

# What's Going On?

The Social & Fund-Raising Team Reports

## DIARY OF EVENTS

The date of the next Branch meeting is

**May 14**

29 Apr	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30 (see page 1)
20 May	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30 (see page 1)
24 May	Poppy Appeal Awards
1 Jun	Rededication of County Standards (see page 2)
27 Jun	Veterans' Lunch, Angel Hotel
1 Jul	RNA Trip to National Arboretum
29 Jul	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30
19 Aug	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30
30 Sep	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30
9 Oct	Informal Autumn Dinner, MH Golf Club
18 Oct	Coffee Morning Harboro Theatre 9am-Noon
28 Oct	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30
1 Nov	Festival of Remembrance, de Montfort Hall, Leic.
15 Nov	Remembrance Concert, Baptist Church MH
25 Nov	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30

*If you would like to attend a Branch event but have no transport, please contact the Social Team and every effort will be made to help you.*

### Calling all Quiz Fans

It is hoped Members will turn out in force, complete with thinking caps, at the May 14th Branch meeting when there will be an opportunity to prove just how clever you are in a general knowledge quiz. (Don't worry, you won't be having to pit your wits against the Eggheads!)

### By the Way

*Marriage is a relationship in which one person is always right, and the other is a husband.*

## The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

### Hon. Secretary:

Sara Whitley-Kinzett 01858 434476

### Welfare:

Vida Edwards 0116 279 3729

Betty Ramsay 01858 434923

### Poppy Appeal Organiser:

Caroline Windsor 01858 463660

### Social & Fund Raising Team:

Glenys Hocking-Davies 01858 467835

Wendy Osborne 01858 467636

Les Moore 01858 463112

Meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the 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.

## In Touch

[www.in-touch.ukvet.net](http://www.in-touch.ukvet.net)

THE MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER OF THE  
MARKET

HARBOROUGH  
BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION  
Founded 1996

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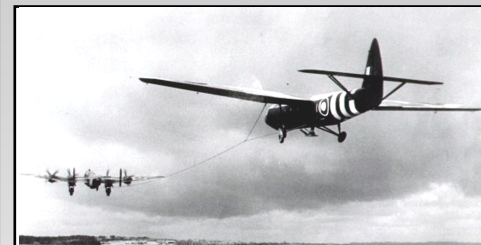
# The Royal British Legion

Market Harborough Branch

## In Touch

Issue 115

April 2008



A graphic account of a hair-raising 'joy ride' in a Horsa glider appears on page 6.

THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



## Spring is in the Air

Celebrate in style with lunch at the Angel Hotel. Meet in the Bar at Noon.

Because of the Bank Holiday in May, the lunch has been brought forward a week, which makes it a bit tight for the next issue of *In Touch*. Our wonderful Social Team have solved this little problem and here are the mouth-watering menus for the next two months. We hope you will be tempted by spring-like weather to join the band of regulars for an enjoyable meal.

**Reserve your place now with Wendy Osborne on 01858 467636**

### THE MENU FOR TUESDAY 29 APRIL

Roast of the Day

Breaded Fillet of Pollock with chips, peas, tartare sauce  
All served with a selection of vegetables  
Mild Vegetable Curry with Boiled Rice  
Apple and Sultana Crumble with Creamy Vanilla Custard  
Fresh Fruit Salad with Ice Cream  
Lemon Roulade with Thick Cream  
Fresh Coffee and Mints

### THE MENU FOR TUESDAY 20 MAY

Roast Leg of Lamb and Rosemary Gravy with  
Roast Potatoes and Vegetables  
Grilled White Fish on Crushed New Potatoes with a  
Creamy Parsley Sauce  
Mushroom Stroganoff Served with Savoury Rice  
Apple and Sultana Crumble  
Fresh Fruit Salad  
Vanilla Cheesecake Served with Mandarin Sauce  
Fresh Coffee and Mints

### Be Aware - Take Care!

Members received much valuable advice at the April meeting in a talk by PCSO Matt Kiff. Suggestions on how we can take sensible precautions to protect ourselves from becoming victims of crime both in the home and out and about were outlined by Matt. He also demonstrated a number of devices, many of which are freely available, to make us and our homes more safe.

