



# The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity No. 219279

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106

Founded in 1923



# Annual Report

for the year

1st October 2010 to 30th September 2011



# The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch  
BR0106



## Introduction

This is my first contribution to the Branch Annual Report and it is not easy to find the right words to express my feelings.

On the one hand there is my grateful thanks and appreciation to those members who unstintingly give of their time to further the work of the branch and the Royal British Legion. On the other hand I ask myself where are the volunteers who can take some of the load and help the branch to be even better than it is. Appeals for volunteers don't seem to work so perhaps conscription is the way forward.

Membership of the RBL is slowly falling and the average age increasing. The RBL says we want to continue to be a membership organisation but the facts tend not to support that claim. Will the RBL gradually become simply a fund raising charity like so many others? The RBL and this branch are in danger of gradually decaying unless new and active blood is found to carry the torch onward. As the poem says "The torch be yours to hold it high, If ye break faith with us who die. We shall not sleep, though poppies grow, In Flanders fields".

When I accepted the post of Chairman I set out several personal 'objectives' in addition to the Branch Plan.

My Objectives were –

1. To actively canvas for new members, particularly those with local connections and who are still serving or recently left the services. I hoped to have a Branch Recruiting Officer to help in this task. *The end of term report reads- failed*
2. To engage more with young people and find ways where they can take a more active part in branch activities. As you will read elsewhere a youth group was set up for all our youth affiliated units, unfortunately only one of them takes part but it is developing into a vital link. *The end of term report reads – a promising start, but more work to do.*
3. To increase the awareness of the branch in the local area. A branch publicity officer didn't materialise but the branch has been involved in several high profile public events with some reasonable press coverage. *The end of term report reads – a good effort, seek more help to improve further.*
4. To broaden the scope of our meetings and outside events. *The end of term report reads – well done Tom for 'holding the fort'. We need to find a team leader and volunteers to move this on.*

So is the glass half full or half empty. On a personal level I feel it is half empty. However when I look back the Branch had a resounding success with the Poppy Appeal collections and the innovations introduced by our PAO, we have a new Remembrance Garden Co-ordinator and the good work over the previous eleven years by George will continue as HMP Gartree have volunteered to maintain and store the display items, we have taken an active part in local events, welfare case workers are active, a new branch web site was developed, and more as you will read elsewhere in this report.

I think the branch has achieved quite a lot in the last year and I thank all the members for your support during the year. I look forward to the next year with anticipation and if re-elected I hope to make further progress on my original objectives.

John Standish, Chairman

November 2011



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



### Highlights of the Year





# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Founded in 1923

### About the Branch

- Formed on 20th March, 1923 at a meeting of ex-servicemen called by a war-time Army Chaplain.
- 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. The 2001 Census quotes the population of the town at 25,826 and of the villages, 5699.
- The nearest RBL Branches are in Northamptonshire.
- There are local branches of Royal Naval Association and Royal Air Force Association with which we maintain close and collaborative contact. Some of our Members belong to them.
- All three local Cadet units, Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps and St John Ambulance, are affiliated to the Branch.
- The Branch does not have a Club and General and Committee meetings are held monthly in a hired room at the Market Harborough Conservative Club.
- New members continue to join the Branch and resignations are few. Despite losses through death, membership numbers have increased by a third in the last ten years to 165, of whom 54 were women. Many had not served in the Forces. We are still a fairly small Legion branch.
- The Branch is strongly represented at County events and has a member on its Executive Committee serving as County Youth Officer. Another member is a County Standard Marshall. Our elected delegate at the R B L Annual Conference was the Branch Chairman. The Standard Bearer and Branch Secretary also attended.
- The Branch produces a monthly newsletter, *In Touch*, - appreciated particularly by those members who are unable to attend meetings. A Large Print version is also produced.
- The Branch has two web-sites:  
[www.in-touch.ukvet.net](http://www.in-touch.ukvet.net) is an archive of the first 14 years of the on-line version of *In Touch*.  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough) provides information about all branch activities, and includes all issues of the newsletter.
- The Branch produces an Annual Report of its activities. Copies are held at R B L County Office, Market Harborough Library and Leicestershire Records Office. Current and all past issues are held on the Branch main web-site.
- The Branch has an enviable reputation both within the R B L, having received awards at county and national levels, and in the local community.



