



**THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION  
NORFOLK BRANCH**

**NEWSLETTER NO.199 January 2013**

President: Squadron Leader Paul Bruning (Retd)  
Vice President: Squadron Leader Peter Lawrence (Retd)  
Chairman: Mr. Gordon Coe  
Vice Chairman: Mr. Paul Rainbird  
Secretary: Mr. Colin Clarke  
Treasurer: Mr. Graham Clarkson



**DEAR MEMBER,**

**BRANCH CHRISTMAS SOCIAL.**

It was a Full House for the Social. We were pleased to welcome home Henry Linford, who has been our Middle East correspondent for the past 12 months and guests Maurice and Diane Millington. Maurice is Secretary of the Coldstream Guards Association, Norwich.

Everyone enjoyed the buffet, Peter Lawrence's quiz and of course the company. Beryl kindly baked a lovely cake for 'The Regiments 70th Anniversary Year.'

Members were so generous, bringing 25 raffle prizes and handing over £107 to top raffle team 'The Honey's' (Jose and Louise).

**BRANCH MEETING - 15TH JANUARY.**

I am pleased to tell you, that subject to the contingency of the service, our meeting will open with an Update on the RAF Regiment by Force Warrant Officer - Warrant Officer S. Rowlands. Don't miss this.....

Then we will have Henry's Winter Quiz, always great fun.

**BRANCH LUNCH.**

Thursday, 11th April 2013. 12 Noon for 12.45pm. 'Moments Restaurant', Beach Road, Scratby, Gt. Yarmouth, NR29 3NW. Peter and Paul have kindly organised this event and enclosed is the menu.

Cost for the three course meal is £15.95. Members may bring one guest but there is a limit of 40 persons.

Please choose from menu and return your Booking Form with a deposit of £5. Cheques payable to the RAF Regiment Association - Norfolk Branch - to Graham, our Treasurer, by the 4th February. 2013. Thank you.

**BRANCH VISIT TO BLETCHLEY PARK  
THURSDAY, 9TH MAY 2013.**

During World War 11, Bletchley Park was the home to The Government Code and Cypher School, a government establishment tasked with decrypting axis codes.

Today, the site hosts the national codes centre and national museum of computing with a collection that spans from wartime toys to original enigma machines.

Bletchley Park Art Fund prize nominated exhibition 'The Life and Works of Alan Turing' presented recently discovered papers belonging to the genius cryptographer.

Travel is by Avanti Coach. Pick up points and provisional times:

Norwich (John Lewis) 7.15am.

Oulton Broad, (Parking available at 55 Lakeland Drive) 8.00am.

Market Place, Wymondham. 8.45am.

We arrive at Bletchley Park 11.15am for a one hour guided tour at 12 noon. Cost £13 (pay later). Lunch at 1pm. There is a café for drinks, snacks or full meals. Then we are free to enjoy the gardens and other exhibits. Leave for home around 3.30pm

The tour is on the flat with resting places, wheelchairs available but require prebooking.

The cost for the guided tour is £13, plus £15 for the coach. A total of £28.

Enclosed is a Coach Booking Form. If you will be joining us please complete, including names and addresses of all persons travelling with your party hand in at the January Branch Meeting or send to Mr. P. Rainbird, 10 The Lawn, Fakenham, Norfolk, NR21 8DT, by the 4th February 2013. Thank you.

Details will be forwarded to Avanti Coach Travel, who will contact members and deal with the arrangements.

### **THEFT by Richard Sugg.**

Nineteen Fifty Six was one of the most active years of the E.O.K.A. terrorist campaign in Cyprus.

Because of the security situation, there was a ban on recreational movement outside the military base area for off duty personnel. In an attempt to provide an extra recreational facility at RAF Nicosia, the decision was taken to construct an open air cinema. A young RAF Regiment Pilot Officer was lumbered with the task of being in charge of the project, in consequence of which, its title was the 'Per Ardua Astra'.

The cinema consisted of three walls of a marquee tent with rows of chairs for the audience, a projector at the closed end while at the open end before each film show, a three-ton lorry with a bed sheet draped over the tilt bars was reversed into place to form a screen.

On one evening the cinema was in use, not for recreational purposes, but to show a trade training film for some young RAF policemen. While the film was in progress an RAF Regiment gunner came from the N.A.A.F.I. in an inebriated condition. He opened the driver's side of the cab and found that the ignition key was still in the dashboard.

Having climbed into the cab he switched on the ignition, pressed the self starter, put

the vehicle into gear, released the handbrake and let out the clutch, consequently the vehicle moved away from the cinema.

The young police corporals were intently watching a film about the presentation of theft - and the screen disappeared.

