

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

93

Years of Caring



Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Centenary Year of 1916



Awarded for
Valour but the
medal was
never seen by
its recipient
(see pp 4&5)

Next Monthly Branch Meeting
7.30 pm Wednesday 10 February
Committee 4 February

Issue 208
January 2016

Function Room, Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Branch News

Special General Meeting

There was just one nomination for the post of Vice-Chairman for which the meeting had been called and Janet Lee was duly elected.

December Branch Meeting

It was reported that the Remembrance Sunday Parade included more Groups this year, that the Church was packed for the Service and the short Service and wreath-laying on The Square was very well supported by the general public. Lord Lieutenant, Lady Gratton, had expressed her appreciation of the events. The Armistice Day commemoration by the gates of the Memorial Gardens was again well supported.

In her report the Treasurer said that the Welfare account had been closed and the balance transferred to the General Account. The P.A.O. said that the Appeal receipts already exceeded £18,000 and he was very pleased with help this year from the Explorer Scouts.

Forthcoming social events were the Late Xmas lunch with RNA and RAFA for which menu and order form were available, and the Peaker Park Xmas party to which members would be welcome.

Application forms for County

Awards had been submitted and the Branch Annual Report, for which the author was thanked, had been distributed.

December *In Touch* had been printed and was ready for distribution but when someone pointed out that it was the December 2014 issue, that was quickly rescinded with apologies from a very red faced Editor!! The correct issue was produced the following day thanks to the co-operation of the Church Office.

After Meeting Events

The last meeting of the year was celebrated traditionally with mince pies and a quiz presented by Janet and Brian Lee. This was shorter than usual in



order to allow for a talk by Glen Illife who had done some research on one of the local WWI soldiers whose name is on the War Memorial. How the talk was

Continued on p7

Cover Photo

The Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry. The image is from one of many on the internet.

Remember These? (From January 2004

Branch News

Harborough Town Centre - Water works disruption.

The Chairman has been assured by local council representatives that the forthcoming work, which will affect the Memorial Garden, would not impinge on the Remembrancetide events. We will be shown the plans for the work.

War Memorial Portico.

The future of the memorial in the Cottage Hospital, should the NHS cease to own the building, is the subject of discussions between Messrs Ashmore, Hudson and Mrs Cox of the Primary Care Trust. Mrs Cox is very supportive of the Legion's concern.

Mr Chris Gibson

The family of the late Mr Gibson thanked members, particularly the Standard Bearer, for their support at the funeral, and have donated £100 to the Branch in his memory.

A Presentation

The Branch President welcomed new Member, Mrs Joan Tooms, and formally presented her badge.

Christmas Welfare

John Liddell is grateful to all who helped compile the list of recipients, which totalled twenty-one having been widened to include those recently widowed. He thanked Vida Edwards and Charles Freer for their help with the distribution.



Youth Affiliation

The Youth Officer, Brian Marshall, announces that the presentation of the Affiliation Certificate to

1084 Squadron of the Air Training Corps will take place on at 8 pm on Wednesday, 25 February, at the ATC Headquarters in the Leisure Centre grounds. RBL County Officials have been invited and Brian hopes that that there will be a good turnout by Members of the Branch. The Cadets will be wearing their new RBL Affiliate Badges, which will be provided from Branch funds.

Double Whammy!

There are two excellent reasons to be at the next Branch Meeting on Wednesday, 11th February. Definitely not to be missed is a talk by the irrepressible Bernard Halsall, intriguingly entitled, 'I Believe this Belongs to You!'. And that's not all - Bernard will be followed by an opportunity to feast upon the goodies tastefully laid on by Mary and Joan. Don't miss it.

