

**Royal British Legion
Leicestershire and Rutland**

THE COUNTY PLAN 2006 - 2007

The Legion's mission is to be the leading Charity safeguarding the welfare interests of all those that have served in the Armed Forces and their dependants. Our plans are to be aligned with the National objectives laid down in the 'Corporate Plan'

1. to define and deliver a caring and sympathetic response to changing welfare needs.
2. to increase the level of support among our membership and volunteers
3. to increase if possible our 'Poppy Appeal'
4. to strengthen our county structure (Executive) and in so doing offer strong and clear leadership to our Branch officials and members.
5. to build a strong relationship with other service related Charities and Ex-Service Associations.
6. to recruit and retain a strong and active membership.
7. to create and expand public awareness of legion work and the care of the ex-service.
8. to offer training to those that hold specific responsibilities and make these opportunities available to all interested in furthering their knowledge of the Legion's work.



**The Poppy Appeal
2005/2006**

**Dougie McMeeken, Appeal Organiser
01858 463203**

As the current Appeal year draws to a close, the total stands at around £20,799. Because last year's figure has been exceeded, no donation from the Branch will be requested.

House-to-house collections for the next Appeal will commence on 28 October and street collections from 4 November.



The Diary

**SOME DATES TO
KEEP FREE**

For more information, please see *What's Going On* - page 2.

- 30 May **BOOK NOW** - page 2 Branch Lunch - The Fox, Hallaton
10 Jun Harborough Carnival - the Branch will be there
24 Jun RNA Wine & Cheese Evening - 36 Lubenham Hill MH
27 Jun National Veterans' Day Lunch, The Angel MH
19 Aug RNA Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre 9am
28 Oct M H Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre 9am
4 Nov Festival of Remembrance - de Montfort Hall
9 Dec RNA Christmas Dance Conservative Club 8pm - £6

For details of the Royal Naval Association events, please call Mike Middleton on MH 445827.

If you would like to attend an event but have no transport, please telephone Vida or Betty (see front cover) and every effort will be made to help you.

**The date of the
next meeting is
June 14th**

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs 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.



**The
Royal
British
Legion**

Market Harborough Branch

Reg. Charity 219279

www.mktharborbl.ukvet.net

In Touch

Issue 92

May 2006

In Touch on-line
www.in-touch.ukvet.net

Editor

George Seward : 01858 433873
18 Charles Street,
Market Harborough, LE16 9AB
e-mail : g.seward@btinternet.com

**Branch Contact Numbers
Welfare**

Vida Edwards : 0116 279 3729
Hon. Secretary
Betty Ramsay: 01858 434923



What the Papers Said in 1940

PREPARATIONS FOR SLAUGHTER ON THE MAGINOT LINE

Yesterday I tried to describe the queer, confused night fighting which goes on nowadays round our outposts in front of the Maginot Line. It seems all the queerer in its setting of country almost unspoilt by war.

The woods are in the full glory of the new leaf, except where it has been stripped away in places by bursts of shrapnel. The fields, across which the attackers move stealthily at night, are seen by day to be brilliant with cowslips and dandelions, and in "no-man's-land" there are apple trees in blossom in the orchards of deserted villages.

Behind the front line, the countryside shows even fewer signs of war. The local villagers were evacuated long ago, and British soldiers in rest and off duty wander, through streets unharmed but deserted.

One of my colleagues was walking through such a village the other day when he heard the sound of organ music coming from the church. He went in and found two British privates taking turns at the organ, one blowing while the other played for 10 minutes, strictly timed.

They were transport drivers from Northumberland, off duty for an hour or two and busy satisfying the good North Country craving for music. In another deserted church, British and French soldiers have attended together services conducted by a priest in the uniform of a French private.

There are plenty of French troops about, since our force in the Maginot Line is an integral part of a larger French formation. Such posts, held by mixed troops of both countries under a single command, are used on each of our flanks to weld up smoothly and firmly to the French forces on either side and to avoid leaving a weak spot.

I do not know whether we have yet used in these combined posts the British unit which appears to be more suitable than any other - the Hampshire Regiment, which draws heavily on the Channel Islands and has plenty of French names.