### **OPERATION TORCH N.W.AFRICA. By Doug Callender (A.A. Flight).**

The first units of the Royal Air Force Regiment to land in North Africa were 4088 and 4089 A.A. Flights. They landed on the beach at Ain Taya, east of Algiers on 8th November 1942. Armoured Car Flights of 2721, 2771 and 2788 with 4090 Flight and Regiment H.Q. landed on the 12th November. They had had to come in separate echelons due to shipping priorities.

### **There were many incidents:**

Scythia with 2788 main echelon on board was torpedoed in the early hours of the 22-23rd November but managed to make port safely in the late afternoon, unfortunately the RAF Regiment suffered some casualties.

The rear echelon was on the 'Strathalon' which was torpedoed and sunk off Oran on the 21st December - two Regiment members were awarded decorations for gallantry. Nurses on board also suffered casualties and showed great bravery in the face of adversity.

### **BUCKINGHAM PALACE.**

The RAF Regiment first mounted guard at Buckingham Palace on 1st April 1943. The King approved this honour in recognition of the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the R.A.F. They took over from the Coldstream Guards and handed over to the Grenadier Guards on 5th April.

Selected men came from three Squadrons, 2773, 2768 and 2857, they trained at RAF Dettling and Wellington Barracks. Officers involved included Sqdn Ldr Vic Cooper, Sqdn Ldr Vaughan and W.O. Roy Wiggett.

## **ROOF OVER BRITAIN. The Official Story of Britain's Anti Aircraft Defences 1939/42 Continued.**

But it is not a life of all work and no play. Officers realise the value of entertainment as an ingredient of morale. The battery canteen was transformed into a concert hall.

There is talent, often professional, of a variety of musical instruments, impressionists and the occasional freak act. One man eats two lamp bulbs, an ash tray, four safety razors, a gramophone record, and a few lighted cigarettes - all with no ill effects.

### **Searchlights in Action, - May 1940, Liverpool.**

On 1st May, three nights after their arrival from the Orkneys, a searchlight team heard the sirens sound just as the clock on Liver Buildings said 'ten.' the raid lasted for some six hours but the real ordeal began on the next night. Incendiaries which rained down set fire to piles of timber. The only sandbags available were on the projector pit, which came down a lot faster than it had been built.

The following night more than a hundred incendiaries fell on the site, setting fire to the living hut and cook-house. The cook who was preparing soup, only knew that two of them came through the roof, one dropping slap into the Dixie of soup. Six fell inside the projector pit putting one of the crew in hospital for a month. The site - a shambles.

They endured this for three more nights until two H.E.s. fell on the site, one on the generator, the other making a mess of the badly battered sleeping hut.

They had to wait nearly six months for their revenge. On the 1st November, a Junkers 88 flew over them at 200 feet. He stopped the best part of 86 rounds from their Lewis guns and later crashed.

By 1941 many of the men were still under canvas for the third year running and social contact with the local population was somewhat limited. Here is a little human story told by a gunner in a searchlight team recently moved to the middle of a moor.

'At last my longed for-night arrived. I shaved for the second time, put on my best battle dress and set off to sample a little night life. Now, apart from the troop officer's and battery commander's visit, we had seen no one during the three or four days we had been there, and our knowledge of the local area, with special reference to houses of refreshment was vague.

Knowing that I had come in on a northerly direction on deployment from civilisation, I reasoned that if I walked south I should find civilisation again and catch a bus. After 45 minutes brisk walking without a sign of life, I came across a man trimming a hedge. I happily enquired (a) the whereabouts of the nearest town (b) the nearest pub and (c) what time the last bus went.

I received the following astounding replies: (a) 12 miles (b) 6 miles (c) Wednesday.

Searchlights were often used to guide our bombers home. By flashing the beam across the bomber and then towards his base the pilot realised he was being directed to his airfield. They were also used at sea guiding rescue launches to crews who had baled out into the water. They also marked mines which had fallen in the River Thames and other places.

### **The Wonderful Visit.**

It was a fine evening with a dull sky to the north. About 10.30pm two unidentified 'planes were picked up by a gun operations room in East Scotland. They were plotted as approaching the coast from south of the Faroe Islands.

As they neared land they separated, one turning north and the other continued over-land in a westerly direction. The 'plane which turned north was soon identified as friendly. The other was presumed hostile.

The raider was plotted at 5,000 feet south of Cambuslang. All gun and searchlight sites were standing by, for the 'plane was getting dangerously close to Glasgow. At 11pm, eight miles south of the city, in the moonlight, it was clearly identified as a Me.110.

At 11.7pm the crew of a gun site watched as it circled above them, the pilot seemed to be checking his position. Twice it circled. The air was quiet, the pilot switched off his engine: then to everybody's consternation, he took a shallow dive straight at the site.

Suddenly a man baled out and the 'plane which had been heading straight at the gun site turned off and crashed some 250 yards away and burst into flames.

