



The Royal British Legion



Market Harborough Branch

Reg Charity 219279

In Touch

Issue 140

May 2010

The monthly newsletter (founded 1996) of the Market Harborough Branch of the Royal British Legion.

**Next
Monthly Branch
Meeting
Wednesday
June 9th**

Function Room,
Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd,
Market Harborough
7-30pm

Letters

Reading your item about young victims of war, brought to mind a grave I found in Wigston cemetery a few years ago. The military headstone was engraved 'Leading Cadet John Derek Woodward, Air Training Corps. 29 Aug 1943, age 16'

Being an ex cadet this interested me so I made enquiries to the senior RBL members. One, who had been a war-time cadet, told the lad had cycled to Bruntingthorpe and had managed to get a flight in a Wimpy (Wellington bomber) doing a test flight. Unhappily the plane crashed and he was killed. I mentioned this to the late Ray Atton, our Club President who had served in the RAF as a driver. He told me of a job he did during the war driving two officers to a funeral in East Anglia. This turned out to be 3 ATC cadets who had been killed in a similar way. I also recall reading a small item in a national newspaper while I was serving in the RAF in Germany saying a pilot had died after ejecting from a Vampire jet over the North Sea, the pilot being Pilot Officer Tony Clayton. I realised that this must have been a fellow cadet of mine from 1F Sqn ATC who had been the only cadet I had known to be accepted as an officer cadet at RAF Cranwell. After leaving the service I became friends with Tony's cousin who was best man at my wedding.

Ian Richardson

Hon Sec Wigston Branch RBL
Editors note

Derek is one of some 50 air cadets recorded on the CWGC web site as killed during the war. The aircraft he

was flying in was Wellington III BK431 - J piloted by Fg Off Heath with 6 others on board. They took off at 1125 for an air firing detail and 15 minutes into the flight the bolts securing the lower port wing spar failed and the aircraft crashed near Oakham. Derek was a member of 1434 Squadron ATC which later became part of 1F (City of Leicester) Squadron. The Runnymede Memorial has the names of several cadets who I believe were lost at sea.

Sainsbury's

Thank you to Sainsbury's for their generous donation towards the running costs of *In Touch*.

If you know of companies who may want to advertise in the Newsletter please contact the editor.

Directory Enquiries

Caller - I'd like the telephone number of the Scottish knitwear company based in Woven.

Operator - I can't find a town named Woven - are you sure you have the right name?

Caller - Yes, that's what it says on the label - Woven in Scotland.

Welfare

If you are aware of any one who qualifies for, and who may benefit from, the Royal British Legion welfare services please contact

Betty Ramsey
01858 434923

VE Day 1945

Word of the surrender had been circling for days. There were two celebratory false starts – one on April 28, another on the morning of May 7. Finally, the official announcement of the cease fire was broadcast on the evening of May 7. On 8 May 1945 Winston Churchill addressed the crowds gathered in Whitehall - saying -

'God bless you all. This is your victory! It is the victory of the cause of freedom in every land. In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this. Everyone, man or woman, has done their best. Everyone has tried. Neither the long years, nor the dangers, nor the fierce attacks of the enemy, have in anyway weakened the independent resolve of the British nation. God bless you all'

In London the streets were filled with people and street parties. Bands played, flags flew and the air was filled with fireworks. At Buckingham Palace, Prime Minister Winston Churchill appeared with the Royal Family on a balcony overlooking an ecstatic crowd that packed the square below.



The euphoria was, of course, short-lived. The horrors of the Nazi concentration camps had yet to unfold, and the war in the Pacific was unresolved. The British troops returned home (as did the war correspondents) to rejoin their families and rebuild their lives and careers. And when, that summer, the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki finally did bring the war with Japan to an end, they also signalled the beginning of a new conflict.

For the next 40 years the Cold War held the world in its icy grip.

Ken West's VE Day

I was on the 3 o'clock train from London Road (Leicester) station. After a most miserable journey we arrived at Victoria Station where normally every pass and paybook was scrutinised most meticulously by the 'Red Caps', this time it was "straight through lads" without a single check. They just wanted rid of us.

As the train passed through London, the whole of the capital seemed to be on fire. Great bonfires burned at every street corner, crowds of people danced and sang, waving and cheering us as we passed, a brief half hour of celebration on a miserable journey. At Dover, the usually officious RTO's were missing and we were on to the ferry in double quick time. Like everyone else they wanted us out of the way.

