

# What's Going On?

## The Social & Fund-Raising Team Reports

### DIARY OF EVENTS

The date of the next Branch meeting is  
**October 8th**

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.
14 Nov	ATC Remembrance Charity Ball, MH Rugby Club
15 Nov	Remembrance Concert, Baptist Church MH
25 Nov	Lunch at the Angel, noon for 12.30

**Subscription Time** Tony Johnson reminds members that the 2008/9 subscriptions are due on the 1st of October. If you are unable to attend meetings, cheques or postal orders for £12.50 should be made payable to The Royal British Legion and sent to Tony at 31 Rupert Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9LT. Membership cards will be forwarded by return.

**RBL HQ Speaker** At the October Branch meeting the Speaker will be Kay Callaghan, Head of Internal Communications at RBL HQ. She will talk about her role and hopefully help to demystify that shadowy place, 48 Pall Mall. She will welcome your questions however awkward or critical they may be!

**The Angel Lunch Tuesday, September 30**  
Meet at noon for 12.30 in the Bar

#### Menu Choice

Roast Pork with apple sauce, roast potatoes & vegetables  
Chicken Strips in white wine & mushroom sauce with roast potatoes and vegetables  
Courgette & Mushroom Lasagne, salad & garlic bread  
Sticky Toffee Square with custard  
Fresh Fruit Salad with ice cream  
Lemon Dream with thick cream

**Only £7**

## The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

### Hon. Secretary:

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### Welfare:

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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](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 120

September 2008

**Reserve Your Tickets  
now for the**

**1084 SQUADRON AIR TRAINING CORPS**

**Remembrance**

**Ball**

Grand Charity Auction and Raffle  
A Disco to suit all ages.  
**All proceeds to cancer charities**  
**Friday 14th November 2008**  
**Market Harborough Rugby Club**

**7.30 pm till Late**

**Tickets £17.50**

*To include refreshments*

*Tickets limited - order now on 0116 240 4170*

THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



# Looking for an Optician

*Joan and Tom Ashmore stopped off in Edinburgh on their Round Britain Cruise in August 2008*

The little screw in the frame of Joan's spectacles had come out and was lost. "We must find an optician tomorrow", she said, frustrated at not being able to read that evening's dinner menu.

We board the open-topped, hop-on, hop-off *Majestic City Tours* bus conveniently close to where our cruise ship is moored at Leith Docks (just round the corner from the Royal Yacht Britannia), and see the sights and listen to the commentary as we make our way to Waverley Bridge where we "hop-off".

There must be an optician somewhere on Princes Street. "Upstairs in Boots", a helpful shop assistant tells Joan. We keep an eye open for the well known logo as we continue along the succession of shop-fronts and at one point are struck by a gap in the almost continuous façade, occupied by a narrow-fronted building with steps flanked by two pairs of stone columns leading to the entrance of what once could have been an imposing building before being squeezed by its retail neighbours.



*An imposing entrance in Princes Street.*

centre of his existence; nothing existed in the deathly white silence but that slowly moving hand...

Suddenly, way above him, a thud and a shriek. Justin involuntarily jerked his head up and around, only to see a massive dark shape hurtling down towards him, massive wings seemed to appear from nowhere, and then the thing hit him, knocking all the air from his body, and Justin was thrown backwards, the wings closing around him, wrapping his entire body in their wet and warm embrace. Justin could not even scream as there was no air left in his body. Everything went black.

Twenty minutes later Justin was found by his relief. Justin was laying on his back, staring up into the white fog, he was trembling from head to foot, and absolutely incapable of uttering a single word.

A few minutes later and Justin had been stripped, warmed, sedated and placed in a bed in the medical centre. Nobody could work out what had happened to him. The Captain ordered the bow watch to continue, but now with two men on duty at all times.

The rest of the night passed without incident. It was another two days before the fog finally lifted, and Justin could be helicoptered off the ship, on the first leg of his long journey back to Blichty. He still had not said a word, and he still trembled constantly like a leaf in a strong wind. He could not, or would not open his eyes.

The Junior Rates were spooked, as were the Senior Rates, the Petty Officers and the Officers. How the hell can this happen in this day and age? In a warship of this complexity? How had a Junior Rating been transformed into a gibbering heap after an hour and a half on watch in the fog? The Captain needed answers.

Another day passed, and the Captain finally had his answer. The ships VHF comms were becoming intermittent at best, and a rigger had been sent up the radio tower to check the antennas. At the top of the tower the rigger had found a couple of very bent VHF whips, a broken HF wire, and several large albatross feathers.

