

### For Your Diary

- 10th Feb. 7.30pm Branch meeting (see p17)  
24th Feb. 7.30pm Committee Meeting  
3rd Mar. 7.30pm Bosco's Bash (see p17)  
10th Mar. 7.30pm Branch meeting - Video film and Talk by John Clark about Porton Down work on decontamination of Anthrax.  
24th Mar. 7.30pm Committee Meeting  
28th Mar. Royal Marines Band Concert at de Montfort Hall. Ring John Cox for details. Transport may be available.  
14th Apr. 7.30pm Branch Meeting - Social event to be arranged.  
1st May. Coffee morning at Harborough Theatre  
12th Jun. Market Harborough Carnival  
26th Jun. Poppy Race Day at Newmarket

Watch this space for details of events still being planned. With your help and support we can have a really exciting and worthwhile programme of social and fund raising activities.

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### Bosco's Bash

In response to popular demand, Tony Johnson has arranged an Informal Evening Meal for Wednesday, 3rd March in a private room at Bosco's, Coventry Road, Market Harborough. The price of the meal is £7.95.



If you put your name down at the January meeting and have not yet returned your choice of menu form and deposit to Tony, please do so before 31st January.

If your name is not on the list and you wish to attend, ring Tony on MH 440501 immediately.

### Meetings

Regular 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.

At the next meeting, on **10th February**, after the usual short business session, there will be a talk by John Liddell on Iraq. John has first hand knowledge of the Middle East having served with the Arab Legion.



Reg. Charity No. 210279

**The Royal British Legion**  
**Market Harborough Branch**  
Founded in 1923



# In Touch

Issue 17

January, 1999.

Editor -- Bernard Halsall  
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## Editorial

For the first time in the history of the Branch, we have a "Lady Chair" and the final stronghold of male domination has fallen! However, it should not be forgotten that women have been an integral part of our defence forces since early in the First World War. My own mother served for over two years in France and Belgium from 1916 onwards, as no doubt the mothers of some of our present members also served. And in the second war, women took a prominent part in the defence of our Island in all three Services, whilst today women are trained for combat at sea, on land and in the air.

Sadly, Women today seem to bear the brunt to the suffering in any conflict - indeed in Central Europe they appear to be the main target for hostile attack and terror.

So "Welcome, Madam Chair, and may we all give you the support necessary to make your term of office a Happy and Successful one".

### Help!

In my first issue as Editor I put in an appeal for material to publish in later editions. I was overwhelmed with nothing!

However, I had no doubt that this was entirely due to the approaching Christmas and its attendant duties. So, now with Lent the next milestone get your pens (and fingers) out and lets have it! There must be something fairly interesting that has happened to you sometime in the long years that have gone before. Don't worry about grammar and spelling. It can't be worse than mine. If we can receive a short note or comment from each of you, then a reasonable "float" of articles can be put together, and my job will be a lot easier! In anticipation, very many thanks.



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Continued from p 11

The results of my research were startling to say the least. At that time there were some 40 prisoners out of 374 who had served some time in the armed forces: this was a staggering 10.6% of Gartree's prisoner population! On my wing there were 12 men out of 80, some 15%, and of these 6 men had been sergeants or above. These 12 men had between them given 130 years of service to "Queen and Country".

*This is the first part of an interesting and thoughtful article from an unusual source. It will be continued in our next issue.*

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**APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE**

**John Liddell on The Arab Legion.**

**10th Feb - after the monthly meeting. Don't miss it!**

## Christmas Presents

by Hotspur

Christmas presents change in significance as one journeys through life. The early years are probably best, as it is mainly "receiving" without the problems and expense of "giving". And after the flush of early adulthood for most of us it is a changed Christmas routine. We have to think of others. And kid ourselves that it is "Better to give than to receive"! After passing 50 years old the whole business becomes a bit of a bore.



So I was delighted this Christmas to receive a book, the review of which I had read some weeks before, but could not afford - as it was Christmas very soon and I had not bought anything for anyone.

