

For Your Diary

- 20 May** Trip to Winchester & Museum of Army Flying. --- Coach departs **8 am Smiths Garage, Western Ave. 8.15 am M H Bus Station.**
(If you have not paid, please contact Bob England (MH 464288) ASAP.
- 20 May** Desborough Table-top sale - see p3
- 28/29 My** "Teas at Medbourne" - See p3
- 31 May** Branch Committee Meeting
- 10 Jun** Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre
- 14 Jun** Branch Meeting + "Millennium Week Plans & Progress"
- 15 Jun** A day on the Canal *(BYO picnic)
- 16-18 Jn** Ashley Millennium Weekend - see p3
- 17 Jun** Desborough Annual Outing - see p3
- 24 Jun** County ½-year Conference in RC Community Centre, Fairfield Road.
(Branch members welcome but please call Tom Ashmore - MH 433108)
- 12 Jul** Branch Meeting + event TBA
- 15 Jul** Visit to Duxford War Museum*
- 15 Jul** Music for a Summer Evening- see p3
- 8 Aug** Branch Lunch - Wheel and Compass, Weston-by-Welland*
- 9 Aug** Branch Meeting + Buffet
- 25 Aug** Beer & Skittles - Old Crown, Fleckney
- 26 Aug** Branch Committee Meeting
- 3 Sep** 5 day Holiday in Normandy*

* For details or to book please contact Bob England (MH 464288)

Legion Policy on Youth

As a result of current child protection legislation, as from 1st October, 2000, RBL youth activities will be limited to

- Youth Bands & majorette troupes
 - Affiliation of Branches with Cadet, etc. units
 - Promotion of youth educational sponsorship.
- No doubt we will be able to obtain advice on these matters from the County Youth Officer.

Andrew Marriott, our own Intrepid Cyclist, has just launched his appeal for sponsorship & hopes that we all will publicise his determination to raise over

£ 1500 for the **Poppy Appeal**

Contact him (when he's not training!) on MH 434805 for details

Mr B The Barber

14 St Mary's Road
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Appointments Available
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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 **14th June** when you will have the chance to find out what the Branch's Millennium Festival Week project is all about. It's exciting and ambitious and you've only had brief reports so far!



Reg. Charity No. 219279

The Royal British Legion Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



In Touch

Issue 25

May, 2000.

Editor -- Ray Tyler
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Branch Internet Web site at
<http://www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net>

Editorial

These lovely warm days remind me of visits to Freetown, Sierra Leone, in West Africa, during the 1940s. The locals were so happy with wonderful smiles. Now their faces show how sad is their world. Yes, we did have our yellow fever jabs, (unlike some Paras). Ouch!!!

We conclude the memoirs of Charles James, Légion d'Honneur, which tell of "being there" in France during the First World War, and his experiences during and after the Second.

From a very much younger author is a well written and moving article by Cadet Peter Claridge, of the local ATC Squadron., about his visits to WWI war cemeteries in Belgium. There, surely, is a strong connection with our Millenium Books of Remembrance and a reminder of the debate about whether the names of those who deserted and lost their lives, should appear on Memorials. Can we really understand the fear of those young men?

It was amazing to read about the Great Granddaughter of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife - the cause of the 1914 - 1918 World War - and her connection with Dieppe and the Second World War. We are indebted to *Navy News* for the intriguing story of this Student in London, an honorary member of the RNA.

This useful tip is from Sam Shutt

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We Must Always Remember

by Cadet Peter Claridge

1084 (Market Harborough) Squadron ATC

This was my third year to Belgium. This year I wanted to get something different out of it - I had a hunger to learn more about the events that took place between 1914 - 1918 in the Ypres Salient. As a result of the research done by the staff we visited a lot of cemeteries, but they were not just a resting place for the dead, they were bloody battle sites some 85 years past. Each cemetery has its heroes, each has a story to be told.

The words 'We shall remember them' will go down in 20th century history, and so they should. Everyone should know what sacrifice these men, some of them forced into war against their will, gave so that we could have our today.

There are two things I will remember about Belgium 2000. The first being the reaction of a cadet, who found a grave that could possibly have been their great grandfather. The way that this normally level headed cadet broke down shows how the deep scars of pain left in the wake of the Great War, still have not healed.

