

The AGM

Both the President, Mr Peter Wilson and Chairman, Mrs Constance Halsall, thanked members for their personal support and their efforts during a very successful year. The secretaries of the Service (Welfare) and Social Committees gave brief summaries of their activities and the Treasurer presented the Branch accounts for approval. In the ensuing election, all existing officers were returned unopposed but a ballot was needed to choose the 7 Branch Committee members. A list of all those elected & their phone numbers is given below.

As noted on p13, Peter Wilson said he wished to resign from the post of Poppy Appeal Organiser & Ken Stimpson was giving up his work in the villages.

Now at the Helm

President	Peter Wilson	464585
Vice President	Ken Stimpson	545820
Chairman	Constance Halsall	465314
Vice Chairman	Tom Ashmore (m)	433108
Secretary	Betty West	434923
Treasurer	George Fleming	462711

Committee Members

irene Blissett (s)	431789
John Cox(m, s)	434983
Bob England(ss)	464288
Charles Freer(w)	467167
Mark Hudson(m)	469527
Tom Jeacock(m, w)	466829
Ken Purdy(wo)	440623

Other Appointments

Standard Bearer	George Fleming	
Deputy Std Brr	John Cox	
In Touch Editor	Ray Tyler	461889
Other Posts under negotiation / consideration		

Note. (m) = Millennium Committee
 (s) = Social Committee
 (ss) = Social Secretary
 (w) = Service (Welfare) Committee
 (wo) = Welfare Officer

For Your Diary

- 7 Dec Xmas Lunch* - The Countryman.
12.45 for 1.15pm
- 8 Dec Branch Meeting and Film Show
- 12 Jan Branch Meeting and Quiz

* For details please contact Bob England.

A proposed programme of Social Events is enclosed. Please complete and return the questionnaire as requested.

Mr B

The Barber

For
Appointments
Phone

01858 464308



01858 468394

14 St. Mary's Road, Market Harborough,
Leicestershire. LE16 7DU

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.

Following the business part of the next meeting, on 8th December, the social session will be the showing of films made by Market Harboro' Movie Makers, to record notable local events. Should bring back memories for some!



Reg. Charity No. 219279

The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



In Touch

Issue 22

November, 1999.

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Branch Internet Web site at
<http://www.mktharborbl.ukvet.net>

Editorial

Tempus fugit, the saying goes, and not only is this the last *In Touch* for this year, it is also the last one for this century and for the second millennium. It is also my last issue, as I am now retiring from the Editorship as old age has finally caught up with me.

It is a strange phase to reach when you admit to old age. Unlike a good bottle of wine which improves with age, or a good piece of furniture becomes more valuable in old age. Even a building can have a preservation order slapped on it in old age. Homo Sapiens becomes frailer, slower, less active, less involved - and in most cases he becomes less valuable. We are left only with memories.

Some people have very accurate and extensive memories and can go back even as far as 80 years ago. Many of us have old family photographs to refresh and sustain our memories. Our fathers and mothers would have taken them to have a reminder of us in our young days. But our grandchildren do not recognise us as we looked then - "That's not you, Grandad, surely!"

Continued on P2>>>

News

Coffee Morning. Whether judged by the large number of member helpers who manned the stalls, served the coffee and did the washing-up or the number of members who supported the event with their presence (and their money!), or by the number of other visitors, or by the £230 raised for the Poppy Appeal, the morning of 23rd October was a great success. Thank you, Bob England and all those involved!



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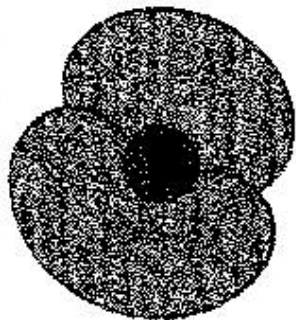
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Poppy Appeal

The first time that the general public become aware of Poppy Appeal activity is when Poppies appear in shops, pubs or at ones door two weeks before Remembrance day. Few People understand the tremendous amount of work which precedes and follows that first appearance. Despite the generous efforts of many members and others, most of the work falls on the shoulders of only four people. As Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO), Peter Wilson has overall responsibility for the Appeal in Market Harborough District. Ken Stimpson looked after the villages (except the Bowdens). Renie & Dick Fulford dealt with the preparation of Poppy trays & collecting boxes and planning their allocation and distribution. They were also responsible for counting, recording and banking the contents of the boxes and for



preparing Thank You cards for all collectors and static points. Not surprisingly, the physical and mental strain has taken its toll of all of them.