## The Dinner Celebrating the Branch 85th Anniversary

*Here is the full text of the speech made by the Guest of Honour, the President of the Leicestershire and Rutland Royal British Legion, Lt. Col. P. A. Roffey DL.*

Thank you very much for inviting me to be with you this evening to celebrate 85 years of service to the people of Market Harborough.

It is a very long time for one organisation to have such a consistent positive influence in the well-being of its community. Older than Harborough District Council in its present form.

Your Branch is needed as much today as it was when founded in 1923. Welfare support for the ex-service community remains of paramount importance to the Royal British Legion where there are increasing demands on the Poppy Fund with a 30% increase in those under 35 years of age now seeking assistance.

I was told, by the way, that this year's Poppy Appeal is expected to reach £30 million. An outstanding result which will be far in excess of expectation.

It is interesting to reflect that whilst the Local Government Association estimates that some £17 billion of benefits money now goes unclaimed each year, the demand on the Poppy Fund is increasing even though the ex-service community at around 10.5 million is decreasing.

Does this suggest I wonder that the benefits system for the ex-service community needs reviewing? How much of the unclaimed - or is it un-claimable money, under the present rules - should be relieving the pressure on the Poppy Fund and other ex-service charities.

The National Legion campaign for Government to "Honour the Military Covenant" needs our support. We need to raise awareness of the issues of concern within our own local communities. Veterans Day was established by the Government as a means of informing local government and statutory agencies of the needs of veterans and their responsibilities to them.

2007 was the year in which the public were reminded of the Military Covenant and the growing concern about the lack of welfare support and medical care for those wounded, mentally or physically, in battle and the dependents of those personnel killed in action. Some startling facts have been brought to light by Legion research. The derisory compensation payments offered to personnel maimed and to the NOK of those killed; the high percentage of the homeless who are ex-service; the high incidence of ex-service personnel with mental disorders caused by their dreadful experiences in battle and the indifference to their needs by central government and other agencies in the provision of satisfactory health care and welfare support.

It is right that the RBL should champion such causes and seek to get Government to do more for the service and ex-service community.

Market Harborough Branch has a proud record of "Service not Self" and I have been exceptionally impressed by the way you have worked so hard in recent years to re-energise the membership.

Your monthly "In Touch" really does keep us abreast of what is going on in the Branch and also has some excellent articles produced by members. Your work with youth has been ground breaking in the County.

When our forbears set up this Branch in 1923 they believed that the need for it would be short lived. The war to end all wars had just been settled. The Branch's task was to look after those who survived and the widows of those that did not and also to provide comradeship and support for those finding it exceedingly difficult to re-establish their lives in "civvy street".

They would have been horrified to think that 85 years on the Branch still has an essential job to do. They would be proud however, I am sure, to see that the spirit in which they founded the Branch lives on today amongst you here this evening.

I conclude by wishing the Branch many more years of success and thank you all for keeping the Royal British Legion standard flying high in Market Harborough.



## “Hold tight, Son!” ‘Joy Riding’ in a Horsa

**Alan Hartley,  
Leading Aircraftsman  
of 271 Squadron,  
RAF Down Ampney.**

I must confess that I personally had very little contact with the glider personnel at Down Ampney. I know that that may sound strange but RAF Down Ampney was a very big airfield, all of our 271 Squadron dispersals and crew rooms were on the east side of the airfield, 48 Squadron were on the south side and the glider park was on the west side and we very rarely came into contact with each other.

My only experience came after watching for several weeks the gliders landing on our airfield so smoothly and so gently. I was talking to a glider pilot near our dispersal just prior to a cross-country exercise called a ‘Balbo’. He asked me if I had ever flown in a Horsa and when I replied ‘No’ he asked me if I would like to fly with them to Oxford and back on this Balbo.

Naturally I was most excited at the prospect of a Horsa flight and my Flight Sergeant, our ‘Chiefie’, readily gave me permission to go.

