

# What's Going On?

## DIARY OF EVENTS

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.

17 Feb Branch Coffee Morning.  
23 Mar Branch 84<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner M H Golf Club.  
For details of the Royal Naval Association activities, please call Mike Middleton on MH 445827.

### It's Coffee Time Again

The next Coffee Morning is almost here (17 February) and your help is urgently requested! We usually rely upon a few loyal volunteers at these twice-yearly events at the Harborough Theatre and it would be most encouraging to see some fresh faces. The Army and ATC cadets will be assisting as always.

There is a need for prizes for the tombola and raffle, and items for the bric-a-brac stall, so your contributions will be most welcome.

Please contact us to enquire if there is anything that you can do to help.

### The Monthly Branch Lunch

Members often call to enquire about the date of the next lunch. Please make a note that this enjoyable gathering is always at noon for 12.30 pm on the last Tuesday of the month.

The next occasion at The Angel is on 30 January, so if you haven't joined us before, why not give it a try? **Please book your place no later than 23 January.**

The menu choice for the two-course meal is:

Roast of the day,  
Beef casserole topped with herb scone,  
Mediterranean vegetable crepe & cheese sauce,  
All with potatoes and vegetables.  
Apple crumble and custard,  
Fresh fruit salad and ice cream,  
Vanilla cheesecake topped with berry compote.  
Coffee and mints.

All for a very reasonable £7.

## The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

[www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net](http://www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net)

### Branch Contact Numbers

**Hon. Secretary:** Betty Ramsay - 01858 434923

**Welfare:** Vida Edwards - 0116 279 3729

**Poppy Appeal:** Douggie McMeeken - 01858 463203

**Social & Fund Raising Team:** Glenys Hocking-Davies,  
01858 467835 and Pat Middleton, 01858 445827

The date of the next Branch meeting is

## February 14

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

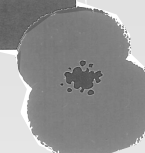
## In Touch

Issue 100

January 2007

Happy New Year  
and welcome  
to our  
One Hundredth  
Edition

THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



### Have you got the wrong coat?

If you find that the grey coat you wore home after the branch meeting on Wednesday is not yours, it probably belongs to Sid Amos, who would very much like to hear from you and may be contacted on 01858 464615.

### And The Money Rolled In

Revised figures for money raised are:

November Coffee Morning - £318.48

Remembrance Concert - £300.

We are grateful to the Baptist Church for allowing free use for the concert and rehearsal and for the provision of refreshments following the performance.

### The Christmas Quiz Answers

#### Catchphrases and Advertising Slogans

- 1 "Hello Darling" was the catchphrase of Ed Stewart.
- 2 "I've started, so I'll finish", said Magnus Magnusson.
- 3 Vodka martini was 'shaken, not stirred' for James Bond.
- 4 "She knows, you know", said Hylda Baker.
- 5 Alf Garnett call his wife "Silly Moo".
- 6 Barney was told to give the money by Wilfred Pickles.
- 7 "George, don't do that", said Joyce Grenfell.
- 8 Uncle Mac's sign-off "Goodnight Children, everywhere."
- 9 Anthea gave a twirl for Bruce Forsyth.
- 10 Rob Wilton's opening line was "The day war broke out."
- 11 The L'Oreal slogan is "Because I'm - or you're - worth it."
- 12 "Don't forget the Fruit Gums, Mum".
- 13 Murraymints were too good to hurry.
- 14 You were never alone with Strand Cigarettes.
- 15 Cream was 'naughty, but nice'.
- 16 'Melts in your mouth ... 'and not in your hand.'
- 17 We were told to "Tell Sid" about British Gas.
- 18 Drink a Pint of Milk Day to consume more.
- 19 The future's bright, the future's Orange.
- 20 A Mars Bar helps you work, rest and play.

*Continued from page 5*

So the dour struggle continued, with many shining examples of strained rearward actions, especially in the CAEN area, but thanks to the "Back-room boys" at the War Office and their excellent forward planning down to the minutest detail, within 3 months the Normandy Campaign was finally polished off.

