

In Touch

The monthly newsletter founded in 1996

Issue 215
August 2016

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



100 years later, this ship's company were honoured in Westminster Abbey (p4)

Next Monthly Branch Meeting
7.30 pm **Wednesday 14 September**
Committee 8 September

Function Room, Conservative Club,
Fairfield Rd. Market Harborough

Branch News

July Branch Meeting

It had been expected that it would be under the Vice-Chairman but in the event, the Chairman was able to attend. Agenda items dealt with included County Chairman election and MSO resignation (see p7); Chairman's thanks to those who had supported the Armed Forces Day and Somme Commemoration events; the creation of a new Committee of relevant local groups, including RBL, to deal with the future of the Hospital Memorial Portico; Youth Officer's report on the affiliated units (see p 7); Treasurer's report and note that the Annual Accounts (to 30 June) had been completed; mention of the 'Talking Books' Service; brief statements about the Poppy Appeal and July lunch and August menu; the Standard Bearer's activities since the June meeting; July In Touch was ready for distribution.

After Meeting Talk

The speaker, PC Malcolm Roberts from Market Harborough had joined the Police after serving in the Army and having been a Cadet. He spoke very well, reminding us all to be more careful and aware with our belongings whether at home or out and about. We lived in a low crime rate area but with relatively wealthy elderly people

often targeted by pickpockets especially in more expensive stores like Waitrose. Ladies were warned not to leave their purses accessible whilst picking items from the shelves. He later handed out little bells for attachment to purses.

As a deterrent to the casual burglar, doors should be kept closed and locked. When answering the door to a stranger ask for proof of identity but do not admit him until you have checked. Do not agree or pay for work which a caller says should be done. If they are persistent and plausible say you will call the police and then do so. When away from the house as when on holiday it is advisable to arrange to have a car on the drive.

Questions and applause showed how much PC Roberts' talk and advice had been appreciated.

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Railway Association Visit to Llangollen

The Branch was represented by three members and a relative on 17th July when, in the workshops, they saw the progress being made on recreating the *Unknown Warrior Locomotive* (being sponsored by TRBL) and the subject of the talk after last July's meeting) before making the very scenic return rail journey to Corwen.. A long but very enjoyable day.

Cover Photo

Shackleton's Expedition ship, Endeavour, Locked in and being crushed by the Antarctic ice - one of many photos on <http://www.coolantarctica.com/>

Remember This? From *In Touch* August 2001

Naval Enquiries by Tom Ashmore

ONE OF THE NAMES on the town WWI War Memorial is Simpkin C B who, research for the Books of Remembrance revealed to be Sick Berth Attendant 2nd Class Charles Bertie Simpkin who served on HMS Kent and who died on 6th July 1918, age 36. Commonwealth War Graves commission records show that he is buried in Plymouth Old Cemetery (Penycomequick).

When my wife and I visited Plymouth recently we went to the cemetery and took photographs of the grave to include in Volume 5 of the Books.

We were saddened to learn that this large (30 acre) cemetery had fallen into an appalling state of neglect under the private company which had owned it. Following the company's bankruptcy, the cemetery had been acquired by a trust whose volunteers have been gradually restoring it to a state worthy of the memory of those buried there. The plot containing Simpkin's grave is still quite rough but all the graves are accessible. However, there are still large areas where

the graves are still completely hidden under thickets of bramble. There are over 200 Naval graves, most of which are marked with tall grey slate headstones, each inscribed with the man's name, rank, age, date of death and ship. Two things puzzled us: why were there so many deaths from HMS Vivid and why were many of these Boys with ages as young as 14?

To solve the puzzles I consulted our naval types. Jim O'Brien, "HMS Vivid? Never heard of it." Bill Cotton, "Leave it with me- I'll ring you back". Later, "According to Portsmouth Naval Museum HMS Vivid was a Plymouth shore training establishment which after WWI changed its name to HMS Drake". Bill also reminded me that he

had joined as a Boy (see *In Touch* Issue 9) but couldn't suggest why those at Vivid had died. Jim when told that Vivid became Drake, "Well, I'm blown. I trained there in 1947!"