(Continued at foot of page 2)

For our first overseas trip, we visit the Royal British Legion Bordeaux Branch.

This is how they introduce themselves on their website. It is written by their Chairman, Richard Holworthy.

Keeping archives is one of the difficulties for an organisation like ours which has never had its own premises. An added difficulty was the sale of St Nicholas Church some twenty years ago, which was the one place where some of our records had found refuge.

According to the documents in my possession, our Branch existed in 1935; it may well have existed before then but I have no proof of this. It was re-born in 1946, the AGM being held at the Café Richelieu in Bordeaux on the 17th October.

The members and the activities for the next 18 years were essentially centred in Bordeaux. Apart from attending the usual Remembrance ceremonies, both French and British, there was one outstanding event for that period. The names of the British Bordeaux residents lost during the 1939/1945 war were engraved on the Cenotaph that stood at the door of St Nicholas Church.

After the sale of the Church, the Cenotaph was transferred to the Allied Military Cemetery in Talence. J.M Clark was in the Chair for the last Committee Meeting appearing in the Minutes Book held at the Café Richelieu on the 22nd October 1964.

After this date there were no further meetings due to lack of support, but for the next sixteen years, thanks to J.M. (Jim) Clark, parades were held each year at Talence and St Nicholas Church for the annual Remembrance Service.

When Jim Clark was about to leave Bordeaux, Tom Payne took over as Chairman and gradually succeeded in building up the Branch until failing health compelled him to relinquish his position and Jack Douay took over and held the post with distinction for the next 20 years. By this time we were in the early 1980s and the trend which had become apparent in the '70s, namely a decrease in the number of British residents in the area and their increase in Dordogne, Lot et Garonne and other rural areas.

This led to developing ways of communication in order to keep in touch with Members by means of several Newsletters each year, choosing somewhere



Our annual parade and service took place at the Allied Cemetery, Talence on an overcast morning. The service was taken by the Rev Michael Selman and was attended by HM Consul General, Tom Kennedy, the US Consul, Brinton Rowdybush, the Mayor of Talence and representatives of the French Armed Forces, the Royal Naval Association, the Royal Air Force Association, the Bordeaux British Community Community and RBL members and their friends.

centrally convenient for most to hold the AGM and lunch, and finally to become more competent with modern technologies, such as the Internet.

Thanks to the Paris and Lyon Branches, who have preceded us in this direction, and offered a helping hand in our beginner's footsteps. We hope that those of our Members who surf the Web will be happy to consult the RBL site to learn of the forthcoming events, read reports of events they were not able to attend, read interesting contributions from fellow Members and send their own contributions.

We exist thanks to the perseverance of our predecessors, now that technology makes everything so much easier, we must not let our Branch fade away.



Around the World with the RBL

TOM ASHMORE TAKES A GRAND TOUR

In Issue 11 of *In Touch*, January 1998, the following short piece appeared.

“In Far away Places.....”

There are Legion Branches in many parts of the world and some are occasionally mentioned in Legion Magazine. Did you know that there is one in Cork, in the Irish Republic? Berlin has a branch, one of 18 in Germany. In Spain, sun-loving ex-service ex-pats. are catered for in a number of places, including Tenerife in the Canaries. There is a branch and club in Valetta in Malta and San Francisco branch, one of three in the States, played host to a visiting Royal Naval ship a few months ago. Nearer home, Jersey Branch celebrated its 75th anniversary last year and set a target of increasing the number of members from 875 to 1000!

Reading it again recently, I decided to set off on my travels, making use of the Internet, and visit as many as possible of the 100 or so RBL branches, both in the UK and overseas, that are listed on the Legion website. My first stop was Alfriston, a small branch with 73 members,



which meet quarterly in this Sussex village. A report of their April meeting was headed Newsletter No. 38. Does this suggest that No.1 appeared over nine years ago, soon

after the first issue of our *In Touch*?

On to Alrewas in Staffordshire, where I found a photograph of the attractive ex-Road Chef clubhouse, where no doubt many of their 330 members meet. You would be welcome to join them, for example, after a visit to the nearby National Memorial Arboretum.

The Tenerife Branch site looks very enticing, with many colourful photographs of Remembrance and social activities. It is informative, too, and even includes street maps of the main towns.

