

In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996

The Royal British Legion



Registered Charity No. 219279

LIVE ON

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

95

Years of Caring



Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



Did Geoff
wear a badge
like this in
1950?
Page 4 does
not tell us.

Next Monthly Branch Meeting
7.30 pm Wednesday 13 March
Committee 7 March

Issue 245
February 2019

Function Room, Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Branch News

January Branch Meeting

The Chairman wished the 22 members present a Happy New Year. He gave his report as Branch delegate to the County Conference (see page 6). The Portico Group had heard that building work at the old hospital site was postponed. Proposals to replicate the Memorial Panels had not yet been agreed. The idea of repeating the successful Afternoon Tea event had been considered. It had been decided that Husbands Bosworth Branch would continue but with County support. It was hoped to arrange a talk by the County Fund Raiser (CFR) (when the future of local Poppy Appeal organisation might be heard). Membership remained at 125 but with 5 still outstanding. Community Support visits were still being made (and recorded in the 'system'). John Standish was thanked for carrying the Standard at a recent funeral. The tri-Service lunch had been very successful and the raffle had raised £52 for the Poppy Appeal. It was hoped that the Singers from last year would be at the Anniversary Dinner on 22nd March. (The menu and application form are enclosed with this issue of In Touch). The previous issue had been distributed.

After the meeting closed Presentation were made to The Lions Club and Home Instead for raising funds for the Poppy Appeal.

Presentations



Certificate to Lions Club

Scroll to Home Start



After Meeting Social Event

Chairman, Stewart Harrison showed the RBL produced film of the GP 90 event which illustrated the scale of the occasion. Despite many shots of the 2000 Standards and Wreath Carriers we could not identify our HilaryBrazil and John Standish!

Branch Website

As was reported last month the site had not been updated since last October. The Editor has now heard from the fairly recently created IT Systems Officer who deals with Branch websites that he had sent the required entry codes to our Branch Chairman (why not to me?) who has not been able to read what he received. So, still we wait!!!!

Cover Image

RAF Wartling Badge from Wikipedia

Turning Back The Pages

To February 2010

ALL CHANGE AT

In Touch

NEWS FLASH

From March 2010, *In Touch* will appear in a different style designed by the new editor, John Standish.

Many features, however, will continue to appear and retain a familiar look.

The editorial chair I occupied for seven years has finally collapsed and from next month a different posterior will be sitting comfortably waiting to begin.

After producing eighty-four consecutive editions, it will be with mixed feelings that I hand over the job to my successor, John Standish. Despite the struggle at times to find sufficient material to fill the pages every month, I have enjoyed the task of keeping the Branch Membership 'in touch'.

Tom Ashmore founded this newsletter back in June 1996 and I have

tried to continue with his objectives - to inform Members of what's going on whilst providing an interesting read. Tom is still very much involved and each month he places the latest issue on to a web site: www.in-touch.ukvet.net where all 137 issues may be viewed.

Members have always been encouraged to contribute their own stories, and a browse through the back numbers on the web site will give some ideas which, hopefully, will encourage contributions, particularly from new Members.

If you have enjoyed reading my efforts over the years, then I am delighted and very flattered. Thank you for your support and encouragement and, if you should feel an overwhelming, and quite natural, desire to show your appreciation, I shall be available for consultation at the next meeting. (*Just a Bit of Fun!*)

Meanwhile, please join me in offering support and all good wishes to John.

George Seward

Kay Callaghan wrote

It was lovely to see so many of you again when I came to your branch meeting this week, thank you for your welcome.

And of course, it was an absolute pleasure to present George with the Director of Corporate Communications'



award for his editorship of this excellent newsletter – timed to mark his 'retirement'.

These awards are not given out willy-nilly – in fact, it's only the second time that it has been given.....

Clerks - Special Duties

by Geoff Moth

While drifting through the Obituaries page of the Daily Telegraph recently I came across the life story of the last Battle of Britain Fighter Plotters. I noted that she had enlisted into the WRAF in 1940 after reading an advertisement calling for 'girls with good educational qualifications' to join the Special Duties of the WRAF.

