



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity No. 219279

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106

Founded in 1923



Annual Report

for the year

1st October 2012 to 30th September 2013



The Royal British Legion

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CONTENTS

Introductionfrom the Chairman	p3	Social, Fund-raising & other Events	p10
Year Highlights.....in pictures	p4	Remembrance...traditions upheld	p11
About the Branch.....who we are	p5	Ceremonial....busy standard bearers	p11
Our Objectiveswhat we try to do	p6	Welfare.....vital but unsung service	p12
Legion in the Community	p7	Involving Young People	p12
Poppy Appeal	p8	Meetings and Membership	p13
Communicationand Archives	p9		



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch BR0106



Introduction

I must begin by recording my thanks and those of the whole branch to my predecessor John Standish who stood down last year after leading us through three very active years of comradeship and service. John continues to serve the RBL as county vice-chairman.

As you will see, activities have continued over the past twelve months with the branch well involved in events in Harborough and Leicestershire. Our Annual Dinner was taken at Harborough Golf Club with our county President Col Robert Martin as our principal guest with Janie, his wife, who is President of the County Womens' Section RBL.

Remembrancetide 2013 was well supported in terms of those attending the church service and War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday and also for the 11.11.11 Act of Remembrance. The Poppy Appeal too was well supported and our thanks go to Dave Prior our branch PAO.

Together with Harborough District Council, the branch has played a leading role in the commemorations marking the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War in 2014. Short Acts of Remembrance took place at the hospital portico memorial, in the Memorial Gardens where a plaque was unveiled and at a service of hymns and readings in the Parish Church on August 4th. During the next 4 years, and with the rest of the nation and the world, we shall continue to observe particular battles and milestones of WWI as they occur. Such sacrifice will never be forgotten.

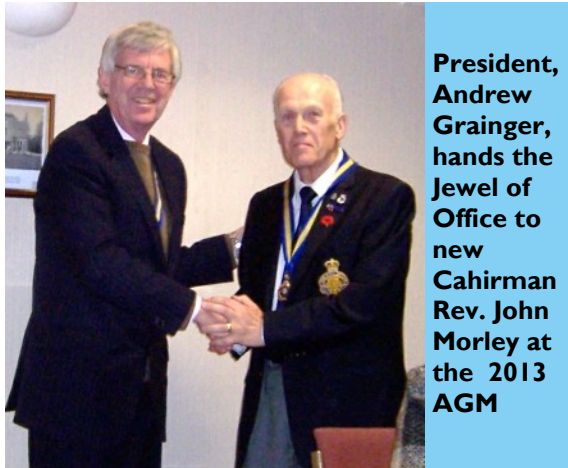
During the year we have welcomed several new members but sadly said "farewell" to a few. Our monthly lunches at The Angel Hotel have been convivial occasions; Les Moore has stood down as the organiser of this popular feature of our programme after about 4 years and Kathie Morley is taking on the arrangements. Tom Ashmore continues to arrange after-meeting talks by outside speakers – and to edit our wonderful branch publication ***In Touch***. Once again we were 'on show' at the carnival and for Armed Forces Day in Welland Park.

I would like to thank all the branch committee members for their support and especially John Cox who has retired after many years service. Finally my thanks to our President, Andrew Granger, for his continuing interest in the well-being of the branch and his support on many occasions during the year.

Rev. John Morley, Branch Chairman

November 2014

Highlights of the Year



President, Andrew Grainger, hands the Jewel of Office to new Cahirman Rev. John Morley at the 2013 AGM



Anniversary Dinner - Sir Edward Garnier MP, Col and Mrs Martin with John and Kathy Morley in front of this year's trophy



VIPs start Armed forces week at flag raising but Chelsea Pensioners were the stars of Armed Forces Day event



Ron West Shield County Award for 2012-13



School Children after placing their own crosses on Armistice Day



Social events included this WWI Commemoration at Peaker Park



Poppy Appeal Long Service Awards



Four Cadet units receive their shares of the Coffee Morning



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



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 and theirs to us.
- Of the four local Cadet units, the Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps and St John Ambulance, are affiliated to the Branch and arrangements are in hand for the affiliation of the Sea Cadets.
- The Branch does not have a Club. 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 over a third in the last ten years to 170, of whom 60 are women. We are still a fairly small branch by Legion standards. Many members have not served in the Forces.
- The Branch is strongly represented at County level. Four members hold County positions: Youth Officer, Chaplain, Vice Chairman and Training Officer. The National R B L Annual Conference was attended by our elected delegate (the previous Branch Chairman) (, Standard Bearer and Branch Secretary.
- The Branch produces a monthly newsletter, *In Touch*, circulated to all members. Large Print and electronic versions are also produced. The Branch has two web-sites: www.in-touch.ukvet.net is an archive of the first 14 years of the on-line version of *In Touch* and information about all branch activities is in www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough which also includes all issues of the newsletter.
- The Branch produces an Annual Report of its activities. Copies are held at R B L County Office, Market Harborough Library and Leicestershire Records Office. Current and all past issues are held on the Branch main web-site.
- The Branch has an enviable reputation both in the local community and within the R B L, having received awards at county and national levels.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106