81st Anniversary Dinner

The date: Friday, 26 March. The place: Market Harborough Golf Club - with music by David Hawke. The cost: just £15. Make your booking as soon as possible, please, with Mary or Joan on MH 462143 with your selection from the following :

- Starters:* Stilton & Broccoli Soup
or Prawn & Smoked Mackerel Platter
- Main:* Roast Lamb & Mint Sauce,
Poached Salmon or Vegetarian Dish
- Choice of Sweet or Cheese & Biscuits
- Coffee and mints

William Hackett VC

On the morning of 22 June 1916, Sapper William Hackett and four other miners of 254 Tunnelling Company were driving a tunnel towards the enemy lines below the cratered surface of the Givenchy sector of northern France. At about one-quarter of the way towards the German trenches at a depth of about 35 feet, the timbered gallery 4'3" high by 2'6" wide was still in the early stages of development; it was served by a single shaft – the Shaftesbury Shaft. At 2.50am the explosion of a heavy German mine (the Red Dragon) blew in 25 feet of the tunnel, cutting the five men off from the shaft and safety. On the surface, a rescue party was immediately organised. After two days of digging an escape hole was formed through the fallen earth and broken timbers, and the tunnellers contacted. William Hackett helped three men to safety. However, with sanctuary beckoning, and although himself apparently unhurt, he refused to leave until the last man, seriously injured 22 year-old Thomas Collins of the Swansea Pals (14th Battalion, the Welsh Regiment), was rescued. His words were said to be, "I am a tunneller, I must look after the others first". The rescuers worked on, but were frequently immobilized by German shelling and mortaring of the shaft-head. Conditions above and below ground became more treacherous by

the minute. Eventually the gallery collapsed again, entombing the two men. Both still lie beneath the fields of Givenchy today. After the tragedy the Shaftesbury workings were abandoned.

For his act of selfless valour William Hackett was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross – the only such decoration ever to be bestowed upon a Tunneller. He is remembered in perpetuity on Panel I of the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing near Armentières whilst Thomas Collins' name appears on the Thiepval Memorial on the Somme. Why two men who died together and still lie together are not commemorated in the same place is unknown.

With William Hackett's courage exemplifying the Tunnellers' work, this memorial stands at Givenchy in

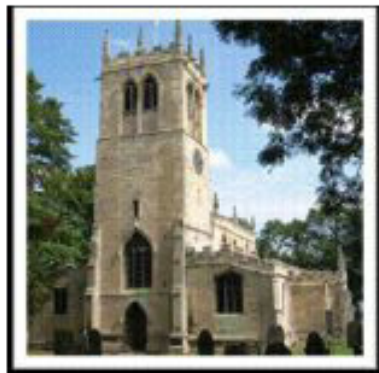


Photo taken at the unveiling ceremony

celebration not only of him, but all his military mining comrades from around the world, men whose critical but hidden role has been long forgotten.

William Hackett, one of two sons of John and Harriet Hackett, was born on 11th June 1873 in Patriot Street, Sneinton near Nottingham. Father John was a travelling brewer, who "did considerable business among countryside inns of the old-fashioned type" [Mexborough and Swinton Times]. William did not go to school and was to remain illiterate throughout his life. Leaving his first job in a factory in Nottingham, at the age of eighteen he applied for mining work at Denaby Main, a large local colliery founded in 1863.

On 16th April 1900 at Conisbrough Parish Church, he married Alice



Tooby, formerly of Morley near Leeds. The couple moved into 22, Cusworth Street, Denaby, one of many small terraced houses owned by the colliery. In 1901 William is listed as a 'Coal Miner's Filler', a job that entailed loading 'tubs' (mine trucks) with mineral. Some years later, and having found better-paid work at Manvers Main Colliery, the Hacketts, now a

family, had left Denaby for Mexborough near Doncaster, South Yorkshire. William and Alice, their son Arthur and daughter Mary, as well as mother and father-in-law Thomas & Sarah Tooby, were settled in a new home at 49, Crossgate. William's job was now that of 'Dataller', making and repairing roads and railways underground.

Upon the declaration of war in August 1914 William Hackett began the quest to 'do his bit'. Three times he tried and failed to enlist in the York and Lancaster Regiment – at the age of 41 he was considered too old for the infantry. Because of the desperate need for skilled miners on the Western Front, on 25th October 1915, despite having been being diagnosed with a heart condition by the army medicals, Hackett was accepted by the Royal Engineers, and after a fortnight's training at Chatham followed by a few days leave, he was sent to France to join 172 Tunnelling Company. Within a month he was transferred to 254 Tunnelling Company, then working on the Western Front at Givenchy lès la Bassée in northern France.

