



Editorial

A small band of stalwarts recently ventured into the big city and enjoyed a conducted tour of the Leicester Mercury offices. Having worked on a local evening newspaper thirty-odd years ago, I was particularly impressed with a couple of aspects in the production process that were different to what I remembered. The first, predictably, was the advance in technology, particularly in the use of lasers and computers. The second, and far more significant to my mind, was the employment of women in the despatch area, which came as something of a shock to me.

In my day, the printing trades unions were very strong and the production departments were most certainly not graced by the presence of the fairer sex. The trade was, I suppose, one of the last bastions of male supremacy, but newspapers have joined the likes of stuffy golf clubs, the Long Room at Lords and, indeed, the armed services, where gender is no longer an issue. Welcome to the twenty-first century.

I have always believed that everyone has a story to tell – and the surface has only to be scratched very lightly to reveal a tale that will fascinate the reader or listener. Being a modest bunch, we think that our story will be of no interest to anyone else. Not true. I enjoy doing a voluntary stint at the Harborough Museum and, being an inveterate chatterer, I often strike up a conversation with visitors. I had hardly to touch, let alone scratch, a couple the other day to hear an interesting yarn which, I hope, will appear soon.

hundred miles to travel, in hostile country and over rough terrain. As there were no roads, only tracks, the Commander Lt Gen. Roberts felt that it would not be practical to take any wheeled transport, which meant that only mountain guns could be taken and all supplies had to be carried by animals. The Force comprised three Brigades, one Cavalry and three Infantry, each having one British Regiment and three Indian Regiments, mainly Sikhs, Ghurkhas and Punjabis, the total numbers being- British 2,836, native 7,151. The animals comprised 190 staff horses, 1,779 cavalry horses, and 450 artillery mules, but there were the transport animals as well these being 1,589 yabus (a type of afghan mule) 4,511 mules, 1,149 ponies, 912 donkeys and 6 camels. Apart from the troops there were 7,000 followers.

The logistics to move this body three hundred miles in twenty days was enormous, but Gen. Roberts was a gifted staff officer and his organization was of the highest order. The greatest problem was feeding the animals and foraging parties ranged far and wide to gather fodder. The death count of the animals was high and further purchases of camels were made en route. But the Field Force arrived at Khandahar on 31st August, the march being considered one of the finest in British Army history. The Battle of Khandahar took place on 1st September and was all over in the day.

It seems incredible that British troops should fight in such a remote country four times in such a relatively short time.

Branches in the group are Corah, Great Glen, Humberstone, Husbands Bosworth, Leicester No.1, Market Harborough, Oadby, Southfields, Thurnby and Wigston.

In the "Structure of the Legion" section of the Management Handbook, a Group is defined as a convenient association of branches, particularly in a large county. It is the basis for mutual support, acts as a forum and offers a communication link between county and branch. Alternative titles are in use – district, sector, borough branch.



What the Papers Said in 1938

MARKET HARBOROUGH BRANCH BRITISH LEGION

Will all applicants for Car Park Attendants please send their applications to E Hardwick, Hon Sec, 3 Nithsdale Avenue, Market Harborough.

The name of Marlow was a recurring theme in a report (very detailed as always in those days) of an April wedding in Desborough. The bride and groom, both from the town, had the same surname as did most of the bridesmaids and ushers. But Marlow was not just a common name among the guests because the organist, apparently not related, was Mr Norman Marlow! *(For the interest of the ladies, the bride set off on her honeymoon wearing a fawn angora two-piece suit, trimmed with fox fur, brown hat with shoes and gloves. That will take some of you back a bit!)*

Looking Back 80 Years March 1923

A momentous event occurred on March 20th – the Market Harborough Branch of the British Legion was formed.

After leading the Soviet nation for five years, the retirement was announced of Vladimir Lenin, following a massive stroke.

Probably the most versatile actress of all time, Sarah Bernhardt (1844 – 1923), died in Paris.

Troop Movements – Then and Now

By Jerboa

The recent involvement of our forces in Afghanistan and the build up of military strength, in the Gulf got me thinking of the unimaginable differences in moving large numbers of troops nowadays and how it was some 120 years ago. Huge supply aircraft, helicopters, naval transport ships, and the like are commonplace these days as forces are transported all round the globe in hours or, at worst, days.

