



The Royal British Legion
Reg. Charity No.219279

LIVE ON

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

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106

Founded in 1923



Annual Report

for the year
1st October 2014 to 30th September 2015



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106



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Introduction

During the year we have continued to observe some of the centenary commemorations of WW1 and two 70th anniversaries of the end of WW2, especially VE and VJ days when wreaths were laid at our memorial stone in Welland Park. Lady Gretton, HM's Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire attended for the Service and Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday and received the Salute during the parade of Veterans, RBL, RNA and RAFA members and our affiliated youth organisations. Harborough District Scout groups became affiliated early in the year along with TS Fernie Sea Cadet unit.

We have enjoyed a variety of after-meeting speakers; especially memorable are two evenings of poetry readings arranged by Tom Ashmore, a talk on the osprey breeding project at Rutland Water and a talk on "Project Patriot", a scheme to build a new national steam Memorial railway engine to be named "The Unknown Warrior" and in steam by 11.11.18.

The branch again took part in the annual Armed Forces Day event in Welland Park in June. With HDC, we continue to monitor plans for the redevelopment of the cottage hospital site in Coventry Road when it becomes surplus to NHS requirements in the next two years. Sadly after much consideration by both branches, a request from Husbands Bosworth branch to become a sub-branch of Market Harborough was withdrawn.

The committee has met 11 times during the year and worked hard to provide an interesting programme for members. As Chairman, I am fortunate to have truly excellent officers and Committee members to support the branch. In particular, Betty Ramsey continues to serve as Secretary with great efficiency and energy and our Treasurer Myra Grewcock has overcome the intricacies of the LOMAS accounting system and our accounts have been signed-off. My vice-Chairman Brian Thomas has always been available for me to bounce ideas and is always on hand when there is work to be done – it keeps him young and agile! We continue to look for an increase in Membership which continues to stay at about 158.

My personal thanks to all have helped the branch in any way during the year. It has been a joy and a humbling honour to serve the branch and the wider RBL community for another year.

Rev WgCdr John Morley (rtd), Branch Chairman

November 2015



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Highlights of the Year



Leicestershire High Sheriff arrives to open Armed Forces Day event in Welland Park



Poppy Appeal Launch on The Square with Cadets and Northampton Pipe Band



VE Day Anniversary Lunch at The Angel



Preparing the Tombola stall at one of the two Coffee Mornings



Chairman, Rev. John Morley & wife Kathie dance at the Anniversary Dinner

200th Issue of In Touch



Poppy Appeal Long Service Awards

Visit made to Royal Hospital Chelsea





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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.
- All of the four local Cadet units, the Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps, Sea Cadets and St John Ambulance, are affiliated to the Branch as are the units of the Area Scouts.
- 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 20% in the last ten years to 158, of whom 58 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 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 sent to 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.



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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 Caseworkers/ 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 and we believe lead to a high standard of service to our members, the Legion and the community for which the Legion exists.



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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 organised the Appeal launch on The Square with the Northampton Pipe Band and the



District Council Chairman getting the first poppy at the Appeal Launch

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 observed Flag Raising event in Church Square and ended with a varied programme of interesting events and displays in Welland Park on 28th June.

Other Involvement.

To commemorate 70th Anniversary of VE Day the Branch arranged a lunch at which members of RAFA and RNA and invited guests enjoyed the nostalgia, novelty and taste of wartime dishes. Some members were involved in the Anniversary event

on The Square which captured the spirit of that day 70 years ago with community singing and a short Service followed by two minutes silence marked by maroons and then the ringing of the church bells. We have maintained contact with Peaker Park Care Village but there have been fewer occasions this year in which Branch members have taken part in its residents' social



Near Sea Cadets stand in Welland Park on Armed Forces Day

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events. A few members have also attended social events at another Care Home, Lenthal House. We have continued to be involved in discussions about the future of the war memorial at the Cottage Hospital. 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 occasionally seek our opinion, advice and help.



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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. The Collection period was officially started in the colourful presence of the Branch and other standards, and the Branch and District Council Chairmen. 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. We are, as always, most grateful to the for the support of the Band, all those involved and especially the Cadets then and during the year. At the launch £233 was collected.

On Market Days during the collection period a stall in the Market Hall was manned to act as a publicity and information point, control centre for the street collectors and where poppies and other items were available. As a permanent contact point the PAO Team has continued to use a room at a convenient location in the town as an office.

