

# What's Going On?

The Social & Fund-Raising Team Reports

## 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.

- 15 Jan Branch Late Christmas Lunch - details on page 2
- 1 Mar Branch Coffee Morning Harborough Theatre
- 7 Mar RNA Scran Hot Lunch
- 21 Mar Branch 85th Anniversary Dinner

For details of RNA events please call  
Mike Middleton on MH 445827.

## An Important Appointment

It is with some delight, and no little relief, that we report the appointment of a Branch Secretary. This is an essential post as, if vacant, the Branch would cease to exist, a fact which goes quite some way to explain the relief!

Thanks to the efforts of Con Halsall, we are delighted to have the services of Sara Whitley-Kinzett, whom we also welcome as a Member of the RBL.

Our Secretary for the past ten years, Betty Ramsay, has generously offered every assistance to Sara to ease her way into the position. (Incidentally, they were school friends!)

(A tribute to Betty, who served the Branch so well, will appear shortly.)

I made myself a snowball,  
As perfect as could be,  
I thought I'd keep it as a pet,  
And let it sleep with me.  
I made it some pajamas,  
And a pillow for its head,  
Then last night it ran away  
But first-- it wet the bed.



## The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

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

**Hon. Secretary:** Sara Whitley-Kinzett 01858 434476

**Welfare:** Vida Edwards 0116 279 3729

**Poppy Appeal:** Caroline Windsor 01858 463660

**Social & Fund Raising Team:**

Wendy Osborne 01858 467636

Les Moore 01858 463112

The date of the next Branch meeting is

## January 9

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 111

December 2007



The Officers and  
Committee wish

Members a

Merry Christmas

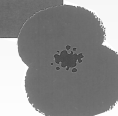
with Happiness

and Good Health

in 2008



THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



**Poppy** A Report by  
LEGIION **Appeal** CAROLINE WINDSOR  
**2007/8** Appeal Organiser

The Market Harborough District for the purposes of the Poppy Appeal covers an area of approximately 45 square miles. To collect satisfactorily within such a huge area requires the support of a large team with individuals being responsible for particular areas or duties.

These helpers do a great deal behind the scenes and facilitate the smooth running of the Appeal. They include John Liddell (The Langtons, Foxton and Lubbenham also i/c wreaths), Maurice Santon (Medboume area), John Cook (Great Easton), David French (house to house), Mark Hudson, Tom Ashmore et al (Market Stall and street collections), Francis and John Swannack (town centre and northern area), John Cox and Wendy Osbourne (town centre and southern area), Bob England and Tom Ashmore (town centre and the eastern area). The Poppy Appeal officers co-ordinate the Appeal and do the banking. Ann Burgess, who counts the money, did so again this year in spite of her recent and very sad bereavement.

**Branch  
News  
Round-up**

As a rule, Annual General Meetings are not considered to be crowd-pullers, so it is with some pleasure that we report the interest shown by our Members, who turned out in considerable force last month. For a Branch with around 140 Members, it must be something of a record for no less than 57 of them to turn out on a chilly winter's evening with only a buffet, good as it was, to attract them.

The formal AGM business was conducted and the Officers and Committee Members for 2007/8 were appointed and elected, as follows:

bags went unexpectedly missing that night. The local police were around at our base the next morning. The Chief Inspector went through the motions. "Americans seem to have lost a few bags. Don't suppose you chaps know anything about it? No? Well, I'll just note that for the record." He closed his notebook and was taken off for a gin and tonic in the Officers' Mess. Over a drink it was soon clear that the affair held little mystery for him but he was a man who knew real priorities when he saw them.

The mission, originally planned for the next day, was delayed for 24 hours by the Germans which gave us a little extra time to do the packing. The flight to Rotterdam was made at 1000 feet, the ceiling being lower than forecast. Ten minutes from the city we had to come down even lower and we found ourselves surrounded by dozens of planes, all headed towards the same objective. In the crowd some delicate adjustments to motors 1 and 4 had to be made and the Rolls Royce Merlins didn't like being messed about with and not a few props had to be feathered.

