



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity No. 219279

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106

Founded in 1923



Annual Report

for the year

1st October 2011 to 30th September 2012



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Introduction

Looking back on this year the Branch has achieved a lot, thanks to the unstinting help of those members who gave so much of their time to further the work of the Branch and the Legion.

The 'In Touch' newsletter continues albeit reduced in the number of pages and now concentrates on local and County news. The Branch web site is kept up to date with text, photographs and the e-copy of In Touch. I am pleased that a volunteer for Public Relations was found, thank you John Morley. The branch is benefiting from increased news coverage both in the press and on radio.

Coffee mornings have been held throughout the year both for the RBL and our sister organisations RNA and RAFA. It would be remiss of me not to say a big thank you here to the ACF and ATC who regularly provide cadets (and staff) to help at these events.

The Branch was represented at the Armed Forces Flag Raising and the Armed Forces Day event at Welland Park was a great success. There is no doubt the highlights this year were the several low passes by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Dakota during the closing ceremony and the earlier Red Arrows flypast on the outskirts of the town. The Branch was again present at the Carnival where several new members were signed up. The Social scene continues thanks to Les Moore and Pat Middleton arranging the monthly lunches and annual dinner.

We now have only 2 case workers but welfare work still carries on led by Betty Ramsay. The Branch is developing a closer relationship with a local care complex (Peaker Park) where several of our members are resident. A cheque was handed to Alderson House following a bequest from a deceased branch member.

Andrew Granger DL was appointed President following the resignation of Brian Marshall through ill health. Monthly branch meetings continue and we have had several 'after meeting' events.

The Branch keeps in touch with the Council and the NHS regarding the Portico War Memorial at the Cottage Hospital and has made representations to the Council about cleaning the Town War Memorial. The Council were very sympathetic to our request and we wait to see what happens.

The Poppy Appeal launch generated much interest with the decorated shopping trolley delivering the collection boxes and the Pipe Band drawing the crowds into the Square. The Ramsay Ramblers once again walked the street of London in the Poppy Walk and members collected at Leicester City Football Club Poppy match and of course during the street collections.

The Remembrance Garden crosses and Cenotaph were re-furbished by HMP Gartree and Certificates of Appreciation were presented to the Prison officers involved.

The Youth Group meets from time to time and helped launch the Poetry Competition which generated a lot of local interest. The winning poem in the Competition was read out on during the Sunset Ceremony held on November 12, the Saturday before Remembrance Sunday.

I look forward to the Branch continuing its progress as it celebrates its 90th Anniversary next year.

John Standish, Branch Chairman

November 2012



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106



Highlights of the Year



Armed Forces Day Branch Stand



Anniversary Dinner - Meet and Greet.



Medal winning Ramsay Walkers at Haig House



Andrew Granger 'happy to be our new President'



County Standard Bearers' Parade to Church Service



Con and Brian enjoy the Xmas Lunch



Betty in recruiting mode at Carnival



Contacts with Peaker Park Care Village



Awards to Prison staff & Mark Hudson



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



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 three local Cadet units, Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps and St John Ambulance, are affiliated to the Branch.
- 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 a third in the last ten years to 165, of whom 59 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, a Standard Marshall and Executive Committee member. The National R B L Annual Conference was attended by the Branch Chairman (our elected delegate), Standard Bearer and Branch Secretary.
- 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 held at 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.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



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. Carry out fully Local Welfare responsibilities by developing the work of the Welfare Team.
4. Increase still further the Branch's contribution to the Poppy Appeal.
5. Work to ensure the Branch's long term survival e.g. through greater involvement with youth and the community and increased effort to improve 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.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106



Legion in the Community We were there

Doing what was expected of us.

It is now taken for granted that the Branch will take a prominent part in the local community calendar. The Branch organised the Remembrance Parade and Services, created the Remembrance Garden, arranged a Remembrance Concert with the Harborough Band, had a display at the Town Carnival and an eye- and ear-catching launch of the Poppy Appeal. We were again involved with the District Council and others in taking a leading role in organising the local celebration of Armed Forces Week. 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.