William was the cousin of Branch member, Tony Hackett's father. Tony provided information from the website www.tunnellersmemorial.com from which this article and that on page 6 have been produced.

Underground warfare

Undermining the positions of one's enemy is one of the most ancient of martial activities. For almost 3000 years before 1914 it was a prime siege-breaking technique.

By the end of May 1915 a continuous trench line stretched from the North Sea coast to the Swiss frontier, effectively becoming an unbroken pair of fortress walls with no vulnerable flanks. It was to grow into a huge network of defence-in-depth earthworks with both sides equally well dug-in and deploying comparable troop numbers and armaments. Neither side was strong enough to force a decisive breakthrough and in these siege conditions the Western Front was a prime candidate for underground warfare.

On 21 December 1914 the Germans secretly dug shallow tunnels across No Man's Land and exploded mines beneath allied trenches. Britain had no such capability until March 1915 when the first tunnelling companies had been formed and were at work in Flanders. By mid-1916 the British had around 25,000 trained tunnellers. Most mining became defensive to protect one's own web of tunnels from enemy action but there were a number of very offensive actions when enormous explosions caused large numbers of casualties.

Miscellany

January 1916 News Items

- 1st 2 million more women in UK in UK than a year ago.
- 2nd Henry Ford returns to US after abortive peace mission to Europe
- 9th British defeat 60,000 Turks in Tigris battle
- 13th Miners' Union vote against conscription
- 23rd British and Natural History Museums close for duration
- 27th Conscription becomes law
- 31st President Wilson says US Navy ready if war comes

Pineapple



A thief broke into my home last night looking for money. I woke up and started searching with him.

The formula for finding the volume of a pizza of radius **Z** and thickness **a** is

$$\text{pi} \cdot \mathbf{z} \cdot \mathbf{z} \cdot \mathbf{a}$$

Seen on a village hall notice board:
Chess Society - January Meeting

Continued from p2
presented was unusual in that the speaker was dressed and equipped, including rifle and bayonet, as the subject of his talk would have been and this was described in detail. Applause and questions showed how much the talk had been appreciated.

Congratulations!

At the ATC National Band Competition in November the band of our Affiliated 1084 Squadron ATC came first in the 'Full Band' and second in the 'Fanfare' classes.

Legion News

New arrangements are being made to enable the Leicestershire Advice and Information Officer, Susan Groggan, to cover the County more fully by setting up more Contact Points. This will mean she will visit Market Harborough only once a month when she will be in the library from 10 am to noon on the second Thursday.

County Conference on 9th January involved five Branch members; John Standish who went as County Vice Chairman but became acting Chairman, John Morley as County Chaplain and became an Executive Committee member as well, Betty Ramsay as County Youth Officer and Conference Committee secretary., Hilary Brazil as County Training Officer and Branch Standard Bearer and Brian Thomas as Branch Delegate who was presented with the Jack Quain trophy and Ron West Shield. *(Full report next month)*

LUNCH AT THE ANGEL



for good food and good company

2 FEBRUARY *MEET IN THE
BAR AT NOON*

MENU

Roast leg of British lamb w/
Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes &
gravy (can be gf)

Nuggets of British turkey held in
rich chunky leek & ham laced cream
sauce served mini roast potato
topped w/herb scone

Nuggets of salmon sat on mash
potato draped in rich tomato ragu
sauce (gf)

All served with a selection of vegetables

-/-/-/-/-

Sherry trifle (v)

Fruity bread & butter pudding w/
custard (v)

Cherry & amoretta cheesecake
w/more cherries & cream (v)

-/-/-/-/-

Tea or Coffee and Mints

£ 9.25 Pay on the Day

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

What's Going On?

Forthcoming Events

- 10 Feb Branch Meeting and display of trophies awarded at County conference (see p 7) and after meeting talk, "Bon Voyage" by Professor Ronald Spiers
- 20 Feb Branch Coffee Meeting at the Theatre. Helpers at items for the stalls please
- 9 Mar Branch Meeting
- 19 Mar Branch Anniversary Dinner Dance at M H Golf Club - see enclosed menu and order form

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

'Picnic on the Beach' 'Miscellany, Remember This?', News, etc.

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Branch Website

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

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