



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Introduction

It is a privilege and a pleasure to introduce this Annual Report of Branch activities during what has been another successful year. Background information about the Branch that has not changed, is repeated from previous years so that the document does not require prior knowledge of the branch or reference to earlier reports.

To have been presented at the 2005 Annual Conference with the Lister Cup was recognition that the branch is held in the highest regard in the Royal British Legion. Trying to maintain such high a standard of performance is a great challenge and the fact of having received the equally prestigious Haig Cup in 2001 must not make us complacent. We are extremely fortunate in having teams and individuals whose competence and determination is backed with the encouragement and support of all members. This must be maintained and developed.

Success may be seen by those outside the branch in terms of winning awards. For members, success is also measured by satisfaction and enjoyment. This may be from individual acts of help or kindness, from achievements by working together, from comradeship by relaxing together or pride in belonging to a successful and well regarded group of people.

As Chairman, I thank everyone for the support they have given me and their contribution to a branch of they should feel proud.

Mark R Hudson, Chairman

November 2005

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Highlights of the Year



Affiliation of local Cadet Division of St John Ambulance

Further Involvement with Youth



Branch shares ATC VE/VJ Anniversary "Street Party"

Branch Success

Jack Quain Trophy County Award



Lister Cup National Award



Branch appointed an Associate Centre for the BBC People's War Project

New Initiatives



Gala Evening at Harborough Theatre's production of *Journey's End* raised £850 for the Poppy Appeal



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About the Branch

- Formed on 20th March, 1923, the 82nd 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' Section Branch.
- The branch had no premises after 1991 when it sold a building acquired just after WW2. Last 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 128 members at year end. Of these 36 were women and 33 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 web sites 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.



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Legion in the Community

Establishing Traditions

By engaging in activities on a regular basis, the Branch is now expected to take a prominent part in the life of the community. Examples are Remembrance Parade and Services, setting up the Field of Remembrance, having a Poppy Stall in the Market Hall and a stand at the town Carnival, a Concert with the Harborough Band.



Field of Remembrance



Carnival Stand

New Involvement.

We were pleased to be asked to arrange a Gala Evening on the first night of Harborough Dramatic Society's production of *Journey's End* to raise funds for the Poppy Appeal. At the request of the Harborough Museum, the Branch assisted in a joint project with a local primary school on the significance of Remembrance. As part of their commemoration of the end of WW2, Market Harborough Library asked the Branch to provide a display of relevant memorabilia. This attracted a lot of interest and favourable comments.

We also helped at the Library's evening publicising the BBC PEOPLE'S WAR project and their part in adding to the archive.

bbc.co.uk

Associate Centre - U1577738

WW2 People's War

45

In parallel with the Library's work, we applied for and obtained our own Associate Centre status, the only RBL Branch on the BBC's published list of Centres. In this capacity we have added to the web site www.bbc.co.uk/ww2 about forty stories, mostly written by our own members, but with some obtained from other people.



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Poppy Appeal

Another Record

We knew that last year's excellent result would be hard to beat, but the amount credited at 31st May, the end of the Appeal year was £19,431, over £1000 more. Over a two year period there was an increase of 33% and now represents an average contribution per head of population of our collection area of about 70p.

A significant proportion of the total derived from donations, bequests and income from events attended by the public. We believe this reflects the high regard in which the Legion is held here.

A High Profile

We endeavour to keep the Appeal very much in the public mind and this year introduced a new eye-catching idea. Three teams, each of two Poppy Helpers and two ACF Cadets, had attractive specially designed trolleys to deliver trays and collecting boxes to shops and businesses in the town centre.

Not only was the exercise good publicity for the appeal, it drew attention to Branch involvement



Trolley Teams

with youth. It was also an example of how working together for a serious purpose can be fun.



Poppy Appeal Display

The Harborough Theatre production in November, of *Journey's End*, the play set in WW1, was an evocative reminder of the need for the Poppy Appeal. It also meant that we worked closely with the Theatre in arranging a special, very successful, Gala Evening. The Theatre also made available their large windows in which we mounted displays, one for the Appeal and the other about the Legion and Branch.