The book is written by a cryptographer who in January, 1942 at the tender age of 22 joined the Code Department of "Inter-Services Research Bureau" - or S. O. E. for short. His father was an antiquarian bookseller and his shop was called "Marks & Co." Of 84 Charing Cross Road. No doubt some of us have browsed through the window of the shop on a wartime leave. The author, Leo Marks knows his stuff and holds the reader's attention for the whole of the 600-odd pages. Within a year he is promoted to Head of Agents Codes, and one's taken on a fascinating journey along the corridors of Whitehall by this brash but brilliant young man.

I can guarantee he will hold your interest the whole time - I am on page 326 for the second time and its not a month since Christmas.

I nearly forgot - the book is called "Between Silk and Cyanide" by Leo Marks, published by Harper Collins. You will enjoy it.

## News

**OOPS!!**. At the last AGM it was agreed that a Resolution should be put to County Conference to remove much of the discrimination against Associate Members. When the suggested amendments to the Rules were submitted to County it was pointed out that what we proposed was already operational. We were using an out of date Rule Book!!

**January Branch Meeting.** Amongst ideas for social and other events for the coming year was the suggestion that as 1999 would see the last performance of the Royal Tournament and that the Legion would be taking part, the Branch should arrange a visit on 31st July if there is sufficient interest from members.

The Legion, in conjunction with Newmarket Race Course, is holding a "Poppy Race Day" with special events including a massed parade of standards. A good deal of interest was shown at the meeting and a Branch outing is possible. More details as they become available.

Later in the year it is hoped to have an evening of films of local interest made and shown by Harborough Movie Makers. This is the group which video recorded the Légion d'Honneur presentation which they are now editing to produce a video film for our archives.

The Diary on page 16, lists events already agreed but what other activities there will be depends on Branch members. The Editor will pass on your ideas, interest and offers of help or contact any Committee member.

## **Market Harborough wins Cup!**

It's not cricket or soccer or even tiddly winks! It is the Jack Quain Trophy for Endeavour, awarded to the Branch in Leicestershire and Rutland which is adjudged to have made the greatest endeavour during the year. This imposing piece of silverware was presented at the County Conference on 23rd January to the our Delegate, Vice-chairman, Tom Ashmore.

To compete for the award a Branch has to demonstrate especial effort in each of a number of areas. Under "raising money for the Poppy Appeal", we cited improved planning, organisation and control; an extra day of Street Collections; more static collecting points & more wreaths provided. Effort to raise money for Branch Funds included five specified events, seeking sponsorship and donations, obtaining payment for advertising space in *In Touch*, etc. As aids to recruiting we mentioned producing and displaying a new leaflet, our stand at the Carnival, "Open Harborough" exhibition and Internet Web site demonstration and encouraging members to "spread the word" in their everyday contacts with other people. We referred to successful welfare work and to many examples of Publicity given to our activities to increase Public Awareness of Branch and Legion. Under Public Relations we listed some of the many organisations and individuals with which we maintain close contact.

Our submission stressed that major emphasis had been given to attempts to increase Members' interest and sense of pride in Branch and Legion as a prerequisite to success in all fields of our endeavour.

## **Veterans' Advice Unit**

The Ministry of Defence has set up a Veterans' Advice Unit to provide ex-Servicemen and women with a dedicated information and advice service.

In establishing the VAU, MoD and VAU staff have liaised closely with their government departments, local authority social services, and non-governmental organisations\* who work in this area. The VAU will continue this liaison to ensure it provides a comprehensive, informed and helpful service.

The VAU is staffed by experienced Warrant Officers from the Army, Navy and Air Force, who are trained in telephone communication skills and have access to a range of information likely to be of use to individual ex-Servicemen and women.

Veterans can call the VAU on 08456 02 03 02 at local call rates. Telephone lines are open Monday to Friday, 09.00 - 17.00, with an answerphone operating outside office hours.

\* The RBL has been operating LegionLine which can provide information on any Service or ex-Service related topic for many months. The local call charge number is 0345 725 725.

