

The Legion's Poppy Appeal precedes the UK Remembrance Day, and Peter Wilson describes what is involved in being the Branch Poppy Appeal Organiser.

Our acts of Remembrance rightly honour those who died but we must always remember that the RBL exists to serve the living. It is important that members of the general public, especially younger people, are made more aware of the RBL. A leaflet has been produced describing briefly what the Legion is and does, and a copy is enclosed for your information.

Contacts

Matters Concerning	Contact	Phone
Welfare, War Pensions, War Graves	Peter Wilson (President)	464585
General Branch affairs, Entertainment / Social	Gordon Adnett (Chairman)	466533
General Branch & RBL matters	Tom Jeacock Vice-Chairman	466829
Information from HQ & Region, Meetings, Membership, etc.	Andrew Marriott (Secretary)	434805
Branch Finance, Subscriptions, etc.	George Fleming (Treasurer)	462711
The Newsletter	Tom Ashmore (Editor)	433108
Poppy Appeal	Peter Wilson Dick Fulford	464585 431515
Standard Bearers & Ceremonial	George Fleming John Cox	462711 434983

Poppy Appeal Plans & Display

Following the regular meeting on 10th October, there will be a presentation of plans for the Branch's participation in this year's Poppy Appeal.

Peter Wilson, Appeal Organiser and Appeal Assisants, Renie & Dick Fulford will explain what arrangements have been made to ensure the maximum sale of poppies throughout the district. If they ask for offers of help where they feel this is needed, please be willing to do your bit in this vital effort.

There will also be a display of the various items available for sale for Poppy Day.

Meetings

Regular meetings are held on the **Second Thursday** of each month at 8 pm in the Conservative Club Building, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough, normally in the upstairs lounge (there is no lift).

The next meeting will be on **10th October**. We hope that you will be able to attend and stay for the feature on the Poppy Appeal (see top of this page).



In Touch

The Newsletter

for
Members
of

**Market Harborough Branch
The Royal British Legion**

Issue No. 3

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Editorial

You may be surprised to receive another **In Touch** after only a month since the last one. The reason is that I shall be on holiday in October when I would have been preparing Issue 3. Being sure you could not bear to wait until November for your Newsletter, I am rushing this to you before I go away!

Let us hope that I leave myself enough time to have this edition proof-read and so avoid the sort of howler which appeared in August. I apologise unreservedly to any Russian citizen who may have read my piece on Weston Park: Tchaikovsky did write the 1812 Overture! Lovers of Beethoven forgive me!



Last time I said that I would try to have in each issue, articles and shorter pieces with an underlying theme. This time it is Remembering and Remembrance.

When Dick Fulford visited the World War II grave of his Uncle George, he had no idea that one of our Branch members was a survivor of those terrible battles. Mr. Robert Cramp, now aged 97, remembered incidents from nearly 80 years ago when he spoke to Dick & I recently and agreed that we could publish them in this Newsletter.

Remembrance is a rather special kind of remembering, more formal, solemn, even with official dates and some of these appear in "Remembrance Days".

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This non-commercial activity is my way of raising funds for causes which I support, whilst indulging in a hobby which I enjoy.

Our gift packs make ideal inexpensive presents.

Tom Ashmore
Tel: MH 433108

I have also designed and produced this Newsletter.

 The Treasurer has available the following official RBL items:

Members' Ties	£6.00
Badges	£2.50
Commemorative VJ Day Mugs	£1.50

Call George Fleming on MH 462711 after 6pm

Going Abroad?

My attention has been drawn to a booklet called "Health Advice for Travellers" and includes an application form which you take to the Post Office to obtain Form E111. This latter is your means of obtaining free or low cost emergency medical treatment in most European countries. Ring 0800 555 777 for your free copy.



Thank you!
I am most grateful to our advertisers for their kind support, to Mr John Forster for generously offering the use of his Photocopier, and to all those Members who have encouraged me since the Newsletter was launched.
Together we can make it more successful & useful.
Tom Ashmore

Coffee Morning

A big thank you must go to Betty & Tom Jeacock for organising such a successful event on 17th August. The arrangements had to be made at very short notice when the Old Grammar School became available unexpectedly. Branch members & others responded quickly & generously to the appeal for help and for items for the stalls.

There was just time to give the event some prior publicity with a notice in the Harborough Mail & with posters around the town.



The venue being in the centre of the town ensured that passers by also were attracted to the activity. The raffle was well supported, many cups of coffee and plates of biscuits were consumed upstairs & comparatively few items of bric-a-brac remained at the close.

Financially it was a great success, contributing over £240 to Branch funds. Of greater value was that the Royal British Legion was put firmly in the public eye at a time when thoughts of, and preparations for, the Annual Poppy Appeal are so important. There was an encouraging number of people who wanted to know more about the RBL and who were given the Branch leaflet which had been prepared for the occasion.

Meetings & Other News

New Standard

At the meeting on 12th September, it was agreed that a new Branch Standard complete with its various accessories, should be ordered forthwith regardless of the outcome of the bid made to the Carnival Committee for a donation. The cost will be about £440.