During the month the unit spent there Frank's entries included,

"Not much sleep last night. A lot of rats in our hut. We also have beetles four inches long." We are now under East African Command. One good thing about this - we might get some decent kit. Have made our own shorts out of old French pants." " Pay day - 280 francs.

Celebrated at canteen. Cup of grapefruit and 3 bars of chocolate." ... "Browned off. Still blowing like hell. Flies very persistent. No Gigs, no choc, no beer, no ink. This (what he was writing with) is made from stuff out of flares."

British Forces had started the invasion of Madagascar on 5th May 1942, (only three weeks before Frank's party arrived) having secured Diego Saurez, the important port at the north of the island, after the surrender of the Vichy French garrison there. It is not surprising that accommodation standards were not those of the RAF stations where Frank had served in Britain.

Things must have improved at the camp where the unit spent the next nine weeks, judging by entries like, "Godsend - got hold of some newspapers and 15 eggs, two tins of Jap salmon and sardines." ... "New pair of shorts and socks today. Not bad, but what about our mail? Got four tins of Nestles milk - 30 francs." ... "Fried egg and tomatoes for supper" ... "Manna from heaven. We are having pork for dinner. Am sick of bully beef"

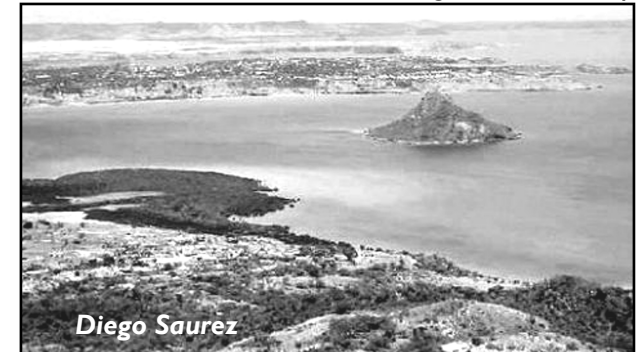
During the last two weeks of August there were signs of impending moves and action

"Kit inspection today. Rifles to be cleaned."... "I think we are to invade the south of Madagascar"..."Issued with puttees and 50 rounds ammo" ... "Lots of ships in harbour getting ready for invasion of south"

On 6<sup>th</sup> September the diary records, "100 of RAF personnel embark on Llandaff Castle. 30 including myself stay here with officers and kites" (which five days later) "take off heading south. Don't suppose we shall be long now." The diary does not make it clear when or how the 34 left or what they

were doing, but for Frank the highlight of that time seems to have been when,

"Aircraft Carrier Illustrious with three cruisers and four destroyers arrived....We have been invited on board Illustrious for supper and cinema show. Had a grand feed....went and see the planes, about 60 of them and then walked the whole length of the deck by



light of moon and stars. Got soaking wet going to the carrier from the Cap but it was worth it."

Spasmodic entries in the diary in early October suggest that Frank's party is following the invasion forces moving south,

"Have got behind with my diary - haven't had much time. We keep moving", "Have been told to pack ready for moving again further south. ... 48 hours rations, "Embark on Eastern Prince ". .... "Dock at Zamata(?) Lovely beach and swimming pool". ... "Arrive capital 10.30 pm ....Get to Drome 11.15pm ....about 9 miles from capital (Tananarivo) .... "Arrive Camp Rob-in 250 miles south of capital".

Then on 9th November, "Fighting over in Madagascar. Waiting for trucks to take us and tons of bombs and ammo back to capital.

Five months later we read, "I am going to East Africa in the Sunderland flying boat on 20th April".

On the diary page where Frank recorded the places where he had stayed, he has written "Mombasa, Thomsons Falls, Nairobi. 14days."