Branch General Objectives and Philosophy

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

1. Foster a sense of comradeship by encouraging members to participate in Branch activities.
2. Supplement the work of the new Welfare organisation by being aware of Branch members who need home or hospital visits..
3. Increase still further the Branch's contribution to the Poppy Appeal.
4. Work to ensure the Branch's long term survival e.g. through greater involvement with youth and the community and effort to increase public awareness of Branch and Legion.

Specific Objectives based on the current Branch Plan include

1. Get more trained Welfare Counsellors/visitors
2. Increase the number of Committee Members
3. Appoint an In Touch Editor and a Social Team Leader.
4. Appoint a person responsible for recruitment.
5. More Committee Members to attend training courses
6. More active participation County and National Events.
7. Strengthen our links with RAFA, RNA and the Cadets.
8. Work with County Recruiting Officer.
9. Arrange/ Attend at least one joint event with Affiliated Cadets annually.

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



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Legion in the Community

We were there

Doing what was expected of us.

The Branch continued to take a prominent part in the local community calendar. It again organised the Remembrance-time Parade, Services, wreath-laying, Remembrance Garden, Sunset Ceremony and Harborough Band Concert. The Poppy Appeal Team had a marquee at the Town Carnival and organised the Appeal launch on The Square with the Northampton Pipe Band and the cadets attracting much attention with their imaginative Poppy kit delivery trolleys. We were again involved with the District Council and others in taking a leading role in the local celebration of Armed Forces Week with branch members as Chairman and Secretary of the organising committee. It started with the nationally



Children watch Sunset ceremony in Garden of Remembrance



Women's Land Army stand at Armed Forces Day Event

observed F l a g Raising event in Church Square and ended with a varied programme of interesting events and displays in Welland Park on 29th June.

Other Involvement.

The branch did not arrange its own events to commemorate the centenary of WW1 but members were involved in the organisation and presentation of others in the town. On 4th August there was a short service at the Cottage Hospital WW1 War Memorial

and at the Parish Church. a solemn commemoration. In contrast on 9th August on The Square there was a re-enactment of the early days of the War in Market Harborough.

We have maintained close contact with Peaker Park Care Village which encourages Branch members to attend its residents' social events from which we benefit as welcome additions to our social calendar. A shortened August Branch meeting was held there, followed by a jointly organised social event which included music by two pipers one of whom is a branch member. The theme of the event was the WW1 centenary with staff members in contemporary dress.



Pipers at Peaker Park

We have continued to be involved in discussions about the future of the war memorial at the Cottage Hospital and were successful in securing the much needed renovation of the WW1 Memorial cross on The Square. 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. We are 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.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Poppy Appeal

Once again the year started off with a Poppy Launch Ceremony on The Square with music by the Northampton Pipe Band attracting the interest of members of the public leading up to the Collection period being officially started. In the colourful presence of the Branch and other standards, the Branch and District Council Chairmen said 'a few words' wishing success for the Appeal. Cadets again took part in the trolley competition before leaving to deliver Poppy trays and collecting boxes to shops and businesses in their allotted areas of the town centre. About £300 was raised during the event. We are, as always, most grateful to the for the support of the Band, the hard work of the Cadets and of all those involved.

On Market Days during the collection period the usual stall in the Market Hall was manned to act as an information point, control centre for the street collectors and where poppies and other items were available. The Poppy Appeal was also publicised at the Town Carnival at which Team had a stand with a prominent Marquee and in which the County Fundraiser was involved. As a permanent contact point the PAO Team has continued to use a room at a convenient location in the town as an office.

Events organised during the year included a Swing Night in November; Glenn Miller Orchestra Event, Coffee Morning and Band Concert organised by the Branch. Special events organised over the Remembrance period realised some £1,200. Members had also collected at the Walker Stadium and the total was shared out equally among participating Branches (£1000 each). Donations were received from the sponsorship of the Ramsay Walkers' Poppy Walk and following funerals in lieu of flowers.

On Market Days during the collection period the usual stall in the Market Hall was manned to act as an information point, control centre for the street collectors and where poppies and other items were available.

The local area Appeal total for 2013/14 had been £26,012, compared with just over £23,000 in 2012/13.

The Poppy Team and Branch are most thankful for the dedicated band of Collectors on which the Appeal relied even more. Their efforts are officially recognised with the presentation of awards marking their years of service and at a ceremony after the branch AGM on 9th October many received their Certificates. Another Awards event will be held when collectors become eligible.