Donations

The Age Concern Community vehicle was vandalised recently. As it is used by ex-service as well as other elderly people, it was agreed that £100 should be donated from the Branch welfare fund.

In a similar spirit of generosity, and as a mark of respect and admiration for those marvellous soldiers from Nepal, a donation also of £100 is to be made to the Ghurka Welfare Trust to help those whose service has been terminated before qualifying for the normal pension.

Reminders

As mentioned in the last Issue, you should contact our Secretary, Andrew Marriott (Tel: M H 434805) if you wish to order Xmas Cards or Diaries or attend the Festival of Remembrance at de Montford Hall on 2nd November.



The Poppy Factory

It has become part of the British way of life to buy and wear a poppy each November, but this tradition arose from the idea of a French woman. It was a Madame Guerin, who shortly after the end of the "Great War", suggested that artificial poppies be made & sold to help ex-servicemen and their families. The first British Poppy Day was on 11th November, 1921, but the poppies sold had been made in France.

A Major George Howson, who had lost a leg during the war, persuaded the then fledgling British Legion to finance a workshop to employ other disabled ex-servicemen making poppies and so with a grant of £2000, the Poppy Factory was opened on 5th June, 1922 staffed by Howson and five others.

From this modest beginning, the Factory had grown by the mid-1930's, to an organisation employing nearly 400 disabled ex-service personnel & making other products and during the second world war was making things for the war effort.

Now the Royal British Legion Poppy Factory, as it has become, employs 110 people of whom about 80% are disabled and 60 disabled home workers. It concentrates on poppies and other Remembrance items, other activities now being the responsibility of Royal British Legion Industries, based at the RBL Village, near Aylesford in Kent. The Poppy Factory is still at 20, Petersham Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6UR, where it is happy to have single or groups of visitors.

The Entertainments Committee might like to consider arranging a visit, possibly combined with one to the Village. If you would be interested, please let me know or get in touch directly with the Chairman or any Committee member..... Editor.

Legionline

You may have read in the July/August issue of "Legion" about Legionline, the advice and information service introduced by the RBL in May this year. Not restricted to RBL members, the service is available to all those still serving, and who have served in the Forces. I used the service recently and was most impressed by the friendly, helpful advisor to whom I spoke. Most of the calls the advisors receive will be about Pensions, Benefits, Convalescence, Training and similar matters which are the mainstream concerns of the RBL, but my enquiry was different.

It arose from a conversation with one of our members when I was delivering the last newsletter. He had a query about a medal available to those who, like himself, had been in the Normandy landings and also wanted to get in touch with a local branch of the relevant Association.

I expect someone in the Branch could have helped him, but I did not know who that might be, so I put his queries to the Legionline advisor. He gave me the phone number of the Army Medals Office (01905 772323) and one for the Normandy Veterans Association (0181 907 9642) for details of any local branch.

As it happened, when I told our member what the advisor had said, he told me that he had seen a reference to a local branch of the N V A, in the "Leicester Mercury"!

If you, as an ex-service person, need advice or information ask Legionline. The number to ring is 0345 725 725 between 9am & 4pm, Monday to Friday. It is charged at local call rate, about 4p a minute. Or try the Leicester Mercury!!

Remembrance Days

In the UK, the national day of remembrance for those killed in both world wars and later conflicts, is Remembrance Sunday, the second Sunday of November. Prior to 1945 the day was known as Armistice Day and held on 11th November.

Last year, at the instigation of the RBL, the tradition was revived of observing two minutes silence at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the time of the signature of the Armistice with Germany in 1918. As Members of the RBL we should encourage others to respect this act of remembrance this year and in future years.

Remembrance Day in Canada is still the 11th November.

In the USA, the name adopted in 1954 for Armistice Day was Veterans' Day and from 1971 has been observed by most states on the fourth Monday in October. Another day of remembrance was instituted in 1868 for those killed in the US Civil War and then known as Decoration Day, later to be called Memorial Day. Since World War I it has been observed as a national holiday on the last Monday in May, traditionally falling on 30 May, in remembrance of all Americans killed in war.

Australia observes two days of remembrance: ANZAC Day on 25th April and Remembrance Day on 11th November.

The Poppy Appeal Organiser

by Peter Wilson

The local area Poppy Appeal Organiser is not actually an office of the respective local Branch of the Royal British Legion but is designated, often on the recommendation of the local Branch, and approved by the Poppy Appeal Headquarters at the Legion Village, Aylesford, Kent. He or she is responsible for co-ordinating the whole of the Appeal within the district of appointment and may include some other place where there is no organiser or RBL Branch.

In about July each year, the Organiser receives from Appeal HQ a form for ordering wreaths, poppies, crosses, publicity material, etc. Permits for Street Collections will have obtained from the relevant authorities & for House to House collections from the Home Office, by HQ which notifies the Organiser when these may be held in his area.

The Organiser needs to ensure sufficient Collectors are recruited to cover his area and that permission is obtained for them to be present on private property such as, in Market Harborough, the Market place and Shopping Precincts.

The Organiser is also held responsible for correctly distributing the poppies and collection boxes, the subsequent return of the boxes, and the counting & banking of the contents. By mid-December he must account for & remit to HQ the monies collected.

