



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Founded in 1923

Introduction

Once again it gives me great pleasure to be able to present an annual report which reflects the dedication and competence of many Branch members and the loyal support of all. The report is in the same format as in previous years with background information which has not changed repeated so that the document does not require prior knowledge of the Branch or reference to earlier reports.

It has been a historic year for the Legion as whole with important changes in governance, organisation and qualification for Membership. For many members, the removal of the distinction between those who served in the Armed forces and those who did not, has been warmly welcomed and in this branch the discarding of Associate Member badges in favour of the now standard (old Ordinary Member) design, has been evident!

This year we do not measure success in terms of awards won but in continuing steadily to maintain a high standard in what we do. In particular, working with young people has been a source of great satisfaction, we are proud of our affiliated units and are pleased to include in this document, reports provided by two of them. We also take pleasure in believing that our previous awards may have spurred other branches to greater efforts!

Mark R Hudson, Chairman

November 2006

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Highlights of the Year



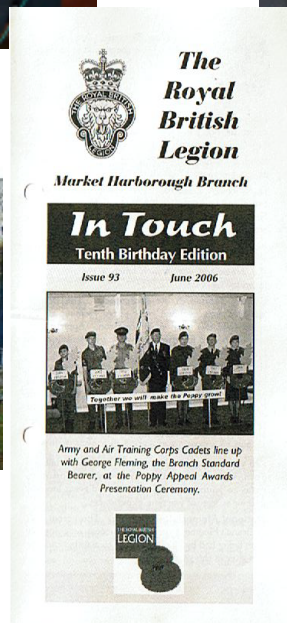
Poppy Appeal Awards Event



83rd Anniversary Dinner



**Garden of Remembrance
6th Year**



**Market Harbourough Carnival
A very windy day!**



**Veterans' Day Lunch
with RNA & RAFA**

**In Touch
10 years old!**



**"What I did in the War"
A talk to local primary school**



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About the Branch

- Formed on 20th March, 1923, the 83rd 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. In 2004 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 137 members at year end. Of these 40 were women..
- 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 with youth and in the community generally.

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

Doing what is expected of us.

It is now taken for granted that the Branch will take a prominent part in the local community calendar. Organising the Remembrance Parade and Services is a tradition going back many years as is having a Poppy Stall in the Market Hall. Having a presence at the town Carnival, creating the Field of Remembrance and arranging a Remembrance Concert with the Harborough Band, although not as long established, are activities which are expected of us.

The Branch is also regarded as the local authority on military and ex-Service matters by the Library, Museum, local Council, schools and individual members of the public who from time to time seek our opinion, advice and help.



**Remembrance Day Parade
forms up**



**Edward Garnier QC, MP
opens CVS/ Volunteer Bureau
offices**

Other Involvement.

The Branch is a member of South Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Service for several years and more recently committed ourselves to the Harborough District Compact in which Voluntary and Community agencies work together. The Branch is represented on other bodies including the NHS Primary Care Trust, and on occasions, such as Church services, funerals and other organisations' functions.

The story gathering phase of the BBC People's War project ended in January and with it the Branch's role as an Associate Centre, the only RBL branch to act in this way. We had added 70 stories to the archive, many more than most participating groups. Two of our members were among the one hundred guests invited by the BBC to a celebration at the British Library in London to mark the completion of this unique archive of nearly 47,000 stories of the experiences of ordinary people during WW2.



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Poppy Appeal

Another Record

The total raised of about £20,700 represents a 6% increase over the previous year's result and was again well above the rate of inflation. Of the approximately £15,000 in the collecting boxes, 40% was from static points, 33% from street collection and 27% from house to house. Donations and special events raised about £3000, nearly 15% of the total.

Our Poppy Appeal Area amounts to about 45 square miles with many small villages and Market Harborough the only town. Of the £15,000 collection, £2,500 came from the rural area, a credit to the many village volunteers.



Collectors

Three new volunteers were recruited as a result of the national "Poppy People" campaign and replacements were found for collectors who had retired due to age and ill health.

Awards

An Award/Reward event was held on 20th May attended by about seventy members and volunteers, when certificates in recognition of long service were presented by Cllr John Ford, Chairman Harborough District Council and Peter Roffey, RBL County President.