*There is nothing to tell us what happened after this period of leave.*

## Madagascar with the RAF

*Before the War Madagascar was a French protectorate and after France capitulated, it came under the control of the Vichy government.*

*Separated from the east coast of Africa by the only 250 miles wide Mozambique Channel it was seen by the Allies as a potential threat to wartime supplies to East Africa and the Middle East and as a possible base for Japanese submarine attacks in the Indian Ocean.*

*It was against this background that on 15th April 1942, Aircraftsman Frank Bent wrote in the pocket diary found with his effects after his death in 2005.*

"Left Liverpool 12 o'clock mid day (on the Cape Town Castle). 130 of us in very small space. Am sleeping 3rd bunk up 12" from roof'.

Frank was obviously not a good sailor as his diary entries show,

"Going round top of Ireland. I feel terrible, it must be sea-sickness.".... "Sea rough, having a job to keep on my feet. Tummy bad. Bought tin of Andrews. Now I'm broke"



After two weeks of this and severe home-sickness,

"I wish Poppy was with me." "Thinking of Poppy and home", he wrote,

"Enter Freetown harbour 11 o'clock. All big hills with green trees and sand. Very beautiful."

Being confined to the ship for three days brought back his earlier mood,

"Still in Freetown harbour. Shall be glad to get moving. Had to queue one hour for tea. Getting very browned off - wish I could get back home."

Clearly Frank was not enjoying his cruise on the Cape Town Castle.

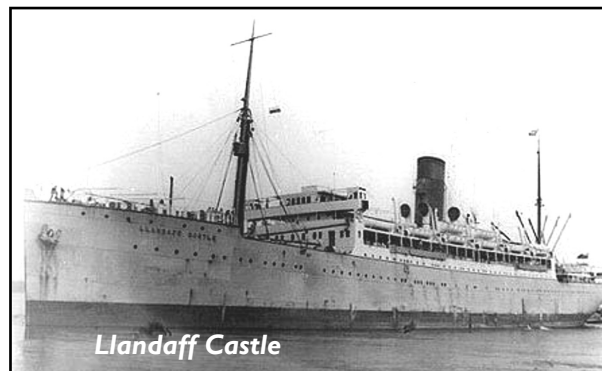
"Nothing to see but water and more water....Same thing day after day. Breakfast 8 o'clock, boat stations 10.30, dinner 1 o'clock, tea 6 o'clock." " Passed Cape Town during night, going straight to Durban..... Lost two ships out of convoy."

Things improved a bit on 18th May, but the diary says nothing about the relief of not being at sea. "Durban harbour 5.30 am. Disembark 11 o'clock. Train to rest camp 10 miles from Durban. Tents. Plenty of ants. Nice cup of tea."

After six days on land,

"Embark on Llandaff Castle, a lot smaller ship but more room for us this time. Sleeping in hammocks. Getting decent food but bread is queer."

On board, the C.O. confirmed the rumours that, "Our little band of 130 will be the first RAF in Madagascar. C.O. don't know what reception we will get."



Llandaff Castle

Then on 30th May, Frank wrote, "Enter Diego Saurez harbour 8 o'clock last night. Troops start to disembark 9 o'clock the morning. Invasion barges. We stay on board in middle of harbour. Hell of a night. Ship 50 yards from us sunk by submarine. Battleship has big list. Five ships now in harbour half submerged. Shaln't be sorry to get off this ship. Too much explosive on board."

Frank spent another week on board helping to unload the unit's Lysander aircraft until the RAF contingent moved to a camp 6 miles from the town.



## You are never too old to enjoy St Valentine's Day

Vigilant members of the branch will have noticed that the next meeting is on 14th February, which is, of course, the well-known Saint's Day.

When this date was made known at the January Branch meeting, an unofficial sub-committee was hastily formed to consider what could be done to mark this auspicious occasion.

As a result of their deliberations, it was decided that Members planning to attend the February meeting be requested to wear distinctive additions to their normal attire in the following manner:

**Ladies are to enhance their natural beauty with a floral buttonhole, natural or artificial.**

**Gentlemen are to forego their Legion neckwear and sport a bow tie, the more colourful and gaudy, the better.**

It is hoped that Members will enter into the spirit of the occasion and brighten up a dreary winter's evening.

The Editor's camera will be primed to record the joyous proceedings.