The question I asked neither Jim nor Bill,

"What was Simpkin's ship HMS Kent?". Anyone know? Answer or more info on Vivid, Drake or Plymouth Naval base to the Editor please.



Part of the beautiful, peaceful place, the Ford Park Cemetery Trust has created,

Shackleton

A Centenary Service of Thanksgiving for the Courage and Endurance of Sir Ernest Shackleton CVO and his Men

Friday 20th May 2016
Related by Helen West

Thanks to Mum (Betty Ramsay's) on-going passion for all things Antarctic and the fact we had previously attended a celebration of Scott, we applied for and received tickets for this service at West Minster Abbey. For those not familiar with Shackleton or his achievements, I cannot hope to do justice in this article. However, the fact that the Abbey was completely full to celebrate someone's life 100 years on from when he had done the impossible and rescued all his men from a failed attempt to cross Antarctica via the South Pole says it all really. He is remembered for his leadership skills; his ability to hold together a disparate group of men and for never asking them to do anything he was not prepared to do himself.

The service was reflective, celebratory, emotive and amusing. It was supported by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, Patron of the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage

Trust and Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence. The service was ably supported by beautiful singing from the Special Service Choir. Various dignitaries were involved in the service such as his granddaughter, The Honourable Alexandra Shackleton and the



Photo from an article in the Telegraph website

Master of Dulwich College. Shackleton had studied here and it is the resting place of the *James Caird*, the boat, which had safely carried him and 5 others for 7 days to South Georgia to bring out a rescue of his men. His swift crossing of the island with Tom Crean and Frank Worsley has never been beaten, and if they had not met up

with the Norwegian whalers, who had stopped off on the island briefly, they would have never had a chance to get back to their men on Elephant Island to rescue them. They had not touched land for 497 days following the loss of their ship *Endurance* to the ice.

Shackleton Endurance Expedition - Trans-Antarctica 1914 - 1917

On 8th August 1914 the newly constructed ship *Endurance* with the 28 men of the expedition set off for a point on the north side of Antarctica stopping off at the Norwegian whaling station on South Georgia for stores three months later. From there, the ship had to force its way through exceptionally heavy pack-ice but after six weeks, on January 18th 1915, and only a hundred miles from her destination, became locked in the ice.

They drifted south-west with the ice and the worry was where this would take them and whether it would be possible to break out in the spring? To maintain the morale of over twenty men of different backgrounds, skiing, football and hockey games were regular features on the ice until the darkness of the Antarctic winter. Men went out looking for penquins and seals as food for themselves and dogs.



Daylight returned in July but the weather was not kind with regular blizzards and low temperatures. Most worrying of all was the pressure from the ice, floes began to "raft" over each other. This increased until the ship

was crushed and had to be abandoned on 27th October. They had drifted nearly 1200 miles and were now about 346 miles from the nearest land, Paulet Island, where there might be food and shelter.

"Ocean Camp" was established on a



thick, heavy floe about a mile and a half from what was fast becoming the wreck of the *Endurance*. With the Antarctica Spring the ice began to thin and Shackleton decided to abandon the Camp and use the three 22 foot life-boats to reach Paulet Island, hauling them over and rowing between, ice floes.

On April 12th it was found that instead of making good progress westwards, they had actually travelled 30 miles to the east as a result of the drifting ice. They did however spot Elephant Island, part of the South Shetlands group and headed that way in seas that were by now largely open for navigation. They made landfall on Elephant Island after 497 days since they had last set foot on land.