Regrettably, husband and wife team, Joyce and Stan Snow from Great Easton, with sixty years service each were unable to attend.



Administration and Logistics

The Cabin acquired last year was of great value in storing and preparing the Poppy material. A coin sorter and counter was used for about half the collections and found to have an error rate of less than 0.4%. Good use was made of the Branch designed computer system to assist in distribution control and the recording of collections. A computer and printer has more recently been acquired by the Branch and installed in the Cabin so that in future the system will not need to be run on a member's own computer equipment.



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Communication and Publicity

Internal



Tom Ashmore,
Founder & 1st Editor

The monthly newsletter, *In Touch*, celebrated its 10th Anniversary in June 2006. Editor George Seward produced No. 93 as a special issue (on coloured paper and a new-look front cover page) with a brief review of its history and the profiles of its first two editors. An early article from the archives was also included and others have been included in subsequent issues.



Dick Fulford
2nd Editor

Information Technology

As reported on Page 6, the Branch now possesses a computer and printer. In practice this is likely to be used mainly for the Poppy Appeal as an aid to preparation, control and distribution, and for recording and analysis of income. It remains far more convenient for those who use IT for Branch business to use their own home computer systems. The disadvantage is that these are not always compatible so making interchange of information more difficult and limiting the potential benefit of IT to the Branch.

Publicity

As shown on Page 5 many Branch activities keep us in the public eye. Some specific events call for direct publicity through press releases,



Cover page of tri-fold
Branch Leaflet

posters, display boards, leaflets, etc.

Word of mouth is also a very effective way to make the existence and purpose of Branch and Legion and Members are keen to "spread the word".

Other Branches

The last Annual Report explained that an e-mail was sent each month to a number of branches and interested individuals, advising that the latest issue of *In Touch* was on-line (on www.in-touch.ukvet.net). This mailing list has been expanded to include all branches for which e-mail contacts could be found, and now numbers about 120. Many recipients have commended the idea of greater inter-branch communication and would welcome some means of sharing the wealth of experience, ideas and interesting information that branches possess. Market Harborough will willingly participate in developing a suitable system.



Escoublac-Ilaboule_war_cemetery
from a Bordeaux Branch story



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Social, Fundraising and Other Events

Another busy year for the Social and Fundraising Team resulted in a full programme of activities that were both enjoyable and profitable. The **monthly luncheons** which had to be discontinued



Lunch at the Shoulder of Mutton, Foxton

last year were reinstated, some being held in village pubs to give a variety of venues. However, most people prefer a fixed location in town and so we are back at The Angel Hotel.

As in previous years, **two dinners** were held, both at Market Harborough Golf Club. The **Autumn Dinner** was an informal occasion for members and their guests, whilst that in March celebrated the **83rd anniversary** of the formation of the Branch. Guests of honour were District Council Chairman, Clr John Pierce and Mrs Pierce and Edward Garnier QC, MP. Richard Foster, County Field Officer, members of Desborough Branch and members of RNA also

attended. On each occasion, a raffle was held and in March generous donations of a Travel Voucher and half a lamb were auctioned.

The team arranged two **Coffee Mornings**: in February funds were raised to allow small gifts to be made to widows and widowers in recognition of their spouses' service to the Branch whilst that in October was in aid of the Poppy Appeal. On each occasion ACF and ATC Cadets provided valuable assistance on stalls and in the kitchen.

Organising the annual **Remembrance Concert** was again the responsibility of the Social Team. An excellent programme of popular music, performed by the Harborough Band, provided an enjoyable evening and a contribution to the Poppy Appeal of £216.

A visit to the **National Memorial Arboretum** in May was judged to be a great success and there have been requests for another visit next year.

27th June each year is to be known as **Veterans Day**. Here this addition to the national calendar was launched with a celebratory luncheon well attended by members of RNA and RAFA as well as our own Legion members. Calls for a similar event next year and for an ex-service groups Christmas lunch, are a measure of its success.





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Welfare

The Branch has three trained **Case Workers**, one of whom is designated Welfare Officer. All have attended the latest Case Worker refresher course.