The Pipe Band with some of the Cadets who took Poppies to the shops. (2010 photo)

Other Involvement.

An initiative which brought the Branch before the public was organising a Poetry Competition. The idea arose from discussions with youth groups but entry was open to all within defined age ranges. The theme was Remembrance and the winning poems were published in the local press.

The contact we have with the fairly new Peaker Park Care Village, through four members who have become residents, has been developed to encourage collaboration between Branch and the organisation.



Silence after raising of the Union flag



The Parade Marshal gives the salute

Each year the County Standard Bearers hold a Parade and Rededication Service at a local Branch and this year were invited to Market Harborough. The occasion was another opportunity to present another aspect of the Legion and the activity of the Branch to our local community.

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 from time to time seek our opinion, advice and help. We have continued to be involved in discussions about the future of the war memorial at the Cottage Hospital. The Branch had contributed to the County Records Office 'History of the Legion' project and was invited to take part in a reception and presentation at County Hall to mark its completion.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Poppy Appeal

Finding sufficient 'Poppy People' for street collections has again proved difficult but the uniforms of the Army Cadets in The Square and market area attracted passers-by to get their poppies from them. A few more static points were established in shops and businesses but the number of house to house collectors is declining. Nevertheless, and despite the prevalent economic conditions, it is probable that the total amount raised during the year will approximate last year's of about £30,000.

Efforts to **increase public awareness** of the Appeal have continued. The Appeal Launch



was again held on The Square with members of the Northampton Pipe Band attracting attention with their music whilst the ATC, ACF and newly formed Sea cadets prepared their military themed vehicles ready to deliver Poppy kits to shops and other outlets in the town centre. The Branch and Cadet standards also added colour and sense of occasion.

A publicised "mini forum" at the Angel Hotel gave publicity to the Appeal but did little to recruit new collectors. The stall in the Market Hall during the collection period acts as an information point as well as serving as a control centre for the street collectors. It is also a quite effective source of donations. The Coffee Morning at the Harborough Theatre and the Annual Remembrance Concert again publicised the Appeal, although primarily intended as fundraising events. A different approach to keeping the Poppy Appeal in the public eye was having space, displays and items for sale in a 'Poppy Shop'. Unforeseen circumstances arose which forced its closure before it had become well known. Intended improvements to storage, preparation and administration which the premises would provide, were also aborted.



There have again been donations to the Appeal in lieu of flowers at a funeral and the legacy of a Branch member who died during the year, made another generous contribution to the fund. Sponsorship for the intrepid Ramsay Walkers completing the London Poppy Walk again added a valuable sum to the Fund.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Communication

Branch Newsletter - *In Touch*

Although continued appeals for someone to take over the editorship have been unsuccessful, issues have continued to be produced monthly reaching Number 168 in September, but only in the single sheet format started last year.

A team of volunteers still deliver *In Touch* by hand but now most members living out of town receive theirs by post to avoid the need for some quite long and expensive car journeys. Some members have elected to view the newsletter on the web-site and it is hoped more will do so in order to save the very high cost of postage, the equivalent of more than three times a member's £2 Branch subscription.

Branch Web-site

The 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 used photographs where appropriate. New sets (galleries) have been added covering the events of Armed Forces Week, Anniversary Dinner, Carnival and County Standard Bearers' ceremony. The recently introduced new Home Page facilities have been used to draw attention to the October Poppy Appeal coffee morning and the November Remembrance Garden. The attractive welcoming introduction to the branch has been maintained.

Branch Archives

More material has been contributed by members and some has been added to the 'Scrap Books'. The web-site also serves as an archive and some documents such as the Branch Annual Reports are lodged with the County Records Office.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Social, Fundraising and Other Events

There has been no designated Social Team Leader again this year but the Branch Secretary has assumed responsibility for fundraising and for ensuring that the ad hoc system of individual members arranging specific events provided a reasonable mix of social activities.

