

# In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996

Issue 207  
December 2015

## The Royal British Legion

Registered Charity No. 219279



### LIVE ON

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



### Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

### Centenary Year of 1915



Not in your tool kit  
but probably in  
Stephen's (page 4)

### Next Monthly Branch Meeting

7.30 pm **Thursday 14 January**

Committee 7 January

Function Room, Conservative Club,  
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

## *Branch News*

### **November Branch Meeting**

The Treasurer reported that the Branch Welfare Account has been closed after transfer-ing the balance to the General Account, Members were reminded that subscriptions had to be paid by 16 November. Remembrance Sunday Parade and Services had been well supported and letters of thanks had been sent to organisations which took part. The Branch standard had been carried by an ACF Cadet and the Queen's Colour by Hilary Brazil. In the absence of a Branch deputy Standard Bearer, our Standard was carried by RNA's Dacia Marlow at

the Armistice Day observance. Cadets and Explorers Scouts had been involved with the Poppy Appeal Collection. The London Poppy Walk in which Hillary and Christopher had taken part, was very successful.B

### **Poetry Reading**

Thirteen members read poems, some of their choosing and others from the list of nineteen selected and arranged by Tom Ashmore and Betty Ramsay. There was a mix of Remembrance and other thoughtful themes, with light-hearted and some very amusing verses. Applause indicated a successful event.

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## *Remembrance*

### **Remembrance Sunday**

With the pace set by the award winning ATC Band, the Parade,

The Reverend Canaan Richard Brand. After the Service there another was held on The Square where wreaths



headed by the Queen's Colour and ex-service, cadet and other standards marched to St Dionysius Church for a service led by our Branch Chaplain,

were laid on the Memorial after two Minutes Silence at 11 o'clock. It was very well supported by the public. Picture from the Harborough Mail

Continued on p7

### Cover Photo

The Mox soldering iron introduced to replace the use of molten lead for jointing aerial cables

## Remember This?

**B Watch, RAF Upavon** Communications Centre (Commcen) had drawn the short straw - we were to cover the 12-hour nightshift on Christmas Eve from 8pm. All married personnel with small children were offered first choice of time off and I was one of the six "singles" left to work!

The IRA had been busy that year. Service families had been targeted in the M62 bombing, five service personnel had been killed in the Guildford pub bomb in October and 21 people were killed in the Birmingham pub bombing in November. We were on a high security alert and were very aware that the "enemy" could be anywhere, disguised as anything. Very few personnel were on camp and the six of us walked into the Commcen building together, booking into the Police Post at the main door as usual. An armed guard checked our ID cards and we then walked through the security doors closing them tight behind us. We then "keyed in" the security code to allow us into the Commcen corridor. At last we could relax in a safe environment and stood at the hatch window until the duty sergeant checked us all and then pressed the buzzer to allow us entry into the main room.

We said 'Goodnight and Happy Christmas' to the retiring shift and prepared for a busy night. As usual, the RAF Police would have locked the doors behind the outgoing shift and settled into their office for the night, after making one last security check of the building. Midnight was

always a busy time, changing records and making sure everything was ready for the new day. At about 1am on Christmas Day it was at last time to make a cup of tea and slow down a little. The police guard had made their hourly call and all was well.

Suddenly there was a noise outside the window hatch - everyone froze. The Sergeant told everyone to keep calm - he picked up the telephone to call the Police Office but there was no reply. Muffled sounds continued to be heard from the hatch - suddenly the glass screen flew back and we screamed. The Sergeant swore and then we all started laughing - there was Father Christmas dressed in his red suit with long white beard calling "Ho, ho, ho - Merry Christmas everyone!" The police guardsman on duty had been an excellent Santa at the children's party that day and thought he would bring us a little Christmas joy!



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*The above is the text of the article in George Seward's excellent December 2003 Issue.*

## *Asbestos Hands ??*

*By Stephen Champion De Crespigny who originally wrote this article for his Ex-RAF Aerial Erectors Association Newsletter.*

My longest detachment was in mid July 1952 at RAF Edlesborough. I was sent there from Henlow to replace a rigger who had left a fitting party. Cpl Jones, known as "Jonah", was in



charge of the party which was installing aerials and associated feeder lines.

I think there were five of us riggers on the site apart from Jonah, Jack and myself, there was "Ginger" Welsh and "Nuttty" Whelan. Nutty used to draw pictures of Thumper the rabbit on anything he could find.

While we were working on the feeder runs they would



sometimes get so hot from static electricity from the nearby transmitting aerials that it would burn your hand and a number of us got our fingers burnt when handling the copper wire.

Molten lead was used to seal all the joints in the copper wires. I was fascinated to watch nuts and bolts bobbing about like corks in water in the molten lead in the iron melting pots. One of the lads was Jack Ashley from Manchester and as Jonah was up a short ladder with the iron pot, Jack was below him holding the ladder in place against the feeder pole. Jonah spilt some of the molten lead onto Jack's hand. I was amazed, he didn't move his hand which was covered with hot lead, he just tapped Jonah on his leg and pointed to the lead on his other hand when Jonah looked down.