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch BR0106



Founded in 1923

## Branch General Objectives and Philosophy

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

1. Foster a sense of comradeship by encouraging members to participate in Branch activities.
2. Carry out fully Local Welfare responsibilities by developing the work of the Welfare Team.
4. Increase still further the Branch's contribution to the Poppy Appeal.
5. Work to ensure the Branch's long term survival e.g. through greater involvement with youth and the community and increased effort to improve public awareness of Branch and Legion.

**Specific Objectives** based on the current Branch Plan include

1. Get more trained Welfare Caseworkers/ visitors
2. Increase the number of Committee Members
3. Appoint an In Touch Editor, a Social Team Leader and Team
4. Appoint a Communication/Publicity person
5. Appoint a person responsible for recruitment.
6. More Committee Members to attend training courses
7. More active participation County and National Events.
8. Strengthen our links with RAFA, RNA and the Cadets.
9. Work with County Recruiting Officer.
10. Appoint a President
11. Gift Aid/ Direct Debit to be encouraged.
12. Arrange/ Attend at least one joint event with Affiliated Cadets annually.

### Our Philosophy

We believe that success with the first General 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



### 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. The Branch organises the Remembrance Parade and Services, creates the Field of Remembrance, arranges a Remembrance Concert with the Harborough Band, has a Poppy Stall in the Market Hall and our usual presence at the Town Carnival this year included a Float in the



**Static Display at the Carnival**

Procession as well as a static display. We were again involved with the District Council and others in celebrating Armed Forces Day, and took a leading role in providing a colourful, interesting, fairly well attended occasion in



**Lord Lieutenant & local M P with John Morley chat at Armed Forces Day Event**

Welland Park. The Branch also took a prominent part in the nationally observed Flag Raising event to mark the start of Armed Forces Week.

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.

#### Other Involvement.

This year was the 90th Anniversary of the unveiling of the War Memorial on The Square and the Branch led a commemoration with a Drum-head Service which included extracts from speeches made on 25th September 1921 still relevant today.



**Fire brigade, Police & others before the Drum-head Service**

The Legion's 90th Anniversary year was brought to the attention of the public with an Informative display at the Library and by a visit of the County Records Office project team which is recording the history of RBL in Leicestershire, and with whom we have become involved.

From time to time, the Branch is represented on other bodies or is involved in events such as Church services, funerals and other organisations' functions. In two examples this year some members attended the dedication of a memorial with members of Husbands Branch and the Branch was represented at the Military Tattoo in Ypres.



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



## Poppy Appeal

Our contribution to the Legion's aim to raise £90 million in its 90th Anniversary Year, has been the excellent total that missed our target of £30,000 by only a few pounds, is over 30% more than last year and nearly 6% of the County total of £525,161 which is up by about 10%. On the basis of the 2001 census, our total equates to a nominal 95p per head of the population of our collecting area. It is very gratifying in view of the prevailing economic climate, and the difficulty in recruiting volunteers especially for street collections. The lack of members willing to act as collectors is very disappointing, especially in view of the increase in branch membership of 23% in the last five years.



Appeal Launch - Pipers  
& ATC "plane" ready for take-off

Efforts to **increase public awareness** of the Appeal have continued and would appear to have had success. Members of the Northampton Pipe Band played on The Square accompanied by standards from RAFA, RNA, the Cadets and the Branch provided the launch of the Appeal with a spectacle which attracted many members of the public to pause in their Saturday morning activities and to put money in the collecting buckets. The ATC and ACF cadets had created imaginative and eye-catching "vehicles" with

which they set off to deliver poppies to shops and other static points in the town centre.

