

For Your Diary

- 28th Mar. Royal Marines Band Concert at de Montfort Hall.
Ticket holders please note the bus leaves the Conservative Club at 6.30pm sharp.
- 14th Apr. 7.30pm Branch Meeting. See p17
- 1st May* Coffee morning at Harborough Theatre. Offers of help on the day, of contributions to Cake Stall, Tombola, and Raffle needed. Please contact Bob England - see below for phone

5th May* Coach outing (subject to sufficient support) to Frogmore House & Gardens in the private grounds of Windsor Castle (open to the public on only 6 days a year). Tickets £13

If interested ring Bob England urgently.

- 12th May Branch Meeting & Hobbies evening. Bring along examples of a hobby or interest. Prizes!
- 12th Jun* Market Harborough Carnival. Help and contributions needed as above.
- 26th Jun* Poppy Race Day at Newmarket - Coach outing - See Panel on p.17
- 24th Jul* Coffee Morning
- 31st Jul* Royal Tournament - details still awaited but contact Bob England if interested.

Other events will be announced when they are arranged.

* For more information and with offers of help please contact Bob England (MH 464288 between 4.30 pm & 8pm)

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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.

At the next meeting, on 14th April, after the usual short business session, there will be a Buffet and Branch archives will be on display. Few early records exist but now they are produced with future interest in mind.

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The Royal British Legion
Market Harborough
Branch
Founded in 1923

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75
Years of Caring

In Touch

Issue 18

March, 1999.

Editor - Bernard Halsall
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Branch Internet Web site at
<http://members.xoom.com/MktHarbroRBL>

Editorial

The Branch was saddened when our Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Mr George Fleming announced he was retiring from the posts he had filled with such confidence and efficiency for some years. Happily George will continue to be our Standard bearer and for that we are both pleased and proud. Meanwhile we thank you George for your services to the Branch, so happily and freely given.

Also retiring from the Committee was Mr Gordon Adnett. Gordon is one of our longest serving members and a past Chairman. Gordon has served on the Committee for a number of years and never failed to support the various efforts of the branch. Justifiably regarded as Mr Dependable when any helpers were required (sometimes the only helper) we thank you Gordon for your staunch support.

In the January issue we published a piece by our regular contributor, Mr Bill Cotton headed "Play the Game", and asked if anyone knew who had written the poem. Our esteemed President, Peter Wilson rang the Editor on the day we published, with the answer. Three other members also responded.

The title of the poem is "In Vitae Lampada" by Sir Henry John Newbolt 1862- 1934. Peter also pointed out the following "errors"

Line 1 *close* should start with a capital C

Line 5 *yet* should read *and*

Line 7 *spoke* should read *smote*

Sherlock Holmes had nothing on Peter!



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Overdue Account

by Hotspur

In the 1950's I was a Corn Merchant, dealing with local farmers, supplying feed for their stock, selling them seed corn and fertilisers and buying their grain. All of which involved considerable capital, providing little profit.

I had a customer called Mrs Hazlegreen. She was the wife of "someone in the city", living in a huge house they had converted from two barns and outbuildings, once owned by a departed farmer. As a pastime Mrs Hazlegreen kept about 130 pigs, and I supplied the food - by the ton. Some farmers preferred to pay when the stock had been sold at market. With pigs this could be up to 18 weeks from birth.

Checking the accounts one weekend I found Mrs H. Was owing £1,704 - 16- 4, going back four months. So Monday morning at 9 o'clock I set off with my receipt book for her mansion.

Affably greeted and ushered into the "drawing room" Mrs Hazlegreen and I discussed the various difficulties of "cash flow", delayed payment, pig market prices and the weather whilst drinking some very pleasant coffee. At what I considered an appropriate opportunity I produced my receipt book and started to fix the carbon prior to filling in the date.