The second memory I will always have is the finding of a soldier with the same name as myself. Of all the British Cemeteries we visited, with nearly 100,000 graves and names between them, it was to be in the smallest of cemeteries where I found this grave. It is extremely unlikely that I am ever related to this man, but just to see your surname on a war grave is something to be experienced.

The carnage, death, torture, suffering and sacrifice of the Great War will never go away, we can only imagine what the soldiers of both sides gave for what they believed in. For this reason we must always remember the dead. Ω

Editor's Note

Each year the Band and other members of 1084 Squadron ATC, with members of Lutterworth Branch RBL, visit Poperinge in Belgium. They visit the WW1 Battlefields, War Cemeteries, attend the Menin Gate Ceremony and balance these emotional experiences with participation in the town's Carnival. In the July 1998 issue we published John Standish's account of that year's visit.



At the cemeteries they visit the Cadets place crosses at the graves of known relatives of people in this area. This year, one such relative was a lady who had given information for our Book of Remembrance. In this photograph, taken in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, a cross is placed at the grave of her uncle, Pte Bernard Carroll, 1st/5th Bn. Leicestershire Regt. who died age 18 on Tuesday, 10th August, 1915. Ω

News

May Branch Meeting. County Field Officer, Peter Locket, and new County Secretary, Mrs. Mo Watson had been invited to attend and to speak and answer questions about their roles. These are complementary, Peter dealing with Welfare and Fund-raising and Mo, membership administration and both covering Northants as well as Leics. & Rutland. Mo's job reflects the changes being made in the Legion structure and the phasing out of Regional Offices. We hope they were pleased that so many of you were present and to know that 40% of our members have actually met them. During the buffet several took the opportunity to chat with them informally. Yes! It was a good evening.

Welcome to new member, Robert Monk who raised a few friendly groans when it was revealed he had served in the Military Police. In fact most of his time was with the Leicesters. about which Regiment he has an extensive collection of information. *(What about a piece for In Touch, Robert? --Editor)*



Events by Other Branches

Ashley, Weston-by-Welland & Sutton Bassett

Teas at Medbourne - This annual event is held in the Village Hall on the Saturday and Sunday of the May Bank Holiday weekend. Take a run out between 3 and 6pm on 28th or 29th and meet our colleagues from "over the border".

Ashley Millennium Weekend 16, 17, 18 June
Visit their Branch Tombola stall in Hall Lane.

Quorn Branch

Saturday 15th July at 7.45pm

Music for a Summer Evening

Leicester Symphony Orchestra
Coldstream Guards Fanfare Trumpeters

Soprano Alessandra Tesai

Popular programme including Land of Hope and Glory, Rule Britannia, famous marches, the Sunset Ceremony and much more with

Grand Firework Finale

Bring your own picnic for a splendid evening in the grounds of Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse, near Loughborough.

Tickets £14 (£12 if booked before 7th July)
from Geoffrey Gibson, 2 Wallis Close,
Thurcaston, Leicester. LE7 7JS
Tel: 0116 235 0946

Desborough Branch

Table-top Sale - From 10am 20th May in the Co-operative Hall. Ideal for bargain hunters.

Outing to Bath - 17th June £8.50 Ring John Freeman, Rothwell 710319 to see if seats still available.

being able to review them all, with all the evidence.

2. With regard to the inclusion of individual names on War memorials:

This is and remains for the local authority (The War Memorials Acts apply here) and local community to decide. It is quite normal for the local RBL to be brought into the consultation, but as a local group with a legitimate interest and expertise in the matter. It is not for the Legion as a national organisation to comment and indeed it must accept the decision taken by its members in that local community. Each case must be judged on its merits, but ultimately it is the local council that decides. In the case of Shoreham, that is the Parish Council, which, I understand has decided to stand by its decision not to include the name of Thomas Highgate on the local memorial, but to consider the matter again in six months time, once again in the light of local opinion. Although the referendum organised by the vicar was in favour of inclusion, it came after the Parish Council decision and the turnout was extremely low and could therefore be construed as unrepresentative. (It is also worthy of note that Thomas Highgate is commemorated on another War Memorial in the locality).