At the AGM, Peter announced that this would be his last year as PAO and Ken said that he too must stand down. Renie and Dick, who had given up preparation & distribution prior to this year's appeal, were willing to continue in a "treasury" role. A PAO is appointed by HQ based on the recommendation of the local branch. A willing and able successor to Peter is now being sought.

Early indications are this year's collection will exceed last year's record total - a very fitting conclusion, Peter and Ken, to so many years devoted to the Poppy Appeal. Ω

Continued from P1

And time flies by, and the 20th Century - "our" century - is drawing to a close. Great advances have been made in nearly every theatre of human existence over the past 100 years: probably the most dramatic advances in any century in this millennium. We can now fly round the world in a matter of hours, we can talk to friends and relatives in distant lands at the touch of a button, we can receive pictures into our homes of events happening world-wide as they happen. We can travel in one hour our relatives in the last century would take a month to cover.

Unfortunately new diseases have appeared in both man and animals. Global warming and pollution problems will involve our scientists to their considerable limits - And we have managed in this century to kill more people as a result of wars than have been killed in the last millennium - and the killing goes on.....

So farewell to "our" Century and a guarded welcome to the next.

Oh! I nearly forgot - "A Happy and Meaningful Christmas to you all."

Bernard Halsall

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And just another interesting memory, Lieutenant Leslie Fenton DSC the Skipper of ML156 returned, but his boat had to be scuttled on the way back. He was an American, a well known Hollywood actor. His wife, who lived in Dartmouth at that time, was Anne Dvorak the very famous Hollywood film actress.

I remember Mr Editor lending you the book "The greatest raid of all" by C E Lucas Phillips. I know you were impressed with the book's great details, and read of the parts played by 2 of your former Army colleagues*. Any member is welcome to borrow this book - just ask!

* They were from the Liverpool Scottish and were mobilised with me in August 1939. Capt. Roy was awarded the D.S.O. (he led 2 Commando) and R.S.M. Alan Moss (M.I.D.). It's a small world!
..... Editor

Poppy Stall

This year the design of the Stall incorporated two computers presenting repeating Slide Shows, one illustrating the many conflicts in which the Forces have been involved & the other showing how the Legion helps those affected by those conflicts. Ω



Thank You, Rotary. Another contribution to help launch this year's Poppy Appeal was from the Market Harborough Branch of Rotary. The donation of £50 was from their fund-raising activities for local Charities.

Thank you, John Cox for donating the portrait of the RBL patron, HM The Queen, which is now displayed at Branch meetings

Continued on P3>>>

Remembrance

Most of us know the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall only as a moving TV spectacle. This year Andrew & Mrs Marriott had the wonderful experience of being in the audience. Though on a more modest scale, the Festival at the de Montfort Hall was an impressive event and a great credit to the County Organising Committee and all those taking part. Both our Standard Bearers were in the Muster, George Fleming leading the group representing "The Royal British Legion", and John Cox carrying the Husbands Bosworth colours. Members from that Branch and ours were taken to Leicester in the Community Vehicle driven by Gordon Adnett.

Nearer home, Armistice Day was observed at a simple but dignified ceremony at the Memorial in Welland Park, followed by one on the Square where wreaths were hung on the Gates to the Memorial Garden. The two minutes silence, marked by the



firing of maroons, was reverently observed by a large gathering of people on the Square, by those in vehicles halted by the Police and elsewhere throughout the town.

Continued on P 4>>>

Another Quiz Night. The Branch fielded a team at the Friends of C.A.B. event on 8th November. Team Captain, our Chairman Con Halsall said, "We didn't do very well but it was great fun". Sounds like the last Quiz!

Back Numbers of *In Touch & In Touch Too* can be reproduced @ 50p & 15p a copy. Also Index for Issues 1 - 18 @ 50p. Contact Tom Ashmore, MH 433108.

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105 sailors were killed, many were wounded and most of the remainder taken prisoner. 64 Commandos died, most of the others were taken prisoner. Amazingly 6 soldiers eventually reached Gibraltar and then rejoined their Units to fight again. What stories they could tell!

Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten said of the raid:

"I know of no other case in Navy or Military Annals of such effective damage being inflicted so swiftly with such economy of force, for in less than half an hour from the moment the "Campbeltown" rammed, all the Commando's chief demolition objectives were successfully achieved".

He continued: *"No fewer than five VCs were won at St Nazaire, surely by far the highest proportion of VCs ever awarded for a single operation; and this is the measure of the heroism of all who took part in that magnificent enterprise".*

I don't believe it will ever be known how many German and French personnel were lost. The delay between the "Campbeltown" ramming the dock and then exploding was considerable and in the interim period the ship and surroundings attracted many visitors!

Some 57 years after, I went to La Baule on holiday. Here was the War Cemetery where many of those who died at St Nazaire rested. As is so often the case, many of the graves were marked "An unknown sailor, known only unto God". Obviously chaps I had known. Able Seaman Bill Savage VC was not there. I learned after, through Tom Ashmore's effective

computer system, that he was taken home, obviously by ML 160 and buried at Falmouth. A hero's ending.

I did, however, view the grave of Sergeant T F Durrant VC. It was beautifully attended at La Baule cemetery and the Victoria Cross was engraved on his tombstone.

In a small way I was involved with the St Nazaire Raid. 42 very high awards were made to the sailors and quite a number were "mentioned in despatches", many posthumously. It was so rewarding to have dealt with the administration work involved with some of these awards. It was also painful to have dealt with the sadder business.

I've learned much about St Nazaire since 1942. Many of my Shipmates were heroes. I remained safely on this side of the ocean - I was no hero!

Shortly after St Nazaire I was drafted to the "proper" Navy. I joined HMS Anson in 1942, a ship which, in hindsight, must have greatly benefited from the Raid. We spent 2 years protecting Russian Convoys from such as the Tirpitz; an enemy ship which caused little trouble again.

When writing these notes, interesting and amusing memories flashed back to those days. I vividly remember Lieutenant Tom Boyd DSO, the skipper of ML160 coming into the office to report to the Captain of "Belfort". He was improperly dressed - a section of his cap was missing; it had been shot away!

Continued on P12>>>

"The Greatest Raid of All"

and other Wartime Memories of the Royal
Navy
by Dick Fulford

The F.S. Belfort was an elderly French Navy Seaplane Tender built in 1919. After the fall of France she joined our Fleet and was my first ship. I joined her in 1940 when she was alongside the China Clay jetty in Fowey & she eventually sailed to Dartmouth where she was moored in the middle of the River Dart between the Kingswear and Dartmouth ferry terminals.

She had been converted into a Depot & Repair ship for Coastal Forces - Administration, Engineering Workshops and Accommodation for spare crews - and me! She looked after some of the Royal Navy's small warships, MTBs, MGBs, MA/SB's and ML's - Motor Launches.

I had been in the Navy just three months. Fortunately the Captain's secretary was a raw recruit too so we muddled through. If this was an example of life in the Wartime Navy then I was all for it. Ashore most nights, duty frees, daily grog ration and weekend leave once a month. "A life on the Ocean Wave" - I was glad I joined!

But Alas! Their Lordships, unknown to all concerned, were planning something sinister, for in March 1942 there occurred what has since been referred to as "The greatest raid of all", the raid on the only enemy Battleship Dock on Germany's Western Seaboard at St Nazaire.

The Normandie Dock at St Nazaire was the only

one able to accommodate the TIRPITZ and Germany's other Capital Ships. To keep this menace away from our Atlantic shipping the Dock had to go. It was considered impregnable so had to be blown up. Yet situated at the mouth of the Loire, this seemed almost impossible.

HMS Campbeltown, an old expendable destroyer, was gutted and chosen to be the source of the explosion. She was packed with an enormous weight of explosives and manned with a chosen RN crew and Commandos to blow the whole of the dock and surrounding area to smithereens. And the 16 MLs plus one MTB and one MGB were chosen to escort her to the Loire from Falmouth and were then to act as rescue vessels after the raid.

The escort vessels were built of mahogany and ran on petrol! And because of the distance, extra petrol tanks were added. What chance did they have against a very heavily defended enemy river mouth!

