



The Editor Writes

Thanks to the wonder of the Internet, a reunion was arranged, after almost sixty years, between a group of villagers in Belgium and our own Bernard Halsall.

After all the years, the gratitude of the Belgian people was still quite overwhelming and obviously made a deep impression on Bernard. It is interesting to compare the attitude still apparent amongst many people who lived under the Nazi occupation with that in our own country.

In a recent Letter From America, Alistair Cooke spoke about the effect of 9/11 on the American people. The awful event was the nearest the United States has become to being invaded, and that unforgettable date has become a landmark in time, with happenings being referred to as before or after 9/11.

Quoting Mark Twain, Mr Cooke drew a parallel with the American Civil War. The Northerners were not severely touched by the conflict compared with the Southerners, who were invaded and virtually everyone, men and women alike, was deeply affected. In the years that followed, the war continued to be a major topic of conversation and concern in the South, whereas it was of far less significance in the North.

It occurs to me that, although we lived through untold hardship during the Second World War, we did not suffer the indignity and deprivation of freedom that comes with invasion by an enemy. Most of Europe was occupied and therefore the impact was greater and the release from captivity remains something of which they are eternally grateful.

For Bernard's Belgian friends, the impact of the war continues to affect much of their lives.

Matters of Interest

Concessionary Passports

The Home Office recently announced a scheme to provide free one-year passports to veterans wishing to attend 60th Anniversary Commemorative Events in 2004 and 2005. The United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS) is working with the Veterans Affairs Secretariat in the Ministry of Defence and The RBL to develop administrative arrangements for the scheme.

The conditions of eligibility for free passports are as follows:

The applicant must have taken part in the action being commemorated, or be the spouse, widow, widower, or partner of a person who took part. Carers, in cases of need, will also be able to obtain a concessionary passport.

The applicant must be travelling as part of a group arranged by a veterans' organisation or to an event arranged by a veterans' organisation.

Free passports will not be issued to persons who already hold British passports, which will be valid for the journey being arranged.

The applicant must be eligible for British Passport facilities.

Further details of the scheme, as well as arrangements for discounted travel, are available from John Liddell.

Priority Treatment for War Pensioners

The following has been issued by the RBL.

A war pensioner has previously been classified as someone who has a pension or who had a gratuity for disablement caused by armed service during the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars and service since 1945. This includes merchant seamen and civilians who receive pensions for wartime injuries. The term "war pensioner" has now been extended to cover people who were injured or disabled as a result of service in the armed forces either before the First World War or between

1/10/1921 and 2/9/1939, the "inter-war" years. In 1953 hospitals run by the Ministry of Pensions for the treatment of war pensioners were transferred to the NHS.

The Government gave an undertaking that there would be priority examination and treatment for war pensioners in NHS hospitals for the condition or conditions for which the war pensioners received a pension or gratuity. NHS hospitals should give priority to war pensioners, both as out-patients and in-patients, for examination or treatment which relates to the condition or conditions for which they receive a pension or gratuity (unless there is an emergency case or another case demands clinical priority). Priority should not be given for unrelated conditions. Referrals for treatment should make it clear that the patient is a war pensioner and requires treatment for the condition for which the war pension was given - either a pension or a gratuity. War pensioners can use the NHS complaints system to resolve any alleged breakdowns in the arrangements for priority treatment. This includes ultimately asking the Health Service Commissioner to investigate.

The National Memorial Arboretum

Subject to a £250,000 grant-in-aid package from the Ministry of Defence, the RBL will assume responsibility for running the National Memorial Arboretum, with its 50,000 trees in over 100 plots and groves. A living tribute to those who have given their lives in the service of the country since the end of the Second World War, the Arboretum, which was started in 1997, is situated in the village of Alrewas, near Lichfield. As well as many groves and monuments, visitors can reflect in the Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness. It is the only place in the UK where the Two Minutes Silence is observed every day at 11am.

The Editor Writes - an Apology

In last month's editorial I wrote about a local boxing club event broadcast back in the Fifties. I said it was televised. Wrong! It was broadcast on the radio. Sorry!



Christmas Lunch

If you haven't done so already, why not book your place for the Christmas lunch at the Angel Hotel on Tuesday, 16 December? Apart from the traditional offerings of turkey (with all the trimmings, of course,) you could choose pasta and flaked salmon or a vegetarian dish, baked Brie and broccoli parcel. Please ring Joan or Mary for more details and bookings.

Successful Coffee Morning

Although it is a pleasant social occasion, the twice-yearly Coffee Morning at the Harborough Theatre is primarily a fund-raiser. In that respect, the event held in October was a great success with £313.76 being raised for the Poppy Appeal.

