

What's Going On?

The Social & Fund-Raising Team Reports

DIARY OF EVENTS

The date of the next Branch meeting is
September 10th

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| 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 |
| 13 Mar 09 | Formal Branch Dinner |

Autumn Dinner A reservation form for the informal dinner on 9 October is enclosed with this newsletter. The Golf Club serve excellent meals and this occasion is always enjoyable. If you haven't attended one of these occasions before, come along and join the party.

An Interesting Speaker Alan Hartley, the author of the article on page six, will give a talk at the 10 September meeting entitled 'Airborne Operations from the Erk's Point of View'. Alan speaks as well as he writes, so this promises to be an entertaining evening.

Future Arrangements A series of votes were passed unanimously at the August meeting and the following arrangements were agreed. The Christmas Luncheon is to be held in January, and the RNA and RAFA will be invited, the monthly luncheons will be moved to the first Tuesday in the month to allow RAFA Members to attend, the monthly luncheons to be moved forward for the Bank Holidays, all luncheons to be held in Market Harborough.

Coffee Morning Les Moore will be grateful for help on 18 October, including setting up (from 8am), clearing up and serving on the sales stalls. As always, bric-a-brac, tombola and raffle prizes are needed and will be welcomed at the next Branch meeting. Your intentions to supply cakes, etc., will be useful.

The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

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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

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 119

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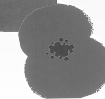


Who is this
intrepid, and
rather
attractive,
aviatrix?

A small clue
to help you
narrow the
field a little:
she is a
member of
our branch.

All is
revealed on
page four.

THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION



Branch News Round-up

Poppy Appeal Organiser

David Pryor has agreed to become the new Poppy Appeal Organiser and was welcomed by Members. David hoped that he would be “up to scratch” after consultation with Caroline Windsor,

who will be moving from this area. David attends the ceremony at the Menin Gate each year to lay a wreath on behalf of the RBL. Caroline hopes Members consider signing up to help the Appeal Team and names will be taken at the next Meeting.

Membership And still they come! Branch membership now stands at 153.

Cottage Hospital Memorial Tom Jeacock re-iterated previous concerns about the portico of the Cottage Hospital and requested that it is an item for the agenda in the near future. He explained that the Cottage Hospital had been built by public subscription from local residents and that it had been built on hallowed ground as a memorial and he was concerned that the present Council were not aware of that fact. Unlike the Gas Board Building in St Mary's Road, the Cottage Hospital portico should be registered as a listed building site to preserve the objectives of the hospital as a memorial to the fallen of the First World War. The RBL had been in contact with the previous NHS Trust but had not brought the matter to the attention of the present Trust and this is to be remedied urgently. Marjorie Adcock urged the RBL to take action to have the portico, at least, listed.

Members visit Orkneys Branch Joan and Tom Ashmore visited the RBL Branch at Kirkwall, Orkney Islands in Scotland and were kindly presented with a Branch pennant and a copy of the Scottish Legion News. They were delighted with the warm reception they received and enjoyed chatting with Members.

he would sit on the crossbar, paws on the handlebars. Once at the dispersal, Billy was very jealous of his territory and occasionally big Alsatian police dogs would enter our dispersal but Billy, despite being half their size, would bar their way - fighting them when necessary. His souvenirs of these confrontations were a deeply scarred nose and half of one ear missing but eventually the police dogs stopped encroaching.

When the NAAFI tea wagon arrived at the dispersal and there was a dash to get in the queue and woe betide anyone who tried to pass Billy as he would snap your ankles. There was no real pain because after fetching pebbles for years (his favourite pastime) he had no teeth, having worn them all down!

After the van had left you could go into the dispersal hut where everyone was seated having their char and a wad (tea and cake) and invariably Billy would be sitting with a piece of cake on top of his head and between his ears. He would be absolutely unmoving until someone said “Right, Billy” and then with an upward snap the cake would be caught and down it would go. But never until he received the word and sometimes, to be cruel, they would leave him for 2-3 minutes.

For a short period we had to go on detachment to a nearby airfield, Blake Hill Farm, which was about five miles away. They put Billy on the lorry and he came with us to Blake Hill. Next day Billy was missing and could not be found. Phil Niven had to go back to Down Ampney to fetch some bedding and there was Billy - he didn't like Blake Hill Farm!

