

# In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996



## The Royal British Legion

Registered Charity No. 219279

Shoulder to Shoulder with all who Serve

### Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



years of caring in the  
local community



Who remembers the occasion and date when this photo was taken?

### Next Monthly Branch Meeting

7.30 pm Wednesday 13 March

Committee 7 March

Function Room, Conservative Club,  
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Issue 173

February 2013

## Branch News

### Members

It is with regret that we have to record the death of Mrs Kathleen Noble who as a member, will be remembered as the friend who accompanied the late Peter Wilson at a number of formal occasions. The Branch was represented at her memorial service on 13<sup>th</sup> February.

Two lady members, Terry Broughall and Mary Symon are now in residential care following serious falls in their homes. We send them our best wishes in their new surroundings.

Membership Secretary, Myra Grewcock reports that unfortunately nine members chose not to renew their memberships for the 2012/13 year. However, we have one new member who was with the Ashley Branch until it

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### OOPS!!

Apologies for the errors last month. On Page 8, the date of the Anniversary Dinner is 22 March not 9 March as printed. On Page 7, the latest date for booking lunch should have been 26 January.

### Last month's cover photo

Taken on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1997 after the Dedication of the new Standard and 'Trooping of the Colour'

## Candid Camera at Christmas Lunch



## In Confidence

Anon

I was reading a book the other day about the history of the Commandos called *By Sea and Land* by Robin Neillands, and one of the incidents mentioned revived memories of events in the Yeman in 1967. Neillands was in 45 Commando when it was decided by Whitehall to withdraw from the Yeman after some hundred-odd years occupation, mainly as a coaling station for the Royal Navy at the port of Aden.

He describes how they gradually withdrew south, collecting their military equipment and material for shipping back to the UK, and their main problem was pilfering and theft by local tribesmen.

However, being Commandos, they managed to ship most of their gear without too much trouble and by November 1967 had proceeded to the UK via the Red Sea and Suez Canal.

Alas, not so for the civilian element! The War Office Works Directorate was responsible for the housing and domestic equipment of the troops as well as the Civil Servants and their families, and this, too, had to be shipped home. In retrospect it would have been more sensible to have moved the civilians first and then the Commandos, but who knows how the

minds of planners work. To load and ship considerable quantities of stores without military protection was a nightmare and more and more of the supplies fell into the hands of thieves and pilferers.

The problem was how to explain the discrepancies and shortages when the ship arrived home. Auditors are not fussy who they blame for shortages, so who would be held responsible? Surely heads would roll with such huge discrepancies. There was nothing

to be done, however, but to load the ships and wrack our brains to think up some plausible excuses before the inevitable enquiry.

In the event, the Gods looked kindly upon us!

The Six Day War between Egypt and Israel and Colonel Nasser, forced onto the back foot, took the drastic step of blocking the Suez Canal. He did this by sinking the ships which happened to be sailing on the Canal and, wonder of wonders, ours was one of those sunk. The Canal did not reopen until June 1975, by which time all our problems had been forgotten and, much to our relief and peace of mind, all stores had been written off.

It just goes to illustrate the power of prayer!

(02/2005)



## 15th February 1942

By Tom Ashmore

Sunday, 15th February 1942 may well be regarded as the blackest day in British military history or, indeed, of the British Empire, when General Percival 'went under a white flag' to capitulate to the Japanese in Singapore. It marked the success of their well planned campaign to occupy Malaya and neutralise the strong British Far East Naval presence based in Singapore. That dreadful event is commemorated in a very realistic 'wax-work' tableau in the Museum on Sentosa Island.

Standing near it in 1996, my wife, Joan and I were reminded of standing on



the beach near Kota Bharu in north east Malaysia eight years earlier, where the Japanese had landed on 8th December 1941. Looking at the solitary concrete pill-box which faced them as they came ashore, I tried to imagine the reaction of the ill-prepared Indian Army troops

defending that stretch of coast as they faced the initial wave of 5600 'crack' troops of the 25th Division of the Japanese Imperial Army, two



warships and four other support ships'.

This relatively small force was to be a diversionary action, advancing down the east coast whilst a much

larger force moved overland from Indo-China through Thailand to drive down the west side of Malaya. It was in this part of the country that British forces included the first Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment based at Sungai Patani. Fifty four years later Joan and I visited

friends who lived there and who took us to a Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Taiping, about sixty miles south of their home town. In a sense we were following the route of those brave 'Tigers' as they were driven back by the enemy.

The cemetery is in a beautiful, peaceful situation outside the town and we

commemorated Pte P W Pargiter, again of the Leicestershires.



