

# Poppy Day 1996

## An Urgent Appeal

There is a pressing need for **Poppy Day Collectors**; "On the streets" on 8th & 9th November and "House to House" at times during the period 26th October to 9th November.

Did you know that we have only 21 "House to House" collectors (most are over retiring age!) for the whole of Market Harborough and the Bowdens? Therefore, well over half of the area is not covered.

Last year only 13 "Street Collectors" were available for the two days allowed.

In spite of these low numbers over £9000 was collected in 1995. Just think how much more could be raised this year if more help is available.

So, please help and try to persuade others to do so. Younger people (they must be over 16 years old), and those who are not members of the Legion, would be especially welcome. Please ring Peter Wilson on 464585 or Dick Fulford on 431515, who are anxious to enrol volunteers.

## Coffee Morning

Betty & Tom Jeacock are organising a Coffee Morning in aid of Branch Funds. It will be held at **The Old Grammar School on Saturday, 17th August** from 9.30 am.

Coffee will be available upstairs in this historic building, whilst below there will be stalls for Books, Bric-a-Brac, Cakes, Preserves, etc. & other donated but saleable items. There will also be a raffle. Please let Betty & Tom know if you can donate items for the stalls or prizes for the raffle. Offers of help will also be much appreciated. Ring them on MH466829

## Pilgrimages Video

It is hoped to show after the meeting on **12th September**, a 40 minute video about the work of Pilgrimages Department and some of the War Cemeteries visited during the last 10 years. This should be of particular interest to those who have made a visit or have considered doing so.

## Meetings

Regular meetings are held on the **Second Thursday** of each month at 8pm in the Conservative Club Building, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough. They are normally in the upstairs lounge (unfortunately there is no lift). The next meeting will be on **12th September** and we hope that you will be able to attend & stay for the Video (see above).

Mr & Mrs F T Ashmore  
9 The Pastures  
Market Harborough  
Leics.  
LE16 9EA

THE ROYAL  
LEGION

# In Touch

## The Newsletter

for  
Members  
of

**Market Harborough Branch  
The Royal British Legion**

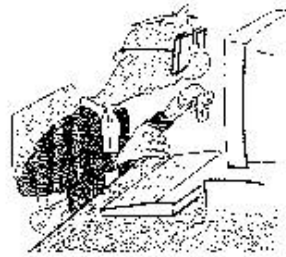
Issue No. 2

August 1996

Editor - Tom Ashmore  
9 The Pastures, Market Harborough,  
LE16 9EA

Tel/Fax 01858 433108

## Editorial



The first issue was, inevitably, experimental in format, content and style. I have not been told that I got it completely wrong (though I inadvertently

promoted our present Parade Marshall. My apologies, Sgt. Maj. Lane.). So on the strength of the compliments I did receive, Issue 2 looks much the same as Issue 1.

What is new is the first of a series of themes covered by short but I hope interesting pieces contributed by someone other than your Editor. This time, Dick Fulford has written about his visit to the grave of an uncle killed in France in 1918. Prompted by his story, I decided to find out where my father's brother lies and I describe the procedure for locating a War Grave. Then there is some information about Legion Pilgrimages.

Items of interest gleaned from the (usually two) meetings between Issues should continue to appear but what I would really like to include is a lively letters page. Who will ride the first hobby-horse?

As far as possible delivery will continue to be by hand and I must thank Dick Fulford & Tom Jeacock for sharing this job with me. As a comparative newcomer to the Branch, I have found it particularly rewarding to meet and be welcomed by members I did not know. It has added real meaning to the Newsletter's title.

## Meetings News

The July and August meetings were attended by 26 & 29 members, respectively, the most for many months.



### New Branch Members.

We are delighted to welcome five new members to the Branch:

Mr Ken Purdy, who has recently moved to Market Harborough, was previously a member of the Barr Hill (Cambridgeshire) Branch and is also a member of the RAFA.

