



Spring Coffee Morning Your contributions of raffle and tombola prizes and items for the bric-a-brac and cake stalls are urgently required and should

be brought to the March Branch meeting. If you are unable to attend and would like your contributions to be collected, please contact Glenys on MH 467835 for arrangements to be made.

Christmas Welfare The continuation of the annual distribution of gifts to elderly members is under review due to possible problems with Charity Commission laws.

Autumn Coffee Morning The date has been changed to 28 October. This is far more satisfactory as it now coincides with the opening of the Poppy Appeal, which benefits from the proceeds of the event.

BBC People's War Website Tom Ashmore gave a demonstration to Members showing how to access the site and included samples of the fascinating contents. *(Please turn to page 3 for a feature article by Tom.)*

Branch Lunches We return to The Angel on Tuesday, 28 March for the first of half-a-dozen visits this year. It is planned to intersperse these with excursions to village pubs during the summer months which, hopefully, will be more convenient to Members living out of town. The Angel offers a two-course menu for £7 with a choice of a roast, sausage and mash, or smoked haddock, all with fresh vegetables. To follow there will be bread and butter pudding, fresh fruit salad or cheesecake plus coffee and mints. The order for our meals has to be made in advance with a deadline of 24 March. Your orders will be taken at the March meeting or by telephone to Glenys on MH 467835.

Donation The late Ken Stimpson's daughter has donated the sum of £30 to the Branch and it was decided to put the money towards the production costs of *In Touch*.



The Diary

SOME DATES TO KEEP FREE

- 18 Mar M H Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre 9am
- 24 Mar M H Branch Anniversary Dinner - menu page 2
- 28 Mar Lunch at The Angel Hotel, MH
- 8 Apl RNA Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre 9am
- 21 Apl RNA Spring Dance Conservative Club 8pm - £6
- 20 May Poppy Appeal Ceremony - Noon at Conservative Club
- 19 Aug RNA Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre 9am
- 28 Oct M H Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre 9am
- 9 Dec RNA Christmas Dance Conservative Club 8pm - £6

Our Branch has a close relationship with Shipmates of the Royal Naval Association and Members are cordially invited to join with them and support their activities. One thing is certain, you will be assured of a good time in great company (well, you know what sailors are!). For details please call Mike Middleton on MH 445827.

The date of the next meeting is March 8th

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room at the Conservative Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Committee meets in the same room on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.00 pm.



The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

www.mktharborobl.ukvet.net



PROUD TO HOLD THE LISTER CUP

In Touch

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***In Touch* on-line**

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The County Conference

A Report by the Branch Delegate

BETTY RAMSAY

The Conference was held at Syston and was attended by twenty-three delegates representing twenty-two branches, and forty-two guests. The agenda consisted of thirty-two items and the guest speaker was Sue Freeth, Director of Welfare.

Disappointment was expressed by many delegates to learn that Mark Hudson, who was spoken of very highly, has had to resign as County Vice Chairman on medical advice. Both Mark and George Fleming had one hundred per cent records having attended all eleven times in the past year.

The following Motion by our Branch, and seconded by Lutterworth Branch, was carried with twenty-two votes for and one abstention.

“That the Board of Trustees authorise the purchase, by branches with Affiliated Youth Organisations, of a Branch Standard. Annotated below the branch name with the words ‘Affiliated Unit’, for use on appropriate occasions when on parade with the Affiliated Branch.”

A further Motion proposed by Melton Mowbray Branch was also carried:

“That the Royal British Legion lobbies Her Majesty’s Government to issue a silver pendant to the next of kin of all British service men and woman who were killed or died of their wounds from the Falklands War to date.”

Other items included the following.

Referring to his recent trip to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, the Chairman spoke of an active Legion branch in Port Stanley.

The County Field Office reported that, although there has always been a close association between the Legion and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) closer co-operation is planned in order to share the benefits of each other’s strengths.

A new programme, Prison Inreach, will aim to do more for the 4000 ex-service personnel, some 2.5% of the prison population, currently serving sentences.

A Fund Raiser, Peter Hart, has been appointed. He will be approaching businesses in the Harborough area.



Members' wartime stories have been preserved for posterity, thanks to the efforts of Tom Ashmore.

Reminiscences and experiences may be read from anywhere in the world via the Internet. Many of the stories have already been published in In Touch and Memories are Made of This, the enterprising book produced by Tom and Bob England in 2002.

They are now collected in an extensive, fascinating and truly amazing BBC archive. Tom, who is to be congratulated for his dedication on behalf of Branch Members, has contributed this review.



Sophia Ramcharam, the BBC WW2 People's War East Midlands Project Manager, with Bernard Halsall, a major Branch contributor to the archive, and Branch Chairman, Mark Hudson.

winner of the Legion's top award, the Lister Cup, is proud to be involved by acting as an Associate Centre in the People's War Project. . . We are not able to provide public internet access to enable authors to enter their stories directly to the website but we are co-operating with Market Harborough Library which has a facility.”