Very often Billy would go flying in our Dakotas and his tail always wagged as he went up the aircraft steps. One day he went to Brussels with one of our mechanics, Newton Foster. When Foster came back he had a



Always a welcome sight. A preserved NAAFI tea wagon.

A picture that will surely stir a few memories!

long face and told us that Billy was lost. He must have wandered off the Evere-Brussels airfield for he wasn't to be found when they took off for the return flight. However, ten days later trotting across the apron towards a 271 Dakota was Billy, pristine white and with a huge pink ribbon bow round his neck. Where he had

been no-one ever knew but Billy had a self-satisfied smirk on his face for days but soon regained his normal colour.

Talking of colour reminded me that 36 hours before D Day we received an order to paint all of our 60 Dakotas and gliders with black and white stripes to identify Allied aircraft for the benefit of the trigger happy Navy and huge barrels of black and white distemper and white-wash brushes were placed at each dispersal. Everyone had

to assist - cooks, mechanics, aircrew, clerks - were all roped in to paint these three black and white bands on the wings and fuselage. There was an air of excitement for we all knew that the day we had all trained so hard for over five months - D Day - had arrived and we were going to take the war into Europe.

Billy, carried away by this infectious excitement, barked his head off incessantly near to where the airmen were busy painting. To shut him up, someone would hit him with a white brush and off he would go, still barking, until someone would hit him with a black brush. So poor old Billy went from black to white and reverse, many times over the next 36 hours.

When the war ended and we left Down Ampney. Phil Niven took Billy home to London but he pined and would not eat. He would also attack civilians being used to RAF uniforms. Eventually Phil motored back to Down Ampney where two Canadian squadrons had moved in and left him there, where he ended his days.

A Sort of Shaggy Dog Story

By Alan Hartley

Billy the Squadron Pup



In 1940, 271 squadron was created in a transport role from the former 1680 Flight. Equipment mostly consisted of the Handley Page HP54 Harrow, supplemented with the Bristol Bombay and civil airliners impressed into military service, including the Handley Page H.P.42s from Imperial Airways.

In 1940 our HP 54 Harrows from 271 Squadron based at Doncaster were helping to evacuate RAF airfields in France as the Germans advanced.

As our ground mechanics who flew with the Harrows as loaders at that time, went to a loaded Harrow prior to take off from the now abandoned airfield they saw a small black and white smooth haired terrier pup, no more than a few weeks old which had also been abandoned. One of the mechanics, strictly against orders, popped the pup into his battledress blouse, before boarding the Harrow. At Doncaster as it grew into a full sized dog, Billy was a firm favourite and the airmen would take him up Ellers Road to Doncaster for an evening on the bus. Being exceptionally intelligent Billy soon learned to go by himself and he would walk up to the bus stop and the bus drivers would always pick him up. Once in Doncaster he would do the rounds of the local pubs looking for an airman or a friendly face to give him a saucer of beer. Then it was back on the bus to Ellers Road. One day the bus failed to stop and Billy leaped off, rolling in the road, shook himself and trotted

off back to camp.

The local people had great amusement watching Billy heading up the fortnightly pay parade. Billy was at the head of the column, sat by the pay table but never actually got paid.

When we converted to Dakotas from Harrows we left Doncaster and flew to Down Ampney near Cirencester where Phil Niven, a 271 Squadron Flight mechanic, took Billy to our 'B' Flight Nissen hut. One day when we hadn't been at Down Ampney, very long Phil gave me a demonstration of how intelligent Billy was. Billy was lying in his favourite position by the coke stove which stood in the centre of the Nissen hut. Billy was filthy because the airfield wasn't really finished being built and there was a lot of mud. Billy was fast asleep when Phil picked up the fire bucket, rattled the handle and said "Bath, Billy". Billy woke, whined and nearly stood up, his legs very wobbly —the picture of being "proper poorly". He staggered up the aisle between the beds and I was filled with pity for this poor pathetic creature. Billy got to the top end of the billet



The Handley Page HP54 Harrow

near the window which was open and then with a quick athletic bound he was up, through the window and away, not to be seen for the rest of the day!

He would go down to the airmen's mess for dinner and if he did not care for the smell of the menu he would try the Sergeants Mess and if that was not to his liking, the Officers Mess. He always got fed.

