



# The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity No. 219279

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106

Founded in 1923



# Annual Report

for the year

1st October 2003 to 30th September 2004



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



### Introduction

This fifth formal Annual Report adopts the same format as in previous years. Background information about the Branch that remains unchanged is included again so that the document does not require prior knowledge of the branch or reference to earlier reports,

It goes without saying that the success of any Branch depends upon the enthusiasm and effort put in by its Members. Good teamwork is essential to the successful operation of any organisation and, in this respect, we are extremely fortunate in having teams and individuals whose competence and determination makes us the envy of many other Branches in the County and, indeed, much further afield.

As Chairman, I pay tribute to the efforts of all members in achieving another successful year. But success has another ingredient - enjoyment. This may be from achievement through working together, from comradeship from relaxing together or just the satisfaction of belonging to a successful and well regarded group of people.

I thank everyone for the support they have given me and know that together we will endeavour to maintain a Branch to which members enjoy belonging, which has a high standard of performance, and which recognises areas of activity which can and must be improved.

.....  
Mark R Hudson, Chairman

November 2004

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## About the Branch

- Formed on 20th March, 1923, the 81st Anniversary was celebrated this year.
- Centred on the South Leicestershire market town of Market Harborough, it serves some 20 villages in a rural area of about 45 square miles, west and north of the Northamptonshire border and a population at the 2001 census of **25,826** (town **20,127** and villages **5699**)
- The nearest RBL Branches are in Northamptonshire.
- There are local branches of R N A and R A F A. Some of our Members belong to these associations.
- There are no nearby military units from which to recruit younger members.
- There is no associated RBL Club and no local Women's Section Branch.
- The branch had no premises since 1991 when it sold a building acquired just after WW2. This year part of the proceeds of that sale was used to acquire a portable storage unit, primarily for use for the Poppy Appeal.
- Meetings are held in hired rooms at the Market Harborough Conservative Club.
- It is still a fairly small branch, with 131 members at year end. Of these **38 were women and 37 Associate members.**
- The Branch has an enviable reputation both within the RBL and in the local community.
- The Branch produces a monthly newsletter - appreciated particularly by those members who are unable to attend meetings.
- The Branch has two websites created and maintained by members.



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## **Branch General Objectives and Philosophy**

General Objectives, based on those set in January 1997, are to,

1. Foster a sense of comradeship amongst all members.
2. Encourage members to participate in Branch activities.
3. Carry out fully Local Welfare responsibilities.
4. Increase still further the Branch's contribution to Legion funds.
5. Work to ensure the Branch's long term survival especially through greater involvement in the community..

### **Our Philosophy**

We believe that success with the first objective leads to success with the others, but that this in turn reinforces the sense of comradeship, interest and members' pride in their Branch. The more we do with and for our members, the more they benefit from their membership and the more the Branch and Legion prospers.

We consider that a branch of the Royal British Legion should be,

Active, Caring, Friendly, Innovative, Outward Looking

These are the criteria which have continued to guide the direction of Market Harborough Branch and we believe lead to a high standard of service to our members, the Legion and the community for which the Legion exists.



# The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch BR0106



## Highlights of the Year



**Affiliation of both local Cadet Units to the Branch.**  
These are the first Cadets in the County to be linked to the Legion in this way.

<< ATC 1084 Squadron

Market Harborough ACF >>



**Branch awarded the Leicestershire and Rutland County Jack Quain Trophy for Endeavour**

George Fleming >>  
with Standard Bearer Cup

Peter Wilson >>  
with Gold Badge Certificate

Mark Hudson >>  
with Jack Quain Trophy



**Achievement**

President, Peter Wilson  
awarded Gold Badge

Chairman, Mark Hudson  
elected County  
Vice Chairman

George Fleming elected  
County Standard Bearer.



 **Poppy Appeal**   
<< Long Service Awards

Decent storage space at last! >>



**Over £18,000 total receipts in year ending 31/5/04,  
a 26% increase on previous year.**



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## Poppy Appeal

### An Excellent Year

**Over £18,000 raised, a 26% increase** on the previous year's figure. This very large increase is attributable to a number of factors including better publicity, improved organisation and more successful fundraising.