Eight cases were dealt with but in one case the applicant withdrew the request for assistance and one is still outstanding. For the others, the help needed was provided, grants made being arranged by County Field Office to which the Branch made one contribution of £250. **Welfare Breaks** were arranged for two members, husband and wife, who went to Byng House.

A number of **house and hospital visits** were made by various members but on an ad hoc basis when the need arose and often on their own initiative. The need for a more systematic method of notifying the need for, arranging and coordinating visits has been considered in the past but so far attempts to provide it have not been successful.

Remembrance

Remembrance Sunday took the same form as in previous years with a parade to the Parish Church where the Service, conducted by the Branch Chaplain, was attended by a very large congregation including Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Mr Richard Everard, and Edward Garnier, QC, MP. They took the salute when the parade returned to The Square for the wreath-laying ceremony and brief service held before the many members of the public gathered there.



The ATC Band, having led our parade so capably, was then whisked away to Oakham to perform the same duty for an afternoon Remembrance occasion there. Our Standard Bearer, George Fleming was also in great demand and attended village services at Lubenham and at Foxton.

Armistice Day observances followed the now established routine of wreath-laying at the small memorial in Welland Park followed by that at the Gates to the Memorial Gardens. The two minutes silence, signaled by firing maroons, was reverently observed there by a large gathering of ex-service people and members of the general public. Similar respect for, and understanding of, the Silence was shown in shops and other places.

The Remembrance Concert was held again at the Baptist Church with the Harborough Band performing an enjoyable programme of popular music. Two cornet players and the Standard Bearer positioned high above the pulpit, created a fitting setting for the Last Post and Reveille.



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Ceremonial

In last year's Annual Report we referred to the long delay before there was a long enough gap in the schedule of appearances of our busy Standard Bearer, George Fleming, in which to send the standard to the manufacturer to have the scroll for the Lister Cup Award added. It eventually was sent, the work was done and we were notified that it had been dispatched but it never arrived. After much correspondence, the manufacturer admitted liability for its loss and made a new standard complete with Haig and Lister scrolls.

As we now had a new standard it had to be dedicated and at short notice arrangements were made for this to be done during a normal church service - in contrast to the ceremonial of the dedication of the previous standard in 1997.

Due to health problems, George Fleming has had to cut down on the number of times he carried the standard from 46 last year to 25 this the year. These included sixteen at Branch occasions as well as two at County functions and two at funerals but as he will not enter the competitions again the Branch may not see Standard Bearers' silverware again for some time.

Membership

It has been an excellent year for recruitment with a total of thirteen new members joining the Branch, ten of them new to the Legion. Sadly three members died but only two relinquished membership, one due to ill health and the other when he moved to Canada.

Thus Branch strength at 30th September 2006 was 137 of whom 40 were women.

Meetings

Monthly Branch meetings were still very well attended, six of them having 45 or more present and an average over the year of 42. The business part of meetings was followed by either by talks by invited speakers, buffets or just informal chat, a format which remains clearly popular.

The Branch committee also met each month with its proceedings reported to the Branch six days later. The attendance at half the meetings was 10 or more, with an average over the year of 9.5.



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Working with Youth

The branch has a well established and active affiliation with 1084 Sqn. Air Training Corps, Market Harborough Detachment Army Cadet Force and the Combined Cadet Division, Market Harborough St. John's Ambulance Brigade.

We have always recognised the importance of keeping a close relationship with each of the affiliated units. To this end branch members regularly visit the cadet units and the cadets, in turn, attend various branch events and functions.

Well before their formal affiliation with this branch, cadets helped with the Poppy Appeal and joined in our various Remembrance Week activities. This has continued and in fact, increased. The branch cannot over-emphasise it's appreciation of their wonderful efforts.



As in the past, three cadet units took an active part in the town's civic Sunday Remembrance Parade. Up to this year, only the ATC possessed and paraded a standard, but this year the ACF and St John have acquired theirs. In future all three units will be able to proudly paraded their own.

Cadets of the Army Cadet Force have been proud to wear the official Royal British Legion 'Affiliated Unit' badge, and it is a disappointment for the Branch and for the ATC cadets

that their units are not permitted to do so. (Since the the end of the year under review, the MOD have ruled that all insignia on military uniforms have to be "approved". The RBL badge is not.)

