

For your Diary

**11th February.** Branch Meeting 7.30 pm

**25th February.** Committee Meeting 7.30 pm

**19th March\*\*.** Exhibition at the Harborough Museum opens, featuring the Branch.

**20th March.** Our actual Birthday

**20th March.** Husbands Bosworth Branch Annual Dinner. Details & Tickets (£11) from John Cox on MH434983.

**21st March\*\*.** Band concert 7.30 pm

**3rd April\*\*.** Anniversary Dinner

**24th May.\*** Anniverary Service of Thanksgiving. There will **not** be a Parade.

**13th June.\*** Market Harborough Carnival

**13th June.** Queen's Birthday Parade - London. Andrew Marriott (MH 434805) has details including Review parades & Beating Retreat during the previous 2 weeks.

**18th July & 29th August.\*** Branch Coffee Mornings.

**27 - 31st July\*\*** Visit to Holland with the Normandy Veterans Association

**16 - 18th August\*\*.** Edinburgh Tattoo - Note change from notice in In Touch, Too.

\*\* More on page 4      \* Details later

## Contacts

At the AGM in December, it was decided to issue a Directory of Members giving names, addresses and telephone numbers. Those who wished to have any or all of that information about themselves omitted were asked in the last issue of In Touch, Too to inform the Chairman. Three such requests have been made and unless others are received by 10th February, the Directory will be issued with the next issue of In Touch, Too. Meanwhile, here are a few numbers you may need to call.

President	Peter Wilson	464585
Chairman	Tom Ashmore	433108
Vice Chairman	Connie Halsall	465314
Secretary	Andrew Marriott	434805
Treasurer	George Fleming	462711
M'ship Sec.	George Fleming	462711
Social Sec.	Tom Jeacock	466829
Welfare Officer	Ken Purdy	440623
Press/PR Off'r	John Sutton	464532

## 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, Mkt. Harboro'.

At the next meeting, on **11th February**, Tony Johnson, a witty and experienced speaker, will recall some of his experiences as an escaping Prisoner of War.

Regd. Charity No. 219279

## The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch 1923 - 1998

**75**  
Years of Caring  


# In Touch

Issue 11      January, 1998.

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## Editorial

Welcome to the first *In Touch* of this our 75th Anniversary Year. The cover has been changed to include a new 75th logo. This incorporates the Old Grammar School device, surmounted by a large "75", across which are the words "Years of Caring". The design is to emphasise the time that the Branch has been doing benevolent work in Market Harborough. The logo will also be used on Branch stationery and on posters, tickets, programmes, etc., for Events during the year.

1998 is to be a year to celebrate, a year that needs to be distinguishable from other years, a year to be noticed. The list of celebratory events and other happenings in "Dates for your Diary" shows that this year is special. Events needing your early attention are detailed in the Programme Update.

*Hotspur's* "Christmas Visit" shows an emotional side to our well known wordsmith as he stood on the "very spot" where "history was made".

At the request of our new Secretary, a series of light-hearted profiles of Branch Members, is to appear in *In Touch*. The first is of our Chairman. (*I think Andrew is cruel! Editor.*)

And the Editor, writing under his own name, reveals in "Dad's Army", that he once wore khaki.



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## Miscellany

### From our Naval Correspondent

(Editor I suspect Bill Cotton lost his Naval History books when he moved house recently, or that he considers *In Touch* is becoming a channel for too much "old men's" stories, so he suggests the following ditty to liven things up -by shocking us?)

Jack Tar took his girl to the seaside  
One Sunday morn in July  
They hadn't seen much of each other, so  
Sunbathing they thought they would try.  
With seaweed only as costumes  
They lay on the sands all the day.  
Now they see much more of each other, for  
the tide's washed the seaweed away!

### "In Far away Places....."

There are Legion Branches in many parts of the world and some are occasionally mentioned in *Legion Magazine*. Did you know that there is one in Cork, in the Irish Republic? Berlin has a branch, one of 18 in Germany. In Spain, sun-loving ex-service expats. are catered for in a number of places, including Tenerife in the Canaries. There is a branch and club in Valetta in Malta and San Francisco branch, one of three in the States, played host to a visiting Royal Naval ship a few months ago. Nearer home, Jersey Branch celebrated its 75th anniversary last year and set a target of increasing the number of members from 875 to 1000!