In all this activity, I am greatly assisted by Renie & Dick Fullford, without whose willing & generous help my task as the Market Harborough local Organiser would be impossible.

"Pilgrims Progress" A Video

After the business part of the meeting on 12th September, the film was shown describing the work of the RBL Pilgrimages Department and showing some of the War Cemeteries and Memorials to which visits have been arranged during the past 10 years. It shows what the department does to ensure that everyone who makes such a pilgrimage has "a visit of a lifetime". There are scenes of very many of the places which have been visited, some of them on a regular basis. The film is incidentally, a tribute to the work of the War Graves Commission for the way in which the cemeteries are so beautifully maintained.

Although one member felt that the film over emphasises the work of the Pilgrimages Department, most of those who saw it thought it very interesting and worthwhile.

If you would like to see it at home, you may borrow it, subject to returning it in good condition and paying the cost of post and packing. Please apply to Andrew Marriott.

Subscriptions

The membership year ends on 30th September and subscriptions (affiliation fees) for next year are due on 1st October. Unless you pay by Direct Debit or Bankers Order, the Treasurer would prefer you to make your payment to him at the next meeting (10th October).

The amount due is £6.

A First World War Veteran Remembers

Robert Cramp was a farmer's son, born in March, 1899, the oldest of 9 children. The family lived in a large house opposite the Crown Inn in Tur Langton. Late in 1917 Robert was conscripted into the Army, joining, not the local Leicestershires but a regiment depleted by the appalling casualties in France, the Manchesters.

His **initial training** was at Cleethorpes and he adapted quickly to army life, but not to army food. At home the family always ate well and the change from Mother's roast meat to cookhouse stew was a problem that had to be solved. A resourceful and personable young man, Robert got permission to take early morning Holy Communion instead of normal Church Parades. This obvious devotion so impressed some of the ladies of the church that he was invited to their homes and once more could enjoy home cooking!

Young Private Cramp was posted to France early in 1918, spending the first few days in a large transit camp. Seventy eight years later, he still remembers the names of two of the soldiers with whom he shared a tent. Recently released from "the glasshouse", Pte. Kennedy & ex-Sergeant McCauly, were **accomplished thieves**, a skill demonstrated when a whole cheese arrived in the tent!

Some time later when in the front line and moving cautiously under cover, McCauly was on top of the parapet showing every sign of having made a successful raid on the rum store. They found his body later. Even before this Robert was a **teetotaler** but the incident must have

strengthened his resolve not to drink alcohol. Indeed, he attributes his survival of the battles of the following months to having a clearer head than some of those who did take the daily issue of rum.

The seven or eight months before the end of hostilities, were spent not far from Cambrai, and his recall of names like Le Cateau, Pommereuil & Mormal Forest, show that despite his mostly light-hearted tales, he was indeed where some of the fiercest battles of the war were fought. Yet, in retrospect, Mr. Cramp still says, "**Soldiering was easier than farming**".

His farming background may well have saved his life. He recalls that at one time his unit was living (resting?) at a Chateau and "they came to me and said, 'the Aid Post is short of milk. **Can anyone milk a cow?**' ". He set out for the nearby village which was reported to be clear (of the enemy) and found it desolate. In the gateway of a smallholding he found a dead cow, but in the cowshed were two live ones. With his dixie full of milk, "I set off to where the Chateau was but before I got there the Germans had blasted the place." Beating a hasty retreat, "I never stopped running until I got to Le Cateau".

A rather more sombre recollection was of a time when, **back in the trenches**, his Sergeant asked him and two others to accompany him to recover a man severely wounded in no-mans-land. With great difficulty they carried him back on a stretcher, but he had died before reaching their own lines. Looking in his pay-book for identification, Robert found that the poor fellow came from Empingham.

The great offensive in July 1918, in which the

British Forces were involved in the Cambrai area, marked the beginning of the end of the war. We asked Mr. Cramp what was the reaction of himself and his comrades to the announcement of the **Armistice**. "Dumb. There was no jollification. I never saw a man smile... A man said, 'My mate was shot at 10 minutes to eleven'."

The three or four months before returning home were wasteful and frustrating. There had been the chance of a Veterinary course for which farmer Robert had eagerly volunteered. "**Draw two days rations** and find your way to Amiens and report at Le Cateau on the way", he was told. He got a lift on a lorry but it did not go to Le Cateau and he never got to Amiens or the Veterinary course. What is more, "I left my two days rations on the lorry"!

Of his reactions to France as a country, he said, "I saw little of real France. **Only desolate villages**. I have never been back". On mementoes, "My only souvenir was a German bayonet. My wife didn't like it so I got rid of it."

Pte. Cramp became Mr. Cramp when he was **demobbed** in Cambrai and in March 1919 he docked at Tilbury en route to Tur Langton and a long life as a successful farmer.

He joined the **British Legion** in 1922 but is not sure whether he was a founder member of the newly formed Market Harborough Branch.

Thank you Mr. Cramp for a talking to Dick Fulford & I and for agreeing to share your memories through the columns of this newsletter. We are indeed honoured to have in the Branch such a long serving member of the Legion Editor