*This very hazardous method of soldering copper wire joints in the field and up feeder poles would not pass muster with today's Health and Safety regulations. The Mox Soldering iron was introduced which was heated by an inserted tablet of Magnesium and aluminium oxide ignited with a special match. The tablets were also good for lighting the billet stove! Later a small acetylene blowtorch fed from a small gas cylinder was used.*

During our stay at the camp Jack had a bout of constipation and after several days it was becoming a bit of a problem. He would announce to Jonah in his Mancunian accent "I've not been today". He would not go on sick parade, so after a few more days Jonah sent me into Dunstable to get some *Exlax* and I got a bottle of *Syrup of Figs*. We gave Jack a large dose. It didn't seem to work for a day or so, but on the second or third evening Jack was out for quite a while and came back into the billet looking a bit ashen and announced "I've been"!! The whole billet gave a great cheer, and we all went into the Traveller's Rest opposite the camp gates to



Traveller's Rest just outside the main gate at Edlesborough, is now also a posh eatery.

celebrate with a drink. When we got into the pub the CO was there and asked me what the celebration was about. When I explained he was much amused and brought us all a round of drinks.

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Photo and information opposite is from the Ex- RAF Aerial Erectors Association website.



Aerial Erectors must not suffer from vertigo and had to be prepared to work on masts even taller than this one. There were many different designs and means of erection. This one was known as Mast 32 and was made of six interconnecting timber sections which fitted inside one another to allow it to be transported on a special trailer equipped with a winch used to erect the assembled mast. The design meant that the mast could be taken down and reused elsewhere, although some became permanent.

## Christmas Days

### Away from Home

Christopher Columbus in 1492 in Hispaniola where his Flagship Santa Maria had grounded and sunk.

Charles Darwin in 1835 in Pahia, New Zealand.

Frank Borman in 1968 in orbit round the moon.

### Crowned

Charlemagne, King Charles I in 800 became the first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

William the Conqueror in 1066 made King of England.

### Discovered

Captain William Mynors in 1643 saw what he called Christmas Island.

### Introduced

Andres Celsius, astronomer, in 1741 announced his Centigrade temperature scale.

Montgomery Ward in 1939 added Rudolph as the 9th Santa Claus reindeer.

### Royal Broadcast

King George V in 1932 gave the first Sovereign's Christmas message.

Queen Elizabeth's message in 1957 was the first to be televised.

### Stolen

Someone in 1950 took the Coronation Stone in Westminster Abbey back to Scotland.

### Truce

Troops on the Western Front in 1914 had an unofficial cease fire.

## Miscellany

### December 1915 News Items

- 4th US state of Georgia recognises the Ku Klux Klan
- 10th Ford makes its millionth car
- 12th German Hugo Junkers makes the first all metal aeroplane
- 12th Frank Sinatra born
- 15th Sir Douglas Haig takes command of British forces on Western Front
- 20th Gallipoli - Allied forces successfully evacuated from ANZAC Cove and Sulva Bay
- 30th 400 die when U Boat sinks P & O liner Persia in Mediterranean



### Christmas Crackers

Where did Frosty the Snowman meet his wife? *At the SNOW ball.*

What carol is most often heard in the desert? *Oh Camel Ye Faithful.*

What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus? *Claustrophobic.*

### Garden of Remembrance

For the sixteenth successive year large white crosses, each with a name of a local war dead, were laid out in the Memorial Gardens, military cemetery style, in two plots flanking a model of the Cenotaph. It was also the location for a Sunset Ceremony with the lowering of the Union Flag and a Silence.

### Armistice Day

After the laying of a wreath by the Memorial in Welland Park, the main observance was by the gates of the Memorial Gardens. In the presence of the District Council Chairman and a good number of the general public and school children there was two



minutes silence at 11 o'clock .



Wreaths were then hung on the gates.

### Remembrance Concert

in the Baptist Church was well attended. The Harborough Band's well arranged selection of music led up to 'The Evening Hymn and Last Post', dipping of the Standard, Act of Homage and two minutes silence. Afterwards, refreshments were provided by ladies of the Church

### Late Xmas Lunch at The Angel with RNA and RAFA

**5 JANUARY** MEET IN THE BAR AT NOON

### Menu

Succulent oven-roasted British Turkey with traditional festive trimmings (+gf)

Mediterranean Vegetable Tart served on fried potatoes with a chunky tomato sauce (v)

Oven-baked Salmon on fried potatoes with a chunky leek & white wine sauce

Slow braised nugget of British Beef in a rich red wine & root vegetable gravy served on mashed potato (gf)

Supreme of British Chicken on mash with a smoked bacon, baby onion & chestnut mushroom sauce) (gf)

Chestnut mushroom, Spinach & mascarpone lasagne (gf) (v)

All served with a trio of vegetables -!-!-!-!

Traditional Christmas Pudding with brandy sauce & candied fruits (+gf)

Rich Chocolate Torte with salted caramel icecream

Fresh Fruit Salad (with fruity sorbet (v) (gf)

Strawberry Compote topped with crème brulee (v) (gf)

Fruity Meringue Roulade with compote of fruits and cream (v) (gf)

-!-!-!-!

Coffee/Tea & Mince Pies  
£13 Pay on the day

To book contact Kathie Morley, phone 01858 419714 or email [kathiemorley@talktalk.net](mailto:kathiemorley@talktalk.net)  
To cancel, ring The Angel (01858 462702) before 10 am on the day or you will be charged

## What's Going On?

### Forthcoming Events

- Jan 5 Xmas lunch with RAFA and RNA see p7 for menu
- Jan 14 Branch meeting. Note it is on **Thursday not Wednesday**
- Feb 10 Branch meeting
- Feb 20 Branch Coffee Morning at Theatre
- 19 Mar Branch Anniversary Dinner at Golf Club

### 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 **0800 802 8080** for advice and support for serving & ex- service people and dependents.

### In Touch Next Month

"VC for a miner", Miscellany, Remember This?, News, etc.

### Branch Contacts

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#### Branch Website

[www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough)

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