Thanks go to Joan and Mary for their organisation and to the many helpers on the sales stalls, the tombola and raffle. Particular thanks to our regular supporters from the Air Training Corps, who raised an additional £75 from the sale of poppies.

Football Crazy

The opportunity to swell the Market Harborough Poppy Appeal total was taken when several Branch stalwarts braved the elements at Leicester City's Walkers Stadium to attend the match against Blackburn Rovers. As well as enjoying a good match, our team joined in the Appeal Collection and will share the sum raised with other participating branches. Fortunately the weather was fine at half time when veterans did a lap of honour around the ground to the loud, prolonged and obviously sincere cheers of the spectators.

Farewells

It is with much regret that we record the passing of Tom Richardson and the wife of Bill Farnsworth.

Good News

There is happier news regarding Gary Farnsworth. He is out of hospital and progressing well.



The Diary

Some dates to keep free.
Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143

- 16 Dec 2004 Christmas Lunch at The Angel - 12 noon for 12.30
- 21 Feb Mountbatten Concert with MH Royal Naval Assn.
- 26 Mar Branch Anniversary Dinner

Note

Branch Lunches. These have proved to be very popular and it is proposed to continue to have a lunch every month, on the Tuesday following the Branch meeting and at The Angel Hotel.

Other Social events. It is up to you to say what you would like and given sufficient interest, we will try to arrange. Write to the Editor who will pass on your suggestions.

The date of the next meeting is December 10th

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room, Conservative Club Building, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.30 pm in the upstairs Committee Room at the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279



Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923

Branch Website
www.mktharborbl.ukvet.net



80 Years of Caring

In Touch

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A Notable Achievement

As reported briefly last month, the Branch is celebrating the great achievement of George Fleming in winning the County Standard Bearers' Cup.

The trophy is returning to Market Harborough after an absence of nine years, having been held by John Cox in 1993/94. Since then, the cup has been won a record eight times by the Loughborough Branch. However, in four of the last five years, George has been the County Deputy Standard Bearer.

The competition is designed to encourage a high standard of turn-out and drill by Royal British Legion Standard Bearers and regional winners go forward to compete for the Ashwarden Cup.

George, who joined the army in 1953 as a boy soldier, served for twenty-three years in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Korea, Hong Kong, Cyprus and BAOR. He was awarded the long service and good conduct medal.

A member of the Branch since 1994, George was treasurer for seven years. He is currently the County Recruiting Officer and a member of the County Executive Committee.

Looking forward to becoming the County Standard Bearer at the next Annual County Conference in January, George remarked, "For someone who did everything he could to get out of being on parade in the army, it is some achievement!"

Members of the Branch congratulate George on 'some achievement' and, of course, will wish him even more success in the future.

The splendid trophy won by George will be on display at Harborough Council Offices.

Page 3

Sunday 9 November 2003



Photograph by courtesy of Andrew Carpenter

Following the Parade and Service of Remembrance in St Dionysius' Church, and the laying of wreaths at Market Harborough's War Memorial, civic dignitaries visited the Garden of Remembrance.

Pictured here in the Memorial Gardens are (left to right) Bertie Thorold representing the Royal Naval Association, Branch President Peter Wilson, Lady Gretton, Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, Councillor Jan Tooley, Chairman of Harborough District Council, and Branch Chairman, Mark Hudson.

A Great Success! The Remembrance Concert Saturday 8 November

No doubt the usual noisy bombardment was lighting up the town on the Saturday after Bonfire Night, but nigh on two hundred happy souls in the Baptist Church were blissfully unaware.

They were part of the best attendance yet at the third Branch Remembrance Concert, where the air was filled with far more pleasant sounds. Not only did our marvellous Harborough Band, under their director Chris Groom, perform impeccably, but the coffers of the Pop-

py Appeal Fund benefited to the tune of nearly six hundred pounds!

Those who were unable to be there missed some great music, including arrangements from the musical Mack & Mabel, a James Bond Collection, the Beatles' Ticket to Ride, Count Basesy's Li'l Darlin' and some beautifully performed solo pieces. The RAF March Past and the Royal British Legion March topped and tailed the programme.

George Fleming and John Cox bore standards with characteristic precision to add to the solemnity of the finale, which included the emotive Hymn to the Fallen, Nightfall in Camp and the Last Post sounded by the Band's fine cornet players.

