

In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996

Issue 220
January 2017

The Royal British Legion

Registered Charity No. 219279



LIVE ON

To the memory of the fallen and the future of the living

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Years of Caring



Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Centenary Year of 1917



See P 4 for the connection

Next Monthly Branch Meeting
7.30 pm Wednesday 8 February
Committee 2 February

Function Room, Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Branch News

December Branch Meeting

Following the Chairman's seasonal greeting to the 30 members present, Revd John Morley reported on the meeting of the Hospital Memorial Portico Project Committee of which he is a member. Where it would be re-sited and the practical problems and covering the cost of doing so were discussed. Six members had attended a Branch Information morning and their discussion would be considered by the Branch Committee. The Branch was represented at the Civic Service in Lutterworth. Possible minor improvements to the arrangements for future Remembrance-time events had been considered. The Secretary and Brian Thomas, attending an ATC presentation event, thanked Cadet Josh Cail, who was leaving to join the RAF, for his support of the Branch and Poppy Appeal. Advice from HQ would be sought on Branch or TRBL support for ex-service personnel threatened with legal action about atrocities in former conflicts. Those who had not paid their subscriptions by the end of the year would lose membership. Records show the Branch has 130 members. Hilary Brazil was grateful for Dacia Marlow carrying the Standard at George Seward's recent funeral. Members were invited to attend the Armed Forces Day meeting or to suggest ideas for 2017.

December In Touch was ready for distribution and the usual 21 copies had been posted. Articles for future issues were requested.

After Meeting Social event

In keeping with the tradition for the last meeting of the year there were mince pies but this time supplemented with other buffet items. Whilst these were being enjoyed by the rest of us Janet and Brian Lee were busy preparing for their Quiz. One section was to identify the TV programmes in which those whose photos were displayed, appeared. Memory testing questions followed and prizes were awarded to the successful teams.

Janet and Brian were applauded and thanked for their hard work in producing the quiz.

Legion News

Charles Byrne, Director General of The Royal British Legion, said of the fifth Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report issued in December, "We warmly welcome the publication of the Report, which outlines the many improvements that have been made for Service personnel, veterans and their families in respect of healthcare, accommodation, education, employment, and access to financial services. "Whilst there is undoubtedly still

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Cover Image

One of many pictures on the Internet of the Monza Grand Prix racing circuit but all more recent than when Ken West was there!!

Remember This? (From January 2007)



You are never too old to enjoy St Valentine's Day

Vigilant members of the branch will have noticed that the next meeting is on 14th February, which is, of course, the well-known Saint's Day. When this date was made known at the January Branch meeting, an unofficial sub-committee was hastily formed to consider what could be done to mark this auspicious occasion.

As a result of their deliberations, it was decided that Members planning to attend the February meeting be requested to wear distinctive additions to their normal attire in the following manner: The

Ladies are to enhance their natural beauty with a floral

buttonhole, natural or artificial.

Gentlemen are to forego their Legion neckwear and sport a bow tie, the more colourful and gaudy, the better.



It is hoped that Members will enter into the spirit of the occasion and brighten up a dreary winter's evening. The Editor's camera will be primed to record the joyous proceedings.

Any comments regarding the above should be addressed to the ad hoc committee and certainly not to your entirely blameless Editor. The guilty parties are Pat and John Walker and John Cox..

Did this actually happen? Ed

Advertising Slogans

**A Mars Bar helps you work,
rest and play.**

**The future's bright, the future's
Orange.**

**Murraymints are too good
to hurry mints**

Waiting for Demob

Although the war in Europe ended with the German surrender and VE Day was celebrated on May 1945, the war in the Far East continued until the Japanese surrendered after the dropping of the atom bombs, marked with VJ Day on 15 August, military service continued for all except married women and those men deemed to be important for the restructuring of war-torn Britain. The rest had to wait for demobilisation (demob) until they had reached their Age and Service Group numbers allotted to give priority to older longer serving personnel.

One's A&SG was calculated by deducting from 100, one point for each year of age and each month of service in August 1945. This was the number of months still to serve.