Each year Branch members man a stall in the Indoor Market where Poppies, Crosses, Wreaths, literature and other items are available. There is a visually attractive display showing the need for the Appeal and the use to which funds are put. The stall also acts as a control centre for the Street Collectors on the four Market days.



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Working with Youth

Welcome St John

Last year's Annual Report recorded the affiliation of both the local Air Training Corps and Army Cadet Force units to the Branch, the first such links in Leicestershire and Rutland RBL. In July 2005, we were proud to welcome the Market Harborough Combined Cadet Division of St John Ambulance as the first such cadet unit to be affiliated with a County branch and one of the few in the Legion.



St John Cadets Affiliation



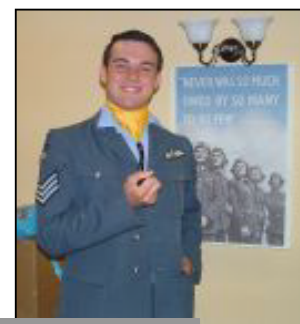
Shields and Certificates

Encouraging Endeavour

At the April Branch meeting each of our ATC and ACF affiliates was presented with a framed certificate and specially designed shield to recognise especial merit of individual cadets. They and the names of their recipients will be displayed in their respective headquarters.

Initiative

It was with great pleasure and satisfaction when the Branch was invited by our ATC cadets to take part in their celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the end of WW2. What they arranged was a 1945 style street party (but held indoors!). They, like the "Spitfire pilot", dressed in clothes of the period, got us joining in typical party games and war-time songs. It was great fun and the "oldies" continued to enjoy themselves even when the party later moved into "disco mode".



A 1995 Photo?

Affiliation - Other Branches follow our Lead.

Brian Marshall, in his role as County Youth Officer, has been working hard to promote the need for and benefit from establishing close links with youth organisations, with the result that several other branches in Leicestershire and Rutland have affiliated Cadet units. We wish them well and that shared experience will be mutually beneficial.



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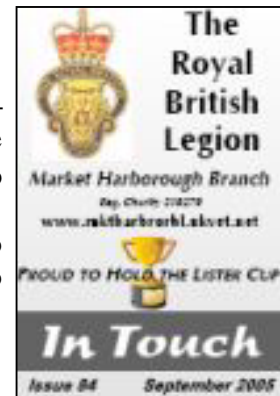
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Communication and Publicity

Internal

Monthly Branch meetings allow not only the dissemination of information but also feedback from and discussion between members. The monthly newsletter, *In Touch*, ensures that those who were unable to attend a meeting are kept up to date and able to feel part of the Branch. What would please our Editor would be comments and feedback to complement that obtained at meetings but members seem reluctant to commit their thoughts to paper.



Information Technology

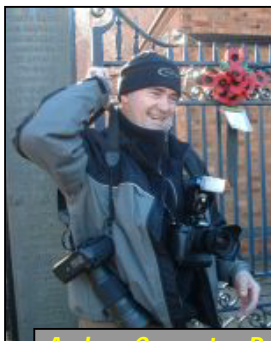
It is encouraging to note an increase in the number of members who no longer say, "I'm too old to learn about computers"; now it is more usual to hear, "Aren't you on Broadband yet?". Most members of the Branch Committee are computer literate and internal communication by e-mail is growing. As an IT guru our Chairman is in great demand to help to sort out problems for the newcomers (and the more experienced!).

The Internet

The branch web-site www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net still attracts visitors and the on-line version of our newsletter, www.in-touch.ukvet.net continues to be updated with each monthly issue. This site does not rely on search engines to attract readership; an e-mail note is circulated to a mailing list of other branches and individuals, to say that the latest issue has been added to the site.

As reported on page 5, the Branch was appointed an Associate Centre for the BBC People's War project and as such has been adding to the archive on their site www.bbc.co.uk/ww2, stories which we have collected and edited.