### 2003 Poppy Appeal Launch



The District Council Chairman and RBL County President presented Long Service and other Awards to collectors and helpers who have worked so hard for the Poppy Appeal over the years. The event received good press coverage.

<<Over 50 years Service rewarded

Help from the ATC recognised >>



### Special Fundraising

The 4th Remembrance Concert, held in November, 2003 contributed nearly £600, a Poppy Coffee Morning over £300 and sponsorship secured by our Secretary, Betty Ramsay and her daughter for completing the London Poppy Walk, over £550.

### Good Collections



Street, House to House and Static Point Collections were all up on the previous year.

<< Youthful help for John Cox!

### Future Improvements

The computer system to aid distribution, stock and financial control is being further developed and with the new storage facility will greatly simplify operations.

Getting organised >>





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## Legion in the Community

Market Harborough branch is well known, and respected in our communities and we have continued to increase our involvement.

### Activities we initiated during the year:

- VIP's attended Branch functions. Guests included the present and former Lord Lieutenants, two Deputy Lieutenants, District Council Chairman and constituency M P.
- Affiliation of both Local Cadet units to the Branch.
- Garden of Remembrance re-created
- Remembrance Concert performed by the Harborough Band.
- Information stalls at the Annual Carnival and during Poppy Appeal Week.
- Discussions with Council, Water Authority and Contractors to safeguard War Memorial, Garden of Remembrance and Remembrance Parade route during flood relief works

### Their Initiative

A measure of success of Legion in the Community is the extent to which the Branch is consulted about, or invited to be involved in, the activities of other organisations.

Some examples have been:

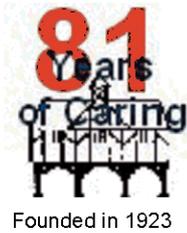
- Britain in Bloom. The theme for this year's award-winning entry was Market Harborough Heritage. One display, around the War Memorial, featured two topiary lions representing the Legion's presence in the town since 1923,
- New Hospital. The Primary Care Trust routinely involves the Branch in matters concerning the future of the unique War Memorial at the old hospital.
- Council for Voluntary Services. We have accepted the invitation to join the Harborough District Compact, a formal agreement to work cooperatively with other voluntary groups.
- Harborough Museum. Invited us to a consultation meeting. Routinely consulted on military matters. A Branch member who is a part-time helper, provides a permanent link.
- Harborough Theatre. We were asked to mount displays about the Legion and Poppy Appeal in connection with their production of *Journeys End*, the famous play set in WW1



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### Working with Young People

In February 2003 the Branch appointed a Youth Officer, Brian Marshall to develop ways to work more closely with young people. His starting point was the two local Cadet units with which the Branch had good relations. Although Affiliation of a Cadet unit to a Legion Branch is a recognised formal arrangement, there was no such link in Leicestershire and Rutland. The chance of the Branch being a County "first" was a spur for Brian and appealed to the ATC Squadron Commander and Training Officer and the ACF Detachment Commander all of whom were Branch members. Thus with training courses and other formalities completed, a ceremony



was held on 25th February 2004 when certificates were exchanged by which 1084 Squadron Air Training Corps became affiliated to Market Harborough Branch, RBL. (see page 5 for picture).

Then on a personal note, Branch President, Peter Wilson presented Flt Lt Smith with a limited edition print of the famous 633 Squadron as a tribute to the Cadet Unit with which he was closely associated in its early years.

Present at the event were County Chairman, Jim Rawlinson, Mrs Rawlinson, members of the Branch - and the Press photographer whose picture appeared with a press release in the regional evening paper.

A few weeks later it was the turn of the Army Cadet Force when on 29th April a parade and signing ceremony (picture on page 5) marked the Affiliation of the Market Harborough Detachment to the Branch. The area ACF Company Commander and a good turn-out of branch members attended the event.

Veteran Bernard Halsall inspects the parade watched by Chairman, Mark Hudson and Detachment Commander, Staff Sgt Andrew Marriott >>





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## Communication and Publicity

### Within the Branch

Good communication with and between members is the key to a strong and successful branch. It breeds trust and respect; enthusiasm and a sense of pride. We sought to achieve this through:

- **Monthly Branch meetings** where those present were made aware of inward and outward correspondence, received reports from those responsible for the various Branch functions, heard from members with responsibilities outside the Branch.