Page 10

Page 11



Branch News

Moves at the Top

At the Annual General Meeting, Branch Members heartily endorsed a unanimously approved proposal by the Committee. This was to show recognition to our vice-Chairman, Tom Ashmore, for the years of service he has given so unstintingly. Tom has graciously accepted an invitation to become the second Vice President of the Market Harborough Branch.

The choice of vice-Chairman was another unanimous decision. The role will be filled by Brian Marshall, who recently became the County Youth Development Officer.

The third change is the election of Tony Johnson as Branch Treasurer to replace John Standish.

The President, Peter Wilson, Vice President, Ken Stimpson, the Chairman, Mark Hudson and Secretary, Betty Ramsay, offered themselves for re-election and were unanimously returned in their respective roles.

Two Committee members, Joan McMillin and Mary Symon opted to vacate their places, but will continue their work as the Social Team, but the other members were willing to serve again and were elected.

The full Committee for the coming year is: Mark Hudson, Chairman, Brian Marshall, vice-Chairman, Tony Johnson, Treasurer, Betty Ramsay, Secretary, Vida Edwards, Bob England, George Fleming, Charles Freer, John Liddell, Dougie McMeeken, George Seward and Stephen Simpson. The President and two Vice Presidents are ex-officio.

The after AGM Buffet, now a firmly held tradition, was one again provided by Janet and Les Sewell. For their generosity in giving us such a wonderful spread, we say on behalf of everyone present, a big **THANK YOU!**



The Poppy Appeal 2003/04 Appeal Organiser Dougie McMeeken Reports

Walking through the town centre in the run-up to Remembrance Day, I was delighted to see so many people wearing poppies – more, it seemed to me, than last year. Whether or not this was because of my innate optimism (for me the bottle is always half full!) I am not sure, but Dick Fulford's totting up to date is most encouraging.

I wish to thank each and every one whom responded to my call and ventured forth in town and village with tray and tin to knock on doors and stand outside shops. Unfortunately, because of personal commitments, I was unable to be around as much as I should have liked, but indefatigable volunteers held the fort (market stall). Many thanks to you for all your efforts.

Particularly gratifying are the sums from events such as the Coffee Morning (nearly £400), Remembrance Concert (nearly £600) and the collection in St Dionysius Church (over £500).

SHOCK! HORROR!



VETERAN POPPY SELLER REVEALS SECRET HAREM

A Happy Reunion



It was a pleasant surprise for Tom Ashmore, but for Bernard Halsall it became a wonderfully nostalgic and emotional experience. The surprise was an e-mail Tom received from a gentleman named Leo Bral in Bruges, who had found our Branch web site on the internet.

Leo was anxious to contact Bernard for information about the forced landing of a General Aircraft Hamilcar Glider at Zomergen, a village near Ghent, in 1944. "I happened to witness this incident", he wrote. "I was six years old at the time and I watched how it landed safely in front of our house, where it remained for some time." After much research, he learned from a book entitled 'Tugs and Gliders to Arnhem' that the glider pilot was Captain Halsall. Contact was made and in October, accompanied by his wife Con, Bernard returned to Zomergen after nearly sixty years.

Bernard was given a very warm welcome from villagers, some of whom had watched him make the crash landing. It was on the third Arnhem lift during Operation Market Garden that the tow-rope on Bernard's glider had broken. He had had less than a minute to make a choice of landing site, and he was delighted to meet the farmer whose field he selected.

"They were just so pleased to see me," said Bernard, "I was delighted with the whole reunion". Leo Bral, who, of course, was delighted to have been able to arrange the meeting after so many years research, presented him with a piece of the Hamilcar glider. Bernard also received a blue delftware plate engraved with five local villages.

OCTOBER

4 members visit National Museum of Photography, Film and TV with MH Photo Society. Annual Dinner held at Golf Club. First copies of *Memories are made of this* in conventional paperback format, produced. George Fleming comes second in County Standard Bearers' competition.

NOVEMBER

Remembrance Concert by the Harborough Band raised over £300 for Poppy Appeal. Garden of Remembrance even better than last year. Many compliments received. Talk given to children at Great Bowden School. Two changes in Branch Committee made at AGM. Traditional buffet again excellent.

DECEMBER

George Fleming appointed County Recruiting Officer. Branch Meeting followed by hot punch and mince pies - again very popular. Christmas Dinner held at The Countryman.

JANUARY



Branch awarded the Jack Quain Trophy for Endeavour.

New CFO attended Committee Meeting. Team set up to review Welfare provision. 4 members attend County Conference.