The Press



Andrew Carpenter Press Photographer

Our Press Officer, George Seward, being a former Newspaper man, has established good working relations with the two local weekly papers and the regional daily and with the freelance press photographer. It is encouraging when a reporter asks "Have you anything for us this week, George?" instead of having to persuade the paper to give us a mention. We get reasonable coverage of our activities, but of course we would like more. So far we have done nothing to attract the nationals!



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Welfare

Although the Branch is in an area of a generally low level of social deprivation and of above average affluence, our case workers have had to deal with about a dozen examples of ex-service people or dependents in need of help. Advice and counseling was what was usually needed and even where there were financial difficulties only two cases involved the need for RBL funds. Respite breaks were arranged in two cases. Two members, husband and wife, went to Byng House and were full of praise for the staff, facilities and the care they received.



Viscount Byng

This care home, at Southport, is named after Field Marshall Viscount Byng, whose efforts after WW1 led to the amalgamation of separate soldiers' welfare groups and the eventual formation of the British Legion.

Remembrance

Observance

Like every branch in the Legion, we were much involved with the ceremonies on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. Members took part in ceremonies and services in their own villages. In Market Harborough itself, 11-11-11 was observed on The Square, near the Gates to the WW2 Memorial Gardens where a large and respectful crowd observed the Silence marked by the firing of maroons by the Branch Chairman.



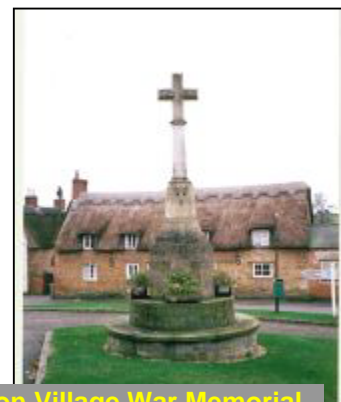
Jim Osborne pays his respects

A few minutes earlier, a more intimate ceremony was held in Welland Park of laying a wreath at the small memorial the Branch caused to be provided in 1995 to commemorate all those who had died in conflict in the service of this country.

Memorials

Although local councils have responsibility for the maintenance of War Memorials in their areas, we feel we have a duty to try to ensure that they are kept in good condition. For that reason, a member, Norman Banting has produced a comprehensive, well illustrated report on nineteen memorials in the town and villages in the branch area. Most were in good condition and his work resulted in cleaning and tidying of others.

We have kept in contact with the NHS Trust to see that they honour their undertaking to safeguard the unique memorial when the Cottage Hospital is vacated in two or three years time.



Hallaton Village War Memorial



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Social. Fundraising and Other Events



RNA Guests enjoying our 82nd Anniversary Dinner

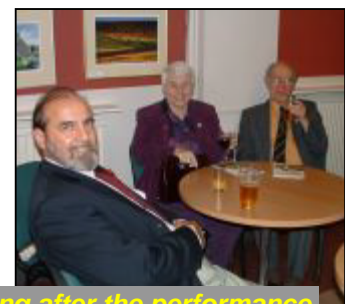
Eating Out

It has become a tradition to have three special meals each year. Paper hats, crackers and all the trimmings set the tone for Christmas Lunch. The Branch “Birthday” Dinner in March is more celebratory with invited guests and music for dancing but a less formal atmosphere is the hallmark of the Members’ Autumn Dinner. All are popular and make a modest contribution to Branch funds or Poppy Appeal.

Unfortunately the monthly Lunches so much enjoyed last year, had to be discontinued when the hotel introduced an unacceptable price increase, but a new venue is being sought for the new year.

A Gala Evening

The Harborough Theatre offered the Branch the opportunity to arrange a special Gala Occasion on the opening night of their production of *Journeys End* (see pages 5 & 6). We could set the seat price for that performance and retain the proceeds in full. Advertising, advance notice in the press and personal invitations resulted in a nearly full house and an income for the Poppy Appeal of £850.