Members allowed discussion on matters dealt with and informal and social communication between members but only for those present - typically less than a third of total membership.

- **A Monthly Newsletter, *In Touch***, which reported on the meetings, included editorial comment and articles and stories from members.

It reached all members, so everyone could be aware of what was happening in the branch. It has the style of a mini-magazine and has become an essential feature of branch life. Some members received a large print version .

- **A Directory of members' names addresses and phone numbers**

Recently updated and circulated to all members, it facilitates individual contact.

### Outside the Branch

- ***In Touch*** - circulated to some other RBL branches, local RNA and RAFA branches and some individuals.
- **Branch Website** - [www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net](http://www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net) made world-wide contacts.
- **In Touch on-line** published in [www.in-touch.ukvet.net](http://www.in-touch.ukvet.net), a growing archive of issues since the launch of ***In Touch*** in 1996.
- **Press Publicity** - Reports and photographs of branch activities published in one Regional daily and two weekly local papers gave a total coverage of about 1300 column-cms (equivalent to 4½ tabloid pages) during the year.
- **Posters** - advertised specific events.
- **Information Displays** - at Carnival and Poppy Appeal stalls
- **Leaflets** - at Coffee Mornings
- **Concert Programme** included Legion information and Branch contacts.



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## Welfare

Most of the sixteen Cases dealt with during the year were concerned with providing advice, support and help in claiming benefits or other forms of assistance to which clients are entitled. There were two cases where specific financial help was arranged, one for the purchase of a washing machine and one for a disabled person to facilitate access to his house. There were also two examples of RBL / SSAFA cooperation when our caseworkers dealt with cases which SSAFA had identified.

Early in the year a Welfare Support system was set up in which the names of contacts who could be alerted to the need for sick or hospital visits were published in the monthly newsletter, *In Touch*. The visits would be made by someone on a list of volunteers. There was a problem when a disabled member was in hospital for several weeks 70 mile away. A few of his colleagues did make the effort to visit him but attempts to find him a contact in a local RBL branch were not successful.

A Member was appointed to the East Midlands War Pensions Agency committee.

## Ceremonial



George Fleming

Branch Standard Bearer, George Fleming, won the County Standard Bearers' Competition in October 2003 and was elected County Standard Bearer in January 2004. In that capacity he entered the Regional competition, gaining third place, was in two parades at National Conference, the County D-Day Commemoration Service and Parade in Leicester, the Quorn Summer Concert and the RBL Poppy Race Day at Doncaster.

The Branch standard was carried by George Fleming or his deputy John Cox (a former County Standard Bearer) at several County events and those of other branches including Poppy Appeal Launch and a high profile Leicester City Football match. In our own Branch, Remembrance events included Services, Parade, Wreath Laying, daily Sun-set ceremonies and a concert. In addition the standard was present at the Cadet Affiliation ceremonies, the Anniversary Dinner and at a number of funerals. There was press coverage of several of the 25 occasions the Branch Standard was carried during the year.



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## Social, Fundraising and other Events A n Active Year

Thanks to the efforts of our Social Team, Joan McMillin and Mary Symon, many branch activities now occur on a regular, predictable basis. During the year they included:

- 12 Monthly Lunches - Tuesday after each Branch General Meeting
- Anniversary Dinner - 26th March - 1st Friday after 20th (Branch formed 20/03/1923)
- After meeting Social periods e.g.
  - Buffets - November (AGM), February, May, August
  - Christmas Cheer - hot punch and mince pies after December meeting
  - Talks - by local MP, a medals collector and a member on meeting the Belgian boy who witnessed his 1944 glider forced landing.