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**APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE**

## Branch and Other News

**Menin Gate and Tyne Cot Cemetery.** In March the Band of the Market Harborough Squadron of the ATC, will be visiting Belgium again. To make the visit more personal the cadets wish to place small Remembrance Crosses on the graves of men from Market Harborough. If you know the name of any local man buried at Tyne Cot, please ring the ATC C.O., Fl Lt John Standish (0116 240 4170)

**Welfare.** At the first meeting of the new Branch Committee, Peter Wilson announced his wish to relinquish the post of Branch Welfare Officer (in RBL parlance, Service Committee Secretary). Welfare is largely work behind the scenes and few will know the full extent of the time and understanding support Peter has given to those he has helped over the years. Thank you, Peter for all you have done and for promising to be a source of advice and knowledge for your successor Ken Purdy.

Ken, who can be contacted on MH 440623, is supported on the Service Committee by Connie Halsall and Tony Johnson.

**War Pensions.** The D.S.S. have announced an increase of 3.6% from April, 1998 in line with the Retail Price Index. The Legion believes that many ex-service people do not know of their entitlement to War Pensions and is campaigning for greater awareness.

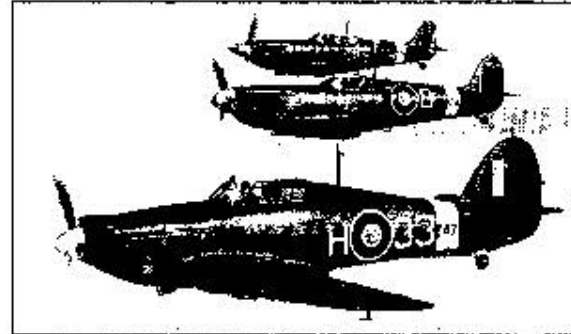
**War Graves Pilgrimages.** The latest 1998 programme issued by Pilgrimages Department, lists 29 visits between April and November. Andrew Marriott (MH 434805) has the details.

## Christmas Visit '97

by Hotspur

There can be few places in the world where one can stand and say, "History was made here - on this very spot". Over the Christmas holidays I was able - nay privileged - to do just that.

Little did I realise as I was driven through the gates towards the Guard Room, and then on to the mess, that I was entering a building which, to my generation, is hallowed ground. I was entering Bentley Priory, home to 11/18 Group Royal Air Force, but in 1940 Headquarters of Fighter Command, the last and greatest command of Air Marshall Dowding. For it was here, in this building and on this very spot that Dowding controlled and conducted the RAF Fighter Squadrons of Hurricanes and Spitfires



over Dunkirk and later over England in the Battle of Britain. Here in this beautiful country house Dowding must have moved from room to room receiving the latest reports, watching the

From page 9.

### Editor's Note

The Home Guard was "stood down" on Armistice day, 1944. At its peak, it numbered 1084 battalions - 1,701,208 men and 31,824 women. INVADERS WERE REPELLED!

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losses mount, all the time knowing of the superior forces available to the enemy. Here, when going out to stand in the beautiful gardens he would have seen the battle raging in the skies above, and here towards the end, when Churchill, visiting to watch the battle for himself, had said to Dowding, "Send in the reserves!", received the reply, "Sir! We have no reserves."

You can hear those words echoing from every wall and ceiling of this historic building, as you look with pride and awe at the many portraits and photos of those who took part in these mighty events. And you tread quietly and reverently over what has become to you in but a few minutes, hallowed ground.

And you can read on every tribute, every presentation, every roll of honour the immortal words which must have echoed through these rooms and corridors when Dowding and his men knew that they had won - "Never in the long history of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

More than three years later this same building was used by Montgomery in which to plan and co-ordinate the invasion of occupied Europe. From the debacle of Dunkirk to the liberation of Europe this building has seen it all. The fate of our country had hung by a thread, and had been saved by the men who served and commanded from this building.

It was an honour and a privilege, made all the greater by being unexpected, to stand and stare on the very spot where the life of our country had been rescued and sustained.