Regular **monthly luncheons** at The Angel Hotel have continued to be supported by a regular core of members with occasional 'new faces' but overall numbers have been fewer than they used to be. The January belated **Christmas Luncheon** was again shared with our RAFA and RNA friends as was the **Anniversary Dinner** in March. As in previous it was held at the Market Harborough Golf Club where we were joined by members of Desborough and Husbands Bosworth branches and the Cadets. There were more 'after meeting' social events than last year: Two **Buffets**, in November and February; Christmas mince pies in December; talks by Sir Michael Carleton-Smith, George Gamble and Phillip Wright; two quizzes and a light-hearted game.



Mainly RAFA members on this table some wearing their Christmas cracker hats.

The attempt to arrange a social event involving both younger and older generations was not successful and resulted in only a poorly attended 'Tea Dance' and Beetle Drive. For the few present it was fun! Several of our members accepted the invitation to join our RNA friends at their enjoyable **cheese and wine evening** held in July at the Great Bowden Village Hall.



Some remembered the Hokey Cokey

As usual, two **Coffee Mornings** were held during the year; that in October, in aid of the Poppy Appeal and in February for Branch funds. ACF and ATC Cadets gave strong support with valuable assistance on stalls and in the kitchen and at each helped to realise over £300. The annual **Remembrance Concert** performed by the Harborough Band, provided an enjoyable evening of popular music, and made a valuable contribution to the Poppy Appeal.

The County **Festival of Remembrance** was not held at the de Montfort Hall but at the Leicester Cathedral but our Standard Bearers and a few members did attend.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch
BR0106



Remembrance

Armistice Day observances followed the now established routine of wreath-laying at the small memorial in Welland Park followed by that at the gates to the Memorial Gardens. There the large gathering of ex-service people and members of the general public included two classes of young schoolchildren. Two of them 'laid' the special, personalised tokens of remembrance which their classmates had made. The two minutes silence, signalled by firing maroons, was reverently observed and nearby traffic was halted. Similar respect for, and understanding of, the Silence was shown in shops and other places.



Young children involved in Armistice Day observance

Remembrance Sunday took the same form as in previous years starting with a parade of youth and adult groups led by the ATC Band, to the Parish Church. There was a disappointing number of Branch members in the parade. The Service was conducted by the Branch Chaplain, and attended by a very large

congregation including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the local M P, Edward Garnier, QC, and the Council Chairman. They took the salute when the parade returned to The Square where many members of the public had gathered for a short service, the wreath-laying ceremony and, at eleven o'clock, two minutes silence.

Garden of Remembrance . For the eleventh successive year, members again created this tribute to the 326 local men and woman who lost their lives in the two world wars and whose names appear on the nearby war memorials. Following the arrangement made with HMP Gartree new crosses had been made by the inmates and other items renovated. Again, it was much appreciated by members of the public, more of whom placed a remembrance cross near the large cross bearing a family name or in the specially created plot close to the Cenotaph.

The Garden formed a fitting setting for a Sunset Ceremony in which the Branch Standard, preceded by a lone piper, marched to the Cenotaph, the Union Flag was lowered, the Last Post and Reveille sounded by a young bandsman, the Exhortation and Kohima verse recited, two minutes silence observed and the winner of the poetry competition read his evocative poem.





The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Welfare

The Branch Welfare Team for the whole of this year has again had only two Caseworkers: Revd John Morley and Betty Ramsay who is designated Welfare Officer. They will be required to attend National Caseworker Courses in 2013 in order to comply with requirements for working as a Royal British Legion Caseworker or Hospital/Home Visitor. They are now part of some 290 Caseworkers covering the East Midlands.

Generally cases will come from the County Office in Leicester for the local volunteers to contact the applicant and arrange a visit. Final decisions and any awards are made in Leicester. From time to time the Branch will be asked to contribute financially to a local case from its Welfare Fund. During the past year we have not been required to do this but, following a generous legacy left by a former Member, we were able to present a cheque for £500 directly to Alderson House, the Poppy Break Centre for this Region.

During the past year, the Team has dealt with varying applications and queries. Some have concerned holidays at a Legion Poppy Break Centre which can provide a break for serving and ex-Service people, their partners, dependants and carers. It is means-tested but consideration is always given to a social as well as financial need. Some enquiries have resulted in the completion of a Form A. Where an applicant is not in receipt of a means-tested benefit, this form will enable County Office to decide if there is a financial need.



