what of the people who lived in this area of the country? From a section of the BBC website 'Native Tribes of Britain' we read that archaeological evidence suggests that before about 50 to 1 BC, two different groups or tribes lived in this region. One lived in what is today Lincolnshire, the other in what is today Northamptonshire. Both areas were different to each other and were important centres of population and economy in the period c. 400 and 100 BC. This was a region where people lived in villages, and some times larger settlements such as Leicester and Dragonby and Old Sleaford in Lincolnshire.

These tribes appear to have combined, possibly with neighbouring tribes, shortly before the Roman conquest when they were known as the Corieltavi living in what is today most of the East Midlands (Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire). It offered no resistance to the Romans and was quickly turned into a civitas (an administrative district equivalent to a modern county) with its capital at the city of Leicester.

For information about all the ancient peoples of Britain see the BBC website [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british\\_prehistory/iron\\_01.shtml#eighteen](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british_prehistory/iron_01.shtml#eighteen)

## Miscellany

### February Centenary Snippets 1914

Marconi states he can light a lamp 6 miles away by wireless power.

### 1915

Footballer Stanley Mathews born.

### 1916

Well off families are asked to have simpler meals to release servants for more useful purposes.

### 1917

Secret German telegram asking Mexico to declare war on USA.

### 1918

George Gerswin has his first successful song, "Swanee".



### Did you Know?

When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.

The man who fell into an upholstery factory is now fully recovered.

Every calendar's days are numbered.



Continued from page 2

### Obituary

Margaret Kendal, a former Branch member, died suddenly on 9th January. She was still well known to those who visited Peaker Park where she was a resident. It was through her efforts that the close link the Branch has with the Prime Life Care Village was established. This busy little lady will be sadly missed. The branch was represented at her funeral on 4th February.

### February Branch Lunch

Eighteen members were present, held in the newly refurbished small dining room, and enjoyed another of The Angel's excellent fare.

### Legion News



Opened on 17 December in Liverpool, this is the first of the 16 major centres referred to in last month's report of the County Conference.

A much more modest Legion presence will be when a contact point in Market Harborough Library is established.

## LUNCH AT THE ANGEL



for good food and good company

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

### Menu

Roast leg of British Lamb  
with Yorkshire pudding, roast  
potatoes & gravy (can be gf)

Oven baked white fish  
on mashed potato with dill & white  
wine sauce (gf)

Supreme of British chicken  
Stuffed with stilton on mashed  
potato with a smoked bacon &  
white wine sauce (gf)



Rich chocolate torte with berries  
& vanilla ice cream (v)

"Spotted Richard"  
with creamy custard (v)

Fresh fruit Salad  
with mini jug of cream (gf)(v)

Coffee and mints



£8.50 Pay at reception

To book, ring Les Moore (01858 463112) before 22 Feb. 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

- 22 Feb Branch Coffee Morning  
Harborough Theatre- Helpers  
please!
- 12 After meeting Talk- WWI -  
Mar Commonwealth Contribution
- 22 **Anniversary Dinner at**  
Mar **M H Golf Club** see  
enclosure
- 17/18 National Conference -  
May Torquay
- 11 Jun After meeting talk- VSO in  
Nepal
- 13 Branch meeting as a possible  
Aug Peaker Park joint event

### Welfare

If you are aware of any one who  
qualifies for, and may benefit from the  
Legion welfare services please contact  
**Betty Ramsay on 01858 434923**

### RBL Helpline

is open to everyone, 8am - 8pm, 7 days  
a week on Freephone **0800 802 8080**  
for advice and support for serving &  
ex- service people and dependents.

### In Touch Next Month

Kimmel Park Riots, March Centenary  
Snippets, 'Remember this?', News, etc

## Branch Contacts

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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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