The Editor is always asking for contributions for *In Touch*, so I've kept an eye open for anything which he might use. There are odd snippets of Branch information, aspects of their history or things they do and articles and stories that they have published.

To return to the tour, I must mention those visits which have resulted in replies. Many provided email addresses and from them I produced a list of 125 branches, including 71 overseas. I sent emails to all the branches on my contact list telling them about *In Touch*, which, of course, is available for the world to read on the Internet. I invited them also to make contributions to our newsletter.

Sadly, nineteen were “returned to sender”, probably because the published addresses were out of date. I was disappointed not to have heard from Florida, Berlin, Cork, Hong Kong, Tokyo and a few others. Replies from those contacts who did reply included greetings to our branch members and invitations to visit. There were messages commending either the idea of contacting other branches or on the quality of the *In Touch* website – all good for the ego!

What will please George is that we have already been given permission to use material that some branches have published, so look out for some fascinating stories. It will be very interesting to see if any branches use material from our site as they have been told they may.



What's Going On? The Social and Fund-Raising Team reports

Glenys Hocking-Davies
01858 467835
Pat Middleton
01858 445827

Our first venture out of town for lunch is at noon for 12.30 on Tuesday 30 May at The Fox in Hallaton. We shall meet in the bar. Please let us know if you require transport or if you are prepared to offer others a lift. The menu choice is extensive and the meal costs about £10, but there is a two for the price of one offer. Please phone Glenys

to book your place and menu choice.

Main Course: Sausage & Mash; Steak & Mushroom Pie, Chips & Peas; Chicken & Mushroom Pie, Chips & Peas; Cod & Chips; Scampi, Chips & Salad; Gammon, Chips, Peas & fried Egg; Stilton & Broccoli Bake; Spicy Veg Chilli; Vegi Korma; Chilli Con Carne; Chicken Tika, Rice & Poppa Dom; Sweet & Sour Pork, Rice & Cracker; Thai Sweet Chilli Chicken & Rice; Lasagne & Salad.
Puddings: Bakewell Tart, Bread & Butter Pudding, Apple Crumble, Treacle Sponge, Cheesecake, Chocolate Fudge Cake, Banana Split, Profiteroles, Ice Cream, Cheese & Biscuits, Coffee, Tea.

Veterans' Day lunch is arranged for Tuesday 27 June at Noon for 12.30 at The Angel Hotel. Details of the £10 three-course menu will appear in the next issue.

Wine & Cheese Evening organised by the RNA will be held at 36 Lubenham Hill (not 26), Market Harborough. Entrance price is only £3 - and two glasses of wine are included.

In the peaceful country farther back there are discreet preparations for the slaughter which has not yet happened. The first British military cemetery of this war - our earliest casualties, in December, were buried in a neighbouring French civilian cemetery - has six brown wooden crosses. A hundred yards or so away is the first German cemetery in the Allied area, with seven crosses in it, only one of the crosses on the German graves has a name on it, the other six dead men could not be identified.

The Germans do not give away many points in the game of war.

This report by Evelyn Montague appeared in the Manchester Guardian on May 8 1940 and was republished this month.

Letter from Egypt A Soldier Writing Home in 1916

Tom Ashmore's father, Holley, served in the Middle East during the First World War as an ambulance driver. He and Mabel corresponded and were later married.

We continue his fascinating account of four days leave spent in Cairo in September 1916.



Dear Mabel,

I will now try to tell you something of the next day's adventures (Thursday). First we were called at 5.30am and after the necessary preparations we had breakfast at 6.15, got our lunch and are ready for a long day. But we missed the first train to the Pyramids so have to take a gharry through the city and meet the train on the other side then go to Giza Pyramids by train where the guide had ordered camels and donkeys to be waiting for us. These we mount, the first time I have been on a camel. It was rather fascinating but not too comfortable.

