

### Diary

- 29th Nov Branch Committee Meeting
- 9th Dec Family Christmas Concert (see p23) Please support our friends the Harborough Band.
- 13th Dec Branch meeting & Quiz (see p 23)
- 15th Dec Branch Christmas Dinner - 7.30pm Countryman Inn, Great Bowden. £13.50. Ring Bob England on MH 464288 ASAP to book and/or to offer or request transport.
- 10th Jan Branch Meeting
- Note! There is no Committee meeting in December.

## Mr B The Barber

14 St Mary's Road

Market Harborough, LE16 7DU

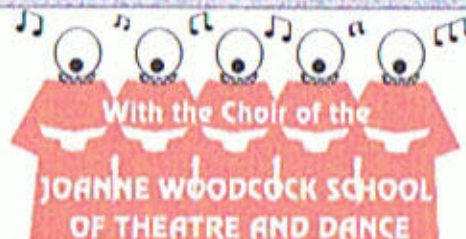
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### Meetings

Regular 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 next meeting is on 13th December. The social event following the business session will be a light-hearted Quiz presented by John Cox.



Reg. Charity No. 219270

## The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch Founded in 1923



# In Touch

Issue 28

November 2000

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

## Editorial

A NEW EDITOR and new horizons--you hope!!

Before starting this new adventure, I must on your behalf, thank my predecessor, Ray Tyler, for the excellent job he has performed as editor of In Touch. He has set a standard which will be a challenge to keep up. Our thanks for all your time and efforts Ray

A word here will not come amiss to give our thanks also to Tom Ashmore, who for many years has produced this newsletter. He has been the backbone of this publication and I am sure his enthusiasm and dedication, is appreciated by all the members.

The main purpose of In Touch is, as the title itself suggests, to keep members informed of what is happening and what is going to happen in our branch of the Royal British Legion. But it would be a rather boring publication if this was all it contained.

Continued on page 2

## In Memoriam

*Sadly, we have to record the death on 25th October, of Nora Callender after a long illness. Although Nora had been a Member of the Legion only since she moved to Market Harborough three years ago, she took as active a part in the Branch as her illness allowed. The standard was carried at her funeral which was attended by many fellow members and by representatives of RAFA of which she had also been a member. Sincere condolences are extended to her sister Joan Ashmore and all her family.*

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### *The Other Three Days*

THURSDAY, 9th NOVEMBER

The opening of the Exhibition in the Museum was a bit of a non-event really, although since then it has been attracting members of the public several of whom have provided new information for "The Books". The exhibition, runs until mid-December.

SATURDAY, 11th NOVEMBER

Armistice Day, turned out to be a very wet one. But in spite of this a good crowd gathered at the Memorial Gates in the town centre to observe the two minutes silence and the laying of wreaths. Special thanks are due to Peter Vine (and his music turner, Marion) of the Market Harborough Band, for defying the rain to sound the Last Post and Reveille. The Silence was also observed in the Market Hall and, we believe, elsewhere in the Town. Earlier, a small but dignified ceremony, was held at the memorial in Welland Park.

A REMEMBRANCE CONCERT is what it was called and in a nostalgic sense it was. The well chosen and varied programme of music representing each decade of the Legion's existence, was performed to the high standard

### *Internet Snippets*

Recent messages on the RBL Electronic Mailing list have included condemnation of the CWGC decision to cut their overseas gardens' allowances, a cry for help from a terminally ill amputee trying to obtain artificial legs, several seeking news of old comrades or relatives, news of Canadian troops in Kosovo and reaction to the government gratuity for former Far East POW's.

The Branch website is still attracting interest with the "hit counter" registering 2137 (as of 14.15 hrs 26/11/00). Recent "Guest Book" entries include one from Tom Jeacock's son in New Zealand "surprised to find a story from Uncle Ken" (West), from Ontario about 3 great-uncles from Kingsthorpe, Northants. killed in WW1, from Holland suggesting another story from Ken West and from Market Harborough about the Band's website.

MH RNA now have a website designed & run by their Mike Cheeseman who won a prize in the recent ComKnet competition. Mark entered too - in a different class his - but his application got lost. He's furious! Ω

that is the hall-mark of the Harborough Band. Near the end of the programme the Last Post provided solemnity appropriate to the day and emphasised by having the two cornet players and our Standard Bearer in the gallery at the front of the church. An audience of about 120 comfortable filled the downstairs of the Baptist Church.

