

In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996

The Royal British Legion

Registered Charity No. 219279



LIVE ON

To the memory of the fallen and the future of the living

92

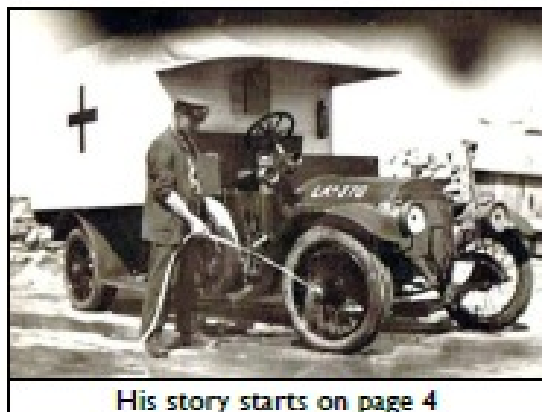
Years of Caring



Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Centenary Year of 1915



His story starts on page 4

Next Monthly Branch Meeting
7.30 pm Wednesday 9 September
Committee 3 September

Issue 203
August 2015

Function Room, Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Branch News

July Branch Meeting

The Chairman reported that the visit to the Royal Hospital Chelsea had been a success. He also mentioned that as he would be away at the time of the VJ Day anniversary no commemoration event had been arranged.

The Armed Forces Day events had been successful but the poor turnout of branch members was disappointing. The Secretary mentioned that Lenthal House Care Home would welcome branch members at some of their

activities, that County Office has to vacate Apex House after September and she has information about the Albert Hall and Cenotaph remembrance events.

The Ramsay Ramblers (less Betty who will be away) will again do the London Poppy Walk and seek your sponsorship. The Standard Bearer and some branch members attended the AFD event in Leicester.

25 people attended the Branch lunch. It was agreed that there would be no Branch meeting in August.

After Meeting Talk

Members of the M H Railway Association joined us to hear John Hasting-Thompson talk about 'Project Patriot' in which a steam

locomotive of the Patriot Class is being recreated. The Patriot was used during WWI and the new one will be a memorial to the many railway



employees lost during that war. It is to be called 'The Unknown Warrior' and is to be completed by 11 November, 2018. The Legion

endorses the project (but cannot give financial support) and the (incomplete) engine was dedicated at the National Memorial Arboretum. The speaker gave details of the development of the

project since it started in July 2007. About half the fundraising target of £2 million has been reached and there have been many donations in kind of material and components. Logistical and engineering problems have involved carrying out the construction in many different locations. This emphasised the sheer scale and complexity of a steam locomotive and the enormous task

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Cover Photo

One of the many photos brought back as souvenirs by Dad now in the care of his son, Tom Ashmore. Also in www.greatwaranddad.net

Remember These?

Virtuoso Coffee Morning

The performance at the Harborough Theatre on Saturday morning, 18th July was a great success. Joan McMillin had composed and orchestrated the work and under her baton, her band of volunteers performed superbly. The overture "Fifty Pee a Cup" featured Connie on the Till and Mary and Terry on Kettle and Tea-towel. The fast tempo of some passages of "Cake Stall" was challenging and the fortissimo of "Nought, five, double nought" was handled generously by the Tombola Section.

Thank you Joan and all those who helped. It was a wonderful effort which raised over £200 for branch funds (50% Social, 50% General). Thanks too, to Members and friends who had given generously to the Cake Stall (manning it was a mouthwatering experience!), and to the Tombola Stall part of which resembled a well stocked ff-licence, and to everyone who parted with their cash in a worthy cause

And what is more, it was fun!!

From In Touch, Too August 1988

All Aboard the RBL Jolly Boat

Although much of his naval career was served under, rather than on, the water, a dangerous mission was fearlessly undertaken by our ex-submariner chairman when he skippered the good ship Day Boat on the Grand Union Canal.