At midnight on 31st January 2006, the submission of stories and our contribution to the project ended and it leaves me with mixed feelings: regret that I did not make effective contact with the BBC much sooner, but satisfaction in having been involved in something which may help future generations understand why WW2 was the “People’s War”. I am also pleased that just before the project closed, I added to our Personal Page, “I must record my personal thanks to all those within and outside the Branch who have provided stories and pictures for publication or who have helped with transcription. I also wish to thank the project team at BBC East Midlands for their help and encouragement. I hope that people who have read, or who may in the future read, any of the seventy contributions we have made, will have found them interesting and informative. It has been a privilege and an honour to have been part of such a valuable and imaginative activity. Tom Ashmore, 27th January, 2006.”

During the next two months the BBC will be making the site easier to use by improving the categorising and arrangement of stories, but the over 49,000 contributions will still be there and accessible in various ways. For example, to visit our Personal Page and its list of our contributions go to www.bbc.co.uk/ww2/U1577738 or from the site home page www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2 search for “Market Harborough Royal British Legion”. If you just wanted to see if something had been written about a person or event, again, use Search.

There are some fascinating stories to discover: some amazing, some sad, some “Like happened to me”, some appallingly written, some small gems of literary or poetic merit. If you haven’t got a computer go to the library and ask to be shown how to explore this not so terrifying world of the internet.

Better still, ask your grandchild to help you - the youngsters know all about IT - Information Technology!

The Poppy Appeal 2005/2006

Dougie McMeeken, Appeal Organiser
01858 463203

I am delighted to report that the total is now in excess of £20,500, which beats the 2004/5 figure. This is particularly gratifying as we have not had so many large contributions this year, such as that from the Harborough Theatre's 2004 performance of 'Journey's End'.

Please make a note of Saturday 20th May, the date of the Award/Reward event in the Conservative Club. This is when we shall be thanking volunteer collectors and others who have contributed towards the success of the Poppy Appeal. I sincerely hope there will be a good turnout of Members to help show our appreciation.

The Sorry Tale of the Branch Standard

George Fleming (seen here on the Standard Bearers' trip to Europe last year) has outlined the series of events which resulted in the loss of the Branch Standard, a new Union flag and flag poles.

The Standard had been sent to the suppliers to have the Lister Cup scroll attached. At the same time a new Union Flag and flag poles had been ordered. The completed order was despatched in the post from the suppliers just before Christmas, but the items never arrived.

Replacements are being manufactured and, as it would obviously take some time to organise a full dedication service, the new Standard will be blessed by the Reverend Sewell during an Evensong service at the earliest opportunity.



As a contribution to commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Second World War, the BBC launched, in June 2003, a project to collect and record the personal experiences of those who had lived during the war years. A central feature of the project was that all contributions (the BBC called them "stories") would be made and held in electronic form and published as an internet website. This would ensure that the whole collection would be freely and universally available to everyone through access to the internet. It would be an archive and historical resource for the indefinite future. Many different organisations, such as libraries, museums, those having contact with older people, etc., were asked to join a nationwide network of Associate Centres to encourage members of the public to produce stories and to help to get them added to the website.

Prompted by the celebrations of the 60th anniversary year, and the events arranged by the Associate Centres, many people produced stories based on their own memories or those passed to them by family members and others. Some people were able to enter their contributions directly on to the website, either from their own computers or at Centres having internet access, where they would be able to get help and guidance. Where possible, Centres would also help people unable to cope with the technology, by transcribing oral or written stories.

Following a talk by the BBC East Midlands Project manager at the April 2005 Branch meeting, MH RBL was appointed an Associate Centre. This was on the basis of our experience of story gathering for *In Touch* and, provided the authors' approved, a stock of ready-made stories was available. Since then some 70 stories have been added to the website, mostly authored by Branch members, but some from other sources.

Each Centre and independent contributor was allocated a "Personal Page" on the site where one could establish ones credentials (and get a bit of publicity!). Our page read,

"The Royal British Legion, as this country's foremost ex-service organisation, is, like the BBC, taking a leading part in celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the end of WW2. Market Harborough Branch, as this year's

1923 83rd Anniversary 2006 Dinner

Friday 24th March 2006

7.30 for 8.00pm

Market Harborough Golf Club

Music by David Hawke

Tickets £16

MENU

Chef's Winter Vegetable Soup
Melon with Fruits of the Forest
Smoked Fish Platter

Chicken wrapped in Bacon
with Stilton Sauce
Stuffed Roast Lamb
Sole Mornay

Selection of Desserts

Cheese and Biscuits

Coffee and After Dinner Mint

*A complimentary glass of sherry or
wine will be offered on arrival.
Drinks may be purchased from the bar.*

Glenys Hocking-Davies and Pat Middleton will take your order and payment at the March meeting. Please make cheques payable to "Social Committee Account".

To book your place, and if you have dietary requests or queries, please telephone 01858 467835.