SUNDAY, 12th NOVEMBER was a fitting end to a week described by one member, a long-time resident of Harborough, as "the biggest thing the branch has ever done". The traditional Remembrance Sunday Parade, led by the ATC band, included an encouraging number of young people. The salute was taken by the Lord Lieutenant, Mr Tim Brooks and HDC Chairman, Cllr. Roy Vickers. Mr Edward Garnier was also present. The service in the Parish Church was led by our Branch Chaplain, Rev. Chris Moody and in a moving sermon Rev. Martin Wilson, spoke of the experience of his father, the Bishop of Singapore, as a prisoner of the Japanese in WW2. A congregation of about 400 was thought to be the largest for many years. Ω

Continued from page 1

This is where you come in!

There is the well-known saying that every city has a million stories. So a town the size of Market Harborough must have a few thousand. Reducing still further, an organisation with a membership of over 100 must have dozens of stories waiting to be told. There are many of our members who served in the last war, you must all have a story to tell. Men and women who served in the forces and women members who worked in the Land Army or other government positions. Or you housewives who stayed at home while your husbands and sons were away -- what was it like, what were your thoughts and feelings? Tell us of your experiences. Even short anecdotes of the "it happened to me" type, will all be of interest. Please tell me YOUR story.

This issue is a bumper one. Apart from reporting on a fabulously successful Remembrance Week, we are including some of the background leading up to the week. You will see that much planning and hard work went into it. The final result was there for all to see and experience.

Apart from the Poppy Appeal itself, I think we can honestly say that we brought home to the people of the town an awareness that not only was there a branch of the Royal British Legion established here, but also of the aims and work of our organisation. The feedback from the public has been gratifying and interesting, both from local contact and through the website, and one hope now is that this awareness may reflect in recruitment figures for the branch.

In closing, may I remind members that during our Royal British Legion Week, the Market Harborough Band gave us much co-operation and support. Now, in turn, I would ask all members to support the band in their concert on Saturday, December 9th (see page23). Ω



#### **OCTOBER 1999**

"We must do this every year", people said after the 75th Anniversary Dinner in 1998. So the event on the 15th October, was called the 1999 Annual Dinner. It followed the same format, was held at the Market Harborough Golf Club, was well attended and a good evening was had by all. On the 23rd of this month we held a Coffee Morning which raised £230; and on the 30th some members attended the Festival of Remembrance at the De Montfort Hall.

#### **NOVEMBER**

Space for storage, preparation and distribution of trays and collecting boxes for the Poppy Appeal was made available by the Army Cadet Force. Street collections were made on 3 days. Novel computer displays were used on the Poppy Appeal market stall. The 2 Minutes Silence was well observed in the town and the Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service well attended. The AGM was held on the 11th and was followed by a buffet.

#### **DECEMBER**

The only two events in December were the Christmas Lunch at the Countryman on the 7th, followed by the branch meeting on the 8th at which we were shown film footage of events in Harborough from earlier in the century.

#### **JANUARY 2000**

The branch meeting was followed by a light-hearted quiz.

#### **FEBRUARY**

The Chairman and another member from Lutterworth branch attended this month's meeting which was followed by a buffet. On

the 18th a Beer, Skittles & Supper Evening was organised at the Old Crown in Fleckney, which was great fun. The first Coffee Morning of the year raised £276 - a record.

#### **MARCH**

This being the birthday month of the branch, the monthly meeting was followed by a birthday quiz and a 77th birthday dinner was held on the 24th at The Bull's Head at Clipston when 24 members enjoyed convivial evening.

#### **APRIL**

On the 4th, a luncheon was held at the Langton Arms which was poorly attended with only nine members present. The branch meeting on the 12th was followed by a talk from Mr. George Gamble, who once again told us the stories behind some of the medals in his wide collection.

#### **MAY**

The County Field Officer and County Secretary addressed the branch following the monthly meeting on the 10th. On the 20th the branch had arranged a day's outing to Winchester and the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop. This was very poorly supported and the coach was eventually filled by residents from Huntingdon Gardens retirement homes.

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Five new members have joined us since the beginning of October and we welcome Mr. L Hirst, Mr. B E Marshall, Mr. E R Norman (transferred from Great Glen Branch), Mrs. J M Norman and Mrs. C L Watling. Sadly there has been one death - Mrs. Nora Callender, (see page 1).

