

## Editorial

**I HAVE RECENTLY** joined a genealogy group in an attempt to trace my own and my wife's ancestors. Through the family we have been given a document that once belonged to my wife's grandfather. It is his army pay-book. When I was in the forces, we knew this as an AB64 Pt II, but in 1884 when he enlisted, it was known as Army Form B 50.

George Edward Wringe joined the Leicestershire Regiment of Foot on 30th December, 1884, and his number was 1155. This was not his "last four" but his full number!! That's a real Old Soldier. He enlisted for 7 years with 5 years in the Reserve.

This paybook shows that he served in Leicester (1884), Aldershot (1886), York (1887), Lucknow India (1888), Myingyan, Burma (1889), Aden (1890) and The Tower of London (1890).

He was promoted to L/Cpl in 1890 but was deprived of the rank in 1891 while serving at the Tower. A family story claims that he got drunk and actually fell into the moat. Conduct unbecoming, etc.??

I'll tell you a bit more about the notes, etc, in this interesting book at a later date.

Two of our members were married recently. They are Frances Cotterill and John Swan-nack. I feel certain that all branch members will join me in congratulating the couple and wishing them both a long and happy future together. Ω



**WHAT A MAGNIFICENT BEAST--** and the horse is quite impressive too!!!

This photograph of our vice-chairman, Tom Ashmore (on the right ) was taken by Ray Tyler during an outing to a shire horse centre. Evidently, Tom heard that the horse had once served in a cavalry regiment, and never being one to miss an opportunity, he realised here was a potential new member.

Our picture shows Tom leading the horse to the nearest RBL enrolment form, with promises of exciting branch meetings with buffets, outings, etc. Ω



## Web Bytes

**AN INTERESTING** visitor to the branch website last month was a lady who had "found your website very impressive and most interesting particularly from a Family History point of view." She had been attracted particularly to the story about Robert Cramp and sought permission to reproduce it in a newsletter she publishes about the study of the name 'Cramp'. With the agreement of Mrs Cramp, that permission has been granted.

**THOSE WHO WENT** to the Covert War Museum may remember that one of the agents flown from Harrington was Violette Szabo, immortalised as Odette in the film 'Carve Her Name With Pride'. On her second mission she was captured by the Gestapo, tortured and eventually executed in Ravensbruck concentration camp. For her outstanding courage she was posthumously awarded the George Cross and Croix de Guerre. Her story is one of many in "Heroines of the S.O.E." on a fascinating, well presented website <http://www.64-baker-street.org/main.html> . Ω



## Do You Know

what a "Thankful Village" is? Tom Jeacock, posed this question recently and getting no response explained that it is a village from which all the men who went to fight returned safely after the War.

A sobering fact is that of the many thousands of villages in the British Isles, only 32 are "Thankful Villages". Clearly, the term relates to the Great War. Ω



## Naval Enquiries

by Tom Ashmore

**ONE OF THE NAMES** on the town WW1 War Memorial is Simpkin C B who, research for the Books of Remembrance revealed to be Sick Berth Attendant 2nd Class Charles Bertie Simpkin who served on HMS Kent and who died on 6th July 1918, age 36. Commonwealth War Graves commission records show that he is buried in Plymouth Old Cemetery (Penycomequick).

When my wife and I visited Plymouth recently we went to the cemetery and took photographs of the grave to include in Volume 5 of the Books.

We were saddened to learn that this large (30 acre) cemetery had fallen into an appalling state of neglect under the private company which had owned it. Following the company's bankruptcy, the cemetery had been acquired by a trust whose volunteers have been gradually restoring it to a state worthy of the memory of those buried there. The plot containing Simpkin's grave is still quite rough but all the graves are accessible. However, there are still large areas where the graves are still completely hidden under thickets of bramble.

There are over 200 Naval graves, most of which are marked with tall grey slate headstones, each inscribed with the man's name, rank, age, date of death and ship. Two things puzzled us: why were there so many deaths from HMS Vivid and why were many of these Boys with ages as young as 14?