They take us through a Bedouin village and up the hill which is very steep and I was rather afraid the camels would not get up. However, we arrive in time at the top alongside the largest Pyramid where we dismount and climb up to the entrance. At the doorway we have to take off our boots then a guide goes with each of us into the darkness. Each guide takes a candle. It is rather a nervy job for it is a very steep climb and no steps except for small notches cut in the smooth granite and these have been cut since the Pyramid was opened just for the benefit of visitors. It was 30 years building and is 475ft high. The date of it is 3133BC. There were 500,000 men working on it. We pass an airshaft well which goes down 100 feet and up 200 feet. We go on up and come into a huge chamber. It is the chamber of the tomb of King Cheops for whom the Pyramid was built. This chamber is in the centre of the Pyramid and is 225 feet high. The tomb is still here. Now we go on again and come to the Queen's Chamber. This is not so large and the tomb has been taken away from

here. In 1872 an American gentleman came and slept in this chamber for three nights hoping to dream of some other treasure hidden here but all he could dream of was an airshaft in the wall above his head which he found and opened. This Pyramid was opened 800 years ago but there was nothing left of the mummies so they were supposed to have been stolen years before.

Now we have seen all [there is] to be seen inside this Pyramid and we go round to the large Sphinx – a huge thing cut from one solid piece of limestone. The date of it is 2872BC. We get the guide to take a photograph of us here on the camels. This Sphinx was the God of the Sun. Then we go into the Temple of the Sphinx. This is down below the surface of the ground and built up of great columns of granite, 16 of them each 16 feet high. Here, too, are three tombs, the tombs of the Holy Priests and the walls of the centre one are of alabaster. Then in an outside wall is a huge piece of granite 17' x 4' x 4'. Here, too, we bought some Roman coins dated 400BC. We also had a glass of lemonade, the last drink before entering on our journey across the desert of Sahara about 9 miles but there is a rest house about half way where we have our lunch.



After lunch we go to see the Tombs of the Sacred Bulls. There are 24 of them, all built of black granite with inscriptions in old Egyptian writing all over them. We looked into one of these which, of course, like all the rest is empty except for a little rat running about it. We could see nothing for him to live on nor anywhere for him to get out. The mummies have all been taken away and some placed in the museums. These Bulls, too, were Gods of the Sun. There are no choice stones in these tombs as they are cut out of the limestone rocks. It is like a long archway with the tombs on either side. From here we went to another tomb, the Tomb of Teh or Tea, the engineer who built the pyramids. This is a wonderfully interesting place. It is quite light there as skylights have been fitted. There are several rooms to it but none of the tombs are left now. The walls here are of limestone and are full of carvings representing the times and customs etc. There are women

milking the sacred cow, others worshipping the gods bringing pigeons and other offerings, and the Egyptians fighting the Jews and driving bands of Jewish slaves along and boats being built, others being rowed by sailors, and many other things of this kind. Then there is another smaller room known as the Fruit Room where people brought fruit and corn to the king as a kind of tithe. On the walls of this room are many carvings representing the bringing of these things and the mill grinding the corn etc. This dates back to the 5th Dynasty 2842BC.



Now we mount the camels and set off for another jaunt, to Memphis, the first city of Egypt. Of course, the whole place is in ruins – it was built out of mud bricks. I had always wondered why the Israelites should want straw to make bricks but I know now for I saw these bricks being made – they are still used by the Egyptians. They mix up straw and mud, cut it into bricks and lay them out in the sun to dry. Here, too, is another large Sphinx which was found and unearthed only three years ago by a Professor Peters, an American. There is here, also, a large statue of Rameses II in red granite. This place is just off the Desert and in a most fertile part. The date palms were loaded with almost ripe fruit and looked beautiful.

We have now left the Desert and have seen 13 Pyramids which I believe are all in Cairo district. Altogether there are 35 Pyramids in Egypt. We now have to hurry to the station called Badrachain to catch a train back to Cairo. We get there just in time to get a drink at the station buffet while the guide gets our tickets. We do not feel any better for our long camel ride especially the sprint in the last lap, but we have a nice rest in the train and enjoy the fine scenery roundabout. We run along with the Nile for some way. It took about one hour and twenty minutes to get to Cairo. Then we drive back to the Hotel, very tired but well pleased with our outing. After a good wash and tidy up and a short rest we come down to dinner on the verandah, very hungry and enjoy our dinner all the better for it. Afterwards we take a walk into the town but feel too tired and knocked up to go far and return after about ¼ of an hour and get to bed.