#### **MEETINGS FOR 2001**

Normally, Branch meetings will continue to be in the downstairs Function Room of the Conservative Club at 7.30pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. **But not in January** - see **December In Touch, Too**. The **November** meeting will be the AGM. The Branch Committee will meet on the **last** Wednesday of the month (except December) at 7.30pm in the upstairs bar of the Conservative Club.

#### **8th NOVEMBER**

The Presentation of "The Books" is fully reported on pages 10 & 11 but mention should be made here of the sense of occasion which had been created. Firstly, the earlier start time of 7.15pm for the Branch Meeting, yet many people were there before 7pm. Chairs and tables set out with near mathematical precision; reserved front row seats with names of invited guests; anxiety on the face of the Chairman (& others!). Then at 8pm, the short business meeting over, the guests came in from the lounge where Tom Jeacock had welcomed them to be received by President and Chairman, with Standard Bearer flanking the entrance. Various "Few Words" of the Presentation Ceremony said, it was Buffet Time. Jan & Les Sewell's offering was magnificent & reflected the significance & importance of the evening. Ω

## *From Little Acorns*

by Hotspur

"It is to mark the Millennium, you know. Various organisations have been allotted their own week to put on a bit of a show. We have got Poppy Week. Anyone got any ideas?"

That was how it all started. As if ordering, distribution of boxes, selling of poppies, re-collecting, totalling up of all the monies and filling in all the forms was not enough, they wanted more -- five days more!

But someone had an idea: A committee of a dedicated few was formed and a plan was made that necessitated an enormous amount of thought, discussion and some physical work.



Few could have imagined the size of the task to be undertaken. Uncomplaining, and almost unnoticed, they set about the job of listing all the people of the Market Harborough area who had made the supreme sacrifice in two world wars.

## *The Poppy Appeal in Millennium Week*

The job of the Poppy Appeal Organiser is a pretty onerous one but when it is combined with heading such an ambitious project as our Millennium Festival Week, it is demanding indeed. Much credit is due to Tom Jeacock for shouldering this double responsibility.

Financial results of the Poppy Appeal are not to hand at the time of writing, but Tom assures us that everything "went smoothly". What he means is that the old stock was sorted and new stock ordered, that over 200 poppy trays were



filled and collecting boxes sealed and labelled, that they were delivered to and later collected from, pubs, shops and offices, and the homes of house-to-house collectors, that a rota of street collectors was produced, that there was an efficient system of counting, recording and banking the money. All of this required the effective and willing teamwork of the many people involved.

We cannot end this report of a fantastic week without special mention of the poppy collectors. We owe many grateful thanks to the band of men and ladies who stood on the streets of the town, often in appalling weather; and those who took on the task of house-to-house collections in the town and the surrounding areas. In spite of all the carefully laid plans and organising of the Poppy Appeal, in the final analysis without your help none of it would have been possible. Our thanks once again.

The branch again had a stall in the Market Hall for the three market days, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday but this year for the first time we were present at the Sunday Antiques Market. Mark Hudson, was responsible for the design and arranging the manning of the stalls, which apart from the sale of poppies and wreaths, carried a wealth of information about the Royal British Legion and its aims and objectives through a continuously running computer display. In a rolling display, a second screen showed each of the 326 name pages in the Books of Remembrance. The medals of one of our members and the citation for his M. C. were on display and aroused much interest. Ω



## ***Books of Remembrance***

On Wednesday, November 8th, following a somewhat shortened monthly meeting, the Books of Remembrance were formally handed over to the town. Members of various organisations in the town had been invited, together with members from other branches of the RBL and individuals who had helped in the production of the Work.

The hand-over ceremony was performed by our Chairman, Mrs Constance Halsall, who handed the volumes to Councillor Roy Vickers, Chairman of the Market Harborough District Council. Mr Vickers praised the branch for the work that had gone into the production of these six volumes and requested that Harborough Museum be responsible for their safekeeping.

The Keeper of the Harborough Museum said how delighted the museum was to receive the works, and how important they were because of the local history they contained. She assured us that the volumes would always be available to any members of the public who wished to peruse them or for researchers in the future.

### **ABOUT THE BOOKS**

For the benefit new members and others who have not seen The Books either completed or whilst in production, the following notes are taken from the "Few Words" Tom Ashmore said at the Presentation.