In the November 1996 issue of *In Touch* I described our visit and how, as a result of writing to the Leicester Mercury, I received information about these two soldiers, but I also had a letter from a survivor of the retreating convoy in which Pargiter had been killed. My namesake was a regular soldier and Percy came from Kibworth where, like his father, he worked in the Gas Works.

spent some time looking at the inscriptions on the headstones. We saw a number from the Leicestershire

Regiment but it was an odd sensation finding my own name, T Ashmore. He had died on New Year's Day 1942, age 23. The



cemetery is in two parts, one being for those of non-Christian faith. Both are immaculately maintained and we thanked two of the grounds-men who were working there. By chance we met the local CWGC superintendent and took us to the civil cemetery to see the single War Grave there. It had the standard headstone but in a civilian style plot and

Recently, I have learned more about the Taiping war cemetery by looking at the data published in the CWCC web-site which lists the details of all the 329 casualties buried there. About half died during the Japanese offensive and of these 27 are from the Leicesters

This story started with the tragic defeat of British forces in Malaya and Singapore so to end here is a photo of the tableau in the Sentosa museum, depicting the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945.



## From some Minutes you might have missed.

First branch meeting held at  
Conservative Club 17/5/1990

John Cox elected Chairman at AGM  
succeeding Peter Wilson 20/12/1990

Coffee Morning to be held at the  
Settling Rooms on 17 December;  
Deputies needed for Secretary and  
Treasurer 10/11/1994

### Birthdays - A Puzzle

Mr Jones had been a regular soldier whose wife bore him three sons at two yearly intervals. All were now in the Forces and today are celebrating Harry's 24<sup>th</sup> birthday. Tom is older than the brother stationed in England but younger than the soldier. The one in Scotland is older than Dick and Harry is older than his brother in Wales. The sailor is younger than the airman.

Can you give the age, Service and location of each brother?

### Welfare

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

**Betty Ramsay**  
01858 434923

## The Brotherhood of Man

by A Former Naval Person

Funny stories of incidents in the Services abound. The long suffering Sergeant Major is often the Army's subject. In the Navy the character is Stripey, the 3 badge A.B.; too wise to seek promotion after 15 years or more service; always prosperous and always able to act dumb, thus avoiding detection of any wrong doing, and very popular with his Shipmates. Stripey, with his brush, knew that he was safe if he kept moving; he was the duty Parade Ground Sweeper.

The Commander of the Barracks, noted as a most unpleasant 3 Ringer of doubtful parentage, challenged

Stripey one day with that well used Naval question - "What are you?"

Stripey had been to Church Parade the



morning before and heard the Sin Bosun (Chaplain) emphasising the brotherhood of man and assuring all, including 3 badge A.Bs that in the sight of God all men are equal.

These good words appealed to Stripey, so he found it a simple matter to answer the Commander's question - "What are you?" "I'm your brother Sir!" (05/01/1997)

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closed. Welcome aboard, Mr G R Faulks. Branch Membership is now 157.

### Social

Members are invited to join the RNA outing to Peterborough Greyhound Racing on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, leaving M H at 6pm. Cost about £22.50 including a three course meal and a great view of the track from your own table. Details from John Marlow on 01858 465502.

A Poppy Factory visit is planned with date, cost, etc. details given later.

A Social Evening to be held at Peaker Park on 8<sup>th</sup> May will be instead of the Branch meeting. The February 'After Meeting' Talk, due to be given by George Seward, had to be postponed. It and others in a full programme of events will be listed in *What's Going On* each month.

As part of our Anniversary year celebration, there will be a Float in the Carnival as well as a stall. More details and appeals for help, for this and the Armed Forces Day event, later.

A 'Corporate Message' from the Legion National Chairman, contains information about major changes in hand to greatly improve how the Legion operates. We will report on developments as they become known. [www.britishlegion.org.uk/pathway](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/pathway) gives background & current progress.



**MEET IN THE BAR AT NOON  
5 MARCH**  
for good food and good company

### Menu

Roasted leg of British Lamb with  
Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes  
and gravy

OR

Grasmere Farm faggots rested on  
mashed potatoes with onion gravy

OR

Fillet of smoked hake resting on  
Dauphinoise potatoes with a rich  
tomato sauce

All served with a Selection of  
Vegetables.



Warm apple tart with vanilla  
ice-cream

Fresh Fruit Salad with Fruity  
sorbet

Rich Chocolate torte with a  
mini jug of cream



Coffee and mints

£8.50 Pay on the day

To book, ring Les Moore (01858 463112) before 26 Feb. To cancel a booking you must phone The Angel (01858 462702) before 10 am on the day or you will be charged.

## What's Going On?

### Forthcoming Events

- 23 Feb Poppy Appeal Coffee Morning - MH theatre. Helpers and items for stalls, please!
- 5 Mar Lunch at The Angel 12 noon for 12.30. See p7.
- 13 Mar General meeting 7.30 pm and a 90th Anniversary 1923 presentation.
- 22 Mar 90th Anniversary Dinner 7 for 7.30 pm. MH Golf Club. Book ASAP Ring Pat on 01858 445827
- 10 Apr General meeting 7.30 pm and a Talk by Rev John Morley
- 25 Apr ANZAC Day
- 8 May Social event at Peaker Park in lieu of Branch meeting.
- 18/19 May National Annual Conference, Llandudno
- 22 May RNA outing -see p7
- 12 Jun Branch Meeting and a Quiz by Janet & Brian Lee
- ? Jun M H Carnival . See p7
- 22 Jun AFD Service and Parade Leicester Cathedral
- 29 Jun National Armed Forces Day - Nottingham
- 30 Jun M H Armed Forces Day

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