The conservatory at Alderson House

In addition, numerous visits are made to the housebound, those in hospital, care homes or simply just keeping in touch. The distribution of our aptly named monthly newsletter In Touch, is an important part of 'Welfare' and the Welfare Team is grateful for feedback received from the 'paper boys and girls'. It is also important that all members keep the welfare team informed of any need.

Branch welfare activity should be seen against the background of that of the Legion as a whole. During the year £15.1 m was spent on Welfare (with some £5.4 m being claimed back from other Organisations through almonisation) and 35,701 new cases were opened. The recently appointed Welfare Advice and Information Team Leader also reported that in Leicestershire and Rutland £64,000 from the Poppy Appeal was spent on welfare in the first six months' of the year.



Another form of welfare is the Poppy Calls service which helps those in need with small household maintenance work. It has dealt with more than 300 enquiries, completing small jobs costing up to £300, free to eligible clients. The fitter for this area and who is also the regional senior fitter, is a Branch member. The presence of his van at events during the year has helped to publicise this aspect of Legion welfare.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Ceremonial

It no longer seems strange to see a lady, Hilary Brazil, as Branch Standard Bearer or her predecessor, George Fleming, being her deputy. We are also becoming used him carrying a cane in his additional duty of a Parade Marshall. Both have had a busy year in their respective roles.

Hilary carried the Standard at the local Poppy Appeal launch and in the Leicester City Football Poppy Match Parade of which George was Marshall. They were together at Remembrance events: at Leicester at the Festival in the Cathedral, at Market Harborough for the Sunset Ceremony (which also included Piper, Graham Prior) and the Sunday Parade and Services. Hilary was also on duty that day at Lubenham and Foxton and later in the month, at our Remembrance Concert. George acted as Parade Marshall at the ANZAC Day Ceremony in Leicester .



After Remembrance Sunday Service

In the company of many Standards from branches throughout the Legion, Hilary carried ours at National Conference in Scarborough in May. In June, the Branch hosted this year's County Standard Bearers' Association rededication parade and service. She marched ahead of the Standards of the other county branches and George was a Marshall but it is to be regretted that they were very poorly supported by their Branch colleagues. Both were again part of the County



Armed Forces Day opening ceremony

parade and service at Leicester Cathedral for Armed Forces Day. Still in the company of other Standards, Hilary was part of the County Drill Display team under Marshall, George, when they staged one of the events at the Armed Forces Day occasion in Welland Park. The opening and closing ceremonies also involved them both but at the earlier Flag Raising ceremony, John Cox carried the Branch Standard, enabling George to act as Marshall.

Hilary maintained the tradition of the Branch Standard being at the HMS Stevenstone Association Reunion Service at Foxton and at the local RAFA

Battle of Britain Service . 'In House', she was on duty at the Anniversary Dinner and a coffee morning. The standard was also present at the AGM.

The Branch makes it known that the Standard would be carried at the funeral of any ex-service person if so requested. Hilary's work commitments have meant that George Fleming, as deputy, has responded to such wishes eight times during the year. In appreciation of this service, bereaved families often have made donations to Legion funds.

Both Hilary and George have shown dedication to their ceremonial duties and the importance they see in carrying them out at a high standard of proficiency. They have been involved with the County Association and attended many of its training sessions and events.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Meetings and Membership

Average attendance at Branch Meetings was 31 which, despite having 165 members was very much down on the previous year. It is just 18% of the number members and is the latest but greatest decline in this measure over the last several years. For comparison the 2004/5 report gave an average attendance of 44 when there were 128 members, i.e. 34%. Ten years ago although there were only 114 members the average attendance was 40. Current poor attendance numbers are partly accounted for by increased problems of health and transport. About 30 members live outside our “catchment area”, and for others there are conflicts of interest. We do not know how many do not wish to attend our meetings, or why.



It is particularly unfortunate that so few members were present in February to welcome our newly elected President, Mr Andrew Granger and see him receive his Jewel of Office. When he presented Certificates of appreciation, first to Mark Hudson for his ten years as Branch Chairman, and then to the representative of the Prison Workshops for the work they have done to enhance the crosses used in the Garden of Remembrance, there was a lack of adequate collective members' thanks to the recipients.