Braving extreme weather conditions (it wasn't half raining) and assisted by his First Mate, Acting Lieutenant Bob England, Cap'n Mark Hudson skillfully steered the ship through the entire length of the Market Harborough Arm, successfully negotiating such severe hazards as the Foxton Swing Bridge. On board Day Boat was a select crew of Branch stalwarts who spent the

entire outward-bound voyage cowering below deck, sustained only by coffee and scones served from the galley by Acting Temporary Wrens



Joan McMillin and Mary Symon, who must take joint responsibility for the foolhardy venture.

After two hours at the helm, Cap'n Hudson dropped anchor near the Shoulder of Mutton,, where lunch was enjoyed. Later when the ship's company staggered back to the Day Boat, the rain had stopped and the sun warmed the cockles of our sea-faring hearts all the way back to Market Harborough.

Taken from August 2004 In Touch

Dad

by his son Tom Ashmore
whose website

www.greatwaranddad.net gives far
more details, hundreds of
souvenir pictures and historical
background.

Born on 2nd March 1896, Thomas Holley Ashmore (always known as Holley, his mother's maiden name) was the son of a coach builder and wheelwright in Bluntisham, a village near St. Ives, Huntingdonshire (now Cambridgeshire). He left school at the age of twelve and after a few years started training as a motor mechanic, working in a relative's garage and chauffeur-driven car hire business. He obtained his driving licence - no test need in those days - on 8th April 1914 and drove clients to many parts of the country. Thus he was, at that time, an unusually experienced car driver when he joined the Army in February 1915.

He was assigned, not surprisingly, to the Army Service Corps, as Private T H Ashmore, Regimental Number M2/047747 and posted as a Motor Ambulance Driver to 29th Division FAWU (Field Ambulance Workshop Unit). A long, framed panorama photograph shows that the unit consisted of 33 drivers, (with goggles on their caps), their Commanding Officer and seven open fronted ambulances. It is captioned "29th Divisional FAWU proceeding to the Great War on February 15th 1915".

29 Division arrived in Alexandria on about 30th March 1915 as part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



Ambulance driver, Dad,
in the desert near
Alexandria

and after a few days was transhipped to the Greek Aegean Sea island of Lemnos and thence to Gallipoli. The FAWU remained

in Alexandria and Dad was probably involved in the transport of nursing and other staff and patients of the several hospitals in commandeered buildings such as Victoria College, a civilian hospital previously run by a German/ Austrian religious order and even a [casino](#).

After about four weeks the first casualties from Gallipoli arrived, brought back by hospital ships. Then



life became very busy taking patients to hospital and then those who

required more [serious treatment](#) were taken to the harbour for transfer to hospital ships bound for England or Malta.

Australian and New Zealand army hospitals had been established mainly near Cairo and so many ANZAC casualties were taken from the harbour by hospital trains, some of which were operated by the Red Cross.

At some time during 1915 Dad, and presumably his FAWU, moved to West Mudros on Lemnos. The continuing very high casualty rate at Gallipoli meant that his work would have been similar to that in Alexandria, but in much worse conditions for him and his patients. He wrote, "it is a very gruesome job & long hours of hard toiling. It is also very painful to be amongst the poor fellows in their pain & suffering of wounds & sickness but for their sakes & ours we have to keep smiling & do all in our power to relieve them of their pain."

After the evacuation of troops from Gallipoli, 29th Division went to Alexandria and after a short while embarked for Marseilles for deployment on the Western Front. Dad was posted to Base Motor Ambulance Depot Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Both before and after Gallipoli, there were large numbers of troops in Egypt and these will have had the normal military medical set-up including hospitals and the need for

ambulances. In April 1916 Dad himself was admitted to hospital suffering from dysentery followed by time in this convalescent camp.



His first leave in 18 months was spent in four action packed days at the end of August in and near Cairo, described in detail in the only surviving letter to his girlfriend. (Mum destroyed all the others when he died in July 1980.)

His Service Records show him posted on in March 1917 to *Motor Ambulances XXI Corps*. and it is likely that Dad then moved east of the Suez Canal to become involved in Sinai and Palestine.