The Poppy Team and Branch are most thankful for the dedicated band of Collectors on which the Appeal relies so much. Their efforts are officially recognised with the presentation of awards marking their years of service and at a ceremony after the branch meeting on 10th September the President presented Certificates to the 7 of the 9 eligible collectors including Roger Brown who has been a collector for 40 years.



Funds raised from events organised by the Branch during the year included £276 and £268 from two Coffee Mornings and £412 from the Remembrance Concert. A few Members collected at a shopping centre in Leicester and also at the Walker Stadium where our equal share of the total raised was £1,100. From a local group's Swing Night in November £300 was received. Church collections and donations from Foxton and Lubenham came to £700. The Branch donated £2000 from the General Fund and other donations were received from the sponsorship of the Ramsay Walkers' Poppy Walk and in lieu of flowers at funerals.

The total amount raised in our area, which now includes Kibworth, was £32,159.78.



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Communication

Branch Newsletter - *In Touch*

Changes made to the design of the cover included using the new Legion slogan **LIVE ON** and WWI being referred to with the words **Centenary of 1915**. The practice of using a picture (where possible a bit unusual) to refer to the main article was continued. In May colour was used to emphasise the special significance of the issue - Number 200 - as this picture shows.



Prime Life Ltd. (parent company of Peaker Park Care Village) which had generously printed the Newsletter had to discontinue doing so after 12 issues but arrangements were made for the Parish Church Office to print in colour and, by using paper supplied by the Branch, to maintain the high quality which is much appreciated by readers.

Appeals for contributions from members and others for articles have produced a number of interesting pieces which have been supplemented with items of research by the Editor.

The practice of having copies available at each branch meeting has continued. A large print version is still produced and an on-line version included on the Branch website and 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. Distribution of paper copies is by a team of volunteers (dubbed the 'Paper Boys and Girl') who deliver in or close to town or by post.

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 photograph of the town centre seen here.





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Social Team Report

2015 has been another very good year for social events for this branch. We started off with the Anniversary Dinner at the Golf Club, 70 members and friends sat down to a very enjoyable meal at the Golf Club, it was lovely to see us enjoying good food and conversation and for the first time for a while — a dance. Many thanks to Tom Ashmore for printing the place cards. His cards are always so beautifully done.

In January we had our combined Late Christmas Lunch with the RNA and RAFA at the Angel Hotel; this has proved to be a popular event and will be repeated again this coming year. I would like to give our thanks to Les Moore who has worked hard over the years organising our monthly lunches at the Angel Hotel. This post has now been taken over by Kathie Morley, and we look forward to many enjoyable lunches with Kathie.



Our fund raising coffee mornings have been well supported by members and also by our



wonderful cadet forces. I must also thank all our members who help with the setting up of the room and the putting away at the end, those who donated cakes, prizes, bric a brac and sold raffle tickets.

Peaker Park still features in our social calendar, also Lenthall House who held a VE Day celebration party which was attended by some of our members.

One of the highlights of our year is of course the Festival of Remembrance, with the concert and Service at the De Montfort Hall. We also have our own band concert with Harborough Band.

The In Touch Magazine, edited by Tom Ashmore is the glue that helps to keep us all literally in touch. It advertises our social events to those who cannot get to the meetings. Tom's contribution to Branch life is very much appreciated.

Our thanks to Chairman V. Rev. John Morley and Myra who looks after the finances and supports our Social events in many ways. Finally our thanks to Betty who works so hard for our branch, she spends many hours organising events, besides her other responsibilities. We do appreciate what a gem you are Betty.

Pat Middleton — Social Team



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Remembrance

On **Remembrance Sunday** there was the usual parade to St Dionysius Parish Church for the service, conducted by the Branch Chaplain, and attended by a very large congregation. After the service the parade and others returned to The Square where many members of the public had gathered for a short service, two minutes silence at eleven o'clock and then the laying of wreaths on the memorial. Afterwards, VIPs and others visited the Garden of Remembrance to see the crosses and memorials which had been on display during the previous week.



The **Armistice Day** event by the gates of the Memorial Gardens was attended by the District Council Chairman and a good gathering of the public for the short service, two minutes silence and wreath laying.



The annual **Remembrance Concert** performed by the Harborough Band was again held in the Baptist Church. The well arranged programme of music led up to the playing of the Last Post with our Standard Bearer high up above the pulpit.