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"Oh!", said Mrs H., "You will have a small drink?", whereupon producing a half pint glass and filling it with sherry. Immediately I formed a plan - drink half the glass in one go, complete the receipt and tell Mrs H. the full amount required on the cheque. Successfully I completed part one, but as I fumbled with my receipt book, Mrs H. topped up the glass - my line of retreat had been blocked.

In truth I remember little after that, except saying to my esteemed customer about one hour later, "Don't you worry about the account Mrs Hazlewhite. I will call again when it is not so foggy." It was with great difficulty that I drove the 3 miles back to the office. Luckily it was lunch time and the office was closed!

Mrs Hazlegreen paid next month with no problems.

Some thoughts from the Middle Watch

More philosophy from our Naval
Correspondent, Bill Cotton

- *Hard work never killed anyone, although it scares some people to death.*
- *You'll never get dizzy by doing good turns.*
- *Don't expect people to see eye to eye with you if you look down on them.*

News

Social Committee Formed at the March Branch meeting. Bob England was confirmed as Social Secretary, with Gordon Adnett, Irene Blissett, John Cox, Andrew Marriott and Sam Shutt as members. They will be responsible for arranging social events with and for Members, but to be successful they need to know what outings and other activities you would like. They will also need your active support and participation in what they do arrange.

"The Boscobash", the informal dinner on 3rd March was a great success judging by the way all 31 people present seemed to be enjoying themselves. Thank you Tony Johnson for an enjoyable evening, a worthy addition to your well supported lunches (which we hope will be continued).

March "Après meeting" . John Clarke, of Husbands Bosworth Branch showed a video film and spoke about the work in which he had been involved, in the decontamination of Gruinard Island of the Anthrax spores released there experimentally in WW2. The presentation emphasised what a deadly biological weapon Anthrax would be.

Wilbaston and Stoke Albany Branch. A message of support had been sent, following reports that efforts were being made to revive their branch. The result has been an exchange of visits and the mutual wish for co-operation in the future (some joint social events, perhaps?).

Carnival Stall. Space has been booked on the Show ground, similar to that of the last two years. Let us hope that the dreadful weather of 1998 will not be repeated on 12th June, 1999!

More News

Community Meetings attended. At a meeting called by the District Council, Betty West obtained information about grants available for Millenium projects. It has yet to be decided if the Branch should devise a project and apply. (It has been suggested that there should be some form of co-operative effort with the other ex-service organisations. So far there is a lack of specific ideas on what could be done which was of benefit to the community. If you have a suggestion, please write to the Editor.)

Discussion at a recent meeting about the proposed Community Building showed that the different requirements of the voluntary groups made it unlikely that a single building could be found in the short term. However, the Branch will maintain an interest in future developments.

War Pensions. The current issue of Legion-Letter contains a reminder that anyone who suffered injury as a result of service in the Armed Forces may apply for a "War Pension". The use of the word *War* is misleading - the injury or disability need not have occurred in a "War". Welfare Officer, Ken Purdy (MH 440623) is the person to contact if you have any questions on eligibility or Legion help available to claimants.

Bernard Page is an independent sort of fellow and it was only by chance that our Chairman heard that he had been in hospital. Ken Purdy who is "keeping an eye on" him, says Bernard would appreciate the occasional visit from fellow members to relieve the boredom and loneliness now he is unable to get out (but call him first on MH 466500).

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow:
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from falling hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

No poem about war and the killing of soldiers is more cited than this one! It grew into a symbol of sacrifice and lies at the origin of Poppy-day in Great Britain: war veterans spread red poppies over the countless war tombs and sell them to help crippled comrades. At the other side of the former front line, we visited another touching monument of unforgettable sadness: the famous statue of Katha Kollwitz at the German war cemetery of Vladslo. K. Kollwitz sculptured it in memory of the needless killing of her beloved son Peter. I never felt more close to the emotions of desperate grief expressed by that sober statue of mourning parents! Really worth while to pay a visit! So you see that our countryside keeps a lot of remembrances to the Great War, in which countless of young people died for the sake of bringing peace to Europe. In spite of their sacrifice however, even nowadays such war scenes remain in everyday headlines! It seems as if contemporary generations keep on forgetting the past!