It was fairly obvious what had happened. In the fog, a very large and very wet albatross had flown into the antenna tower on the top of the bridge. The force of

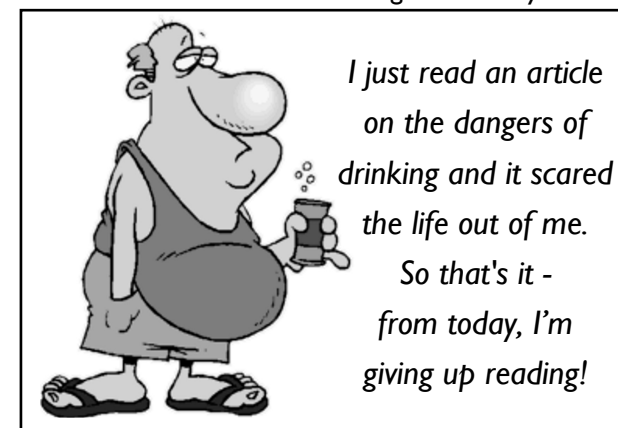
the impact had flung the albatross backwards, it had then somersaulted through the air, and sorted its aerodynamics out just in time to spread its wings and smack into Junior Rate Justin O'Toole, wrap its wings around him, and knock him off his feet. One very p\*\*ed off Albatross had then sorted itself out, and launched itself once more into the skies.

A very relieved Captain Tannoyed the news to the entire crew, and a signal sent off to the medics looking after Junior Rate Justin O'Toole. The news would surely help with his recovery.

The entire crew had a great laugh and, of course, not one of them had ever been in the slightest bit spooked, not at all, not in this day and age. Ships routine returned to normal, but from now on whenever a bow watch needed to be posted in the fog, it was never with less than two men. Both in flak jackets and helmets.

The rigger could have sworn that those albatross feathers had been there the last time he climbed the mast some weeks before, but the Senior Warrant Officer had convinced him that he must surely be mistaken, and swore him to silence - or the rigger could find himself doing the next bow watch alone.....

The Senior Warrant knew there is absolutely no place in the modern Navy for superstition and rumour of this type..... There are no such things as 'Sea Monsters' or 'Creatures in the fog'. Absolutely not.



# Technology and the Beast

Mike Morgan

After several articles about army life, Mike Morgan turns his attention to the Royal Navy.

A modern warship possesses an incredible array of sensor equipment, both passive and active. The ship needs to know what is around it, what the potential air, surface and subsurface threats are – which are the friendly contacts and which un-friendly. As with all modern technology this vast sensor array is entirely computer controlled, and of course, comes at a very steep price, often running into billions of pounds.

It may therefore come as some surprise that the most reliable early warning devices are still the Mark I Eyeball and the Mark I Ear. This is why Able Rating Justin O'Toole

found himself perched right at the bow, (the sharp bit), of HMS Birmingham late one night in a dense fog in the South Atlantic.

Justin was, by trade, a Radar operator, whose normal shipboard locations included his bunk, the galley, the Junior Rates mess and when working, in front of a warm radar screen deep within the bowels of the ship. Justin rarely saw daylight, and even more rarely the sea. Given the normal weather conditions in the South Atlantic this bothered him not at all.

Although a technologist and great believer in the vast array of sensors at his disposal, the Captain of HMS Birmingham decided that a bow watch could only further protect his rank and pension prospects, given the current dense fog, by further ensuring that any chance of an in-fog collision was avoided. Computer controlled sensor arrays were indeed wonderful and

miraculous tools to have at ones disposal. But a single set of human sensor arrays stuck far out in the bow could only add to the overall safety of the ship, and, of course, the safety of the Captain's career prospects.

The Captain's orders had percolated down through the chain of command and a roster drawn up by the Chief Petty Officer. And so it was that Able Rating Justin O'Toole found himself cold, wet and very alone at the pointy end of HMS Birmingham at 0230 hrs on this cold wet and very foggy morning. Just nineteen years old, and this his first sea tour.

The Leading Rates had been winding up the Junior Rates for several hours, with stories of Bow Watch

men mysteriously disappearing, or being relieved on watch only to be found in a cata-tonic state, unable to speak – and no explanation ever found. What had the bow watch seen? Why had some disappeared? Had they jumped?

Were they pushed? Justin had laughed along with the other juniors – utter rubbish,, no way would he ever be spooked by these idiots. Not in this day and age.