There was also poor support for Committee Meetings and in March there was insufficient numbers to form a quorum. To allow the Branch function with fewer members present at a Committee Meeting, it was agreed at an Extraordinary General Meeting to amend the Branch Bye-Laws to allow ‘...a quorum of four Members of whom no less than two should be Officers...’ instead of the seven required in the original Bye-Laws. In the event, the average attendance has been eight, including Officers.

Several events and activities have been arranged to provide some social element to meetings evenings. Although there was only one buffet (that after the AGM), Members were able to enjoy mince pies in December. Light-hearted events involving members present included a game with the theme Bletchley Park and two quiz sessions. More serious were the very interesting presentations by Sir Michael Carleton-Smith relating some of his service experiences during the Cold War and post-colonial periods, George Gamble with Medal stories and Phil Wright on how TRBL provided support for him and his young family.

News of some Individual Members

Vice Chairman, Rev John Morley was appointed as the new County Chaplain.
The Ramsay Walkers again completed the London Poppy Walk.
George Fleming was appointed County Deputy Parade Marshall.
Tom Ashmore and George Fleming were each awarded the Gold Badge,

Sadly, the following members died during the year: Sidney Amos, Terry Cooper, Peter Johnstone, Sydney Read and Ronald Veryard.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Involving Young People

The Chairman and Secretary have continued to hold occasional meetings with Cadet Unit representatives to discuss ways the Organisations can work even closer together to their mutual benefit. Last year the suggested Poetry Competition was successful and the overall winner read his entry at the Sunset Ceremony in the Garden of Remembrance. The 10 years old girl who won in her class, was invited to attend a branch meeting where her entry was read. The results of the current competition to design a poster about the work of the Royal British Legion, will be in next year's Annual Report. The idea of a social get-together to link the older and younger generations was not successful. Young people failed to support an evening Disco which would have followed an afternoon 'Tea Dance' and even this appealed to only a quite small number of Members and others.

Young people are involved with the older generation at Remembrance time. The schools emphasise its importance and some classes of young children are taken through the Garden of Remembrance and then to use the Books of Remembrance in the Museum where also they can talk to Branch Members who served in the War. On Armistice Day, two youngsters had the honour of being official wreath layers, carrying tributes made by their classmates. On **Remembrance Sunday** each cadet, Scout and Guide unit, with its own standard, was in the parade to and from St Dionysius Church, led as usual, by 1084 Squadron ATC Band.

The Poppy Appeal provides more opportunities for the cadets to work as part of a team. They are a focal point at the launch and create public interest with their military themed trolleys on The Square and as they take them through the town centre delivering Poppy kits to shops and other outlets. Some help with Street Collecting and their uniforms seem to encourage people to come to them for their poppies.

At the **Armed Forces Day Event** this year, the newly formed Market Harborough unit of the Sea Cadets had its own stand. ACF and ATC units again mounted displays in the arena and all units took part in the opening and closing ceremonies. St John's cadets were with other members of the Ambulance on their stand.

At **Coffee Mornings** cadets come into close contact with members of the public who appreciate the courtesy and helpfulness of those from the ACF on kitchen duty or the ATC on the Tombola or Raffle stalls.

The Branch is proud of these young people and members are always pleased to hear of their normal Cadet activities and successes such as those of the 1084 Squadron Band in this year's ATC National Band Contest.

We are fortunate in having ACF and ATC Officers as Branch members to keep us in touch and so strengthen the affiliations. Other members provide close links with the St John and new Sea Cadet units.

CONTENTS

Introductionfrom the Chairman	p1	Social, Fund-raising & other Events	p8
Year Highlights.....in pictures	p2	Remembrance.....traditions upheld	p9
About the Branch.....who we are	p3	Welfare.....vital but unsung service	p10
Our Objectiveswhat we try to do	p4	Ceremonial.....busy standard bearers	p11
Legion in the Community	p5	Meetings and Membership	p12
Poppy Appeal	p6	Involving Young People	p13
Communicationand Archives	p7		