### **Promotion**

In the days when Policemen had a routine beat, our friend was on night duty, and his beat took him past his own house. It was winter, and around midnight he started to get very cold. On passing his house he threw a small pebble to the window of his bedroom and when his wife appeared asked her to throw down his overcoat. When he reported to HQ at the end of his duty the Officer in charge said to him, "Well Bob, how long have you been a Sergeant?"

## **Food for Thought**

by Melvyn Mullin

Some time ago I was asked by Bernard Halsall to write an article for the Market Harborough Royal British Legion branch's Newsletter.

I have been a member of the RBL for a number of years before joining this Branch at Bernard's instigation. Having been a uniformed member of the Armed Forces for a considerable number of years and finding myself in my present circumstances, I decided to write about ex-service men in prison.

I joined the Army in September, 1961 as a Junior Leader, aged 15, after being in the Army Cadet Force for two years. I had worked my way up through the ranks and attained the rank of Captain, having to finally resign my commission in 1997 due to my prison sentence. I have served in a number of active service areas including Aden, Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

Having never been in trouble with the law in my life, it was quite an experience to find myself in prison convicted of manslaughter and serving a life sentence. I have never had any problems with serving my sentence and I believe that I am deservedly in prison for the crime I committed.

The number of ex-servicemen whom I met within the Prison system as I progressed through it came as a great surprise to me. This includes the number of prison officers, now locking us up! Therefore I decided, as an exercise, to do some research into the numbers serving in H.M.P. Gartree where I was at the time.

## **What did you say?**

by Tom Ashmore

I'm not deaf. I just don't hear as well as I did. My hearing aid helps but in noisy surroundings it makes the jumble of sounds even more difficult to comprehend. But my biggest problems have been hearing the TV without deafening my wife or disturbing the neighbours, hearing and using the telephone and hearing the front door bell.

I've never been keen on the telly, preferring to do what I am doing as I write this little piece - using the computer. However, there are some programmes I would have watched if I could have heard the dialogue. Rather belatedly, I have discovered that a number of these have sub-titles and so I can now enjoy "Morse" and "Heartbeat"!

Not being able to hear clearly can be quite frustrating and has made me reluctant to use the phone. I could never get the hang of holding the hand-set in my right hand with the earpiece near the hearing aid's microphone. However, a few months ago I treated myself to a phone with an amplifier and this has made telephoning much less stressful. The instrument I bought is a BT Comverse 200, the cheaper of only two models which the BT Shop in Leicester could offer. Being able to adjust the volume and pitch of the ringer is helpful but it has other "Hi-tech" features which I had managed to live without previously. These I am now pleased to have but obviously contribute to the relatively high price of £44.99.

Thanks to information published in the CVS Newsletter Nexus (which the Branch receives as

a member of the Council for Voluntary Services), I now know that what I should have done was to have paid a visit to the Centre for Deaf People in Leicester where there is a display of telephone and other equipment for the hard of hearing which can be demonstrated by the Centre's skilled staff.

If you are becoming deaf, don't leave it as long as I did before doing something about it. Ring 0116 255 6776 to arrange to visit the Centre.

## **New Hope for Hearing Loss War Veterans**

A recent Press Release from HQ shows that the Legion is still fighting hard on behalf of the "Thousands of ex-Service men and women, denied a war pension for deafness as a result of the Government changing the rules two years ago". They "could have their cases reconsidered in the light of new medical evidence."

Two papers by Professor Davis of the Medical Research Council Institute of Hearing Research suggest that further research is needed to ensure that the Government's assessing of hearing loss is fair. The Royal British Legion and Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) have requested copies of the papers to send to Ministers for discussion at a Review Panel meeting in February.

The Legion and the RNID are now planning a public appeal to raise the £20,000 to fund the research if the Government will not pay for it.

For a copy of the full Press Release ring Tom Ashmore on MH 433108.