The Appeal Organiser again attended the annual Poppy Conference.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Communication

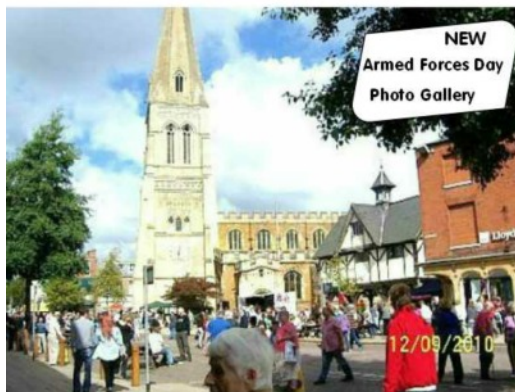
Branch Newsletter - *In Touch*

The design of the cover each month of 2014 marked the centenary year of the start of the First World War, by prominently carrying the phrase **2014. WW1 Centenary Year**. The Branch 91st anniversary year was also suitably commemorated and the practice of a picture was continued but provided with the location of the article to which it refers.

Prime Life Ltd. (parent company of Peaker Park Care Village) generously continued printing in colour and its high quality is much appreciated by readers. The Editor attempts to keep informed of Branch news items so that the content can be prepared in advance to allow printed copies to be available at each branch meeting. A large print version is still produced and an on-line version is still included on the Branch website. It is also attached to a monthly email circular to Branch members able to receive it and to other Legion members who have expressed a wish to see it.



A team of volunteers (dubbed the 'Paper Boys and Girl) still deliver *In Touch* by hand to members in or close to town. There are now more members who live outside this area to whom the newsletter has to be posted. Some members have elected to view the newsletter solely on-line and it is hoped more will do so in order to save the very high cost of postage.



Branch Web-site

www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough has continued to promote the branch and to describe fully its past, present and known future activities. It has been updated regularly and includes appropriate photographs. Galleries of these cover major events. The Home Page includes a 'What's new' space on the attractive welcoming

Branch Archives

Although the branch no longer has a nominated Archivist, a member has volunteered to digitise some of the old minutes and other records and, when available at the Library, search microfilms of old local newspapers for reports to add to our limited knowledge of the early years of the branch.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Social, Fundraising and Other Events

Regular **monthly luncheons** at The Angel Hotel have continued with a welcome addition to the regular core of members with typically between twenty and twenty-five enjoy the varied menus, excellent food and relaxed atmosphere of the occasion. The January belated **Christmas Luncheon** was of the expected high standard and again shared with our RAFA and RNA friends.

The **Anniversary Dinner** in March was held as usual at the Golf Club. Honoured guests included Sir Edward Garnier MP, Colonel Robert Martin, RBL County President and Mrs Martin seen here with Branch Chairman Rev John Morley and Mrs Kathy Morley in front of the proudly displayed



Ron West Shield. We were also pleased to have RBL County Chairman, David Atterbury and Mrs Atterbury in the 70 people present. To commemorate the centenary year of the start of WW1, specially designed place cards had been produced,

A group of members attended the **Festival of Remembrance** at the de Montfort Hall with its concert and service. Our annual **Remembrance Concert** by the Harborough Band this year included 'Sing along' items in which the audience participated. Ticket sales provided a valuable income for the Poppy Appeal.

Peaker Park Care Village have continued to make a great contribution to our Branch life by showing great hospitality to our members at several events arranged for their residents. They hosted the August Branch monthly meeting which was followed by a jointly organised social occasion which had a WW1 theme as this picture shows.



Several of our members accepted the invitation to join our RNA friends at their enjoyable **cheese and wine evening** held in July at the Great Bowden Village Hall.

'**After meeting**' social events included a quiz and buffet, two light-hearted games and five presentations or talks, three of which were particularly appropriate in the WW1 Centenary year.

As usual, two **Coffee Mornings** were held during the year, the one in October in aid of the Poppy Appeal realising over £300. The other, in February, was to raise funds for the four local Cadet units. The proceeds were shared equally and presented to their representatives at the March Branch meeting. Cadets again provided valuable assistance on the stalls and in the kitchen at each event. Their presence demonstrates to members of the public an example of how Legion members and young people work together.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch BR0106



Remembrance

On **Remembrance Sunday** there was the usual parade to St Dionysius Parish Church for the service, conducted by the Branch Chaplain, which was attended by a very large congregation including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the local MP, Sir Edward Garnier, QC, and the Council Chairman. They took the salute when the parade returned to The Square where many members of the public had gathered for a short service, the wreath-laying ceremony and, at eleven o'clock, two minutes silence.