To solve the puzzles I consulted our naval types. Jim O'Brien, "HMS Vivid? Never heard of it." Bill Cotton, "Leave it with me- I'll ring you back". Later, "According to Portsmouth Naval Museum HMS Vivid was a Plymouth shore training establishment which after WW1 changed its name to HMS Drake". Bill also reminded me that he had joined as a Boy (see In Touch Issue 9) but couldn't suggest why those at Vivid had died. Jim when told that Vivid became Drake, "Well, I'm blown. I trained there in 1947!"

The question I asked neither Jim nor Bill, "What was Simpkin's ship HMS Kent?". Anyone know? Answer or more info on Vivid, Drake or Plymouth Naval base to the Editor please. Ω



## A Toad in a Tumbledrier

We reported in the June Issue the start of a courageous (or crazy?) attempt by ex-SAS-man Peter Bray to paddle solo across the Atlantic in a Kayak. His progress has been followed from regular postings on the NAKC website. From the beginning wind and sea conditions have been far worse than expected. Confined for days to a coffin-like cabin in Force 10 storms and 8 metre high waves he felt like "a toad in a tumbledrier". Despite being driven far north of his intended course, now after 60 days and many hours of strenuous paddling he is due to reach Ireland as planned in early September.



And all of this in a most ambitious bid to raise £100,000 for Charity (two children's hospices) in which our RBL County



## Branch News

### POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER.

It has to be admitted that there was more than a little anxiety when no one volunteered for this job. However, Tom Jeacock has said that he and Betty will carry on for this year's Appeal. No doubt Tom will be appealing for helpers as House-to-House and Street Collectors and for distributors. Please respond generously and offer as much time as you can manage.

At the annual County P A O conference, which this year was attended by Chairman Constance Halsall and Treasurer George Fleming, a number of innovations were explained including a newly designed Poppy Tray with built-in collecting compartment.

### NEW MEMBERS.

We are pleased to welcome to the branch, Mr Sidney Jackson, another ex-RASC man who served in the 1950's. What about some reminiscences for In Touch, Sid? There has also been a request from a lady who expressed interest some months ago, for Application Forms for herself and two others.

**THE SOCIAL TEAM** (Tom Ashmore, Irene Blissett, John Cox & Barry Thorpe) has now been joined by Steve Simpson. At a recent meeting the details of arrangements for the events for the remainder of the year were agreed as was the allocation of the Social Fund surplus. Ω

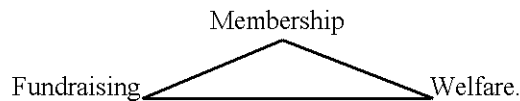
Quorn Branch 11th Annual Poppy Appeal Concert by the Band of the Coldstream Guards at Loughborough Town Hall on 14 & 15 November. Tickets @ £12 from Geoffrey Gibson MBE, 2 Wallis Close, Thurcaston, LE7 7JS. Tel: 0116 235 0946.



## Qualified ! By Betty West

**I RECENTLY ATTENDED** a two-day Branch Management Course in Leeds, organised by the Membership Training Department of the Royal British Legion as part of their programme of National Training Courses, which proved to be most interesting and informative.

We looked at Branches and Clubs from all aspects, from Finance to a Proper inquiry but much stress was put on the important triangle of



Several fresh ideas were put forward on the subjects of publicity, sourcing welfare cases, involving all Members etc and I will be passing these suggestions and contact names on to the appropriate Teams within our Branch. However, when it came to such words as ‘Apathy, Stagnation and Boredom’, with regard to motivating Membership, I knew that did not refer to our Branch! I was veiy proud to be able to acknowledge that Market Harborough already had a newsletter, ran well-attended, lively meetings and organised fund raising events. However I was concerned when we were told that, if a Branch failed to appoint a Poppy Appeal Organiser, there was no point in that Branch existing but it should amalgamate.

I will say that the course was very well organised and the leaders most enthusiastic. There

was opportunity for the forty-four delegates to chat and learn about each other’s Branches and Clubs (from Amsterdam to Blaby!), and if you did not agree with everything there was plenty of time to put your own views across and enter into active debate. I would strongly recommend such courses to any interested Member and I always hold current details of any planned (e.g. Treasurers’ Course in September). I also have a full copy of the Course Notes which any Member is very welcome to borrow. Should there be any doubt that I am fully qualified to be a Member of this Branch’s Committee, I have the Certificate to prove it! Ω



## What was F & H?

**ONE MEMBER BELIEVES** he has the answer to the question posed in the July Issue. When Pte John Bolton wrote from France in June 1915 to his pal Jack Dimpleby asking “Is the trade very brisk at F & H this year?”, he may have been referring to Foster and Hine. According to Tom Jeacock a boat hire business under that name was established on the canal near the bridge on the Leicester Road in 1910. Associated with it was what would now be called a transport café called “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”. Tom also says that regattas were organised on the canal by F & H.