Throughout this year, as in previous years, all three of our affiliated units took a full and active part in the town's community activities.

The branch fully realises that the future membership of the Royal British Legion is dependant on the youth of today, and with this in mind, members have been pleased to be invited to speak to children in our local schools to explain what the Legion is and does. The branch is extremely grateful for these opportunities.





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Cadet Unit Report. . .ATC

1084 (Market Harborough) Squadron's Involvement with RBL Events 2005/6

In October 2005 four cadets helped out at the RBL Coffee Morning held at the Harborough Theatre where they helped serve coffee and man the Tombola Stall.



November again saw cadets helping with the Poppy Appeal: selling poppies in the town and with ACF cadets, distributing collecting boxes to the shops.

They helped at the Festival of Remembrance at the De Montfort Hall distributing programmes, selling poppies and escorting VIPs' to their seats.

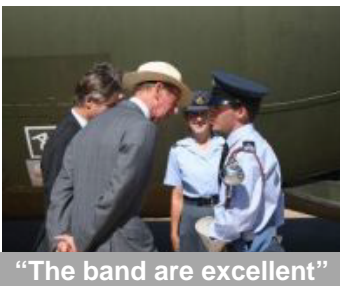
On Remembrance Sunday they took part in the local Parade and Service. Once again the band led the parade. Immediately afterwards, the band drove the 45 minutes to Oakham where they led the Oakham parade for the 14th consecutive year.

March saw them at the theatre once again for another coffee morning and the following day they took part in the Blessing of the new RBL Branch Standard at the church.

At the end of the month the squadron went on its annual visit to the battlefields of Flanders where the band led a parade of Lutterworth Royal British Legion members to the Menin Gate Last Post ceremony and conducted a Last Post ceremony outside Talbot House in Poperinge. A wreath was once again laid at the Menin Gate on behalf of Market Harborough RBL and crosses laid on the graves of local soldiers who were killed during WW1.



In May cadets took part in the Poppy Appeal Awards event at the Conservative Club.



We also found time for. . .

Easter Camp with 54 Squadron RAF Kinloss.

The band to play before HRH Duke of Kent (& 1000s of others!) at the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford in July.

And weekly parades, training, parades, training. . . And fun!



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Cadet Unit Report. . .ACF

Who we are.

The Market Harborough Detachment is part of A-Company, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland County, which is one of the counties in the 49 (East) Brigade Army Cadet Force. A-Company is affiliated to the Royal Anglian Regiment which is why the cadets wear that regiment's cap badge.

The detachment commander is Sergeant Major Andrew Marriott (promoted from Staff Sergeant in August 2006). He is also a member of Market Harborough Branch RBL. There are three other Instructors.

There are about 30 cadets of whom two thirds are 14 years old or over. All undergo training and are encouraged to increase in proficiency by working up a scale of award stars. During the year most achieved other qualifications in sport, life-saving or in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

What we do.

An important aspect of their training is in citizenship and community service. Working with the RBL Branch is a valuable element of this and is something the cadets enjoy (and for which there is no shortage of volunteers!). In late October a group were involved in the launch of the Poppy Appeal and helped to deliver Poppies and collecting boxes to shops in the town centre.



A week later the cadets were again working with RBL members, this time at the coffee morning, where it was kitchen duty for some and manning the Bric-a-brac stall for others.

On both occasions our cadets worked alongside their ATC counterparts. This is an example of demonstrating the basic objective of both organisations - helping to develop good citizens. Members of the public, seeing cadets with the Poppy Trolleys, or doing real jobs at the coffee morning, will have formed a favourable impression of these young people and helped dispel the generalised negative perception of teenagers they may have had .

What our bosses think.

Extracts from Detachment Inspection Report dated 8 June 2006.

Visiting Officer's Report -Turnout and Bearing - *Excellent.*; Training - *Standard very good...Cadets enjoyed themselves whilst learning*; Additional Remarks - *Good work with RBL. Very Good Detachment*
Commandant's Remarks - *SSI Marriott and his team are achieving great things here. Well Done.*
Brigade Commander's Remarks - *This is a very good report reflecting hard work and dedication.*