Later, back at Stradishall, the mechanics were most put out at the treatment we had been giving them. They had to work all night to get them back into operation for the next day. Some of the pilots weren't very happy either - several planes came back with bullet holes in them in spite of the promised ceasefire. They were only bullet holes though, there was no ack-ack.

The scene on Rotterdam racecourse, the designated dropping zone, was extraordinary. Hundreds of planes were packed into the approach and you could see people scurrying about grabbing supplies while more was still dropping - this in spite of strict instructions to the contrary by the Dutch police. We learned later that several of these queue-jumpers were killed by falling sacks.

After the drop we flew over the city at 300 feet where the four-storey buildings and flat roofs were covered with orange flags and thousands of cheering people. Infected with their obvious enthusiasm we



## A Poem for Christmas

By Jan Boddy

*Christmas would never be Christmas  
Without a remembrance of you  
And so with kind thoughts and good wishes  
I'm sending this message anew  
May you be happy and may you be blest  
Now and forever with all that is best.*

dropped to 200 feet along the wide avenues and really gave them something to look at.

There were another three or four operations of like nature between then and the end of the war, at Rotterdam again and also The Hague.

Although what we could do was obviously very little in the face of so much need, the Dutch were very grateful and in 1970, I was invited to London with other RAF officers who had participated in Operation Manna by the Dutch ambassador to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the event, (I had left the RAF in 1962 after 20 years service and was settled in Paris).

During the speeches at the embassy we learned that in Holland, in 1945, 1000 people a day were dying of starvation. Each officer received a decoration and a print of the one and only photograph taken of the operation from the ground that day.

I have since had the opportunity to learn much more of the terrible hardship endured by the people of that brave country during the long years of occupation and it is a source of great satisfaction to have participated a little in this effort to relieve their distress.

*Were you involved in Operation Manna in any way?  
If so, I should like to include your story in In Touch.  
Please contact me - the details are on the cover.*

The Editor

## ***Around the World with the Royal British Legion***



### **OPERATION MANNA**

*Kenneth E. Davey remembers a little-known operation at the end of the war.*

(From the Paris Branch)

On the 26 April 1945 nobody knew that the war was to end 15 days later. RAF Squadron 186, based at Stradishall near Cambridge was given the task of dropping food to the Dutch who were dying of hunger. The Germans must have been aware that the end was near and had, through the Red Cross, agreed to allow planes to drop food in a "window" of one hour on 28 April.

The Air Ministry had calculated that 350 Lancasters could participate which meant they would pass at the rate of six per minute - weather permitting! We discussed at length the best way to go about it - drop from what height and how to pack the goods - spam, corned beef, potatoes, flour, dried vegetables etc. There was, of course, no question of parachutes and we didn't even have enough bags to put the stuff in.

On the 27th we carried out tests with 25Kg bags dropped from 1000 feet. The sacks burst, the potatoes arrived mashed, the flour bags exploded like smoke bombs and the tougher items were distributed all over the landscape. Subsequent tests at 900, 800, then 600 feet made little difference. At 500 feet, however, which for a Lancaster was skimming the treetops the potatoes landed unmashed and if we put them in two sacks, one inside the other, only the interior sack burst. The problem was partly solved by the armourers who adapted incendiary bomb containers which could carry 1250 lbs. of supplies in the bomb bays but much more could be carried if sacks were also loaded into the fuselage to be heaved out of

the door by the crew members. Where on earth, however, could we get thousands of sacks at 24 hours' notice? After some thought the Group Captain pointed out that the only place likely to be oversupplied in sacks, as for so much else, was likely to be the nearby US base.

An approach was duly made and the US Colonel was sympathetic and admitted to having in fact, vast quantities of sacks which he would be delighted to hand over - as soon as he had authority.

Such an unusual request would probably have to go to the Pentagon in an infinite series of small steps before being agreed to and the chances of getting it in 24 hours - zero. There was a silence, then, "Of course", the Colonel added, "Petty theft is a big problem and there aren't enough MPs to guard everything. Especially when the hangar isn't locked and the MPs are all on the other side of the base as they will be this evening. I don't suppose anything would be noticed until at least 20 minutes after the last sack left."