**Fund raising activities** like the Coffee Morning at the Harborough Theatre and the Annual Remembrance Concert again publicised the Appeal as well as contributing useful funds. The same is true of the **stall in the Market Hall** which acts as a "sales" and information point and as a "control centre" for the Street Collectors on the days the hall is open. **Sainsbury** had adopted the Poppy Appeal as their nominated Charity in Leicestershire for the year so this gave added publicity as well as a valuable donation. A publicised "mini forum" at the Angel Hotel gave publicity to the Appeal but did little to recruit new collectors.



Poppy Appeal Stall in the Market Hall



# The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch  
BR0106



Founded in 1923

## Communication

### Branch Newsletter - *In Touch*

Monthly issues have continued in the format introduced last year, reaching Number 156 in September. Obtaining articles and stories to supplement the items of news has remained a serious problem with very few members having made contributions. Appeals for someone to take over the editorship have also been unsuccessful. This lack of support and the time required to search for other sources of copy has led the Editor to decide to reduce the newsletter to four A5 pages from the previous eight pages.

A team of volunteers still deliver *In Touch* by hand but now most members living out of town receive theirs by post to avoid the need for some quite long and expensive car journeys. Some members have elected to view the newsletter on the web-site.

### Branch Web-site



Screen shot of Armed Forces Day Photo Gallery

The new branch web-site launched last year as [www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/market-harborough) has been progressively developed to promote the branch and to describe fully its past, present and known future activities. It makes generous use of photographs, both singly and as sets (galleries) covering specific events.. Current and all previous issues of *In Touch* are now accessible, including those of all the first 14 years, although the archive web-site [www.in-touch.ukvet.net](http://www.in-touch.ukvet.net) is still live. The new site is also an archive and already contains all issues of the Branch Annual Report, the previous year's "Recent Events" and a project report. It also has a Search facility.

### Branch Archives.

The County Records Office project "90 Years of the Legion in Leicestershire and Rutland" involved us in sorting and recording what Branch records exist and in preparing a visual display for their exhibition. It has also emphasised how much of our history has been lost and the importance of preserving information for the future. Now the Cabin provides secure storage for paper documents, a scrapbook of past and new material and some artefacts. The web-site and digital storage media also provide long-term security. Some material has been lodged with the Records Office.



Our oldest archive -Standard Dedication in 1921 at Langton Branch which was later absorbed into ours.



# The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch  
BR0106



Founded in 1923

## Social, Fundraising and Other Events

Following the death of our Social Team Leader early in the year, appeals made for a successor were unheeded. Such social and fund-raising activities that have taken place have been without a formal plan but thanks to a few individual members, most established events and a few others, did occur.

Regular **monthly luncheons** have continued at The Angel Hotel but the increase in numbers attending reported last year has not been maintained. The January belated **Christmas Luncheon** was again shared with our RAFA and RNA friends. There was no Autumn Dinner but the **Anniversary Dinner** in March was held. As in previous years, we were joined by members of two other branches and of RAFA, RNA and the Cadets. Music for dancing was re-established but using (free) Chairman-operated equipment instead of having a paid DJ. Funds were raised from an auction as well as the usual Raffle.



That was a good Christmas lunch!!

After meeting events have been very limited. Due to increased costs and the constraints of Health and Safety Regulations, the previously popular **Buffets** were limited to two during the year. There was only one **Talk**, Sir Michael Carlton-Smith's evocative "Afghan Dilemma" to which RAFA and RNA members and other guests had been invited. By contrast, a light-hearted competitive **Game** got members involved and off their seats! The pre-Christmas "sing-along" was fun, too.

As usual, two **Coffee Mornings** were held during the year; that in October, in aid of the Poppy Appeal and in February for Branch funds. ACF and ATC Cadets gave strong support with valuable assistance on stalls and in the kitchen and at each helped to realise over £300. The annual **Remembrance Concert** performed by the Harborough Band, provided an enjoyable evening of popular music, and made a valuable contribution to the Poppy Appeal.