Back in 1878 when our troops invaded Afghanistan, it was necessary to assemble a sizeable force to subjugate the Afghans. The British Army on the North West Frontier formed the northern force and marched on Kabul via the Khyber Pass, while the southern arm had the longer route to Khandahar by way of Quetta and the Bolan Pass. My great-grandfather, was serving in the 2nd Battalion of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps stationed at Meerut, some thirty miles north-east of New Delhi, when orders came for the Battalion to join Lt. General Stewart's Force for the journey to Khandahar. It is not recorded what notice they were given but they left Meerut on 18th October 1878.

The first leg was by train to Mootano, which took two days, but the second stage was delayed and departed for Sukkar, on the River Indus, on 14th November. Here they disembarked, having travelled 610 miles, the remaining 350 miles would be on foot although it was reported some officers moved equipment down the Indus on rafts. The

battalion moved towards the frontier with Afghanistan, passing through Shikapore and Jacobabad. But at Sir-I Bolan, they had a set back as the camel drivers deserted in droves complaining of hunger and cold. Quetta was made on 24th December, but there were no Christmas celebra-

To explain his interest and connection with this piece of British Army history, the our member, author has written the following introduction.

When I retired some ten years ago I decided it was the ideal time to research my family history, and a fascinating hobby it has proved. During my searches I found that my Great-grandfather had served in the Kings Royal Rifle Corps from 1865 to 1882. Henry was in Canada, India, Afghanistan and South Africa and this led me on to find out why the KRRC served in these places and how they fared there. The history of the KRRC also intrigued me as they were formed in North America! I found that the Public Records Office was a fund of military history, much in great detail with original documents. Much reading of military campaigns and their political implications also assisted me in my investigations.

this was not so back in Khandahar. As soon as General Stewart marched north, the Afghans began to be a nuisance, and by July General Primrose reported that he was besieged in the Citadel under constant threat from Afghan insurgents, estimated at some 6,000 troops with 379 guns. The situation worsened and so, after six weeks in Kabul, orders were given that the troops should return south with all speed.

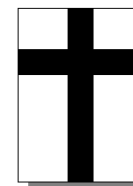
The Ghazni Field Force was quickly assembled and left for Khandahar on 9th August 1880. They had over three

tions as the march continued for another two weeks. Khandahar was entered on 8th January 1879 in Parade Order with the band playing. The whole trip of 960 miles had taken nearly eight weeks!

In the event all opposition in the Khandahar region melted away and the South Afghanistan Field Force had only patrolling to do for over a year. In April 1880, the KRRC, now part of the Bengal Division, marched north to Kabul to quell riots there but once again, it was all quiet when the Division arrived. But

newsletter in the near future to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the formation of our branch. I would like to include anecdotes, humorous or otherwise, about any aspect of the history of the branch. So, if you have memories or mementoes of activities, ceremonies, outings and social occasions, please let me know. If there is sufficient response, we could have a small exhibition at a branch meeting, so photographs would be welcome, too. Don't be put off because you think your contribution would be too insignificant – remember Tesco's slogan, "Every little Helps"!

Back to newspapers and the photograph of branch officers that appeared in the Harborough Mail last month. Let's face it, with a handsome line-up like that, is it any wonder the branch wins accolades? Perhaps we should try for an Oscar next!



In Memoriam

It is with sadness we report the death on 22nd February, at the age of 82, of fellow member Sidney (Snowy) Downes. He joined the Leicestershire Regiment in 1940 and later saw service in

Burma with the legendary Chindits.

Poor health for the past several years prevented Snowy from attending meetings but he remained an interested Branch member.

The Standard was carried at his funeral service which four other branch colleagues attended.

We extend our sincere condolences to his widow Winifred, who is also a long serving member of the Branch, and to his family.



Branch News

PILGRIMS' PROGRESS.

Members enjoyed a brief round-the-world tour when a fascinating film was shown at the March meeting. Entitled *Pilgrims' Progress*, the story was told of the wonderful work undertaken by the Royal British Legion's Pilgrimage department. Tours to war cemeteries are arranged to visit the graves of British servicemen who lost their lives on battlefields ranging from the Far East to Europe.

THE COLLECTION taken at the February branch meeting for the Victoria Cross and George Cross Memorial Fund raised £32 and a letter of thanks has been received.

OBJECTION. Letters have been sent to the District Council expressing the disapproval of members of the branch and of RNA to the positioning of a seat in front of the Memorial Gates, and suggesting an alternative location.

POPPY APPEAL. Look out for the new "all year round" collecting boxes that shops, pubs and other outlets are being asked to display. The box takes the form of a poppy.

CONGRATULATIONS to our Chairman, Mark Hudson who has been co-opted to the County Executive Committee. The Branch now has two representatives on this 15 member body, George Fleming having been elected and appointed County Recruiting Officer, at the County Conference in January.