Any comments regarding the above should be addressed to the ad hoc committee and certainly not to your entirely blameless Editor. The guilty parties are Pat and John Walker and John Cox.



"Rare and precious are the gems of lives of those who live quietly, yet who radiate a goodness that has a profound effect on those they come into contact with. Today we are mourning the loss, and celebrating the life, of one such gem."

These words of the Revd. Cook were spoken at the funeral of Branch Member, Jim Osborne, who died on Christmas Day, aged 69.

Jim was born in Harborough, the eldest of four children. His mother had worked at Symingtons corset factory, and his father was a printer. After attending Little Bowden Primary, Jim went on to the Grammar School. His first job was as a clerk at Leicester British Rail Station. In 1955 he enlisted into the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment and served as a clerk in England, Cyprus and Egypt. His discharge book pointed out that Jim was "Quiet in his manner, with a mature and sensible outlook, and a dry sense of humour - and he represented the Battalion at soccer". This talent for football is a little known fact about Jim who, when a teenager, was approached by a Coventry City talent scout for a trial, but his mother vetoed the idea.

On leaving the army Jim rejoined British Rail, this time as a clerk at Kibworth Station. Before long, he caught the attention of an attractive young lady who happened to commute daily between Market

## JIM OSBORNE

1937 - 2006



*Jim and Wendy in the Garden of Remembrance, November 2005*

Harborough and Leicester, and would lean out of the window at Kibworth in the hope of getting a glimpse of the shy man behind the counter. After a long courtship Jim and Wendy were married in 1970 and their son Richard was born in 1980.

Jim left British Rail and joined fork-lift truck maker Spencers, where he played football and cricket in the company teams. After the firm folded in 1996 he joined HMP Gartree, working in the Education and Probation Departments. He retired in 2002, having worn out two bicycles commuting from home to the prison! Jim was also a Pools Collector on the Southern Estate and would cycle out at the same time each week regardless of the weather because it was important to him not to inconvenience his customers. He also collected for the Poppy Appeal when he became involved in the British Legion and regularly supported Branch events.

Jim was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2004, and the family fought a steady but resolute battle with the deterioration in his health.

The Revd. Cook closed by quoting from a card sent to Wendy by one of the Church's Crusaders' Leaders: "My memories of Jim will always be of a true gentleman who quietly and willingly got on with whatever needed to be done and for whom we all had a great respect!"

## Well Prepared

### KENNETH WEST

*This story was submitted to the BBC People's War site by Market Harborough Branch, Royal British Legion.*

For over a year we had been preparing for the "Second Front". Trained to the Nth degree and superbly fit, the time had now come. Tomorrow we embark and then "Ramps down" - in we go!!! But first there were items of personal kit to be issued. The army with its meticulous attention to detail would ensure that we would be well provided for.

New assault type Gas-masks, special wound dress-

ings, foot powder, water sterilization tablets, small 3 legged "Tommy Cooker" and solid fuel tablets, tin of tea/sugar/milk powder, packet army biscuits (hard tack), 1 emergency ration (tin of concentrated chocolate), tin 50 cigs, book matches and 1 pick or shovel were also issued.

We were required to fill in the page marked WILL in our AB 64 and paybooks then to be handed in. On their return we found that 1/- had been deducted for "Blankets, soldiers for the use of, 1". When the CQMS was asked why we should pay for an army blanket, he replied - "That is now your personal property, to keep you warm when you're alive and to bury you in if you

die - any further questions?" - there were no further questions.

Whilst in Normandy, our daily needs were catered for by the 14 man packs, usually brought to us at night. Carefully shared out, we each received 1 tin Meat and veg, 1/7 of a tinned pudding, 6" rasher bacon, cube of porridge, pkt hard tack, tablesp. Tea/sugar/milk, 7 boiled sweets, 1 bar Bournville chocolate, 7 cigs, 1 book matches and 3 sheets of khaki IZAL toilet paper. Whilst the edible contents provided a well balanced diet, the 3 sheets of "Army Form Blank" did cause us some concern.

*Concluded on page 1*