



Annual Conference The Branch Chairman, Mark Hudson, will attend the Conference in Torquay as Branch Delegate at the end of May.

Donation The Market Harborough Scout Council has donated £100 to the Branch from money collected at the recent St George's Day service.

Membership The total number of Members now stands at 132, and the latest, Mike Cheeseman, was welcomed to the Branch.

Husbands Bosworth RBL Branch VE/VJ celebrations planned for Sunday 10th July include an exhibition, picnic and drumhead service.

Market Harborough Working Man's Club John Cox reported on 60th Anniversary fund-raising events held at the Club, which would continue until VJ Day when proceeds would be presented to the Branch.

National Arboretum A new building was to be opened at an event from 10am to 3.30pm.

Poppy Race Day This is always a popular day out - and in a good cause, too! Why not join the party and treat yourself to a flutter at Newmarket on August 27th? A coach is being arranged and if you want to be on it, please ring 01858 462 143 without delay.

The RNA and Sailors' Sunday Mike Middleton outlined proposals for this year's celebration on Sunday July 10th and extended an invitation to all Members. The usual annual service in Little Bowden Church would be modified in recognition of the 60th Anniversary and standards would be invited. The Cadet units and others had expressed interest. A buffet supper is also planned.

Betty Ramsay's Birthday Present At a celebration held earlier this month by our esteemed Branch Secretary, a Poppy Appeal collecting tin contained £58.70.

Branch Membership Directory

Please note the following amendment:

We welcome a new member:

01858 445872 Cheeseman Mr M H (Mike)
5 Nithsdale Avenue, Market Harborough LE16 9PD.



The Diary

Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143. Joan welcomes your ideas for events, outings, etc.

SOME DATES TO KEEP FREE

- 11 Jun Harborough Carnival - Visit the Branch marquee
- 17/19 Jun Railways at War, Gt Central Railway, Loughboro'
- 4-10 Jul Veterans Awareness Week & 60th Anniversary End WW
- 8 Jul Indoor Street Party (see page 2 for details)
- 9-10 Jul Beaumanor Hall Concert and Thanksgiving Service
- 10 Jul Sailors' Sunday (for details see Notices)
- 27 Aug Poppy Race Day at Newmarket - book coach seats now
- 18 Oct Branch Autumn Dinner at MH Golf Club
- 5 Nov Branch Coffee Morning
- 11/13 Nov Remembrance Services in MH
- 19 Nov Remembrance Concert, Baptist Church

The date of the next meeting is June 8th

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room at the Conservative Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Committee meets in the same room on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.00 pm

Mr & Mrs F T Ashmore
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The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

www.mktharborrbl.ukvet.net

In Touch

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In Touch on-line

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The Editor Writes

The news media highlights the 'awful behaviour' of youngsters, leading in one case to the banning of certain 'threatening' items of clothing in a shopping centre. How refreshing, then, it is to read in this newsletter (which, incidentally, much prefers to report good news) of the initiative of the local Air Training Corps cadets. The item on page 2 gives details of a joint event with our affiliated friends in the 1st Squadron, which is aimed at bringing together young and old to celebrate the 60th anniversary of VE/VJ Day.

The important thing to bear in mind, however, is that the proposed indoor street party is not something the oldies have dreamed up to encourage the youngsters. On the contrary, the idea comes from the cadets, who have invited us to participate. It is to be hoped that the oldies will respond to this expression by the cadets of the value they put on the association of our two bodies. So, don't delay, show your appreciation and order tickets now!

Stand and be Recognised - By JKL

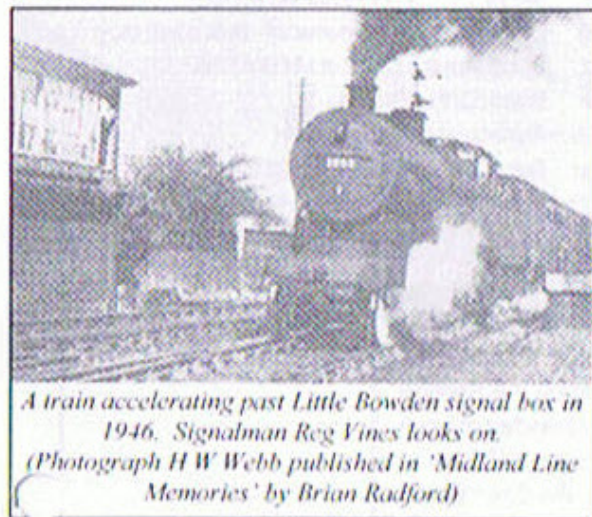
The situation is a lonely sandy beach on the north-east Norfolk coast near Happisburgh. A group of young men are staying in a farmhouse and the only access to the beach is across a meadow and down a ladder propped against the crumbling cliff.

They decide on an early morning swim and their clothing is a towel round the waist. Leaving their towels on the beach, they enter the sea. On coming out of the water, and before reaching their towels, they realise that two young ladies, who happen to be walking along the beach, are looking at them.