I took up a standing position behind the two green tubular pilots’ seats and the take off was far more smooth than I expected and we were airborne long before the Dakota became unstuck. A beautiful sunny day and it was most exciting looking down that long rope to the tail of the big Dakota and enjoying a smooth undulating flight, on high tow looking down on the ‘Dak’ and on low tow looking up at it.

Eventually we turned 180 degrees and returned to Down Ampney and I was quite looking forward to the type of gentle landing which we had been watching for weeks. We arrived back at Down Ampney at about 5.000 feet and suddenly one of the glider pilots said “Hold tight, son !” and I wondered what was going to happen.

Than I found out for one of the pilots pushed the control stick forward and flat into the floor of the cockpit and both pilots put their feet in it. The glider simply dropped out of the sky and plummeted vertically towards our airfield. My knuckles turned white as still standing, I gripped the tops of the seats. The slipstream whistled through the gaps, in an ear splitting scream and my eyes started to bulge as the pressure built up in my head. All of my insides seemed to be compressing in my shoulder blades. Through the Perspex window the triangle of runways was getting bigger and the black and white checkered control van at the end of the runway, rapidly became bigger and bigger

It was at this stage of the flight that I decided that I had made a mistake in volunteering to fly in a Horsa and reflected on the six bolts holding the tail unit on. At the very last minute before we became a pile of smashed plywood and Perspex, both pilots leaned forward and pulled the stick back into their midriff. The huge Horsa leveled off at 90 degrees and the gravity forces were unbelievable, with my stomach and lungs piled up into the back of my neck. Then, on another word of command, the huge flaps as big as barn doors were dropped, fully out, not as our Dakota’s did — quarter flap, half flap and full flap — and we gently touched down.

It is impossible to describe the physical shock of coming down from 90-100 miles per hour to a 10 mph trundle as we landed in about 50 yards. As I stumbled severely shaken from the Horsa I had the sobering thought, that after this ordeal our glider pilots then had to fight and defend themselves. My admiration for the glider pilots before my flight was very high, but it soared after this frightening but exciting exercise.

As we landed our NAAFI wagon was in our dispersal area and I staggered over to join the queue. “What was it like?” someone asked. “A piece of cake”, I replied, but my tea slopping over the top of my mug betrayed my words.

### COUNTY STANDARDS REDEDICATION SERVICE *Programme of events*

**On Sunday 1 June 2008, Market Harborough Branch will host the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Rededication service of the Leicestershire & Rutland Royal British Legion Standard Bearers’ Association.**

1. Branch members are invited to join the parade to the Parish Church of St. Dionysius, forming up on the Tesco car park (free on Sundays) at **2.30pm**.
2. The church service will commence at **3.00pm** and those not on the parade are requested to be seated by **2.30pm**. Please observe any reserved seats, particularly the **first seats** in the pews, as they are for the Standard Bearers.
3. The Service will be conducted by the Branch Padre, the Reverend Richard Brand.
4. The order of service is not too dissimilar to that of a Remembrance Service.
5. The congregation is respectfully requested to remain seated until the Standards and the Dignitaries have left the church.
6. Following the service, two wreaths will be laid at the Memorial in The Square.
7. After the parade, all are welcome at the Conservative club, where refreshments will be served.

***The Leicestershire & Rutland R.B.L. Standard Bearers’ Association would like to thank you for your support on this very moving occasion.***

#### **BRANCH MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY**

***We welcome four new members:***

Mr Peter Chappells,  
Tollgate, Harborough Rd, Dingley, Market Harborough LE16 8PS. Tel: 01858 535374.  
Mrs I Garnham,  
8 Gunnesbrook Close, Great Bowden, Market Harborough, LE16 7HZ. Tel: 01858 463616  
Mr S G and Mrs M A Cator,  
4 Hill Gardens, Market Harborough, LE16 9EB.  
Tel: 01858 432023

In the mid nineteen nineties the southern portion of what had been the Soviet Union dissolved into a series of bloody little wars, as first states such as Ossetia, Georgia and Chechnya declared independence from Russia, and then states within states fought for independence, South Ossetia from North Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia.