The **Armistice Day** event by the gates of the Memorial Gardens was attended by the District Council Chairman and, despite a very rainy morning, a good gathering of the public. Breaking tradition, there followed a 'sunset' ceremony in the Garden of Remembrance. There, Branch members had again set out the crosses and memorials as a tribute to the 326 local men and woman who lost their lives in the two world wars.

Harborough Band again performed the annual **Remembrance Concert** at the Baptist Church. This year the programme included a 'Sing-along' item of popular songs.

Ceremonial

Thanks are due to George Fleming and John Cox for their help and support with Standard Bearer duties and to the ATC Cadet who carried the Branch Standard on Remembrance Sunday, allowing the Standard Bearer to carry the Queen's Colour.

The Standard Bearer attended the Annual RBL Conference in Torquay and carried the Standard there, at the County Conference; Leicester Festival of Remembrance; two out-of-town Remembrance Services and the Poppy Football Match. She also attended the Standard Bearers' AGM, Schools and their Carol Concert.

In the Town the Standard was carried at the Armistice Day Ceremonies, RAFA Battle of Britain Service; Armed Forces Day events, Poppy Launch, Annual Dinner and Band Concert.



The Standard was also carried at funerals where this had been requested..



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Welfare

The approach to Welfare delivery has changed. There are now three contact points for Beneficiaries:

Contact Centre — 0808 802 8080 8am — 8pm 7 days a week

RBL Website Online knowledge base - Information relevant to potential Beneficiaries

Face to Face at 'Outreach' centres in towns such as Leicester, Melton Mowbray, Loughborough and at Market Harborough where it would be in the Symington Building as from November.

Our previous Welfare Officer hopes to continue to receive information from Members of anyone who is lonely, sick or requires a visit. Where necessary, she will be able to point them in the right direction for further assistance from TRBL. The Provision of Welfare to the Ex-Service Community should be one of the main aims of the Branch and it is very much hoped that with the support of Members we will be able to continue doing this.

Currently some £1.6million is spent on Welfare nationally. Total spend within Leicestershire/Rutland to the end of September 2014 was some £80,551 from the Poppy Appeal and after funds had been sought and acquired from other Charities. The main Categories of spend were Mobility Assistance and Housing

Youth

We again organised a youth competition in the Town but this was unsuccessful.

Some of our Members attended a talk at Leicester Grammar School in Great Glen and made contact with teachers there. Oadby and Great Glen Branches would not object to our working alongside the School, and we hope to do this in the future with an exchange of visits.

An approach had also been made to our Membership Council Representative, suggesting that any packages for schools eg the Schools Packs should be sent via Branches to enable them to be delivered by hand and the Branch to establish contact with the school.

We are very pleased to have worked on Affiliation with the newly-formed Sea Cadet Unit in the town and this will come through very shortly. Our next mission will be the Scout Groups.

The Branch is most grateful for all the help and support given throughout the year by Its Affiliated Units: ATC, ACF and St John and we look forward to these ties being strengthened.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106



Meetings and Membership

Average attendance at **Branch Meetings** was 30 (the same as the previous year) and at 18% of the total membership is well below the 34% nine years ago. However 37 members did attend the AGM. Current lower attendance numbers are partly accounted for by increased problems of age, health and transport. Over 30 members live outside our “catchment area”, and for others there are conflicts of interest. What we do not know is how many do not wish to attend our meetings, or why.

One Branch meeting was held at Peaker Park.

The average attendance at Committee Meetings including Officers has been 8 out of a total of 11

Several events and activities were arranged to provide some social element and interest to meetings’ evenings and these are reported on page 8..

During the year **Membership** of the Branch was around the 170 mark with 6 new Members during the period; 6 lapsed and 5 deceased.

17 ex-Ashley Branch Members signified their agreement to join this Branch; 4 lapsed and 2 transferred elsewhere.

A new Accounts System LOMAS, was introduced with no training given apart from the manual on line, and no support. Mo Watson had audited the accounts again and said the Treasurer had done a very good job, considering the lack of training.

The collection of subscriptions from cash payers still involves the Branch in some expense, time and effort Members are strongly encouraged to pay by Direct Debit if possible.

News of some Individual Members

John Standish was elected County Vice Chairman.

Pat Middleton chaired the Market Harborough Armed Forces Day Committee..

The Ramsay Ramblers (Betty Ramsay, daughters Helen and Hilary and grandson Christopher) again completed the London Poppy Walk.

CONTENTS

Introductionfrom the Chairman	p1	Social, Fund-raising & other Events	p8
Year Highlights.....in pictures	p2	Remembrance.....traditions upheld	p9
About the Branch.....who we are	p3	Ceremonial.....busy standard bearers	p9
Our Objectiveswhat we try to do	p4	Welfare.....vital but unsung service	p10
Legion in the Community	p5	Involving Young People	p10
Poppy Appeal	p6	Meetings and Membership	p11
Communicationand Archives	p7		