Lere Van de Sande

In the Church yard

Here lies Henry Hardwick, who,
By a cricket ball was struck
and on his stone is written:

Hardwick
Hard Ball
Hard Luck

*With acknowledgements
to the (unknown) author.*

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Old School Ties

by Tom Ashmore

Like many other Grammar Schools my alma mata no longer exists. It was absorbed into what has become Hinchingsbrooke School, a large Comprehensive in Huntingdon. It has kept many links with the past - Cromwell, Montague, Pepys and Vesey are still the names of the Houses, the school magazine is still "The Huntingdonian", it is built on part of what was the home estate of the Earls of Sandwich and where we had football and cricket pitches, and those leaving school today can join the Old Huntingdonians' Association, to which I still belong.

But it is the scale of things which is so different. HGS had about 350 pupils when I left in 1941, today, the annual intake is greater than that. We had a History master, they have a History department, we had a "Library" - a few bookcases in the 6th Form room (itself the school where Cromwell sat!), they have a "Learning Resources Centre".

Teaching has changed too. Our Dr. Clayton used to try to fill us with dates and names and got as far as Napoleon. Now WW1 is part of the National Curriculum. We might have had a book in the library which described the Battle of Waterloo, they have videos, CD's, and access to the Internet to learn about the Somme & Vimy Ridge. What is more many of the pupils have actually been to such places.

Hinchingsbrooke, like many other secondary schools, has its own Internet web site, and very good it is, too.

Duncan Grey, the Head of Learning Resources who runs it with help from students has developed a particular interest in WW1 and a comprehensive section of the site is called "The Battlefields". It includes notes by some of the pupils who went on the History Field trips but what I find of particular interest are the essays about WW1 by students of a Belgian school which Grey contacted. I have selected just one of these excellent pieces.

from Lore Van de Sande

Mentioning World War One brings about a lot of sad feelings to many senior citizens in my countryside.

Indeed, near to Tielt, where I live, one finds some of the greatest battlefields of this Great War : Ypres,

Passendale, Diksmuide, the battlefield of the Yser, etc...

More than 70 years later everyday life in Flanders still shows visible scars of the horrible combats that took place in those days. At Diksmuide, for instance, one can visit remains of trenches, suitably called Trenches of the Death. On old, blanched photographs I saw thousands of young soldiers living and fighting day and night in those muddy dugouts. What a frightening times they must have gone through!

Last summer my father took me on a visit to the battlegrounds of the Yser and the countless neighbouring war cemeteries. It really shocked me to see such a lot of crosses and memorial stones. I cannot stop thinking of all those young boys perishing under heavy gunfire, shell explosions or poison gas. Daddy recited me a famous poem written by a certain John McCrae, lieutenant-colonel and surgeon at the Ypres front. It is entitled "In Flanders fields" and gives a striking description of the immense bloodshed and despair in these days.:

The Royal Engineers

From: Christopher Toplis
<christopher.toplis@bt.com>
To: 'The Legion Mailing List'
Subject: The Royal Engineers

Dear Members

Can anyone tell me how the RE came to be known as the 'Corps' of Royal Engineers? Was it during the Great War and why? I know an old sapper (8th Army) and he can't remember the exact details. I know there will be someone out there who will be able to give me the 'nith' detail!

regards
Chris

From: Martin Stoneham
<martin@stoneham.org>
To: legion@londonweb.net

The answer is 26 May 1716, when a Corps of 28 engineer officers was established. The Royal title did not come until later - 1812. Although some might say it was 17 October 1756 when Corps of Royal Sappers & Miners (soldiers) was incorporated into the Corps of Royal Engineers (officers). Much more information available if needed.

Martin (Ex Sapper 1963 to 1970).