81st Anniversary  
<< Dinner

Bernard Halsall's  
Talk >>

Leo 1944

Bernard and Leo  
October 2003



- Autumn Coffee Morning - held 25/10/03 (Raised nearly £400 for Poppy Appeal)
- Spring Coffee Morning - held 3/4/04 (advertised as for Gurkha Welfare - made £400)
- Remembrance Concert - 8/11/03 (Raised over £600 for Poppy Appeal)
- RBL Poppy Race Day - 31/7/04 (An enjoyable day of interest, excitement and fun!)
- Canal Cruise - (Another enjoyable, but very wet day of interest, excitement and fun!)
- County Festival of Remembrance - 1/11/03 (A group of Members attended)
- Football Match - 2/11/03 (Members helped at this County Poppy Appeal event)
- Summer Carnival - 12/6/04 (Members manned the Branch information stall)



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## Remembrance



Lord Lieutenant, Lady Gretton and Council Chairman, Cllr. Jan Tooley at the Cenotaph in the Garden of Remembrance

**Garden of Remembrance** with rows of crosses each bearing the name of a local man (and one woman) who died in one of the two world wars. Several people placed Poppy Appeal LRX crosses where relatives are commemorated. One elderly lady said, "As I stood near my husband's cross, I felt close to him." Such comments make the efforts of those involved each year so worthwhile.

Each afternoon there was a "Sunset" ceremony.

**Remembrance Concert.** The programme of popular music performed by the award winning Harborough Band, as in previous years, ended with a short act of remembrance with *Nightfall in Camp*, the Exhortation and dipping of standards.

**Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service.** As usual, in Market Harborough the Branch made all the arrangements on behalf of the District Council. There was very good public support and attendance along the Parade route, in the Church and at the wreath-laying at the Memorial in the Town Square. In the villages the acts of remembrance were arranged locally, but some branch members were involved.

**Armistice Day.** In the town, the Branch organised a well attended wreath-laying ceremony and short service and fired maroons at the start and end of The Two Minutes Silence.

**D-Day Anniversary.** The Branch did not arrange any event locally, but Members were involved in a number of different events. e.g.

- **County Service of Commemoration** in Leicester Cathedral and Parade of Standards.
- **Normandy.** Stan Snow with his family, visited several of the places he fought over in 1944. He was one of the eleven veterans at the Saint Desir Cemetery to receive the French Commemorative medal.
- **Tarrant Rushton.** Bernard Halsall, M.C. returned to his Glider Pilot base where, at the march past of veterans, his son Air Commodore Martin Halsall took the salute.
- **National Memorial Arboretum.** Tom and Betty Jeacock were much impressed with the RBL organised event.



Stan Snow revisits Sword Beach 60 years later.



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### Meetings

Branch Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. About two thirds of all members attended at least one meeting during the year, a typical attendance being 35 to 40 or 30% of membership. Of those who did not attend any meetings 10 lived outside the Branch area and 9 were in poor health. Others had regular commitments on meeting evenings, others had difficulty with transport and some preferred to take a passive role in the Legion.

The Branch Committee meets six days before each Branch Meeting. During the year it endorsed arrangements for the Poppy Appeal Long Service Awards, the Cadet Affiliations, and Remembrantide. It accepted the proposal to purchase and equip a Portacabin primarily for the Poppy Appeal, to buy a new computer printer and to re-arrange the General Fund Investments.

Teams concerned with Welfare, Poppy Appeal, Social and Communications met informally as required but their activities were reported at each Branch Meeting.

### Membership

Although no specific recruitment exercise, the Branch has maintained a high profile during the year and this may partly explain why a total of 14 people were attracted to join us.

There were 3 transfers from other branches, so the Legion gained 11 new members. Branch losses amounted to 8 of whom 3 died, 3 did not renew their subscriptions and two transferred to other branches. Thus there was a net increase in Branch membership of 6 (5%) bringing the total number to 131. Of these 94 were Ordinary members and 37 Associates, increases of 2 and 4 respectively.

### Members' Achievements

President, Peter Wilson was awarded the Gold Badge for Service to the Legion and Branch.

Chairman, Mark Hudson, was elected County Vice Chairman and due to the illness of the County Chairman, temporarily acted in that role.

Standard Bearer George Fleming, won the County Competition and was appointed County Standard Bearer.

Success outside the Legion came to new member, Nigel Powner when he became National Coach Driver of the Year. Nigel is a partner in a local Travel company.