There was obviously a great deal for the military, especially the Army, to do in Europe and the Far East to secure an orderly return to peacetime conditions but in Britain there was a good deal of finding something to keep the military occupied. These two aspects of waiting for demob were experienced by two In Touch contributors, Ken West, 'Ken' and Tom Ashmore, 'Tom' and examples are illustrated with extracts from 'Some Were Lucky', Ken's recently published book and 'Did I Tell You?', a book Tom wrote for his family.

At the actual end of the war, Ken was serving in the Royal Signals Corps with the Royal Scots Fusiliers and was in



the small German Westphalia town of Ludenschaid. "I had been on all night duty, had breakfast and had just got settled in

bed when my room-mate shook me and said excitedly, 'It's all over. The Yanks have dropped a special bomb on Japan and they have surrendered.'

Tom, serving as O.C. 37R Installation Detachment REME was based at an AA Workshop at Wednesfield, Staffs. but has no clear memory or record of the immediate reaction to the announcement of what would be called VJ Day, unlike the alcoholic celebration of VE Day.

Ken, now with the 1/4 Bn Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, KOYLI was still expecting to go to the Far East was actually going to Italy to replace troops who had served "in the desert and Italy". At a stop at Geneva in the long train journey to Milan "an English

lady exile walked down each corridor to thank us for what we had achieved". Their eventual destination was Monza where they were to guard the VRD (Vehicle Reception Depot) where thousands of ex-WW2 vehicles were stored on the famous Grand Prix racing circuit. Ken's Signals team had to check and maintain the communication lines from HQ in the town to and within the VRD and the nearby German POW camp. *The May 2002 issue of In Touch has a story Ken wrote entitled 'On the Grand Prix Circuit.*

Tom's next move, still with his specialist REME unit was to be

"attached to 22 AA Workshop Company, sharing buildings vacated by the Americans at Egginton near Derby. For me



.....it meant that most weekends I was able to go 'home'two rooms in part of the house Joan's parents had been allocated following the bomb damage to their home in Beckenham". My unit was still modifying 3.7 AA guns which then went to a military storage compound on the Wirral. They might never be used again but the work kept me and my men occupied (and used up the components still in stock!)

After an interesting time in Monza with its opportunities for non-military social occasions, Ken was on the train again "I thoroughly enjoyed the journey through the Brenner Pass" to Austria and with his unit eventually reached the snow capped mountain village of Mariazell. This was on the border between the British and Russian occupation zones. Based in the Post Office next to the local telephone exchange, the Signals team was responsible for the phone line to the border control working with the local linesman Josef with whom Ken became friends. Then came the time for home leave.

Tom had the sad duty of closing down his 37R unit in May 1946 and after leave joined a course at Bury, Lancashire at "the School of Electric Light, a misnomer as it was concerned with electrical instruments" and inappropriate for my posting to the Military College of Science to run the 'Mechanical and Optical Instruments' Workshop. This really was a case of keeping those waiting for demob busy but it also applied to the two German POWs awaiting repatriation who were in about a dozen folk under my command- some change from the 60 when I took over 37R. My boss was a professor and his academic staff were all civilians as was one of my men. My 'luxurious' quarters were a two room 'suite' in a block built during the pre-war army expansion. The workshop was in the previous NAFFI building. The 'officers' mess was in

Becket House and provided some accommodation, lounge and dining



facilities for a mix of military and civilian staff.

Shortly after Ken returned from leave the KOYLI were disbanded and he was attached to C Coy 2nd Bn The Loyal Regt. They were to start a Lumber Camp on the River Mur. "Parties of men would go with Austrian woodsmen to cut the pine trees, trim them and load onto a narrow gauge railway taking them to the sawmill." Ken's Signals work was on hold when made Company Clerk until his home leave.

Tom, too, will have had leave but he returned to M C of S from where on one occasion he visited the National Physical Laboratory and was shown the 'Automatic Computing Engine' they they were developing not knowing that the first 'programmable computer' had been made and in use at the still secret Bletchley Park.