I was immediately reminded of an interview I had towards the end of my Basic Training in 1950 when the RAF tried to find a suitable job for me during my National Service. This proved to be very difficult as I had spent the whole of my working life in the Library Service. At last a solution was found and I was designated a Clerk - Special Duties and sent off to RAF Bawdsey Manor on a 4-week course to learn the necessary skills. On arriving I found



that my rather special job title was changed to Fighter Plotter. Evidently in the early days of the war the RAF had sought to disguise the fact that it had developed a very efficient use of Radar to ensure that our Fighters were used to the best possible effect and did not want to let the enemy know by

advertising such a vital part of the whole setup. As usual the Forces hadn't found it necessary to change the job title in 1950,

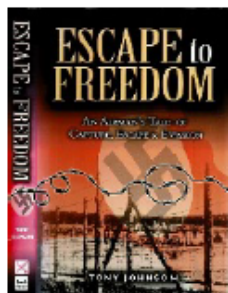
At the end of my training I was posted to a small Radar Station, RAF Wartling. Situated between Eastbourne and Hastings. The living and working sites were about a mile apart and when I arrived at the latter, I was told 'we don't have Fighter Plotters, you are a Radar Operator. It's the same as Fighter Plotting but you read the plots out instead of receiving them to plot on the table.

Despite this I had a very happy time at Wartling although the living conditions were very primitive. We were a mixed bunch of misfits in RAF terms, but we worked very hard at times as our numbers were too small to maintain a 3-shift system. During the many exercises we had to cover our operations with two 12 hour sessions. A consolation was that we were the only Forces Station within reach of the young ladies of Eastbourne, we had a marvellous pub just up the road selling mind destroying Scrumpy, and a local hotel who welcomed us to their open-air swimming pool on the long Sussex Summer days in 1950.

Remembering Tony

Longer serving branch members will have memories of some of the ways in which he was involved in the branch. The lunches and Christmas dinners he organised at The Countryman in Great Bowden were always well attended but there was a limit to the number of passengers/crew members on that Canal outing. Was he at the helm when we nearly got stuck? He regularly attended branch meetings, for a few years was on the top table as Treasurer. Did he take your money at Coffee Mornings or was he off duty and enjoying his coffee and biscuits, chatting to those on his table? As a scooter driver he had the reputation with Bernard Halsall and Dick Fulford for speed and some members suggested they should be given coloured smoke generators and emulate the 'Red Arrows'. His flying had been had been in a real much larger aircraft as a wireless operator/airgunner but as a retirement hobby, he simulated flying using computer programs, getting himself promoted to pilot. In reality, his wartime operational flying ended

very abruptly when his Wellington Bomber was shot down on his first mission. What happened after that is described in his book, 'Escape to Freedom'.



This was mentioned in the outline of Tony's life read at the funeral service. Having left school at 13 years of age he later joined the RAF and received training in the North East of England where he met Land Army girl, Joyce. She was waiting for him when he returned from his escape from the infamous forced march of prisoners of war from Poland to central Germany, to meet up with Allied Forces towards the end of the war.

He and Joyce were married on 19th May 1945 in Horden, Durham. After twins arrived they moved south to Essex where after the tragic death of one of the twins two more children were born. By this time, having joined the Police Service, he was making good progress in this career, eventually rising to Detective Superintendent and then to Deputy Co-ordinator of what is now the National Crime Agency before retiring in the mid 1970s.



Moving to Market Harborough, he worked for the District Council and in his spare time started research which led to the publication of the book. Sadly Joyce did not live to see his success, having died in 1987. Later he met Betty who, from Partner became full-time carer as his health declined.

County Conference

Out of the 33 Branches in Leicestershire and Rutland, only 8 Branches attended! There was an expression of grateful thanks to all the Standard Bearers who had been particularly busy last year. Lady Gretton was thrilled with her retirement gift.

Bill Brown, the County Chairman reported that

In 2021, there will be a celebration the RBL being 100 years old; the Women's Branch is to be restarted!; a LGBT Group is to be started; Condolences sent to the family and friends of County Committee member David Backhouse who died this morning; 2 Nominations are required for the County Committee.

Guest Speaker didn't turn up nor did the County Chaplain!

Stewart Allen from the Membership Council who is standing down on 6th March 2019, gave RBL news including that that 300 Normandy veterans and carers, are being taken on a liner paid for by the RBL for the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day landings; the RBL Visitors Centre at the National Arboretum has been finished at a cost of £8.2 Million.