This is an example of the many useful question & answer exchanges circulated to those on the RBL Electronic Mailing List. Anyone with access to the Internet who "visits" the RBL Web site can ask to be included on the list. The result is information, ideas and opinions from people in many different parts of the world. We will publish from time to time, other items of general interest. ---Editor

Food for Thought (Part 2)

by Melvyn Mullin

(Continued from *In Touch* Issue 17)

I can only talk of my own experiences in the Army. Because it is a fighting force the Army teaches servicemen how to use violence and weapons of destruction in the course of their training. It impresses upon us how to direct our aggression to an "enemy" and how to suppress our feelings. Once we have served our time, it turns us out onto the streets without so much as a debrief to show us how to conduct ourselves in our new environment, civilian life, with its many different demands.

It is a fact that around 25% of the homeless on the streets of Britain are ex-servicemen, that 80% of service marriages end in divorce and 25% of ex-servicemen and women turn to alcohol. These are proven by statistics that we can read in our respected papers such as the Times and also from the comments made by doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists who have to deal with these men and women.

Our Army is unable to attract enough men to join and it is also unable to persuade enough serving members to serve beyond the minimum 3 years despite the bonuses they have on offer. This shortfall is in the "Teeth" arms, mostly Infantry, that in war do all the "fighting". "Overstretch" is effecting our armed forces and this in turn does not help in keeping army families together. Now they are bolstering the understrength units with Gurkhas to make up the shortfalls. They are also encouraging more women than before to join and the numbers are rising - they are even contemplating allowing them to serve in Forward Combat Zones because it is claimed they are more likely to

carry out attacks - what are our women letting themselves in for?

Previously any drug offence would bar you from joining the Army, so would tattoos on the hands. Now, due to the shortfalls, cannabis, ecstasy and heroin convictions will not preclude your entry; theoretically you can get in.

Why is this? It is because of the treatment of our ex-servicemen and also those who are serving. Look at what happened to men serving in Bosnia a few years ago. Some of them were served with redundancy notices whilst serving for Queen and Country on an Active Service tour. No wonder they are disillusioned. Britain's armed forces are by universal acclaim the finest in the world. They are tougher than the Israelis, more professional than the Americans, more decent and humane than the Russians, according to Peter Osborne of the Express newspaper. The average age of the soldiers in the Falklands was 19 and what a good job they did too!

One of the plans for a future approach for manning the Army of the Future is called the Army's Human Resources strategy (HRS) and it has been under development by the Adjutant General, for the Army, since the beginning of 1997. The stated aim of the HRS is "...to provide the strategic framework within which coherent and effective human resources policies can be actioned in order better to deliver the human element of fighting power... The army already has a plan in place to achieve a fully-manned Army by the year 2002. The HR strategy addresses the needs of servicemen and women in the Regular Army, the TA and Regular Reserves in the longer term so that the current work will not be undermined. The strategy recognises that retaining high quality

people in a career first choice is the key to success". Sounds good doesn't it -- but what about when they have finished with us?

The final part of Melvyn Mullin's unusual but thought provoking contribution will appear in the May issue of In Touch.

Congratulations

From: Colin Coley
<ccoley@globalnet.co.uk>
To: Mark Hudson
<mark@mrhudson.freemove.co.uk>
Date: 03 January 1999 09:41
Subject: Web Site