Relaxing after the performance



Conductor, Chris Groome with the award-winning Harborough Band.

Remembrance Concert

The November 2004 concert was held in the Methodist Church, a modern building, very different from the more traditional Baptist Church we have used previously. The upholstered chairs were more comfortable than the wooden pews but one missed the cornet players and our standard bearers impressively positioned in front of the organ, high above the pulpit for the Last Post and National Anthem.

Coffee Mornings

We have two regular bookings for the Theatre lounge, one for the Poppy Appeal and the other for Branch Funds. This year they raised £330 and £321 respectively. Smartly turned out Cadets took great pride in manning the stalls, serving coffee and tea and helping our own volunteers.



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Our Members



Certificates of Appreciation

Recognition

It is seen as important publicly to acknowledge the special endeavours of those who work so hard to achieve the success the Branch enjoys. A number of Certificates of Appreciation were awarded during the year including that shown here. All the recipients would all agree that it is the support and encouragement they receive from members that is really reflected in the awards.

But a significant spur to individual effort is recognition given to the Branch as a whole and this year has been notable for us in winning “top” awards at both County and National levels, the Jack Quain Trophy and the Lister Cup, pictured on page 2.

The Numbers

Branch membership at 30th September 2005 was 128, three fewer than a year previously. However, eight new members joined us during the year, sadly six Members died, some who had been with the Branch for many years, three left the area, and only two resigned for health or personal reasons. We are pleased that far from following the overall Legion trend of declining membership, our numbers have increased by a third since 1998.

Ensuring the Legion’s Future

Hilary Brazil, daughter of our Branch Secretary, and a very keen Branch member, has made a special effort this year towards safeguarding the future of the Branch and Legion. The result is shown in the picture. We are assured that Christopher will be applying for membership in 2023!



Happy Mum

County Responsibilities

The citation for the Lister Cup Award emphasised the involvement last year of the Branch at County level and the members concerned have continued in their respective roles. During the County Chairman’s illness, his Vice, our Chairman Mark Hudson, took over. Brian Marshall’s successful work as County Youth Officer is mentioned on page 7. County Recruiting Officer, George Fleming has had a full year of visits and presentations to many of the 42 county branches and all three have attended Executive and other meetings. George and Mark have also been involved with the County 80th Anniversary events and the Festival of Remembrance. This year, a fourth member, Secretary Betty Ramsay was elected to the County Conference Committee.



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Ceremonial



George Fleming at the CWGC Cemetery, Calais

As in previous years, the Branch was represented on the County Standard Bearers' Pilgrimage to Belgium and France, where George Fleming carried our Standard on five occasions. Altogether, he made 46 appearances during the year, an average of once every 8 days. This frequent use of the standard meant a long delay in having the scroll for the Lister Cup added, but this did give time for establishing where it should be placed in relation to the Haig Cup Scroll already on the standard!.

The Branch makes it known that the Standard would be carried at the funeral of any ex-service person if so requested. There were seven such requests during the year and this service was so much appreciated that several bereaved families made donations to Legion funds.

Each of our Cadet Affiliates now has its own standard and is showing keenness and pride in its use. The Branch is anxious to foster this and has investigated how this may be done in a way which more closely links them to the Branch and Legion.

Meetings

That most Branch meetings are regarded as interesting and worth while is shown by the attendance figures. Taking account of the size of our catchment area and the 17 who live outside it, we believe that an average of 44 members, about one third of total membership, coming to the 12 monthly meetings, is highly commendable.

As mentioned on page 8, meetings are a means of communication with and between members. Formal reports provide information from County and National levels as well as about Branch activities, outside speakers provide a wider perspective, occasions such as that pictured here, enable everyone to know their success is being publicised and when



This picture of the Jack Quain and Lister Cups was in the local paper.

the final gavel sounds, there is the camaraderie which maintains our common purpose.



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Reg. Charity No. 219279

Market Harborough Branch

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Founded in 1923



Annual Report

for the year

1st October 2004 to 30th September 2005