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**Branch Meetings.** There is a widespread feeling that our monthly meetings have left much to be desired. Your Committee discussed the problem and have proposed certain changes.

- The Branch Committee should be the main vehicle for conducting Branch business. It will therefore meet monthly (on the last Wednesday). Matters of importance would be put to the next Branch meeting, two weeks later.
- Freed of much of the business detail, the "formal" part of Branch meetings would be much shorter and sometimes even omitted. Thus meetings would be more "Social" occasions, so encouraging the comradeship which is one of the purposes of the Legion.
- Branch meetings will start at 7.30 pm.

At the Branch meeting on 14th January, these proposals were accepted. Members present suggested that initially activities would include films, a quiz, and talks. Other ideas would be tried to suit the wishes of Members.

**Questionnaire.** Less than a third of our members are present at any particular meeting and about half seldom if ever attend. To try to discover why, a questionnaire is to be prepared to which it is hoped all members will respond. From the answers, the Committee hope to be able to meet the wishes of many more of our members.

### Space Fillets

- *The cook was a god cook, as cooks go and as good cooks go, she went.....Saki*
- *A committee is a group of the unwilling, chosen from the unfit, to do the unnecessary.....Anon*

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## **Dad's Army** by Dick Fulford

War on Germany was declared on 3rd September, 1939. I was too old to be conscripted at that time so, eager to be "in on the fun", I volunteered to join the Royal Navy the following month. The Navy however, was then fully manned, all reserves having been called up. So I had to wait, and wait I did until August 1940.

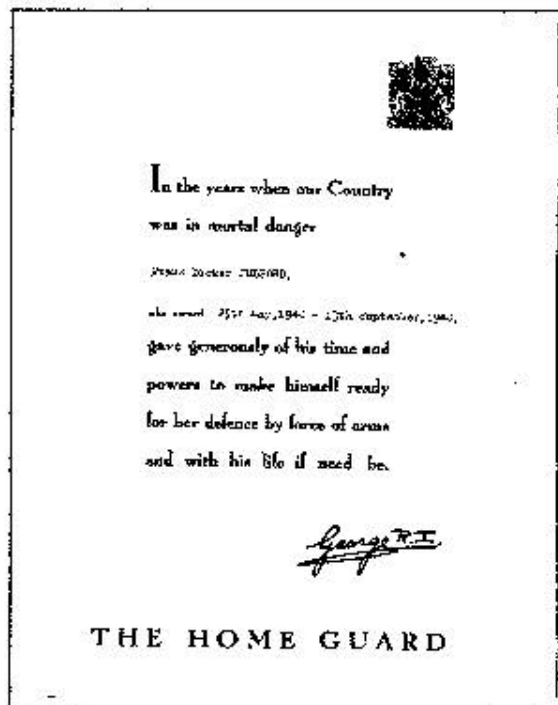
For a month or so after the outbreak of the War, little happened; it has since been referred to as the "phoney war". But the bubble burst in a big way in the Spring of 1940; Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium fell to Hitler's Forces in April and May, and in June France surrendered on the 22nd, followed by the Channel Islands which were occupied on 1st July.

So Britain was alone - our "Finest Hour"! Now that invasion was more than likely extra defence was necessary and on 25th May the L.D.V. was formed - Local Defence Volunteers or rudely referred to later as the "Look, Dive and Vanish Brigade"! I joined immediately - my 23rd birthday.

Armed with a 4/10 shotgun and a home made L. D. V. Armband I was detailed to report to a cart shed on the top of one of the Wiltshire Downs. Lord Essex had been appointed C. O. of our village contingent and I, being the youngest, was nominated his "runner"; as telephones were unheard of at that time. The other volunteers were aggressive World War I veterans, all armed with rifles, shot guns, cutlasses and home made pikes. Look out Hitler, we, the LDV are ready for you!

Then two months later, on 23rd July 1940, the Home Guard was formed and replaced the LDV. One by one we were kitted out with Army uniform but I missed out, for just a month later my uniform issue was Navy blue and my Army career had ended.

I am proud, however, to have been a volunteer in "Dad's Army" and I treasure the proof of my service; a certificate signed by His Majesty.