But Justin was spooked. Justin found himself in an alien world. The fog impenetrable, swirling white and twisting grey shapes all around. The movement of the ship, up and down, was greatly magnified by his position at the most forward position of the ship. The white spray gentle, but persistent and soaking. Trapped in a little white and wet world all of his own, Justin missed the warmth of the mess, the galley, and his radar screen. He kept looking at his watch, every minute of his two hour stint passed with an unbelievable slowness. Slowly up and down, up and down, more spray, more swirling white shapes in the silence. Had to check his watch again, had to concentrate on the second hand to convince himself that time was passing. The white watch face became the



(Picture - The Wreck Site)

When we read what is over the door, we find ourselves transported back half a century to Priory Road, Ascot, in 1954. Joan is reading about an international organisation whose members offer hospitality to visitors from other countries. "We should join this", she said, "although we may never benefit from others' hospitality, if we had people from other parts of the world staying with us, it would be good experience for the children (then aged six and four)."

Meanwhile, back in Princes Street. "We joined the Overseas League fifty-four years ago", we tell the receptionist. "You must be Life Members", she says. Does she think that we have belonged to the League ever since then, or is she being hospitable to these two old tourists as she asks, "Would you like to have lunch upstairs?". Remembering the need to repair Joan's specs, we thanked her and said we would return "a bit later".

The "bit later" sees us in a fairly small but very pleasant bar whose windows look out over Princes Street Gardens and up the slope to the Castle. All the tables are occupied but one couple invite us to share theirs. Clearly, bone fide, fully paid-up members of the Royal Overseas League, they are making use of its club-like facilities whilst back in the UK on a visit from Thailand, where they now live and work. We took the opportunity to relate how, all those years ago, our membership led to giving hospitality to four Malayan officer cadets at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst (only a few miles from Ascot). We tell them how having those four young men from Malaya eventually led to our hospitality being returned so overwhelmingly.

But that, as they say, is another story (in fact many stories!).

**The Royal Over-Seas League** is a self-funded, non-profit Commonwealth organisation which offers clubhouse facilities to members, organises Commonwealth art and music competitions and supports the Commonwealth through its own social, music, arts and welfare activities. It was founded in 1910 by Sir Evelyn Wrench to foster international understanding and friendship. Today there are over 20,000 members worldwide

# Dad's Army in the Langtons - 1941/ 42



Left to right - Standing : C. Buxton, B. Dilworth, B. Clawson, G Rowe, S. Ward, H. Burrows, C. Cox, M. Taylor, W. Cockerill, Townsend, W. Humphreys.  
 Seated : B Snutch, R Styles, T. Thompson, Jeffries (Capt.) B. Peach, C. Taylor, P. Ward.

The names shown are correct, but I am not sure if they are in the right order, so I should appreciate any amendments. - Editor

## The Sailor who Refused to go to Sea

Alan Hartley's story last month about Billy the Squadron Pup reminded Tom Ashmore of another doggy story. The following piece by Bill Cotton appeared in In Touch in 1998.

In 1940/41 there was a sailor who flatly refused to go to sea. All efforts to lure him to sail with a ship were in vain. His name was Able Seaman Nuisance, a Great Dane (dog type). He would travel between Capetown and Simonstown by train several times a day greeting all sailors on the train. He was not interested in anybody else, just sailors. At night he would "kip" in his own bed in the Sailors Rest in Capetown.

The Navy paid for his keep as he had been enlisted in the RN. Anyone who had called at Capetown at this



Finding enough material to fill In Touch every month isn't always easy.

So I appeal to you for help. Please let me have your photographs and anecdotes - such as the piece by Bill Cotton.

If you think your story will not be of interest to others, you'll be surprised to know it quite probably will!

I realise most of us are not brilliant writers, but don't let that deter you. Just give me the gist of the story, and I'll try and do the rest.

Many thanks, your Editor.

time of the War will remember Nuisance for the great friend and protector of Navy men that he was.



A somewhat sexist message on a plaque spotted by Pat Walker whilst on holiday on the Channel Island of Sark

A young ventriloquist was touring the clubs in the north and one night, with his dummy on his knee, he began his act with the usual quota of dumb blonde jokes. (*Apologies to fair-haired Lady Members.*)

## Just a Bit of Fun

Suddenly, a blonde woman stood up and started shouting. "I've heard enough of your stupid blonde jokes. What makes you think you can stereotype women that way?"

"What does the colour of a person's hair have to do with her worth as a human being? It's people like you who keep women like me from being respected at work and in the community, and from reaching our full potential as persons.

"You and your kind continue to perpetuate discrimination against not only blondes, but women in general - and all in the name of humour!"

The embarrassed ventriloquist began to apologize, and the blonde stopped him saying, "You stay out of this, Mister, I'm talking to that little runt on your knee!"