Ceremonial

Standard Bearer's Report

Again this year I must first of all thank John Cox for his help and support with Standard Bearer duties, including attending their AGM in Whetstone. My grateful thanks are also due to the ATC Cadet who carried the Branch Standard on Remembrance Sunday, allowing me to carry the Queen's Colour.

I took the Standard to the HMS Stevenstone Foxton Service which has been a long-time commitment of the Market Harborough Standard Bearer. The Branch Standard was at the County Conference; Leicester Festival of Remembrance; two out-of-town Remembrance Services; the Poppy Football Match and the Armed Forces Day Service and Parade in Leicester. I stood with the Standard at Desford during the Richard 111 procession Leicester and at the ANZAC 100th Commemoration in Victoria Park at 7am.

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

Hilary Brazil Standard Bearer



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Welfare

As previously reported the approach to Welfare delivery has changed. There are three contact points for the

Beneficiaries: Contact Centre – 0808802 8080 8am - 8pm 7 days a week

Information for the Beneficiary – On Line knowledge base- Web Site

Face to Face at a Pop-in Centre. Locally, Susan Grogan, Advice and Information Officer - Leicestershire is at The Symington Building Market Harborough on 2nd and 4th Monday each month 2pm to 4.30pm.

As a Visiting Volunteer and Welfare Secretary in the Branch, I shall hope to continue to receive information from Members of anyone who is lonely, sick or requires a visit. I also field any calls that come through as a result of our Website. The number of visits and calls made by members of the Branch will be recorded each month and sent through to the Area Office, thus stressing the importance of local, welfare needs and complying with the Charity Commission's rules.

As I wrote last year, I believe the Provision of Welfare to the Ex-Service Community should be one of the main alms of the Branch and I very much hope with the support of Members we will be able to continue doing this.

At the Annual Conference in May 2015, figures quoted included 450.000 requests for help with 60% of the calls received at the Contact Centre being dealt with at the first port of call; 400 wounded soldiers cared for at the Battle Back Centre; 18.000 beneficiaries away on breaks.

Betty Ramsay, Branch Welfare Secretary



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Youth

The Branch is very pleased to have achieved affiliation with both the Sea Cadets and the Scouts during 2015. We are very proud to add these two Youth Groups to our other Affiliated Cadets: The Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps and St John. We look forward to working together with them to our mutual benefit over the coming years.

Invitations are received from time to time to join events organised by the Youth Groups and we would encourage Members to go along if at all possible. We joined in the St George Day celebration with the Scouts and Commissioning Dinner and others with the Sea Cadets. Both the latter Cadets and the ACF will be holding open days and we hope Members will show their support to these.

We have already received a great deal of help and support from Cadets during Remembrancetide, Armed Forces Day, Coffee Mornings and other Branch activities. Last November an ATC Cadet carried the Branch Standard at the Remembrance Service and Parade and this year we hope to have a representative from the ACF to carry out this task, enabling the Standard Bearer to carry the Queen's Colour.



A new Youth Policy has been written into TRBL Handbook so I shall need some time to study the 16 or so pages.

Betty Ramsay County Youth Officer



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Meetings

Average attendance at the 11 **Branch Meetings**, including the AGM held during the year, was 33, an increase of 3 from the previous year and is 21% of the total membership. There was also a Special General Meeting to agree Husbands Bosworth's application to become a Sub Branch of Market Harborough. (Husbands Bosworth later decided to remain as they are at present).

The eleven **Committee Meetings** held had an average attendance of 9 out of the 11 eligible to do so.

After the formal part of each meeting there was an event or activity to provide some social element and interest to the evening. There were seven talks, a quiz, a buffet, poetry reading by members and the Poppy Appeal Awards.

Membership

This year membership of the Branch has been around 158, During the course of the year we had 6 new members, 6 lapsed and sadly 9 deceased and.

The collection of membership fees for all branches is now being taken over by the Membership Services Team in London with effect from 1st October 2015. From whom everyone will receive a renewal letter up to 6 weeks before membership renewal date showing the various ways in which payment can be made.

For Branch members I will accept cash payment and forward this to the Legion's payments team

Once payment has been received your membership card will be sent to your home address within 2 weeks.

The new accounts system LOMAS has gone very well this year. Mo Watson has audited the accounts, which were completed on 20th July 2015.

Myra Grewcock