A Life Fondly Remembered

CHARLES HARRY FREER

1923 - 2005

Sadly missed and remembered with the greatest affection, our dear friend Charles left us last September. His son, Andrew, looks back on the life and times of a kind, gentle man. He chose as a theme the range of vehicles owned and driven by his Father.



Born in Desborough, Charles was still a child when the Freer family moved to Market Harborough. Charles grew up with his two brothers, Fred and Sid, two guys who were definitely not to be messed with - then and throughout their lives.

Like most boys, Charles's first mode of transport was the bicycle. He pedalled bikes in a variety of roles - butcher boy, delivery boy, apprentice carpenter, tradesman - sometimes biking to Leicester. There were incidents, and accidents, galore when he progressed to the next stage - motor bikes. Four, or more, wheels followed and Charles drove a variety of lorries over the years.

During the war, Charles was to get to grips with the controls of a fearsome vehicle that was vastly different to anything he had driven before. Now in the Leicestershire Yeomanry, joining his brothers, Charles became the driver of a Sherman tank, taking part in the liberation of Europe from shortly after D-Day. As true brothers, they served alongside and looked after each other, often in the face of grave danger.

Just after the end of the war, in 1946, Charles's life entered a phase which was to continue for nearly sixty years. Romance was in the air when he was stationed at Hoosum in Germany, and Charles was swept off his feet when he met and fell in love with Velta, a lovely, young Latvian girl. When he was demobilised, Charles returned

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to his home in School Lane, with Mother, Fred and Sid. He soon arranged for Velta to come to England and within a couple of months they were married.

Back in Civvy Street, Charles's other romance - with motor vehicles - continued with no let up. He drove coaches for Adams on seaside excursions and lumber wagons for Hickmans. Charles then worked for Reedmans building houses in the town and surrounding villages. After that he was employed by Twynhams in Fairfield Road coach building horseboxes and cattle wagons, craftsmanship of which he was justly proud.

Meanwhile, Velta and Charles lived in Connaught Road, where I was born, and then into a prefab in Fernie Road, where they were to spend almost 15 happy years, during which time Peter was born. Eventually they moved to their home in Coventry Road.

Having bought his first car, Charles started his own business as a carpenter and joiner. He could build or make anything in wood, in fact, his trade was his hobby and a big part of his life. He acquired his own workshop and yard in Nelson Street which soon became a point of call for many people when they saw his van outside.

The kettle would go on and the chat would begin. Tea was important to Charles and there were people all around the town where he would be welcomed for a cuppa at most times of the day. This satisfied his community spirit, as did his readiness to lend a hand, to chip in and help - very often unpaid.

Peter joined the firm in 1975



Charles and the most fearsome vehicle he drove - a Sherman tank.

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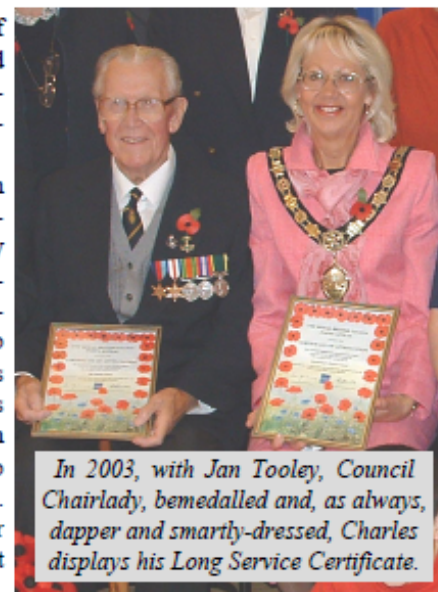
and a lot of Charles rubbed off onto him. Although not always harmonious in their working relationship, they provided a trustworthy and honest service to their numerous loyal customers - anything from building work to repairing a chair. Happily, Peter maintains that tradition.

The workshop (probably one of the last real tradesman's yards in the town) contained vast stocks of interesting and sometimes useless items that Charles had hived away. "I'll find a use for that some day" he'd say - even in his last few weeks he was looking out things he had "saved" at home to build yet another extension to his conservatory - "I'll get round to that when my legs get better".

Charles served as a loyal member of the British Legion for 50 years and he was passionate about its ideals. He regularly attended meetings and relished the comradeship he found. He had always been active as a distributor and collector for the Poppy Appeal, dedication which was recognised with the award of the long-service certificate.

Proud of his many cars and vans, Charles always took great care to keep them neat, tidy and clean. Due to his failing health he reluctantly had to give up driving his car so he swapped it for his final vehicle, a smart red buggy. True to form, he wanted to know if I could get a bit more speed out of it - possibly so that he could decorate it with 'Go Faster' stripes!

Charles loved life, he needed company, and he had to share - at work, with his pals - chatting and telling stories. His Faith was based on knowing God as his carer and protector - a faith so strong it could bring tears to his eyes.



In 2003, with Jan Tooley, Council Chairlady, bemedalled and, as always, dapper and smartly-dressed, Charles displays his Long Service Certificate.

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