Mr Stuart Ferns, who as a post WWII soldier, served in the Grenadier Guards.

Mrs Barbara Cruickshank, who served in the WRAF and subsequently in the TA.

Rev Chris Moody, our new Branch Chaplain, joins as an Associate Member.

Keith Ryan (sorry Keith, I forgot to ask for your two line autobiography!)

### Presentation

At the July meeting President, Peter Wilson, presented a Royal British Legion stole to Chris Moody to wear whenever he officiates as Branch Chaplain.

## **Weston Park**

Phew! What a scorcher it was on Saturday, 20th July. But what a wonderful outing. Truly a day to remember. In the last newsletter I called it "The Weston Park Spectacular" and so it was, from the Pembrokeshire Toy Soldiers (youngest soldier just 4 years old!) which started the day to the finale with Beating the Retreat with bands from the RAF, RBL & Army Cadet Force and fireworks giving star-shell & canon accompaniment to the climax of Beethoven's 1812 Overture.

For many, the highlight of the day was the Service of Dedication of the new RBL and Women's Section Standards, when 450 Legion Standards massed in front of Weston Park House to form an impressive backdrop to the ceremony. This was followed by a March Past at which the salute was taken by Sir Peter de la Billiere (who had commanded the British forces in the Gulf War), accompanied by 3 holders of the Victoria Cross and 4 of the George Cross, all R B L members. From the spectators' point of view it would have been better if the march past had been in the main arena (I might then have spotted our Standard Bearers George Fleming and John Cox), but this would have meant all those in the parade standing in the hot sun even longer.

The coach trip, too, was a success. The 35-seater was very comfortable, the driver competent and helpful, the hospitality and meal at the Bedworth ex-servicemen's club most welcome and the raffle well supported. Congratulations and thanks to Gordon Adnett, George Fleming & John Cox for arranging it all and to members & friends for deciding to make the trip. Those of you who did not come missed a great day out!

## **R B L 75th Anniversary Souvenirs**

Many who went to Weston Park may have thought as I did that to have to pay £3.95 for a programme was a bit steep. In fact the programme was free and included with a book called "75 More Years". This is a fascinating, very well produced and illustrated publication of some 120 pages covering the past, present and future work of the Legion. It also includes authoritative articles on some of the major conflicts from the Somme to the Gulf, the aftermath of each of which has called for care and support from the Legion.

I understand that the book should still be available at £3.95 + 75p P & P from the publishers Strategems Ltd,  
Mairfair House, 40 South Audley Street,  
London, W1Y 5DH Tel: 0171 495 8662.

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### **RBL (Marketing) Ltd. Offers**

You may have seen in the July/August issue of "The Legion" the advertisements for a range of souvenirs celebrating the 75th Anniversary. John Cox showed two of these, the tie and the silver medallion at the last meeting. I thought the medallion was particularly fine, but have a word with John (MH434983) for his opinion. Buying by Mail Order is always a bit of a gamble so if anyone else has bought any of the other items please let us know whether you would recommend them.

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## *A Pilgrimage to France*

by Dick Fulford

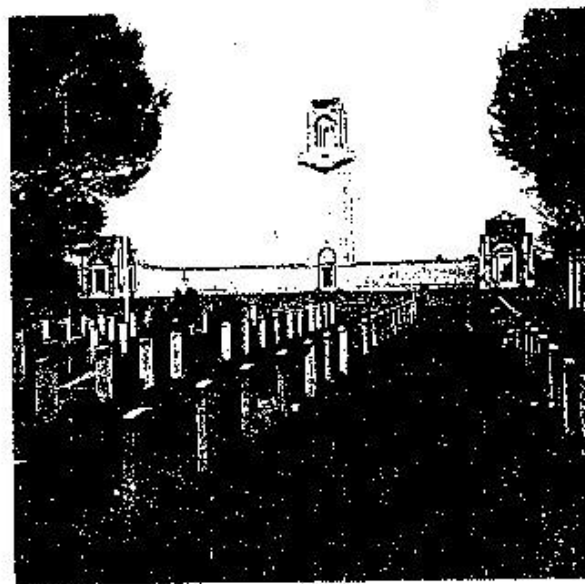
My uncle at the age of 28, was killed on 10th August, 1918; Armistice, as we all know was 11th November, 1918; his daughter, my cousin, was born on 5th December, 1918. I was only one year old at the time, so I have never understood the agony my Aunt had to endure and the agony suffered by countless thousands because of the horrors of the Great War of 1914 - 1918.