For the most part these 'little' wars went unnoticed in the west, as the war in Bosnia had also reached its height at this time and western governments were focused on doing all they could to sort out the Croat / Serb / Muslim wars and the ongoing siege of Sarajevo.

But the wars in the Caucasus were a concern, there was, and still is, much oil in the region, and any situation which further threatened stability in the region had to be monitored.

In 1994 the UK Government sent a couple of Army Officers to the Caucasus to observe and report on the situation. I was one of those officers.

As usual we drove slowly. The potholes and craters could rip a wheel off the Land Cruiser, and this road was constantly being mined by one side or another, there was just a chance of spotting recent digging if you went slow enough and kept your eyes fixed on the road ten metres ahead.

The usual nause of getting through the Abkhaz checkpoint on the bridge — a couple of oil drums, manned by a pair of spaced out bandits, festooned with grenades, knives, pistols and Kalashnikovs. The usual Rambo head scarves tied around their heads and eyes, piercing like holes in the snow — booze and pot making their words incoherent and their actions

# The Finest Army in the World

*A further article in the series written exclusively for In Touch.*

## A Fair Exchange

By  
Lt Col Mike Morgan

unpredictable.

Onto the Georgian checkpoint, two more space bandits - but this time a little more coherent - their Commander wanted to talk. So one of us stays in the Cruiser with the engine running, and I accompany bandit number one to a much damaged little brick cottage by the side of the bridge.

The 'Commander' is middle aged, large, hairy and smells of cheap tobacco and vodka. He offers me a drink and I accept, (with gratitude). We make small talk for a few minutes. He has been to England - was a school teacher (chemistry) before the war, wants to go home to his wife and kids - normal stuff.

Then onto the reason for the meeting. His lot, (the Georgians), wish to do a body swap with the other lot, (the Abkhaz), they have Abkhaz prisoners, they will swap for three Georgian prisoners. They also have two Abkhaz bodies - these they will swap for Georgian dead. I make notes, and agree the time and place for the swap. Two days time - 1500 Hrs

Local. This bridge. A final shot of vodka, shake hands and back to the Cruiser.

Back to the Abkhaz side, and finally find somebody in charge who is not so high that he doesn't know what day it is and who can, and does, agree to the swap. Three live, two dead.

Two days later - 1500 Hrs (Local). The bridge is crowded and we wait on the Abkhaz side. Soldiers from both sides are milling about at their ends of the bridge. The Red Cross are here to witness the exchange, as are local politicians and what must be family members hoping and praying that it is to be their son / husband / brother that is exchanged today.

But there is a problem. The Abkhaz have turned up with two live and three bodies. I wander across the 25 metre span of the bridge, shake hands with the Georgian Commander/Chemistry teacher. 'Not a problem' he says - and goes to talk to his soldiers.

I begin to wander back across the bridge. When a single shot is heard from the Georgian side. I have a sick feeling in my stomach. I know what has happened but do not want to believe it.

A minute later and the Georgians escort two emaciated looking prisoners to the centre of the bridge. They are carrying two body bags, and a third body. The bodies are dumped, not placed, dumped in the centre of the bridge. The third body is still warm and still bleeding - a single bullet to the back of the head has blown the front of his face away.

Two live and three bodies.

A fair exchange.

*(Another contribution by Mike Morgan soon.)*

### Just a Bit of Fun

*If you take an Oriental person and spin him around several times, does he become disoriental?*

*If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?*

*Do infants enjoy infancy as much as adults enjoy adultery?*

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*If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?*

*Why is the man who invests your money a broker?*

*When cheese gets its picture taken, what does it say?*

*Why is a piano player called a pianist, but a person who drives a racing car not called a racist?*

*Why are a wise man and a wise guy opposites?*

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*Why do overlook and oversee mean opposite things?*

*Why isn't the number 11 pronounced onety-one?*

*'I am' is reportedly the shortest sentence in the language; could it be that 'I do' is the longest sentence?*

*If 4 out of 5 people suffer from diarrhoea, does that mean the other one enjoys it?*

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