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A Camp was set up using two of the life-boats for shelter and although safe, there was no chance of being found and rescued. Shackleton therefore decided to use the other boat, the *James Caird*, with five chosen companions to get to South Georgia for help from the whaling station to rescue those left on Elephant Island. The boat which had a sail, was made more seaworthy and equipped with a part cover against the weather and the



Launching
James Caird

sea. They left on 24th April 1916 to cross 800 miles of the most stormy stretch of ocean in the world. During this journey the only solace were hot meals every four hours by the light of a primus stove. A break in the clouds on the seventh day allowed the calculation that they were half way across. On 10th May they able to land on a South Georgia beach at King Haakon Bay.

Five days later Shackleton, Crean and Worsley set out to cross the uncharted mountains to reach the whaling station. After an exhausting and unprecedented 22 miles journey they arrived at Stromness where they

washed, shaved, ate and slept. Worsley went with a whale catcher to pick up the three left at King Haakon Bay whilst Shackleton was able to arrange with help from Uruguay and Chile for the rescue of those still on Elephant Island. On 30 August 1916 after 137 days there, the whole party left at the end of an epic period of individual endurance and Shackleton's superb leadership.

Based on and with extracts and photo from <http://www.coolantarctica.com/>

Miscellany

August 1916 News Items

- 4th USA buys Danish Virgin Islands for \$25 million
- 5th British beat Turks in naval battle off Port Said.
- 5th American chewing gum goes on sale in France
- 21st Reports of Turkish massacre of 500,000 Armenians
- 27th Trade unionists protest in Hyde Park at high food prices
- 31st British casualties for August alone are 127,000



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Branch AGM

Enclosed with this issue is the Notice and Form on which you are asked to nominate (with their agreement) the Officers and Committee members for the coming year

News of our Affiliates

Busy Youth Officer Betty attended the St John Cadets award event, the ATC cadet enrolment service and the Scouts jamboree where the Queens Guard Patrol, 1st Bowden Scouts won the Fraser Shield - Congratulations!!

The ACF detachment, in uniform, had added to the solemnity of the Somme Commemoration in the Memorial Gardens.



RBL County News

Election of County Chairman
Branches had been asked to vote in favour of either Vice Chairman, John Standish or a former Chairman, Jim Rowlinson. Because so many Branches had not previously sent in their annual returns, only eleven would have been eligible to vote. Other irregularities reduced the number of votes to eight split equally between the contenders. But after further consideration, it was ruled that Jim Rowlinson. Is the new County Chairman.

MSO Retirement

Michelle Green, Membership Support Office, formerly known as County Secretary has left the post and the duties has been temporarily taken on by the Area MSO.

In an email to Betty Ramsay Michelle wrote, 'I am looking forward to my new opportunity, and I will miss parts, but not all, of the Legion!

I will always be very grateful for the support I received from Market Harborough and yourself during my time as County Secretary and MSO.'

For **RBL HQ News** see
www.britishlegion.org.uk

LUNCH
AT THE
ANGEL



for good food and good company

6 SEPTEMBER **MEET IN THE BAR AT NOON**

MENU

Shoulder of pork, Chicken Supreme on pasta, Cod on veg curry, Prawn salad, Meats & Chicken Salad.
Fruit Scone w/jam & clotted Cream, Crème Bruleé, Lemon & Raspberry sponge w/custard.
Tea or coffee & mints. £9.25

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

- 20 Aug Lenthal House Fete 2 - 4pm
Members welcome.
- 17 Sep RAFA Coffee Morning for
Wings Collection
- 18 Sep Battle of Britain Service, Ltle
Bowden Church, 10.45 am
- 12 Oct Branch AGM + Buffet
- 15 Oct Coffee Morning at Theatre
for Poppy Appeal
- 29 Oct Festival of Remembrance @
De Montfort Hall
- 29 Oct Poppy Appeal Launch on
The Square
- 9 Nov Branch Meeting + talk
- 12 Nov Festival of Remembrance at
Albert Hall. If you wish to go
please contact Betty Ramsay.

Welfare

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

RBL Helpline

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

In Touch Next Month

'Pause to Remember', Miscellany,
Remember This?, News, etc.

Branch Contacts

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Branch Website

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