Dear Mark,

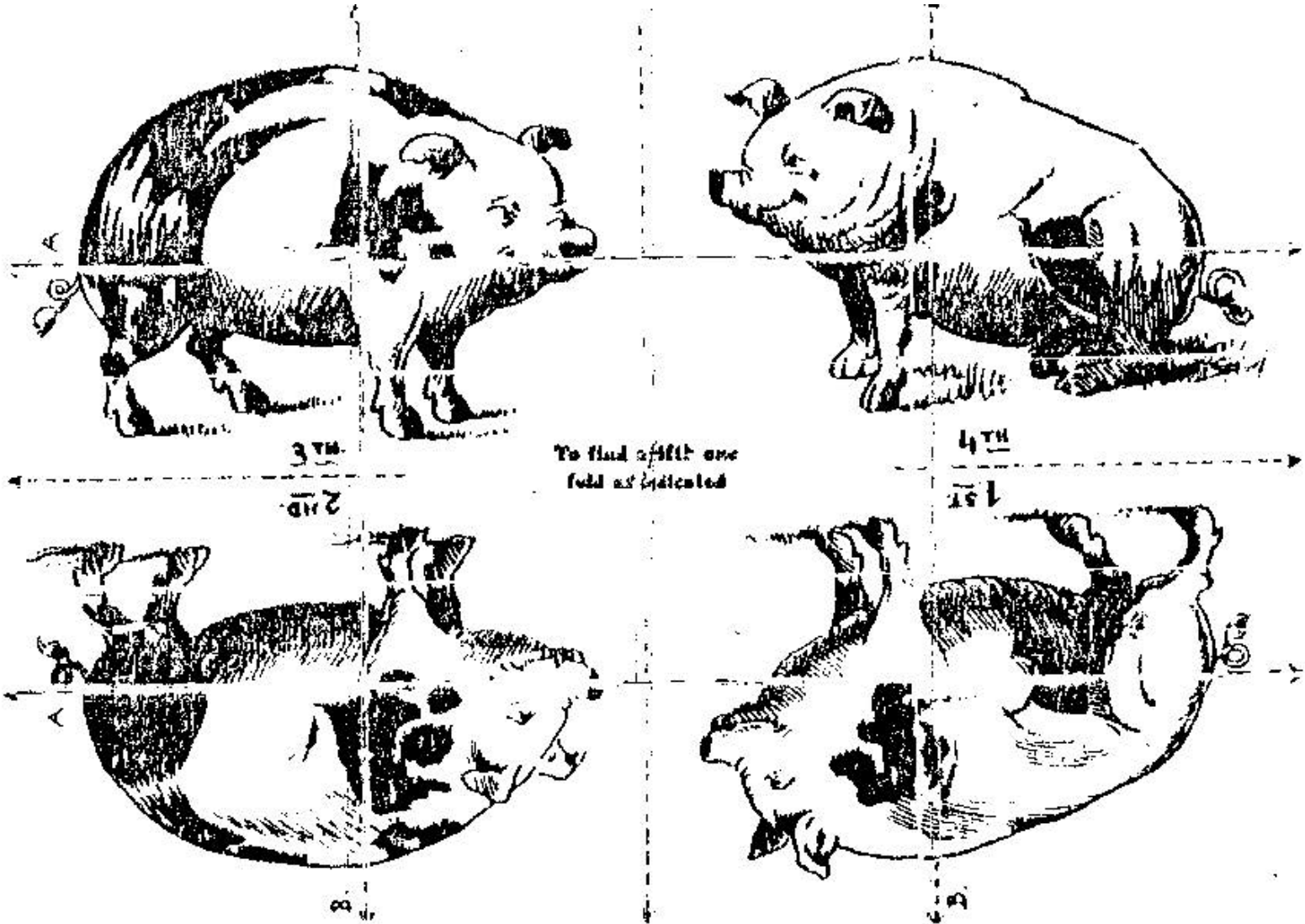
To introduce my self, I am the Branch Secretary at Shirley Royal British Legion (Warwickshire). Shirley is in Warwickshire in RBL terms, but is in Solihull, West Midlands by postal address.

I just wanted to congratulate you on creating an excellent site for Market Harborough Branch. I will be looking at your site again and printing up sections to show my fellow Committee Members.

Best wishes for 1999, to all at Market Harborough Branch.

Regards, Colin.

This is an e-mail message which Mark received early this year. Recently, Colin Coley has written to say that Shirley Branch are to have their own Web site and "Mark, please can you help us design it"!!



5 PIGS - A Wartime Puzzle

Fold the paper to find the fifth pig.

A prize to the first Member to phone the Editor with the correct answer.

Fold inwards along long central line. (is along the page)

Fold outwards along one of lines A A

Fold inwards along short central line (is across the page)

Fold outwards along one of lines B B