However this daring night raid was planned for the night of March 28th 1942. "Into the jaws of death rode the 600" - in fact 611 men took part; 345 Navy personnel, 166 soldiers from 2 Commando, 91 forming demolition teams from the combined Commandos plus a medical party, 3 liaison officers and 2 Press representatives.

Success was overwhelming, for the Dock was out of use for 10 years, such was the destruction. Enemy Capital ships were never again able to reach out from Norway to destroy our Atlantic shipping. But sadly the cost was high for only one of the MLs (out of 16) returned to Falmouth.

Continued from P3

President Peter Wilson recited the Act of Homage and Kohima Epitaph, Last Post & Reveille were played and prayers were said by Rev. Chris Moody. There is no doubt that support for the two minute silence is growing.

In Market Harborough the Remembrance Sunday parade was led by the ATC Band and overall there was a good turn-out, especially of young people. However, it was disappointing that so few Branch members were able or willing to march. At the very well attended Service the lessons were read by Peter Wilson and Constance Halsall and Rev. Chris Moody gave an excellent sermon. The Last Post and Reveille was played beautifully by Peter Vine and two fellow members of Harborough Band.

In the villages, there were services and other acts of remembrance at which local Branch members will have been present, though we have not received details of these events. Ω

Lest we forget

We regret to announce the death earlier this month of Mr T Driver. Although seriously ill he decided he wished to join The Royal British Legion & became a Member in August this year. We extend our condolences to his widow and family.

From the Legion Electronic Mailing list we have learned of the death in a road accident in Northern Spain of two prominent members of the Costa Brava Branch. Messages of sympathy have been sent via the North Spain District Secretary.

Is the Branch ACFIO?

What on earth is ACFIO? It is how in a publicity leaflet a year or more ago, the Branch was said to be

- Active
- Caring
- Friendly
- Innovative
- Outward-looking

As the following Calendar shows there is no doubt that 1998/99 was an ACTIVE year. But what about C, F, I & O? These characteristics are very much a matter of individual judgement, so how do you rate the Branch?

Is ACFIO an appropriate set of characteristics by which to judge the branch? What is right and what is wrong with the branch? Let us know what you think. Let's get a bit of discussion going in these pages. Give the new Editor something to get his teeth into!! See P16

October

- 2nd 75th Anniversary Dinner - 57 attended
- 23rd Poppy Appeal Collections start
- 28th Pub lunch for 22 at The Countryman
- 31st Festival of Remembrance. Members & Standard Bearer go to de Montfort Hall

November

- 3, 6 & 7th Poppy Appeal Street Collection
- 6 & 7th Poppy Stall manned in Market Hall
- 8th Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service organised by Branch members
- 11th Wreath laying ceremonies in Welland Park & at the Memorial Gates. Good public response to 2 Minutes Silence

- 11th AGM - Ladies elected as Chairman & Secretary - Mrs Constance Halsall & Mrs Betty West.

Bernard Halsall becomes Editor of **In Touch**

- 25th New Service Committee elected.
- 27th Branch members attend Husbands Bosworth Annual Dinner.

December

- 1st Chairman & President interviewed on Local Radio
- 11 Wheelchair purchased for loan to members and other ex-Service people
- 14 Civic Reception & Le Légion d'Honneur presentation for Robert Cramp
- 16 Xmas lunch at The Countryman
- 31 Members attend funeral of Member Jack Stimpson & Standard carried.

January

- 13 Branch meeting followed by a Quiz.
- 23 Jack Quain Trophy for Endeavour presented at County Conference

February

- 10 Branch meeting + Talk by John Liddell

March

- 3 Informal Dinner at Boscots.
- 10 Branch Meeting + video presentation by John Clark, Husbands Bosworth
- 18 1st meeting of new Social Committee
- ? Branch represented at AGM of newly re-formed Stoke Albany Branch.
- ? Branch represented at meetings about Millennium plans & a community building
- 28 Members attend RM Band concert at de Montfort Hall

April

- 14 Branch Meeting + Buffet & display of Branch archives
- 20 Branch Luncheon at Welland Lodge

May

- 1 Coffee Morning at Harborough Theatre
- 12 Branch meeting + Hobbies evening
- 31 Poppy Appeal 1997/8 final total over £10,500 - a record
- ? Video of Légion d'Honneur ceremony presented by MH Movie Makers
- 20 Branch Luncheon at Welland Lodge