He never walked to our dispersal because on the perimeter track which circled our airfield, anyone passing on a bike would say "Come on, Billy". With a bound

Guest speaker at August Branch Meeting Mr Chris Sewart, Harborough Town Development Of-

Mr Sewart introduced himself as a Leicestershire lad from Birstall and thanked the RBL for the opportunity to come and talk with them about his role in Market Harborough. The post of Town Development Officer is funded by the Harborough District Council and is part of the Harborough Improvement Team whose function is to facilitate the different groups in the town in their aims to develop the town.

He hoped to be able to talk again to the RBL with more specific plans for the development of any projects that they might decide upon in the future. The groups represent both the voluntary and business sectors of the community and part of his job is to indicate areas of possible funding to support the group's projects and to listen to the needs of the retailers.

The recent successful Egyptian Sand Playtime was an example of raising the profile of Market Harborough in the surrounding area, including Northamptonshire, by putting on an event on a traditionally quiet day for retailers. The retailers had been impressed that the trail of scarabs linking the independent shops in the town had in fact increased their takings on a Wednesday. Spot interviews amongst visitors/shoppers in the town centre had indicated that advertising this event in the wider area had attracted a good number of visitors who had never visited Market Harborough before and would return as they had enjoyed their visit and the range of shops.

He felt that his role was to "cherish, protect and support local businesses and to re-energise voluntary groups as the people who get involved are the lifeblood of this jewel in the crown of market towns in Leicestershire".

OBITUARY

Frank Dicker Fulford

Adapted from the funeral address by Rev Brian Lewis

It is good to celebrate the life of someone who has lived so long and so well as Dick Fulford, a lovely, charming man, a real gentleman and a delight to be with. It is good, too, that he was able to stay in Harborough to the end, to be looked after so well at St Luke's, and be able to enjoy his last weeks, retaining both his dignity and sense of being loved.

Dick was born in 1917 at Bishopstone, near Salisbury, where his father was a carpenter and his mother a schoolmistress. After primary school Dick went to the Bishop Wordsworth School in Salisbury before joining the Wessex Electricity Company in 1935 as a surveyor. He met Renie, a secretary with the firm, and after becoming engaged on her 21st birthday, they married in 1943.

Dick had volunteered to join the Royal Navy as war began and served as a Chief Petty Officer on HMS Anson and HMS Kent protecting Russian convoys, as well as on shore duty in Plymouth.

After he was demobbed, he and Renie moved back to Wiltshire, where Dick continued to work for what



Dick as so many of us will like to remember him - smiling with a glass of wine in his hand.

With his eldest son Roger, Dick is pictured on his 91st birthday in May, seven weeks before he died.

had become the Southern Electricity Board, until he retired in 1981. They moved to Market Harborough in 1985 to be near their family and really settled into their new life together.

They had many interests and both worked for many years as volunteers in the local Cancer Charity shop as well as being very active in the Royal Naval Association and the Royal British Legion, especially being very much involved for many years with the Poppy Appeal. In addition, Dick became a Vice President of the Harborough Band.

With holidays in France several times a year and continued involvement in the lives of their children and families, Dick and Renie enjoyed a full and satisfying life with 61 years of very happy marriage.

Sadly Renie died in November 2004, but Dick managed to carry on, helped by having daughter Marion living close by.

Marion, a Member of the Branch adds this message.

"Roger, John and I would like to thank all Mum and Dad's friends in the RBL for their support, especially during the last four years.

After 67 years together, Dad found life difficult without Mum, but his ex-service comrades were a lifeline to him. He continued to have his own social life, enjoying the lunches, outings and meetings.

Our thanks to you all!"

A Day Out with the Girls of 750 Squadron



This group of young Wrens under training in October 1956 includes, third from the left, Pat Middleton. The girls are standing in front of a Hunting Percival Sea Prince of 750 Naval Air Squadron at the Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose in Cornwall.

Pat writes, "We were at the end of several months of a Communications Course and the object here was for us to experience the voice communications from the pilot's viewpoint in an aircraft during flight.



We are all kitted up with parachutes, life jackets and sick bags - you can see mine tucked into the front of my life jacket. I don't remember receiving any instructions on the use of the parachute except that the pilot said 'Well girls - if I shout JUMP you must jump straight away, if you hear it a second time it is only an echo!'

We all thought that was hilarious - not realising then it is the oldest flying joke in the book. We were all just eighteen and raring to go!"

Members are invited to send the Editor anecdotes and photographs for reproduction in In Touch.