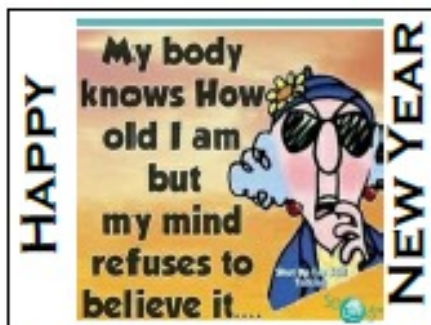
Then, Ken had a series of short postings taking him from Austria to Yugoslavia and Italy where he was at an Army Education college passing his time 'waiting for demob' in June 1947.

Tom left his college a month later when reaching his A&S group 153.

Miscellany

January 1917 News Items

- 1st Cunard Liner sunk by German submarine in Mediterranean
- 4th Government agrees with Germany to exchange all internees over 45
- 10th Buffalo Bill (Col. William Cody) of the Wild West Show died
- 11th New War loans of 5% for 30 and 4% for 25 years launched
- 16th German government proposes a military alliance with Mexico
- 19th Explosion in a London munitions factory kills 69 people
- 30th Votes for women over a certain age proposed by Parliamentary committee
- 31st 4 charged with conspiracy to murder Lloyd George



It's hard to make a come back when you haven't been any where.
It's easier to get older than to get wiser.
My wild oats have turned into prunes and All Bran.

From the Archives **Bits of Branch History**

October 1984 - first general meeting open to all members. Previously, the only meetings were for the Committee in alternative months.

May 1990 - Start of use of Conservative club for meetings

May 1991 - HQ Building in Hines Yard sold (now dilapidated but site for sale)

May 1993 - only 6 members present at Branch meeting (there were 9 in February and 7 in April)

June 1993 - New Secretary, John Sutton's first meeting.

June 1994 - 17 members present at Branch meeting; entertainments sub-committee formed

October 1994 - Branch Dinner held at Bulls head at Clipston.

December 1994 - Coffee morning held in the Settling Rooms

May 1995 - VE Day Anniversary events in which members were closely involved

July 1996 - Outing to RBL 75th Anniversary Open day at Weston Park

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much more to do, the Legion recognises the work that has been undertaken by the UK Government, devolved governments, local authorities and third sector partners in support of our Armed Forces community, and looks forward to continued dialogue and collaboration on new and outstanding issues in the weeks and months ahead."

County News

The annual County Conference was held on 7th January and will be reported in the February issue

LUNCH	
AT THE ANGEL	
for good food and good company	
7 FEBRUARY	MEET IN THE BAR AT NOON

MENU

Roast Pork & Stuffing, Baked Cod on Mash, Chicken Supreme on mash, all with vegetable selection, Vegetable Risotto>
Bread & Butter Pudding, Chocolate cheesecake, fresh fruit salad.
Tea or coffee & mints £9.25

To book, contact Kathie Morley, email kathiemorley@talktalk.net , or phone 01858 419714 To cancel, ring <u>The Angel</u> (01858 462702) before 10 am on the day or you will be charged
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What's Going On?

Forthcoming Events

- 7 Feb Lunch at The Angel
8 Feb Branch meeting + Talk re Sea Cadets??
8 Mar Anniversary Dinner Dance in lieu of Branch Meeting @ Conservative Club. 7pm for 7.30. **Please respond to enclosed menu.**
8 Apr RNA Coffee Morning @ MH Theatre
10 RNA-Peterborough Dog racing & Dinner 6pm £20
May
24 Jun Armed Forces Day @ Leics Cathedral
24 Jun RNA Cheese & Wine
25 Jun MH Armed Forces Day

Welfare

If you are aware of any one may benefit from the Legion welfare services ring **Betty Ramsay** on 01858 434923

RBL Helpline

is open to everyone, 8am - 8pm, 7 days a week on 0808 802 8080 for advice and support for serving & ex- service people and depend-

In Touch Next Month

"When did dancing become uncool?"
Miscellany, Remember This?, News, etc

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Branch Website

www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough

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