## **We will remember them**

*It is with sadness that we have to report the death of two fellow Branch members. We extend our sympathy to their widows and families.*

*Jack Stimpson died on 22nd December at the age of 84 following a heart attack. He had not been in good health for some years and this had prevented him from attending Branch meetings and functions. He was a keen supporter of the Branch and especially of In Touch for which wrote several pieces including his poem "Winter" which we publish in this issue.*

*He served in the Ninth Armoured Brigade in the North African and Italian campaigns in which he was mentioned in despatches. He reached the rank of Warrant Officer.*

*At his funeral at Tur Langton Church, John Cox carried the Standard and the Branch was also represented by Ken Stimpson, Con Halsall, Tom Ashmore and John Dilks.*

*George Burroughs died at the age of 65 on 13th January. He was one of a well known Medbourne family. Ill health for the past several years meant that his only contact with the Branch was through the Newsletters and Dick Fulford who delivered them. Joyce and Stan Snow attended his funeral.*

## Honour and Honneur

by Bernard Halsall

It had never happened before and will certainly never happen again. For a few brief minutes we were transported back in time - back 80 years. We went back to the trenches and to the mud: to the distant sound of gunfire, to the barbed wire, to the cries of the wounded, to the reality of death. Fleetingly we were there to share in the horror of those times.



Then we were back. Back in the Council Chambers at Market Harborough, back in the warmth and comfort of familiar surroundings. We were back with our comrades, the veterans of the next generation, as the Lord Lieutenant of the County stepped forward towards our guest of honour, Mrs. Cramp, representing her husband, Robert, to whom the Lord Lieutenant was to present Le Légion d'Honneur. Belated perhaps, but nevertheless symbolic of a nation's gratitude to our fathers and grandfathers generation who had fought and died in the defence of France.

We watched quietly as words of thanks were said, and dignitaries received their flowers. Mrs Cramp and her family, dignified and supportive, were given a warm welcome.

A memorable event for us all.

## WINTER

The Autumn colours have gone away  
and a sprinkling of snow heralds winter's day,  
lingering for an hour or so  
until a pale watery sun persuades it to go.  
The trees have lost their canopy of green  
and look bare and stark against the winter scene,  
standing like skeletons in a frame  
waiting to be born again.  
Fog envelops all in a blanket of murky white  
bringing a silence of deathly quiet.  
Phantom figures lit to and fro.  
From where do they come and where do they go?  
Will the ice bear the skater's weight?  
And who will be the first to know their fate?  
The Christmas rose struggles through the frozen earth  
its delicate beauty a poignant homage to the holy birth.  
Snow transforms the landscape into a white Sahara  
glittering like the diamonds in a queen's tiara.  
Dark storm clouds race across an angry sky  
discharging their burden as they fly  
hammering on the window panes with staccato sound  
music to those who till the ground.  
The shining icicles are weeping and gently shedding their tears  
as if lamenting the passing of the years.  
The regal snowdrops arrive dressed in virgin white  
accompanied by their courtiers, the golden aconite  
The blackbirds and thrushes and warblers are here,  
where they belong  
delighting us with their spontaneous bursts of song,  
but where did the swallows and blackcaps and swifts all go?  
I do not know! I do not know!

J. R. Stimpson

December, 1997.

## Play the Game

Our Naval Correspondent, Bill Cotton,  
"an old fashioned sailor", has these "thoughts  
for today and the future".

In this day and age of overpaid sportsmen and  
bad sportsmanship, to bring real meaning to our  
way of life it would be wise to consider at least  
one value of yesteryear.

There's a breathless hush at the close tonight  
ten to make - a match to win  
A bumpy pitch - a blinding light  
An hour to play and the last man in.  
Yet its not for the sake of a beribboned coat  
nor the selfish hope of a season's fame  
With the Captain's hand on his shoulder spoke  
"Play up, play up and play the game".

The sand of the desert is sodden red,  
red with the wreck of a square that broke.  
The Gatlins jammed - the colonel dead,  
the regiment blind with the dust and smoke.  
The river of death has brimmed its banks  
England far - Honour a name,  
Yet the falling fling to the ranks behind  
Play up, play up and play the game.

And this they all with a cheerful mind, bear  
through life like a torch in flame  
where the voice of the schoolboy  
calls from the ranks  
"Play up, play up and play the game".

Editor - Does anyone know who wrote this well  
known poem and when?