Jeremy Lillies, Head of Public Affairs. Ω

Postscript

A section of the National Memorial Arboretum being created in Staffordshire will contain a semi-circle of 306 wooden posts each bearing the name of a WW1 executed soldier and fronted by a statue of a blindfold young soldier, in the likeness of 17 years old Private Herbert Burden, the youngest to be shot. Ω

Twists of Fate

“Two shots from a Browning automatic pistol fired by a 19 year old Serbian student today killed the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Duchess of Hohenberg, as they drove through the streets of Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia. Earlier, on their way to the Town Hall, a bomb was hurled at their car ...the Archduke picked it up and threw it into the road...”

Thus ran the press reports on 28th June, 1914.

85 years later, in July 1999, the newspaper, *Navy News*, carried an interview with the great grand-daughter of the Archduke, Her Serene Highness Princess Eva von Hohenberg, a 24 year old student in London and an honorary member of the Royal Naval Association.

Intriguing! Such were the complications of the politics and royal family relationships of 19th & early 20th century Europe, that though her great great grandfather was an ally of the Kaiser, her grandmother served in WW2 as a Naval Nursing Sister and her grandfather, Arthur Caesar as a Lieutenant in the Canadian Princess Patricia Light Infantry.

“Off Dieppe his ship was attacked and suffered heavy casualties. He was badly wounded and left for dead but he was carried to safety by an unknown Naval seaman.” He recovered, rose to the rank of colonel and at the end of the war married the Nursing Sister. Their daughter was Princess Eva’s mother. “I would not be here today but for the sailor who saved my grandfather.” Her regret is not knowing who that sailor was. Ω

Should his name appear on the Memorial?

By Ray Tyler

Members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives in the two Great Wars are being commemorated in different ways to mark the new millenium. We have our Books of Remembrance and, as in other places, the War Memorial at Shoreham in Kent is being refurbished. But they have a problem.

Britain entered the First World War on 4th August, 1914, and on 8th September 1914 a regular soldier aged 19 was shot for desertion. He was found "cowering in a shed far from the front line, in France". The problem at Shoreham was - should his name be included on their memorial? In a local referendum the great majority (of the small number who voted) were in favour of adding his name. The local R.B.L. branch, though split on the issue, opposed it.

This young man had two brothers who lost their lives in Action in France. The modern way of dealing with desertion is to be sent to a Detention Centre. Had this happened to this young man, he would have lived to tell the tale and there would have been no problem for Shoreham.

I would like to hear this problem being debated here. To allow desertion in wartime is very dangerous, but to kill is inhumane. What is the correct answer? When is fear the result of common sense and we all suffer from fear at times? We all value life, even if for a very short time. Then there was the boy's Mother who lost three sons - one with a dark cloud!
Should his name appear on the Memorial?

Local Problem - World-wide Interest

Following reports in the national newspapers and on TV in March, there was a lively debate on the Internet by members of the Legion Electronic Mailing List from around the world. In one contribution on 16th March 2000, the "Official" RBL position was given as follows,

1. Regarding pardons:

After the most recent Government statement the following was issued and is still valid:

24 July 1998

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION REACTION TO ARMED FORCES' MINISTER'S STATEMENT THIS MORNING

While The Royal British Legion welcomes the Armed Forces' Minister's statement in the House today and his expression of "deep regret", Dr Reid stopped short of granting the legal pardon the Legion has been seeking for some years for servicemen executed for cowardice during the First World War.

Legion members will be disappointed that a full pardon is not forthcoming since, as recently as last year, at its annual conference, they resolved that "in the light of current medical evidence, First World War service personnel executed for cowardice should be granted a pardon and called on the Legion National Council to bring renewed pressure on HM Government to take this action".

We must accept that a pardon is not practical, in the main due to the loss of files, partly as a result of enemy bombing during WWII, as it would be neither fair nor equitable to review cases without

Continued from p2

Letter of Thanks. George Fleming was very pleased to receive a letter from the daughter of our late member, Eileen Russell, whose death was reported in *In Touch, Too* last month, thanking him for the presence of the Standard at the funeral service. Every effort is made to honour in this way, any ex-service person, whether or not a Legion member, whose family wish it.