FEBRUARY

Brian Marshall appointed Branch Youth Officer. George Seward appointed In Touch Editor. Joan McMillin & Mary Symon assume responsibility for Social activities. Branch represented at the Lord Lieutenant service in Leicester Cathedral. A few members enjoy a conducted tour of the *Leicester Mercury* offices and print works.

MARCH

First meeting of the S E Leicestershire Group. Mark Hudson elected Vice Chairman. RBL Pilgrimages Dept. film *Pilgrims Progress* shown after Branch meeting. 80th Anniversary Dinner included an audio re-enactment of the Branch formation in 1923. Mark Hudson co-opted to the County Executive. Coffee Morning raised £262 for Branch funds.

APRIL

After branch meeting talk by George Seward on Life as a Newsagent 50 years ago. Pub lunch poorly attended.

MAY

Branch meeting approved new proposals for Welfare provision. Excellent buffet followed. National Conference attended by Branch Chairman, Secretary and Standard Bearer. End of Poppy Appeal Year Branch total £14,228.



JUNE

Publicity and recruiting stall on The Square on Carnival day.



After meeting talk by Tony Johnson on his work with S.E. Regional Crime Squad. Visit with RNA to Manchester Military Tattoo. Four members attend County Half-year Conference.

JULY

After meeting talk by Mr Derek Seaton on "The History of the VC"

Branch Lunch at the Angel Hotel. A memorial built by Stan Snow as a tribute to the six RCMP soldiers killed in Iraq was placed on the Great Easton war memorial.

AUGUST

Well attended visit to Newmarket Poppy Race Day. George Fleming carries Standard in the parade. Buffet followed Branch meeting. Branch represented at County Standard Bearers' trip to Holland. Branch members attend Husband Bosworth Branch Flower Show. Branch lunch at the Angel - now to be monthly

SEPTEMBER

After meeting talk by Col. Anthony Swallow on the Leicestershire Regiment Museum, Autumn Dinner at the Bulls Head, Clipston. Betty Ramsay and daughter Hilary Brazil take part in the London Poppy Walk and raise about £550 for the Appeal.



Obituary

Atholl Stuart

As reported in the October issue of *In Touch*. Atholl (Jock) Stuart passed away at Leicester General Hospital on the 7th October, two days after admission following a suspected heart attack. For a couple of months prior to his death, Jock had been in poor health, which resulted in two periods in the Cardiac Unit at Kettering Hospital, on each occasion with heart trouble.

Born in Aberdeen in 1919, on leaving school Jock became an apprentice printer and, as soon as he was able, joined the Territorial Army. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 he served in the Royal Corps of Signals and was soon soldiering with the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium during the 'Phoney War'. However, when Hitler's Blitzkrieg of the Low Countries in 1940 changed things, he was one of those fighting a rearguard action to the beach at Dunkirk. After an upsetting day or so being strafed by the Luftwaffe, he managed to get aboard a steamer and head in the direction of Dover. Whilst queuing for a mug of tea, the ship was bombed and received a direct hit. Jock said he heard a whoosh and later came to under a pile of dead bodies, many his mates - such was his lucky escape. The incident had a profound affect on Jock; brought up in a religious and churchgoing family: from that moment on he said he lost his faith in God. He subsequently served in the UK until shortly after D-Day, and then back on to the Continent where he fought with Montgomery's Second Army until the end of the conflict.

After demob he returned to the printing trade in Aberdeen and married a petite midwife named Margaret in 1947. A year later the couple moved to London to set up home and Jock found employment in Fleet Street, ini-



1084 Squadron is Flying High

We frequently have cause to thank our friends in the Air Training Corps for their generous help at Poppy Appeal time and on Coffee Mornings. It is a particular pleasure, therefore, to offer the Market Harborough Squadron our heartiest congratulations on a really wonderful achievement.

The members of the band of 1084 Squadron, behind whom we marched to the Remembrance Service, have become the ATC National Champions. They will now take part in the World Marching Band Championships to be held in Bournemouth next July.

All members of the branch will wish the commanding officer, FI/Lt Valerie Smith, FI/Lt John Standish, and the young people in the band continued success in the coming year.

tially with Odham's Press. In 1954 they moved to Wickford in Essex, where for many years Jock commuted to London and rejoiced in being a local councillor serving on the Highways Committee. Ill health forced his retirement in 1980 and, after a spell living in Kettering, subsequently moving to Market Harborough in 1988.

Jock was a popular member of this Branch, always ready with a wartime anecdote of his considerable experience as a signaller at the front line. He is survived by Margaret and their two sons.

The funeral at Kettering Crematorium was attended by John Liddell as well as the three members mentioned in the last *In Touch*.

Tony Johnson