Remembrance Sunday:

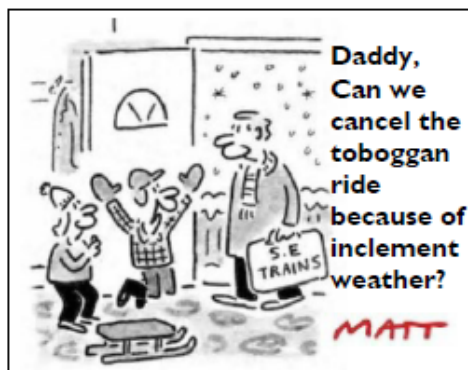
Under an Act of Parliament dated 1923, including subsequent amendments, it states quite clearly that Local Councils have the responsibility for looking after War Memorials, and organising Remembrance Parade

Continued on p7

Bits and Pieces

February News Headlines

- 1900** Trade unions create Labour Party
- 1915** UK moves to defend Suez against the Turks
- 1925** Hitler's Nazi Party will shun violence
- 1940** All shipping fair game for U Boats declares Hitler
- 1955** Motorway network planned for Britain
- 1975** Margaret Thatcher is new Tory leader



February Dates

- 2nd** Candelmas Day which is halfway between the Winter and Spring Solstices
- 14th** St Valentines Day originally thought to be when the birds chose their mates
- 22nd** Thinking Day is when Scouts and Guides remember their founders
- ????** Shrove Tuesday if Easter is before 16th April

Obituary

We regret to report the death of Branch member Anthony Frederick (Tony) Johnson on 7th January after several weeks of serious illness. We extend our sincere condolences to his family and his partner Betty Ramsay. A funeral service and burial were on 17th January.

Continued from p 6

The RBL has a current membership of 228,000; the decline in numbers reduced from 8% a couple of years ago, to 3.5% this year; Members with Direct Debits now stands at 60%; Branches were once again encouraged to keep up the flow of Information regarding welfare work to HQ, as this has been used to good effect to lobby MPs.; last year 187,000 people contacted the RBL; there is now a Social Isolation Group within the RBL, to combat loneliness; the Membership Book has been re-written and will be published in the Spring.

Next Year's County conference will be held on 11 January 2020 at Monuntsorrel Memorial Hall. From 2021, the Conferences will be held on the 3rd Saturday of January,

National Statistics for last year - 4,356 people used the Family Break Service; 90,386 visits to Pop-In Centres; 4,684 users of Handyman Service; 5471 people occupied Break centres; 1,153 people attended

adventure Breaks; Poppy Appeal total £49.6 million (County £688,011 - highest ever).

Branch members are always welcome at **Peaker Park** at their social events details of which will be given here when their programme for 2019 has been received.

Committee Members

Pat Middleton (MH 445827)

Kathie Morley (MH 419714)

Barbara Pickup (MH 433492)

Brian Thomas (MH 431119)

Sara Whitley-Kinzett (MH 434476)

**LUNCH
AT THE
ANGEL**



for good food and good company

5 MARCH

**MEET IN THE
BAR AT NOON**

MENU

Beef nugget in sauce on mash;
Vegetarian sausages on mash; Smoked haddock on fried potatoes; Vegan winter stew & roast potatoes.
Fresh fruit salad & sorbet; Lemon meringue; Raspberry & frangipane tart.

Tea or Coffee and Mints £9.50

To book, contact

Jill Mann 01858 461572

jillmann164@gmail.com

To cancel, ring **The Angel (01858 462702)** before 10 am on the day or you will be charged

What's Going On?

Forthcoming Events

- 5 Mar Branch lunch
13 Mar Branch Meeting followed by a talk
22 Mar Anniversary Dinner -see enclosed application form
2 Apr Branch Lunch
10 Apr Branch Meeting & talk
- 3&4 Aug Harborough at War at the Showground (details later)
- 11 Sep Branch Meeting & poetry reading

Welfare

If you know any one who may benefit from Legion welfare 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 dependents. Locally, visit the **Pop In Centre** at the Library 10 am-noon on the second Thursday each month

In Touch Next Month

Centre pages story, Miscellany, Remember This?, News, etc.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. The editor reserves the right to decide what is to be published. No part may be reproduced without prior permission.

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Branch Website

www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/
market-harborough
Committee - see Page7