Some 78 years have passed, during which time no family members have visited his grave. For emotional reasons only, my Aunt and Cousin felt they could never do so. Before she died, my Aunt said that if I should ever be in the Somme Department of France, she could let me have details of the War Cemetery where he rested. But I never went when she was alive and my cousin still declines although she has given me all the details which were supplied by the War Graves Commission.

So, with my two sons, I went to VILLERS - BRETONNEUX in May of this Year. I was more than pleased that they asked to come with me as I felt that three following generations would ensure that Uncle George will still be remembered.

VILLERS - BRETONNEUX in the Somme Department of France is a few miles south of CORBIE, of all places! It is easy to locate as it is not far from AMIENS. I contacted the French Tourist Office in AMIENS and was sent, free of charge, a very informative booklet "The Battlefields of the Great War" together with a map of the Somme region and details of the numerous cemeteries.

Finding the village and then the cemetery, presented no problems and with the aid of the War Graves Commission information, we were able to locate Uncle George's grave immediately. It was a beautiful place; each grave immaculately tended and surrounded by flowers and the vast lawns were kept as perfect as any bowling green. It is an Australian War cemetery though Uncle George was not an Australian. He was a Sergeant in the London Rifle Brigade, a unit which had fought alongside the Australian Army. He was killed at VAUX - SUR - SOMME, a few miles north at the side of the actual River Somme; he was buried in the VAUX village graveyard but re-interred a few years later in his final resting place at VILLERS - BRETONNEUX.



A visit to a cemetery such as this is with mixed feelings. One thinks of that awful war and then one is faced with the present day serenity of the

place. Uncle George has a grave; but most of those who died have their names engraved on the Memorial Building as having "no known grave". So many others were in graves marked "known only unto God".

Each of us had taken Poppy Crosses and Peter Wilson, our Poppy Appeal Organiser, had provided me with a Poppy Spray. In silence we placed these on the grave, took photographs and then walked among the graves alongside. It was a moving occasion and I was so glad, that at last, some members of the family had been able to pay their respects.

We stayed overnight so we were able to spend some time in the area. A visit to the tiny village of VAUX-SUR-SOMME, where he fell, was memorable. The great River Somme and surrounding fields and woods are beautiful. Yet one can only guess what the same area was like some 80 years ago. On a lighter note and recalling that the cemetery at VILLERS - BRETONNEUX was Australian, the village cafe was named "LE KANGAROU", typical of French humour. In very different mood, a plaque had recently been placed within the large cemetery Memorial Building saying that the monument and some graves had been attacked by the same enemy in the Second World War. Most had been rebuilt and repaired but some damage had been deliberately left by the French just to remind us of "man's inhumanity to man".

We left mindful of the words on all of our War Cemeteries "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE".

## Another Uncle George

by Tom Ashmore

Since I was a child I have thought of the War memorial in my native village of Bluntisham-cum-Earith as rather special for it bears the name my uncle killed in the first World War. I was invited by the Vice Chairman of the local branch of the Legion to attend their Service of Remembrance last November when wreaths would be laid at the memorial by members of the families of the men from the villages who died in the Second World War. But standing there my thoughts went back a generation to the uncle I had never known and wondered where his own memorial was. Now I know.