At speed the men grab their towels and leave the beach. At the top of the cliff, those men with their towels round their waists wanted to know why the eldest had his towel round his head. His response was that while he could not speak for them, as far as he was concerned locally he would be recognised by his face.

there was until the crane went through. When they came back I looked up the line towards Seaton and the starting signal had gone! The jib had knocked the signal off. Jack Lovesey didn't realise what had happened - but that was Jack. We used to call him "Mad Jack" - that was his nickname. Because of this incident I had to stay there for 24 hours.

Another day, another story. Still at Wakeley and Barrowden, I was in the signal box with a man named Ron [unclear], a relief signalman. In the yard we used to have sugar beet wagons and Silcocks cattle cake vans and wagon sheets were put over some of these wagons. We had to fold these very big sheets.



A train accelerating past Little Bowden signal box in 1946. Signalman Reg Vines looks on. (Photograph H W Webb published in 'Midland Line Memories' by Brian Radford)

This particular day we had folded up about five sheets. They lay about 10 yards apart on the siding alongside the wagons when the station master came along to take stock of the wagons in the siding. We watched him come up the yard and probably because he was looking at the wagons he fell over the first sheet. He then got up and proceeded to fall over all five in turn. What a comedy act. Ron said "If he doesn't go back in the office soon he's going to break his b..... neck!"

The Bulldog!

That station master at Wakeley and Barrowden when I first went there was called Mr Hurst and he had a bulldog. I used to get there at half past seven on early shift to light the fire in the office. I would see to both passenger trains, issue the tickets and see the passengers on and then he would arrive and sit at the desk and go through his paperwork. His bulldog would come with him into the office and lay in front of the fire. To draw the fire up and get it going we used to put a blower over the front of the fire but the bulldog knew all about it and the minute you put your hand on the blower the bulldog used to attack you. Getting the fire going was a risky occupation.

Jack Lovesey and Don Faulkes were standing outside the signal box one day waiting for the up-locals from Peterborough to come through to change over, when we saw the station master coming with the bulldog. Without more ado Jack and Don got back on the engine. (they shouldn't have been near the signal box anyway), and when the station master walked round the front of the engine Jack opened the steam taps and covered the station master and the bulldog with steam - well I've never seen a dog run so fast back home. It was so funny but of course there could have been a serious side to it. They were happy times.

Kibworth Station

During the 1950s, one of my postings was the box at Kibworth Station. Henry Sears, George Knott and Bill Driver (ex RSM in the Army) worked this box and I remember well arriving there for the first time. Bill Driver kept me standing on the door mat because he didn't know who I was. He wouldn't let me in. The signal box was like a palace with polished lino and everything shining like a new pin.

Sid's reminiscences will be concluded soon.





Working on the Railway



The Memories of Sidney Read

More of Sid's memories of his working life on the local railways.



Harborough No 2

I've talked about Seaton, the station master, the porters and the guards. I've talked about Uppingham, so now I'll switch back to where I started as a boy - Market Harborough. Harborough No.2 was a twenty-four hour, seven-day week continuous signal box in the 'thirties. I can remember the three signalmen who worked the box, Jack Davy, Walt Johnson and Billy Underwood. There were four roads out of the exchange sidings. You could get onto the down and up Midland main lines and onto the Western side as well. We used to call that the exchange and it was where all the wagons were loaded and unloaded, whichever way they were going - down to Leicester or Peterborough and up to Kettering. They carried nearly everything in those days.

I knew all the signalmen in Market Harborough No.1 box which had two loop lines which used to carry the coal trains and empty wagons to allow the passenger traffic to flow. It was a really tip-top system. It can never be like that again.

In Market Harborough yard was the engine shed and from there they used to ring No.3 signal box. I was in the box one day when they wanted to ship some engines off to the loco from the engine shed and they used to put them down what we called "the side of the bank". A lot of them were hand points to get out of the engine shed, but the signalman couldn't control anything out of there

and this particular day there were three engines standing down the side of the bank. Most of the coal trains that used to go up the Northampton line had a banker (another engine) on the back to assist them up as far as Lamport. On this day the banker came down the loop by the signal box at No.3 onto what we called the dead end. You could come off the dead end and come down the loop round these engines. Johnny Lever was the signalman on this dark and foggy day and when the banker came down to the stops Johnny forgot the engines were standing there and he let the banker go down the side. Well there was an almighty bang and clang. Roy Jackson was standing well down the bank because they'd had what we used to call "a rough shunt". I don't know how Johnny got away with that. It was what we used to call a PMFU! (*Your guess is as good as mine - Ed.*)

Wakeley and Barrowden

At Wakeley and Barrowden station the local train used to come down from Harborough Exchange calling at all the stations, and swap over with the locals from Peterborough. One day when I was relieving at Wakeley one of the locals from Market Harborough arrived with Jack Lovesey the driver and fireman Don Faulkes and they were shunted into the yard. There was a crane in the yard which wasn't supposed to be shifted unless the jib was down on the top of the wagon. Well the jib wasn't and the crane was fetched out onto the main line with the wagons which they were going to shunt and they went up through the platform. There was a starting signal at the end of the platform on the up-line, or

The Poppy Appeal



Dougie McMeeken has announced his willingness to resume the role of Poppy Appeal Organiser for the Market Harborough District from June 1st. Mr McMeeken was confident that the advantages brought by the Portakabin and an improved record system, plus the publicity

resulting from the 60th Anniversary Celebrations of VE and VJ Days, will result in another excellent year. The gratitude of the Branch was conveyed to Dougie.