This information has been passed to the Harborough Museum which now holds the transcripts of the Bolton letters some of these make reference to local soldiers who died in the War and whose names are in The Books.

Have we anyone amongst our members who is, or who knows someone interested in the history of the Harborough branch of the canal who might be able to provide any further information? Ω



## Newmarket — A Day At the Poppy Races

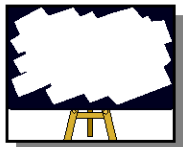
By Betty West

**36 INTREPID TRAVELLERS** and one Standard Bearer, set out on Saturday morning, 4th August to find out if the Newmarket Race Course was indeed paved with gold. The weather was good and the going fair to soft (for those with high heels).

Before the races we were royally entertained by the Wellingborough Majorettes, freefall parachutists, the Royal Airforce demonstrating armed and unarmed combat, the Leiston Band and, top of the bill, the Parade of Royal British Legion Standards — a magnificent show with Leicestershire again solely represented by Market Harborough Branch.

Then we got down to the serious business of finding a friendly bookie who would take our small investments and then spending our winnings at the RBL fund-raising stalls. There was a large, friendly crowd and plenty of good publicity for the Poppy Appeal and the RBL.

We all came back to the bus tired and perhaps some of us a little wiser. Mr Cox conducted the raffle and quiz with great aplomb but was not quite so successful with the community singing (only because some of us were trying to sleep). The bus driver’s parting words were something like “I have greatly enjoyed your company and would take you anywhere you want to go in the future.” Ω



## Notices

### 8th SEPTEMBER OUTING

There have been just enough people wishing to go on the trip to make it viable at £20 per head. This includes group admission at each venue. If your name is on the list and you have not already paid, please send your cheque ASAP (payable to "Social Committee Account") to Tom Ashmore, 9 The Pastures, Market Harborough, LE16 9EA. Ring MH 433108 to see if there are still seats. Coach leaves Conservative Club at 8 am.

**LUNCH AT THE COUNTRYMAN** has always been a success at previous gatherings so come along at 12 for 12.30 pm on 25th September for another enjoyable occasion. Please sign the list at the September meeting or ring John Cox, MH 434983 so we can tell the pub how many to expect. Also say if you need or can offer a lift.

**ANNUAL DINNER** arrangements will be similar to previous years. The 4-course menu will offer a choice of two starters, two main dishes, sorbet, selection of desserts and coffee. There will be a glass of wine on arrival, with other drinks purchased from the bar. "Suitable" music will be by last year's artist. There will be only enough formality to make the occasion special with two "Official" guests and their spouses and invitations extended to some other branches and individuals. The cost will be £15 with a £2 discount for Branch members and partners. Cheques payable to "Social Committee Account". Early booking advisable. Details from John Cox, MH 434983 or Tom Ashmore, MH 433108.



## Diary

Reminders for September with some other dates to keep free. (see also page 10)

- 8 Sep RAF Cosford & Blists Hill Museums
- 12 Sep Branch meeting
- 25 Sep Lunch at Countryman, Gt. Bowden
- 26 Sep Branch Committee meeting
- 10 Oct Branch meeting & talk about the ATC.
- 12 Oct Annual Dinner - M H Golf Club
- 27 Oct Poppy Appeal Collections start
- 27 Oct Northants. Festival Concert—Derrogate
- 3 Nov Remembrance 2001— de Montfort Hall
- 10 Nov **Our** Remembrance Band Concert
- 10 Nov Royal Albert Hall Festival of Rem'ice
- 11 Nov Remembrance Sunday
- 14/15 Nov Coldstream Guards Band - Loughboro' (see p2)

### 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, Market Harborough. The next meeting is on 12th September and will be followed by a Buffet.

The Branch Committee meets on the **Last Wednesday** of each month (except December).



## The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

### Market Harborough Branch



Founded in 1923

## In Touch

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