### Tracing a War Grave

I asked our President, Peter Wilson how to make the necessary enquiries. "Contact the Commonwealth War Graves Commission", he said and gave me their address, phone & Fax numbers. I rang. "Do you know his Service Number?". No, all I knew was what appears on a family tree I prepared some years ago:-

*Arthur George Ashmore,*

*born 22/7/1899, died 31/8/1918*

I believed he was killed in France and was probably a Private, possibly in an East Anglian Regiment.

The Commission's records do not include date or place of birth nor first names, only initials. They had no A G Ashmore but they did have a G A Ashmore who was killed on 31/8/1918. My father used to refer to his younger brother as George, so I am sure this is him. I was told his

Service Number, that he was a Private in the 1st Bn East Surrey Regiment, his Grave is No.2, in Row H, in Plot 1 of Vaulx Hill Cemetery near the village of Vaulx-Varucourt, 6 Km northeast of Bapaume in the Pas de Calais.

All this precise data was produced from the minimal and misleading information I had provided and all during a phone call lasting less than 10 minutes. Marvellous!

So if you want to locate someone's War Grave, ring the Commission on 01628 34221 and ask for Records. If you have the person's Service Number, the correct initials & surname and the date of death your phone call should be even shorter than mine! If you need any other advice or help with your search, I am sure Peter Wilson will be pleased to assist you.

### Pilgrimages

The R B I. Pilgrimages Department organises visits to war graves in cemeteries overseas both for conducted groups and for individual war widows. In the latter case the Ministry of Defense pays seven eighths of the cost of a widow's first visit. Help with the remainder may sometimes be available from Legion funds.

Pilgrimages arranged for the rest of 1996 include those to:-

Normandy	19 - 23 Aug	Aden	24 Oct & 1 Dec
NE India (Kohima/Imphal)	9 - 20 Sept	Malaysia & Labuan	4 - 12 Nov
North Italy	29 Sep-6 Oct	Ypres	9 - 12 Nov
Malta	12 - 18 Oct	Israel	5 - 12 Dec
Burma	24 Oct-4 Nov	Hong Kong	21 - 28 Dec

For more information phone Pilgrimages Department on 01622 716729, or contact Peter Wilson.

**Don't miss the Video on 12 Sept. See page 15.**

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Continued from Page 2

### 1995 Poppy Appeal

The final figure for money raised in the Branch area was £9664, a record (but see on page 14 how you can help to create a new record for 1996).

### Help the Legion.

If you pay Income Tax you can increase the value to the Legion of your annual Subscription, without any additional cost to you if you sign a **Deed of Covenant**. Also you can reduce administrative costs by paying your sub. by Direct Debit.

Don't throw away used postage stamps. HQ can raise money from UK as well as foreign stamps.

Buy RBL Xmas Cards & Diaries.

For more information on any of the above please ring the Secretary, Andrew Marriott (Tel: M H 434805).

### Festivals of Remembrance.

There may be a very limited number of tickets available for the evening event at the Albert Hall.

A block of seats and a coach are being booked for the de Montfort Hall festival on 2nd November. Ring Andrew if you would like to attend.

### Other Items from the August Meeting.

The Weston Park outing made a profit of £80.

There is an urgent need to replace the Branch Standard & a bid has been made to the Carnival Committee for a donation towards the cost.

As part of its 75th Anniversary celebrations, the Branch should enter a float in the 1997 Carnival.

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Tom Ashmore  
Tel: MH 433108

I have also designed and produced this  
Newsletter.



The Treasurer has  
available the following  
official RBL items:

Members' Ties	£6.00
Badges	£2.50
Commemorative VJ Day Mugs	£1.50

Call George Fleming on MH 462711 after 6pm

### Going Abroad?

My attention has been drawn to a booklet called "Health Advice for Travellers" and includes an application form which you take to the Post Office to obtain Form E111. This latter is your means of obtaining free or low cost emergency medical treatment in most European countries.

Ring 0800 555 777 for your free copy.