I cannot claim Royal British Legion Ordinary Membership by virtue of my time in the LDV & Home Guard for that was for only 3 months and our Handbook says 6 months service is required. But I do qualify through my subsequent 6 years of service - but that is another story!

Continued on Page 10

## **Anniversary Year - Programme Update**

All events for which dates are firm are listed on p16. The following require early action.

**Museum Exhibition.** Please dig out any memorabilia which would help to tell the History of the Legion in Harborough.

**Band Concert.** By the Harborough Band on Saturday, 21st March at 7.30 pm at the Baptist Church, Market Harborough. This is a public concert the proceeds from which are for Branch funds. Please give it maximum publicity. Tickets £3.50 from R D Jeacock & Sons, Ltd. or for seats for Members and their Guests, from Tom Jeacock (MH 466829)

**Anniversary Dinner.** Friday, 3rd April at the Wellington Suite. A special 7-course meal for a special occasion. £ 12.50 per head. Send a deposit of £5 per head for yourself and your guests, to Tom Jeacock as soon as possible.

**Edinburgh Tattoo.** A 3 day, 2 night Coach trip, 16th to 18th August, staying in The Station Hotel in Dumfries, "renowned for its excellent cuisine" and including ticket to the Tattoo. Price £124 per person. Note change from notice in ***In Touch, Too***. Early booking advised.

**Visit to Holland.** In conjunction with the Normandy Veterans Association. 27 - 31st July. 5 days 4 nights. Staying half board at a recommended hotel in Valkenberg. Price £170.

For more details of any of the events and to book, please ring Tom Jeacock (MH 466829).

## **The Duties of the Branch Chairman**

The Model Branch Bye-laws, which are set out in the RBL Mangement Handbook, define the duties as,

- (a) as the Chief Executive Officer to direct all branch activities;
- (b) to chair the branch meetings and be conversant with the contents of the Royal Charter and Schedule of Rules and other Legion publications;
- (c) to control meetings effectively, ensuring that they are planned according to content and time, avoiding the imposition of his own ideas on the meeting but encouraging participation from members;
- (d) to delegate responsibilities to the members but to ensure that such duties are effectively performed;
- (e) to ensure that proper handovers take place, such as ensuring that all minute books, correspondence, Legion publications, branch papers and keys are handed over .....
- (f) to set an example as an active member of the Legion and make himself available for advising both the committee and the members;
- (g) to ensure that such sub-committees, individual officers and members for specialist functions are appointed as necessary.

That's the model, now how does our chairman measure up?

### **Examiner's Report on the Performance of the Chaitman's Duties**

- (a) "Digs his oar in a bit deep" which freely translated means too much interference?
- (b) Knew where to find the Bye-Laws.
- (c) Should make boring meetings short & long ones interesting. Should give all members special microphones so he can hear their comments (participation) and so they can only speak one at a time.
- (d) See (a)
- (e) "Dick, has Andrew got all your paperwork, apart from that which the Chairman lost?"
- (f) Yes, pretty active; but advice....? Could try calling M H 433108.
- (g) See (a).

#### **General Comments**

Not too bad for a "New Boy" but should learn to relax & smile more, to lecture less, to explain things more simply and to produce less paper.

Signed..... *Ob. Per Vant*

## **Your Chairman - An Interview with Harry Porter An *In Touch* Exclusive**

- 'arry "Tell me, Mr Chairman, when did you join the The Royal British Legion?"
- Y C (smiling as he relaxed with his slippers feet on the desk) "Less formality, 'arry, call me Tom. What did you say?"
- 'arry "Tell me, Tom, when did you join the The Royal British Legion and why?"
- Y C "3 years ago because I wanted a cup of coffee."
- 'arry "but Tom, "Service not Self"."
- Y C (getting serious) "'arry, there's nothing wrong with "Service and Self". Giving Service can provide a great deal of self-satisfaction."
- 'arry (quick as a flash) "and what Service has given you most satisfaction?"
- Y C (taking feet off desk and turning to the computer) "Helping to produce and distribute *In Touch*."
- 'arry "Hold it like that....."