"The Tigers" is the first major history of the Leicestershire Regiment to be published since the 1930's. This story of the 6th, 7th, 8th & 9th battalions in the Great War is by Matthew



Richardson, a friend of our Kibworth member Stan Woolfenden. The book is published in hardback by Pen & Sword Ltd., @£16.95. Over 300 years of the regiment's history is portrayed in the The Royal Leicestershire Regiment

Gallery of the New Walk Museum, in Leicester, open 10am to 5pm weekdays & 2pm to 5pm on Sundays.

Poppy Appeal Organiser. A P.A.O. is not elected by members like other Branch Office holders but is appointed by H Q (normally on the recommendation of the Branch). It has now been confirmed that our new P.A.O. is Tom Jeacock. He has now taken over from Peter Wilson, who had held the office for many years. Tom can be contacted on MH 466829.

County Circular. The announcement that we are hosting the County Half-Yearly Conference pokes a little fun at the town of which we are so proud. We'll show the urbanites we are up with the future as well as having an enviable past!

Visit to Poppy Factory. If you would be interested in going, probably in September, please let Bob England know (Tel: MH 464288) Ω

Charles James, Légion d'Honneur

The concluding extracts from his memoirs.

The First World War went on for Private James and he was "in the thick of it". Several of his mates were injured or killed by shrapnel and on one occasion he waited while a party of officers passed by. A shell came over and killed them all. He was blown into an earth bank and was amazed to find himself completely unhurt. During the latter part of the war he suffered from gassing, and was hospitalised with shrapnel wounds but survived to be demobbed in January 1919. He often suffered nightmares.

After being demobbed he decided to find a full time job, but the problem was the number of unemployed. He started work with the Railway at Oundle Station as a porter in January 1919, but in August of that year he transferred to work with signals at Welham Junction. He worked with the Railway until he retired.

In January 1921 he married Amy - the marriage lasted 65 years - and two years later their son was born and later on they had a daughter. Both children did very well at Grammar School. The rent of the little cottage, where they lived for 14 years, was two shillings and sixpence a week.

Charles wrote in his memoirs "When Children were evacuated from London in September 1939 we had two boys billeted on us. There were allotments at the back of our house and these London Kids started running all over them until we stopped them. They did not know that potatoes and carrots grew in the ground. They always got them from barrows."

In uniform in World War 2, Charles served in the Home Guard as Platoon Sergeant. He recalled, "We could recognise the sound of Wellingtons from the drome going out and returning. On one occasion a Wellington came down, near by, on fire. Looking out of the signal box I saw a man with no shoes, with thorns in his feet. He had been a member of the crew who had been ordered by the Captain to jump. I phoned to say we had a member of the crew who needed help with an ambulance."

"One afternoon I heard a Jerry plane. It was following the railway line and dropped a bomb just wide of the sidings. He machine gunned the signal box damaging equipment"

"In 1941 our son joined the R.A.F. and trained as a navigator, although he had arranged to go to University to read Maths. He was sent to South Africa to finish his training, promising to send a telegram when he passed his finals. A telegram did come which said - Regret F.C. James died of injuries received in a flying accident - on May 7th 1942. He had passed his final examinations"

As a local Serviceman who died in WW2, Charlie James' son's name is on the Market Harborough Memorial Gates. He is also honoured in the Book of Remembrance now being produced in the Branch. In this the inscription reads

Leading Aircraftman Felix Charles James
Obs. U/T Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 19 on Thursday, 7th May 1942
Remembered with Honour
at East London (East Bank) Cemetery, Eastern Cape,
South Africa

Leading Aircraftman James was the son of
Charles and Amy Mabel James of Market Harborough

"The day I was 65 - September 25th 1962 - I was called to see the area manager and receive a scrap of paper and a handshake. One had to have 45 years service to get a watch, and I had done 43 years and 8 months. I had retired from work".

On his 100th birthday he had a wonderful party and received a telegram from H. M. the Queen. In his latter years his eyesight failed rather badly and very little could be done to help. He was presented with the Légion d'Honneur Medal by Lt. Col. Roffey on 8th February, 1999 for service in France in World War 1. It had to be placed into his hand so that he could feel it.



Mrs Marjorie Cowens proudly sees her father wearing the medal Lt. Col. Roffey had presented to him.

Charles James, Légion d'Honneur, died peacefully on 10th July 1999, aged 101.

During his life he gave a lot of his time to many societies and groups of people, and always expressed thanks to his Lady Wife and family for the support they had given to him. Ω