A group of members attended **Festival of Remembrance** at de Montfort Hall arranged and taken by a social team member. A proposed outing to Newmarket for the **Poppy Race Day** did not attract sufficient interest for a coach to be hired but our Standard Bearer and her family did attend and she took part in the Parade - the sole representative from the County.



The impressive Armed Forces Memorial

Our RNA friends kindly invited our members to join their enjoyable **cheese and wine evening** held in the garden of one of their members in June, and their outing to the **National Memorial Arboretum** in July. The ATC cadets arranged as a **Legion 90th Anniversary Event** a "Mad Hatter's Tea Party" - great fun but poorly supported by members.



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



Founded in 1923

## Remembrance

**Remembrance Sunday** took the same form as in previous years starting with a parade of youth and adult groups led by the ATC Band, to the Parish Church. The Service was conducted by the Branch Chaplain, and attended by a very large congregation including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the local M P, Edward Garnier, QC, and the Council Chairman. They took the salute when the parade returned to The Square for the wreath-laying ceremony and short service held before the many members of the public gathered there. The changes made to the parade route and arrangements on The Square were beneficial.



**Armistice Day** observances followed the now established routine of wreath-laying at the small memorial in Welland Park (seen on right), followed by that at the gates to the Memorial Gardens. The two minutes silence, signalled 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.

**Garden of Remembrance.** For the eleventh successive year, members again created this tribute to the 326 local men and woman who lost their lives in the two world wars and whose names appear on the nearby war memorials. Again, it was much appreciated by members of the public, many of whom placed a remembrance cross near the large cross bearing a family name or in a specially created plot close to the Cenotaph.



The Garden formed a fitting setting for the daily Sunset Ceremony involving the parade of the Branch Standard, preceded on the last day, by a lone piper, lowering the Union Flag, sounding the Last Post and Reveille, reciting the Exhortation and Kohima verse and two minutes silence. The few members of the public and the disappointing number of branch members appearing each day raise questions about the future of the daily ceremony.

Following the loss of a building previously used for storage and the inability of the member who has always done so, to continue maintaining the crosses and other items, an arrangement has been made with HMP Gartree to provide that service, for which the Branch is truly grateful.



# The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch  
BR0106



Founded in 1923

## Welfare

The Branch had a Welfare Team of three Caseworkers one of whom is designated Welfare Officer, but during the year, one had to step down due to other commitments. No one has yet volunteered to fill the vacancy. The team have all attended Basic and up-date Caseworker Courses; have been checked by Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and have been issued with Identity Cards – prerequisites of working as a Royal British Legion Caseworker or Hospital/Home Visitor.

Generally referrals will come through the County Office for the local volunteers to contact the applicant and arrange a visit. Final decisions and any awards are made in Leicester. The County total Welfare Expenditure was £183,773, with Cases 296 completed. This year several requests came as a result of the Leicestershire County Council's First Contact initiative - a signposting service of which The Royal British Legion is a Partner. It is also important that members keep the welfare team informed of any need.



Alderton House Dining Room

During the past year, there have been applications for respite breaks at a Legion Poppy Break Centre – Alderson House, Bridlington in the case of successful applicants from this area. This can provide a holiday for serving and ex-Service people, their partners, dependants and carers. It is means-tested but consideration is always given to a social as well as financial need.

We have also dealt with applications for assistance which have required the completion of a Form A. Where an applicant is not in receipt of a means-tested benefit, this form will enable County Office to decide that there is a financial need. From time to time the Branch will be asked to contribute financially to a local case from its Welfare Fund.

In addition, visits have been made to the housebound, to those in hospital or simply to just keep in touch.

Another form of welfare is the Poppy Calls service which helps those in need with small household maintenance jobs. The fitter for this area and who is also the regional senior fitter, is a Branch member.





# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



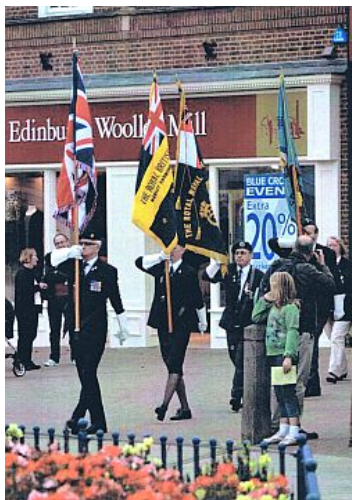
### Ceremonial

Branch history was made on 2nd December when Hilary Brazil became our first lady Standard Bearer, after George Fleming stood down after many years in the role. He was appointed her deputy.

Hilary took on her new duties with enthusiasm, has attended the County Standard Bearers' Schools, their AGM and their Annual Rededication Service and Parade. She represented the Branch with other County Standard Bearers in Leicester on ANZAC Day and the Armed Forces Day Service and Parade at the Cathedral. In the company of many Standards from branches throughout the Legion, she carried ours in the Parade at National Conference and in the very different setting of the Newmarket Poppy Race Day. At a smaller scale and with Standards of other local groups, Hilary



Hilary receives the Standard



Marching on to The Square - John Cox leading

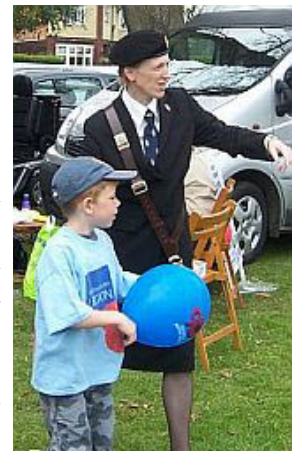
attended the town's Armed Forces Day events, the Drum-head Service of the War Memorial Anniversary commemoration, Battle of Britain Service and the HMS Stevenstone Association Reunion service at Foxton. Within the Branch, she had the Standard at the Anniversary Dinner and a Coffee Morning.

Hilary's work commitments have meant that George Fleming, as deputy, has been busy, too. He continued to attend the training "Schools". He Paraded with the Standard on eleven different occasions, including some before the hand-over. The Branch makes it known that the Standard would be carried at the funeral of any ex-service person if so requested and George responded to such wishes, ten times during the year. In appreciation of this service, bereaved families often have made donations to Legion funds.

George's ceremonial duties have been widened to include that of Parade Marshall. He received formal training on the Legion National Parade Marshall's Course in March and acted in the role at the Armed Forces Day Flag Raising and at the event in Welland Park..

Each of our Affiliated Cadet Units has its own standard and the Branch is gratified to know they are keen and proud to be involved with our local ceremonial events.

A very light-hearted form of Ceremonial was the float in the Carnival Procession. Designed and assembled by George Fleming, it featured Hilary with the Standard and Cadets and over a banner celebrating 90 years of the Legion.



Hilary- Standard Bearer and mum



# The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch  
BR0106



Founded in 1923

## Meetings and Membership

Meetings are held in a hired room at the Market Harborough Conservative Club, General Meetings on the second Wednesday of each month and for the Committee six days earlier. There were exceptions to this year. There was no August General Meeting and an Extraordinary General Meeting had to be held in December to receive the Annual Accounts which were not available at the Annual General Meeting in November. Average attendance was 39 except for the EGM which was very poorly attended. At the AGM there were 47 members. This average is less than a quarter of the membership but if one takes into account the apologies for absence, over one third would have attended. About 30 members live outside our "catchment area", and for others there will be problems of health, transport, and conflicts of interest. We do not know how many do not wish to attend our meetings, or why.

There was a disappointing attendance at Committee Meetings with one having to be cancelled and at two others there were insufficient members to form a quorum. New and more committed members must be found if the management of the Branch is to be effective.