From July, when General Allenby had



been appointed to the command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force there was a great deal of activity in increasing the size of the Force and in

building the infrastructure needed to support a major campaign. However, this may not have involved a great deal of ambulance driving and Dad may have felt under-utilised. If so, it

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could partly explain why, when the opportunity arose to apply for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps, he did so because he "would render a much better service to the Country . . . than I am able to do at the present. . . I have always been very anxious to become an air-man". We do not know why he did not join the RFC and he soon became very busy dealing with casualties as XXI Corps moved northwards. After Jerusalem was occupied there was a period of consolidation in the summer of 1918, until the EEF continued its advance through Palestine and into Syria but there is nothing to suggest that Dad did too. The campaign ended when the Turks finally surrendered and an armistice was concluded on 31st October 1918.

During his time in Palestine Dad took every opportunity to see and photograph places in the Holy Land he knew from the Bible especially



when near Jerusalem in the four months awaiting the start of his return to Britain. It is not known how this was done but did involve a stop in Rome. He was demobbed on 6th April 1919 at Purfleet.

Miscellany

August 1915 News Items

- 9th Czar rejects German separate peace offer.
- 13th Gallipoli - men worn out by heat, disease & flies feeding on corpses.
- 14th 9 die and 21 hurt when Irish Mail train from Euston derailed.
- 19th German submarine sinks White Star liner Arabic.
- 21st Italy declares war on Turkey.
- 25th Stalemate in offensive in Artois & Champagne.
- 31st Welsh miners strike settled.



This month's funnies.
 "What's a skeleton?"
 "A lot of bones with the people scraped off"
 " I can't eat this garbage", said the enraged diner. "Call the manager"
 "S'no use". Replied the waiter. " He won't eat it either"

Continued from p2
facing the project.

Once complete, the engine will
visit different parts of the country
and possibly abroad.

Following the talk and questions,
the Chairman thanked John for a
most interesting and informative
presentation..

Poppy Walk

The about 400 people who took part
in this year's event on 19th July
included Ramsay Walkers, Hilary
Brazil and her son Christopher, seen
here at two of their stops.



From our Chairman

Brian Thomas will be standing
down at our AGM from his role
as Branch Vice-Chairman after
two years.

We shall therefore need to
elect a replacement at the
AGM in October who will
hopefully become Chairman
when my term ends in 2016.

Anyone interested in becoming
Vice-Chairman, please have a
word with me or email me

LUNCH AT THE ANGEL



for good food and good company

5 SEPTEMBER *MEET IN THE
BAR AT NOON*

MENU

Roast shoulder of pork
w/ Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes
& gravy (can be gf)

Supreme of British chicken
sat on mash potato draped chunky
tomato & tarragon sauce (gf)

Smoked fillet of haddock
sat on fried potatoes w/a sweet green
pea sauce (gf)

All served with a selection of vegetables

Home cooked ham salad garnished
w/hard-boiled egg
& warm new potatoes (gf)

Fresh fruit salad w/ cream (gf) (v)

Vanilla cheesecake topped w/ mixed
berries & mini jug of cream (v)

Fruity roulade w/fruits & mini jug of
cream (v)

Tea or Coffee and Mints
£ 8.50 Pay on the Day

To book, contact Pat Middleton, email
patriciamiddleton@hotmail.com
or phone 01858 445827

To cancel, ring **The Angel** (01858
462702) before 10 am on the day or
you will be charged

What's Going On?

Forthcoming Events

- 9 Sep Branch Meeting + Poppy Appeal Awards presentations.
- 14 Oct Branch Annual General Meeting + buffet.
- 24 Oct Poppy Appeal Launch 10.30 am on The Square
- 31 Oct Poppy Appeal Raffle Draw
- 8 Nov Remembrance Sunday Parade and Services
- 11 Nov Armistice Day
- 11 Nov Branch Meeting + poetry reading

Welfare

If you are aware of any one who qualifies for, and may benefit from the Legion welfare services, please contact Betty Ramsay on 01858 434923

RBL Helpline

is open to everyone, 8am - 8pm, 7 days a week on Freephone 0808 802 8080 for advice and support for serving & ex- service people and dependents.

In Touch Next Month

Two years with the PPCLI, 'Miscellany, Remember This & Him?', News, etc.

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Branch Website

www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough

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