A troop train awaited us at Calais and we were off into the night. Dawn broke as we halted at the sidings of Armentières, a normal stopping place. We were told there would be a two-hour wait. Carriage doors flew open, a mass of khaki de-trained and were over the fence and across the road to the cafes, where the locals were still celebrating from the previous day. Toasts were drunk and we danced with the mademoiselles of Armentières as they celebrated their liberation. Shouts of "All aboard" caused a scramble back over the fence to catch the train as it slowly drew away, with everyone happy that we'd celebrated VE Day, albeit a day late.

(Ken is Betty Jeacock's brother. This article was posted by the Branch on the BBC People's War web site.)

Shop keeping in the 50's

What a splendid presentation by George Seward at the last meeting. The tour round his shop was fascinating and entertaining.

It no doubt brought back many memories in the audience as they saw comics, newspapers, cigarettes from yesteryear. Reminded me of my smoking days graduating from Park Drive to being one of the big boys on Capstan Full Strength, well I was 13 by then! More meetings like this - I should think so. What do you think?

Friendly Fire!

I received the following story from George Gamble about a friend of his named David Tranter.

A true account recalled in my 66th year of an incident which took place a few years after WW2 in a terraced house in a Leicester suburb.

From as early as I can remember a shiny brass shell case had adorned the hearth of fireplace. I was told it was for a Spitfire cannon and was one of a pair my father had acquired while stationed as a guard at a fighter station prior to being sent to North Africa with the Leicestershire Infantry. In the early 50's the landlord modernised the house and the old cast iron range was removed and a smart new tiled fireplace was installed. My parents were very pleased with it, particularly my father who no longer had to 'black lead' the range every Saturday. The shell case took pride of place in the hearth alongside the fire and became the holder for the fire poker. In order to get the new fire to catch hold quicker Dad would thrust the poker under the coals to enable a

better flow of air to draw the fire, this was regular practice for a number of years UNTIL!

One weekend Dad was doing his usual chore of lighting the fire and as I felt I was hindering the process of domestic maintenance I went upstairs to my bedroom.

Eventually I started back down the stairs, steeper than modern stairs and with a dog leg at the bottom entering the living room to the right of the fireplace. As I neared the dog leg an ear splitting explosion and a heavy iron poker flew through the open stairway door and thumped past my shins into the wall. Shaking I leapt down the few remaining steps into the living room, Mum was all of a dither and Dad was drained of all colour, the shell case was lying on the opposite side of the window which had a large crack in the glass. Although the hot poker had stood in the many times over the years it must have been usual and a lot set off the firing poker into a After a cuppa to



The Dud Shell—Or the Fuse-Top Collector
"Give it a good 'ard 'un, Bert; you can generally 'ear 'em fuzing a bit first if they are agoin' to explode."

Dad began to contemplate the gravity of what had happened and remembered his brother had the second shell case. He set off on his 'Harpers' bike to warn him. Our shell case disappeared shortly afterwards and I was later told it had been 'put away' where to I don't know and never found out.

The damage to the hearth, although comparatively minor stayed as a constant reminder of the near miss and if I had been just one step further down the stairs I may not have been here to tell this tale. What had been intended to despatch 'Uncle Adolph' may so easily have turned into a nasty case of 'friendly fire'.

Over the years I have often wondered if fewer items of ordnance had been diverted from the war effort by over enthusiastic souvenir collectors would the enemy have been defeated earlier and my Dad come home from the war sooner – was Dad the author of his own misfortune?

Cartoon by Bruce Baimsfather

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**MESSAGE LEFT ON A
BRITISH ARMY
ANSWERPHONE:**

Thank you for calling the British Army. I'm sorry, but all our units are out at the moment, or are otherwise engaged.

Please leave a message with your country, name of organisation, the region, the specific crisis and a number at which we can call you.

As soon as we have sorted out Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia, Iraq, Sierra Leone, The Congo, marching up and down bits of tarmac in London and compulsory health and safety at work training, we will return your call. Please speak after the tone or, if you require more options, listen to the following

If your crisis is small and close to the sea, press 1 for the Royal Marines.

If your concern is distant, with a tropical climate, good hotels and can be solved by one or two low-risk bombing runs, please press 2 for the Royal Air Force. (Please note that this service is not available after 1630 or at weekends.)