June

- 9 Branch Meeting + talk on Medals. RNA & RAFA members invited.
- 12 Stall at Carnival successful despite rain
- 21 Funeral of Robert Cramp - 7 members attend
- 26 Poppy Race Day at Newmarket. A great day out for Standard Bearer, Members & Friends.
- 30 CFO attends Committee meeting

July

- 6 Branch Lunch at Old Red Lion, Welham
- 14 Branch Meeting + "Characters & Coincidences" - members tales.
- 24 Coffee Morning - poor support & takings due to Holidays.

August

- 5 Novice Bowls afternoon
- 11 Branch meeting + a "Games" evening

September

- 7 Branch Lunch at Wheel & Compass
- 8 Branch meeting + Buffet & Chat
- 13 RAFA Quiz Night - 12 members attend
- 17 Long Alley Skittles & supper evening
- 19 Members attend Battle of Britain service & Parade. Chairman's son, Group Captain Halsall takes the salute

- ? Web-site passes 1000 visits mark (after frequent additions & improvements during the year). Ω

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION MARKET HARBOROUGH BRANCH

Proposed Social Events programme for the year 2000:

<u>JANUARY</u> 25th (Tues) Luncheon, venue to be announced	<u>JULY</u> 4th (Tues) Canal Trip / Picnic
<u>FEBRUARY</u> 18th (Fri) Beer & Skittles Evening, Kibworth 25th(Sat) Coffee Morning, Harboro' Theatre	<u>AUGUST</u> 8th (Tues) Luncheon, venue to be announced 25th Beer & Skittles Evening, Kibworth
<u>MARCH</u> 24 (Fri) Birthday Dinner, Golf Club	<u>SEPTEMBER</u> 3rd (Sun) 5-day Holiday to Normandy Outing to Poppy Factory
<u>APRIL</u> 4th (Tues) Luncheon, venue to be announced	<u>OCTOBER</u> 20th (Fri) Annual Dinner, Golf Club 28th (Sat) Coffee Morning for Poppy Appeal
<u>MAY</u> ?? Day Trip to Winchester	<u>NOVEMBER</u> Royal British Legion Week in Mkt Harboro
<u>JUNE</u> 6th (Tues) Luncheon, venue to be announced 10th (Sat) Coffee Morning, Harboro' Theatre ??? (Sat) Market Harborough Carnival	<u>DECEMBER</u> Christmas Dinner (an evening dinner this year)

As you can see, this quite an ambitious programme, and all these events are being thrown open to include RBL members and guests from our neighbouring branches who may like to join us.

The day trip to Winchester will include a stop-off at the War Museum at Middle Wallop and possibly a late tea at a Royal British Legion Club on the route home. The cost will not exceed £10 per head, and if we can fill a coach, it could be as little as £7.

The trip to the Poppy Factory is pretty well self-explanatory and the cost will be the same as above.

The 5-day Holiday in Normandy will be with Bowers Travel. The itinerary is: SUN. depart (9.10 am) for Folkestone for the Eurotunnel to Calais, and on to the Relaise Hotel, St Valery en Caux. MON. excursion to Bayeau and the Normandy Beaches. TUES. excursion to Monet's Gardens at Giverny. WED. at leisure or optional coach tour to Honfleur and Deauville. THURS. Home.

The cost is £189 p.p. There is a single room supplement of £58; and remember hotel prices on the Continent are bed and breakfast only.

Below you will find a questionnaire and we request that you fill this in and return it to a member of the Social Committee by the Branch Meeting on January 12th in order that we can get some assessment of the numbers interested in the events on the programme. By this means we will be able to judge whether or not it is worthwhile pursuing these outings and booking coaches, venues, etc.

I could be interested in taking part in the following:

	YES	NO
Day Trip to Winchester	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Trip to Poppy Factory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5-day Holiday in Normandy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Canal Trip / Picnic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Birthday Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annual Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christmas Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NOTE: This questionnaire does NOT commit you to anything at this stage. It is just to be used as a guide by your committee.

* or Post to

Mr Bob England
RBL Social Secretary
83 Cromwell Crescent
Market Harborough
Leics. LE16 9JW