" On the War memorial on The Square there are the names of 254 who died in the First World War. On the Memorial Gates there are 72 from the Second World War. All we know for certain from reading those 326 names is that one is that

a woman. Her name is given as Kathleen Pryor but all the others are just surnames and initials.

Clr Vickers, what you will receive is our attempt to turn those anonymous names into real people ..... To honour them as individuals we have given each two facing pages. On the right is a large cross on which is inscribed his personal details. On the left hand page are details of the cemetery or memorial, its location & directions about how to reach it. Historical information often includes reference to the campaigns in which the casualties occurred.

Three volumes are needed to cover WWI and one for WW2. The fifth volume is a sort of supplement to the first four and contains additional information which (has been or) may be obtained about an individual, a location or an event. There are photographs, stories, even a diary kept in 1915 and 1916 - some really fascinating stuff in this volume. Volume six is a sampler and contains copies of representative pages from the other volumes. This is the volume which will be on permanent display in the Museum, with the others being available for reference on request.

Clr. Vickers, this is what is being handed over but I have to tell you that the work is not complete. There is information that we have obtained but not yet included. We have had offers of memorabilia that we have not yet taken up. There are many lines of enquiry that could still be pursued. What we hope is that more research will be undertaken and that members of the public will still come forward with material, to continue the process of converting names to real people." Ω

Continued from page 5

They needed the names, home addresses and parents of these people, together with their final resting places. Research was carried out with the co-operation of the Harborough Mail into the newspaper's archives; through the internet, Commonwealth War Graves Commission records were accessed and sources of local history used; from published works; and from the information and memorabilia provided by local people. Great care was taken to ensure the accuracy of the research. The result - a Roll of Honour in the form of a six volume "Book of Remembrance" presented and accessible to the people of the town.

But that was not all! The Memorial Gardens in the town centre were to be transformed into a Garden of Remembrance, a sort of miniature war cemetery with a new flagpole on which the Union Jack would be lowered each evening in a sunset ceremony. And to round off the week, a Concert would be given by the popular and respected Harborough Band.

They were ambitious plans -- but the committee, with help from a lot of people, succeeded. Our congratulations and grateful thanks must be accorded to the Millennium Committee and all those who worked so hard to make this week the success it undoubtedly was.

They were also expensive plans, but costs have been met fully through generous donations, grants and fundraising. No Branch or Legion funds have been used. Ω

## *Garden of Remembrance.*

The first event of "our week" was the opening of the Garden of Remembrance, on the evening of Monday, 6th November. Following a concert in St Dionysius Church, given by the Band of the Army Cadet Force, we proceeded to the Memorial Gardens.



The Rev Chris Moody, the branch Padre, conducted the service of dedication. The newly installed floodlights shone down upon row upon row of pristine white crosses, each bearing a poppy at its head. Flanking these crosses were two memorials, one commemorating the dead of the First World War and the other for the Second World War; and the centrepiece, a model of the Cenotaph.

It was an extremely touching and poignant time witnessed by a sizeable crowd on the footbridge and the path on the other side of the river. As the Union Jack was lowered to the strains of the Last Post, played by two buglers, many tears were being shed among the watchers.

But, on the morning of this event . . .

A small band of workers turned up at the gardens at 8.30 -- a damp cold Monday. We were concerned that the river at the bottom of the garden was rising and rushing past at an alarming rate. Would the river burst its banks and flood our work area? With fingers crossed (metaphorically) the working party pressed on.

With much reference to the plans drawn up so meticulously by George Fleming and Tom Ashmore, datum lines of string were marked off on

the lawn; lengths of timber with crosses already attached, were carefully unloaded from the vehicle (kindly loaned to us by Monks).

The rows of crosses were laid out -- 18 inches between each cross and 2 feet between each row, in strict alphabetical order. And it was with much satisfaction that the last row of three crosses fitted in exactly according to the plans.

One problem was the unevenness of the ground and the need to align the tops of the crosses horizontally. This was achieved with battens and specially made steel rods -- and a spirit level!



Meanwhile the electricians had been installing the floodlighting; and the branch name boards and title board were placed facing across the river. The final touch was to place the two memorials and the Cenotaph in place, - all three of which were made with much care and hard work by George Fleming--and we stepped back to admire our work!!!

Mention must be made here of the contribution of some of our lady members who, during the morning, supplied and served us with hot coffee and cakes. Thank you, ladies; and it is arguable as to whether the job would have been completed without you!!