If your enquiry concerns a situation which can be resolved by a warship, some bunting, flags, a damn good cocktail party and a first class marching band, please write, well in advance, to the First Sea Lord, The Royal Navy, Whitehall, London SW1.

Branch Directory

No one asked to be left out of the Directory so this will now proceed. Disappointingly only a handful of members agreed to have e-mail address included. A sign that not many members have, or use, e-mail?

Bill Tasker

Bill who died earlier this month was born in 1919 in Sutton, one of seven children. He joined the Army in 1939 and met Kath when stationed in Feltham. He served 5 years in Egypt and after the war Bill and Kath married and daughter June was born. An excellent gardener he entered flower shows winning many prizes. Fishing was a lifelong passion. He pulled more than fish from the water. He saved an army officer from drowning, pulled daughter June aged 8 from the Thames and Kath from the Nen. In 1966 he had major surgery. Soon afterwards June married Peter. Joanne and Darren were born in the following years. June & Peter moved to Harborough in 1972. Bill and Kath followed when Bill retired in 1980. They moved to Wales for 6 years but Kath became ill and they returned to Harborough. Kath died in 2003. In 2007 Bill moved to Little Bowden where he enjoyed church life. Bill always made people feel better in his company. To June he was "a gentleman, a wonderful dad, so generous"

Puzzle Corner

a bit of brain training for you

What number comes last in this sequence. Answer on back page

1, 9, 1,
4, 1, 9,
1, 8, 1,
9, 3, 9,
1, 9, 4,
?

Important Notice

If you have to cancel your Angel lunch on the day phone Glenys before 11am.

If by any chance Glenys is not available then phone the Angel on 01858 462702

Failure to do so will mean you will have to be charged for the meal.

Central Band of the Royal British Legion

The Central Band under the direction of Captain David Cole MVO MMUS ARCM RM is the premier and flagship band of The Royal British Legion.

Now in its 64th year, the Band continues to represent The Legion on many formal occasions including annual conferences and special concerts.

These have included such high-profile events as The Royal Tournament, the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, remembrance services at Westminster Abbey and more recently with the RPO at Central Hall, Westminster.

Their many concerts throughout the year take them all over the country.

Their latest CD is 'Marching as to War'. Tracks include The Contemptibles, 1914, Machine Gun

Guards, and Aces High.

Other CDs include, 'Remembrance Day', 'The Shadow of your Smile', and 'Fame, Stage & Screen'.

They are reasonably priced and available via all good record shops or internet.



Tuesday June 1

**Reservation to
Glenys Hocking-Davies
01858 467835
before 25 May**

Cancellations on the day to Glenys before 11 am. If Glenys is not available phone the Angel 01858 462702 before 11am or the meal will be charged for.

Menu

*Baked white fish, mashed potato,
parsley sauce and vegetables*

*Roast loin of pork, stuffing, roast
potatoes, vegetables and gravy*

Chicken salad, warm new potatoes

*Vanilla cheesecake, mandarins,
passion fruit coulis*

Fresh fruit salad with cream

*Rich chocolate tart with vanilla ice
cream*

coffee & mints

Only £7

Meet in the bar at noon

What's Going On?

- 1 Jun** Lunch at the Angel.
Meet noon in the bar.
- 12 Jun** Harborough Carnival.
Helpers needed for
branch display.
Names to Betty or
Mark please
- 19 Jun** RNA Cheese & Wine
7 to 9-30pm
36 Lubenham Hill, £5
includes two glasses
of wine
- 4 Jul** Armed Services Day.
Celebrate our armed
services past, present
and future Welland
Park. 10 to 2. Helpers
needed to assist.
Names to Betty or
Mark please.
Static displays, banner
parade, ATC band, St
John's and ACF, Sun
set Ceremony & more
for your enjoyment
- 6 Jul** Lunch at the Angel.
Meet noon in the bar

Puzzle Corner—Answer

5

The sequence of numbers make up
the years that the two World Wars
started and finished.

Branch Contacts

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Poppy Appeal
Dave Pryor
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Wreaths
John Liddell
01858 465003

Standard Bearer

George Fleming
01858 462711

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01858 467835

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Next Committee Meeting 3 Jun

And Finally

Mooning Around

The first meal eaten on the moon was
by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. It
consisted of cold roast turkey plus all
the trimmings.

The last time a man walked on the
moon was in 1979.

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