Only three people did not renew their subscriptions and sadly 9 members died. There were 8 new members almost offsetting these losses, and making a total membership of 169.

## Training

Members are always encouraged to apply to attend appropriate Training Courses. At County level, the Secretary and Treasurer attended relevant up-date courses to familiarise themselves with any recent changes. The Chairman attended a Branch Management course and the Secretary, in her County roles, one on County Management and one on Child Protection Awareness, all at National level.

The Standard Bearers attend the County "School" training sessions regularly.

## News of some Individual Members

The "Ramsay Walkers", Betty Ramsay, daughter Hilary Brazil and grandson Christopher, again completed the 10 mile London Poppy Walk, their sixth occasion.

Betty Ramsay, elected to the County Executive Committee, last year, has now taken the role of County Youth Officer.

Two members, Tom Ashmore and George Fleming, received the Legion Gold Badge Award, "for at least eight years meritorious and conspicuous service to the objectives of the Legion"

Sadly we record the death of nine members; John Ballard, Ron Ford, Bernard Halsall, Glenys Hocking-Davies, Betty Jeacock, Joan Mc Millin, Peggy Tyler and Roger Williamson,



# The Royal British Legion

## Market Harborough Branch

BR0106



### Involving Young People

The Chairman and Secretary have had several positive meetings with Cadet Unit representatives to discuss ways the Organisations can work even closer together to their mutual benefit. Out of one of these meetings came the idea of a Poetry Competition about Remembrance, to be judged in time for 11th November. Although primarily aimed at children in three classes between the ages of 7 and 18, there is also an open age class. There will be prizes of Vouchers donated by Waterstone.

Cadets took part in the **Remembrance Sunday** Parade, Service and Wreath Laying and as usual, the 1084 Squadron ATC Band led the parade to and from St Dionysius Church. Each cadet unit had its own Standard Bearer. Scout and Guide units were also in the parade. At the Armistice Day ceremony children from one of the schools placed tributes they had made alongside the wreaths on the Memorial Garden Gates.

The Drum-head Service and War Memorial 90th Anniversary Commemoration was also very well supported by young people.

All three Cadet units took part in the **Armed Forces Day Event** and this year were joined by a Sea Cadets unit from Hinkley. They were involved or had their own static stands and displays. In the arena there were interesting examples of skills acquired through training and practice like the Field Gun exercise by the



Sea Cadets Stand



Poppy Trolley

ACF and the performance by the ATC Band. Cadet units took part in the Sunset Ceremony which formed the finale of the Event.

In the **Poppy Appeal** Launch ACF and ATC cadets attracted attention with their own designed delivery “vehicles” on which they took poppy trays and collecting boxes to shops and businesses in the town centre. They also helped with the Street Collection.

At **Coffee Mornings** cadets come into close contact with members of the public who appreciate the courtesy and helpfulness of those from the ACF on kitchen duty or the ATC on the Tombola or Raffle stalls.



Mad Hatter & Chairman!

To celebrate the Legion's 90th Anniversary year, the ATC cadets provided a “Mad Hatter's Tea Party” which was great fun but was so disappointing for them when so few Branch members attended.

The Branch is proud of these young people and members are always pleased to hear of their normal Cadet activities and successes such as that of Harry Marlow becoming the St John Ambulance “Cadet of the Year” for two successive years. We are fortunate in having the ACF and ATC Commanders as Branch members to keep us in touch and so strengthen the affiliations.

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....from the Chairman	p2	Social, Fund-raising & other Events	p9
Year Highlights.....in pictures	p3	Remembrance.....traditions upheld	p10
About the Branch.....who we are	p4	Welfare.....vital but unsung service	p11
Our Objectives .....what we try to do	p5	Ceremonial.....busy standard bearer	p12
Legion in the Community	p6	Meetings and Membership	p13
Poppy Appeal	p7	.. News of some individual Members	p13
Communication .....and Archives	p8	Involving Young People	p14