ANNIVERSARY DINNER. A success! Full report next month.

As we go to press we learn the sad news of the death of Mrs Sheila Hudson, mother of our Chairman, Mark Hudson. She had been ill for the past few months but her condition suddenly became critical and she was taken into the intensive care unit at Kettering General Hospital where she died in Friday 21st March.

Sheila was known to many members for she accompanied Mark at many of our social functions.

We offer Mark our sincere sympathy and support and our condolences to Sheila's family and friends.



Grouping for the Future

"We all know that if we continue along the road we are travelling the 'Legion' will struggle to exist. Most branches and other organisations are facing problems getting individuals to take 'office'. What can we do about it? Do we sit on our hands and wait for it to happen or do we attempt to strengthen the existing framework already in place?"

The County Chairman, Jim Rawlinson, makes this dramatic assessment of the future facing the Royal British Legion. His message continues with details of the positive action being taken to address the situation. It has been agreed to form another three groups to join the two already in existence within the County, and Market Harborough is included with nine others in the South-East Group.

"The groups have proved very successful", the Chairman's message continues, "if only by offering advice and support to branches experiencing difficulties. Often by just talking a problem through with someone with similar interests you get moral support. Eventually the Group could become a large branch, the responsibilities of welfare and poppy would be retained within that area, true the area will be larger but the key elements will be retained."

The Chairman said this was an attempt to retain

membership and he asked members to support branch officers in their endeavour to put the plan into place. He added, "If you as an individual feel that you have the inclination and the time to help in this venture you are most welcome. Indeed this is an attempt to combine the strengths that we have at this moment in time for the benefit of the future of the County Royal British Legion".

At the first meeting of the SE Group on 10th March, Mr A L Smith of Oadby was elected Chairman, and Mark Hudson, Vice Chairman.

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"Groups" Continued from page 5



Dunkirk Veterans Welfare Memorial Trust Fund

This fund is now administered through the Legion's Welfare department.

Funds are still available to help Dunkirk veterans and their widows, and those eligible, whether in the Legion or not, can be considered for a one-off Widows' or Welfare Grant.

Please contact John Liddell (MH 465003) if you consider that there is someone who is eligible. Please remember that not only do we owe a duty to those who served at that time but also to those who gave money to create the fund.



Coffee Morning.

If you can help but did not sign the clip-board and if you have Tom-bola or Raffle items, please ring Joan (MH 462143). Bring Bric-a-brac and Cakes, etc., to Theatre by 8.45 on the day.

RNA Dance. Do support our Naval friends. Details from Mike Middleton (MH 445827)

Pub Lunch. Let Joan (MH 462143) know by 9 April if you wish to attend.

Tattoo. Seats may be available. Ring Michael Petch Mh 462143.

National Memorial Arboretum. The date chosen is that of the unveiling of a new National Service Memorial but there is much else to see and do in this 150 acres of developing woodland. Details later but ring MH 462143 if interested.

Netherlands Visit.

A few places are available on the County Standard Bearers' trip to the Netherlands in August staying in Venlo. Standards will be paraded at five cemetery visits and, as well as having free time in Venlo, there will be optional visits to the only American cemetery in the Netherlands and the attractive resort town of Valkenberg. The trip, from Friday 22nd to Tuesday 26th August, costs £225 per person. Contact Mrs Chris McCrachen, 35 Holmden Avenue, Wigston, LE18 2EG, tel: 0116 288 4660 for details.



Diary

Reminders for March and April & some other dates to keep free

- 22 Mar RNA Bric-a-brac sale. Market Hall
- 29 Mar Coffee Morning—Harborough Theatre
- 4 Apr RNA Spring Dance
- 15 Apr Lunch. Countryman Gt Bowden. 12.00
- 24/26 May RBL Annual Conference
- ? Jun MH Carnival—We will have a stall
- 28 Jun Military Tattoo Manchester. With RNA
- 29 Jun Visit to National Memorial Arboretum
- 3/5 Aug Trip to Edinburgh Tattoo
- 22/26 Aug Holland with Standard Bearers Ass'n
- 19 Sep Autumn Dinner (to be confirmed)
- 17 Oct RNA Trafalgar Day Dinner
- 25 Oct Coffee Morning—Harborough Theatre
- 1 Nov de Montfort Festival of Remembrance
- 8 Nov Remembrance Concert—Baptist Church

Meetings

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

After the 9th April meeting we hope to have a speaker to talk about the Women's Land Army.

The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch meeting, at 7.30 pm in the upstairs committee room of the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion



Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch



Founded in 1923

In Touch

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