A nod is as good as a wink, hands were shaken and there followed a very busy evening. 1500 heavy sand-



*Dutch girls wave their appreciation as a Lancaster drops more 'manna from heaven' in the humanitarian operation in 1945*

Many thanks go to all who helped with the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Week. It was gratifying to see some new names on the street sellers' rota, however the lion's share was done by our long-standing supporters. I hope to have a social event next Spring at which certificates for long service will be presented and all the helpers will be thanked for their good work.

This has been a very successful year so far. Already we have collected over £20,000. House to house collections were 5.6% more than in 2006, similarly static point collections were 9.3% better and street collections increased by 13.2%. The general perception was that recent publicity given to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts had influenced the donors.

Hopefully by now all the collectors will have received a 'thank you' postcard informing them of the amounts they collected in their money boxes. Their fortitude in braving the elements for hours on end is really appreciated as it is essential to our success.

This year the R.B.L., is hoping to extend its welfare work with the money raised. As the Appeal runs until May 2008, we should try to continue to contribute whenever possible.

For now may I say: 'Well done and thank you.'

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President	Brian Marshall
Vice President	Con Halsall
Chairman	Mark Hudson
Vice Chairman	George Fleming
Hon. Secretary	Sara Whitley-Kinzett
Hon. Treasurer	Tony Johnson
Welfare Secretary	Vida Edwards
Poppy Appeal Organiser	Caroline Windsor
Membership Secretary	Tony Johnson
Branch Standard Bearer	George Fleming
Your Committee Members:	

Tom Ashmore, Fred Brown, John Cox,  
Les Moore, Pat Walker.

**More Branch News on page 3**

Branch  
News  
Round-up

**Poppy Appeal Extra** The collection at the Leicester City football match was slightly up on last year and £4,177.90 was shared between participating branches. Betty Ramsay and friends collected £175 in the Shires on Saturday (10th) morning towards our Branch total. During the past few weeks, Mark Hudson has disposed of 105 metal poppy lapel badges, raising a total of £215, of which £95 will go to the Poppy Appeal.

**Social Team Changes** Pat Middleton regrets she will be unable to continue as a member of the team during the coming year due to personal commitments. Fortunately we can welcome Les Moore to the team.

**L I N E R S**  
I told my girl I had a job in a bowling alley. She said "Ten pin?" I said, "No, permanent." I went into a shop and I said, "Can someone sell me a kettle." The bloke said "Kenwood" I said, "Good, where is he then?"

*A True Story*

## The Ghostly Car Journey

**J**ohn, a student stood at the roadside hitchhiking on a dark night in the midst of a storm. The night was rolling on and no car went by. The storm was so strong he could hardly see a few feet ahead of him. Suddenly, he saw a car slowly coming towards him and stopped.

John, desperate for shelter and without thinking about it, got into the car and closed the door only to realise there was nobody behind the wheel and the engine wasn't running.

The car began moving slowly. John looked at the road ahead and saw a curve approaching. Scared, he started to pray, begging for his life. Then, just before the car hit the curve, a hand appeared out of nowhere through the window and turned the wheel.

John, paralysed with terror, watched as the hand came through the window, but it never touched or harmed him.

## The Boys - and Girl - of Harborough's Old Brigade



*Some familiar faces feature in this photograph, kindly sent by David French, of a section of this year's Remembrance Parade in Market Harborough.*



Shortly thereafter John saw the lights of a pub appear down the road, so, gathering strength, he jumped out of the car and ran to it. Wet and breathless, he rushed in and started telling everybody about his horrible experience. A silence enveloped the pub as it was realised he was crying and not drunk.

Suddenly, the door opened, and two other men walked in from the stormy night. Looking around, and seeing John sobbing at the bar, one said, "Look Paddy, there's that idiot who got in the car while we were pushing it!"



**A Generous Goodwill Gesture** Ladies of the St Luke's Church WeghtCare section presented Brian Marshall and Pat Middleton (second left) with five magnificent Christmas hampers. One was raffled at the December Branch meeting and raised over £70 for the Poppy Appeal, and the others will be used for welfare purposes. Mark Hudson thanked guests from the church who attended the meeting for choosing us as this years recipients of their annual charity donation.

## Without Moving His Lips

**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.*)

Suddenly, a blonde woman stood on her seat 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!"