Bob England was thanked for all his efforts as Organiser during the current, very successful, record-breaking appeal year, which has already exceeded the total raised in the previous twelve months.

60th Anniversary VENJ Day Celebrations

Air Training Corps Cadets of 1084 Squadron are keen to organise an Anniversary celebration for young and old in association with the Branch. Their proposal is for an indoor street party and Brian Marshall is working in conjunction with the Squadron. Arrangements have been made to hold the event in the Conservative Club, Market Harborough, from 7pm on Friday, 8th July. Nostalgic music will add to the period atmosphere and games will be organised.

It will be possible to accommodate 120 people, seated, in typical street party style, of course, on benches at trestle tables. Tickets, costing £2.50 each, would be allocated equally between the Squadron and the Branch. Brian is certain the evening will be a success and, if you would like to support the enterprise of the Cadets and share in the enjoyment, he urges you to apply for your tickets as soon as possible. They are obtainable from Brian on 01858 463668 or Mark Hudson on 01858 434436.

Ken West remembers how he spent VE Day.

About a week after taking part in the fighting to liberate Amhem, I was summoned to report to the Commanding Officer. Surely not a medal in recognition of my modest contribution! On arrival with five others, the Colonel informed us that we had been granted Home Leave - more welcome than any medal.

He explained that there was a truce in place to allow the RAF to drop food supplies to the starving people in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Hopefully, the truce would continue until the war ended, which he thought was nigh. Should the war end whilst we were on leave, he asked us to not overstay our leave, but to return to allow others the privilege of Home Leave.

Sure enough, half way through my leave the BBC announced the Germans had surrendered and that on 8th May 1945 we would celebrate the victory in Europe - VE DAY. All home based service personnel would get two days special leave *but* those on leave from overseas would report as per pass! Typical, those with cushy home postings would get two days whilst those who had been fighting would get nothing. I checked my pass, it read 'Report to Victoria Station, London at 2359 hrs 8th May 1945'.

On the morning of VE Day, I cycled with my wife to say my farewells to my parents and family, and found everyone busily preparing for a street party. The rest of the morning was spent helping to erect tables and benches in the middle of the road, before returning home to pack my kit. To ensure that I kept my promise to the Colonel, my wife made sure that I caught the 6 o'clock train from London Road 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

Members Look Back on World War Two



street corner where crowds of people danced and sang, waving and cheering us as we passed, just 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 had scarcely broken as we halted at the sidings of Armentières, the normal stopping place for the change of engines or re-fuelling. 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!

Pat Middleton and sad times on Merseyside.

I was 18 months old when the war started. My Dad was one of the first to be called up because he had been in the Territorial Army. We lived in Wallasey, just over the Mersey from the Liverpool Docks. My very first memory is of sitting on my Mum's knee under the stairs listening to the bombs falling. My Mum was holding me and rocking me backwards and forwards and I had my eyes so tightly closed I could see coloured lights.

After Dunkirk my Dad's regiment was stationed for a short while on Lord Bingley's Estate in a small village in York-

shire called Branham. Mum and I went to stay there and we had a room in one of the cottages. We were called evacuees. The village people did not like it when one of the evacuees won first prize at the whist drive. We kept going back to Wallasey when things 'quietened down'.

My Grandad and Nanna lived close to us in Wallasey. Grandad's first war had been the Boar War, he had medals and a letter of commendation from his Commanding Officer. Grandad was a Manager at 'the mill', Vernon's Flour Mill down on the Wallasey docks. My Mum's twin sister Lily, and her new husband Jim also lived close to us. Jim was not called up because of his job, he was a printer on the Liverpool Echo. On 21st December 1940 Lily and Jim were going dancing with some friends at the Tower Ballroom in New Brighton, on the way there they popped in to see Grandad. Nanna had come up to Yorkshire to stay with Mum and I. While Lily and Jim were with Grandad the air raid siren started so they all went under the stairs until the raid was over. That is where they were when the bomb hit the house. Grandad was 62 and Lily and Jim were both 27.

Mum and Nanna had a telegram on Christmas Day to say they had all been killed, and we went straight back to Wallasey. The house was looted before we arrived so Nanna lost her engagement ring and her pearls as well. My Mother remembers the funeral, three coffins draped in the Union Flag, but the grave diggers were so busy they had opened the wrong grave, so the funeral procession had to wait until the right one had been opened. 422 civilians were killed on Merseyside during that one raid.

When the war ended Dad came home. During one of his battles he had lost an eye because of a bomb blast. However he went back to his old job in the Post Office. A few years later the sight in his other eye went and although he had several operations he was blind for the rest of his life and a St. Dunstaner.

More of your stories next time - if you will kindly oblige, that is. (Yours in hope -Ed.)