Meanwhile, two A.A. signalmen, hearing the crash had come running out of their quarters in time to see the pilot floating slowly to earth. They rushed to where they knew was a small farmhouse. When they reached it the backdoor opened and a ploughman appeared. 'Are you looking for a parachutist?' he enquired. They said they were. 'Well, he's inside now, arrived about half a minute ago.' They dashed into the cottage.

There in an armchair, dressed in a fleece lined brown leather flying suit, sat the parachutist. He threw up his hands to prove they were empty, and said, 'Ah! British soldiers-no guns-no bombs. They searched him for weapons but found none.

They asked his name. 'Alfred Horn,' he replied; and as they couldn't understand him properly he wrote it down on a piece of paper. 'Where have you come from?' they asked him. He replied, 'Munich in four hours.'

He was asked if he had ever been to England

before. 'No,' he replied; but after a pause, 'I have a very important message for the Duke of Hamilton,' whom he had met at the Berlin Olympic Games. He seemed to want to be friendly and showed them a picture of his wife and son with whom he said he spent that morning. One of the soldiers asked him if he would like to return to Germany. He immediately shouted, 'No! No! No! No!'

The scene where the 'plane had crashed was increasingly confused. There were policemen, Fire Brigade, A.F.S. Home Guard, soldiers, R.A.F. men and many civilians.

The searchlight detachment were ordered to fix bayonets and even then had great difficulty in clearing the field. Many pieces of the 'plane disappeared into cars in which spectators arrived but were all eventually recovered and handed over.

One of the gunners, on returning from escorting the prisoner, had a strong idea that he had seen a photograph of him recently. Every newspaper and magazine to hand were diligently scanned and suddenly the gunner shouted, 'That's him! I'm sure that's him!' He pointed to a photograph of a dark, strongly built man, a Nazi, with thick black hair and deep set eyes. It was a photograph of Rudolph Hess, Hitler's Deputy. How they all laughed.

Their troop officer had been sent to the Home Guard Headquarters, where an R.A.F. Officer was interrogating the prisoner, assisted by a crowd of officers and others.

The contents of the prisoner's pockets were emptied out onto the desk, including two hypodermic syringes, a phial of liquid and two bottles of white tablets. The troop officer turned to the R.A.F. Officer who was at the moment doing the interrogating and said: 'You know, sir, I believe this is Rudolph Hess. I've seen him in Germany and I recognise him as Hess,' To be continued....

**QUESTION:** Does anybody in the Army still use the cleaning product blanco on their webbing?

Military webbing originated in the late 17th/early 18th Century as a method for a soldier to carry all his arms and equipment on his person while on the march or in battle.

Early leather straps were replaced by cheaper, woven cotton canvas. It consisted of a belt around the waist and cross belts over the shoulder, to which could be attached equipment such as a knapsack, pack, ammunition pouches and bayonet frog. Over the years, the design of webbing has changed several times, but its purpose and basic construction remains the same.

Originally, powdered pipe clay was used to keep the webbing smart and gleaming white. This was replaced by a solid block of blanco (from the French blanc - white), softened with water and rubbed onto the webbing. When the Army changed from red coats to other uniforms, blanco was made in colours such as khaki, white and RAF blue.

When I joined the RAF in the sixties, blanco came pre-softened in tins, like shoe polish. Blanco was made with wax to give it some water resistance, which proved useful in the field. Both methods of colouring had disadvantages. Pipe clay tended to run when wet and stain the red coats of soldiers, eventually creating permanent pink patches. Blanco was difficult both to apply and remove while the blanco was still damp, there was a risk of stains.

The original powdered blanco was manufactured by the Mills Equipment Company, while more modern soldiers and airmen will remember the blocks and tins made by Pickerings.

Any soldier can tell of the tedium of removing and applying blanco. The webbing had to be scrubbed clean, before fresh blanco was applied - often with an old tooth-brush to get into all the crevices. After drying the webbing it was necessary to shine the brass buckles, but without leaving any metal polish residue on the brass - both sure to attract the wrath of the drill sergeant.

Nowadays, it is unthinkable for a soldier to have shiny metal on his kit while out in the field - all buckles are painted black. Modern webbing is either ceremonial or practical. Ceremonial webbing belts, usually white, are made of plastic moulded to provide an imitation canvas effect. This can easily be scrubbed to keep it gleaming white and is cheap to replace.

The practical webbing worn by soldiers is still made of heavy cotton canvas but this is now waterproofed and dyed olive green, so blanco is no longer required. However, rumour has it that some regimental sergeant-majors still have a set of blancoed webbing to hand out for cleaning as a punishment for ill-disciplined soldiers. Bob Cubitt.

***Editor: I bet this article brought back some happy memories.***

RECENTLY OPENED 'LADIES ONLY' CAR PARK IN NORWICH.





## **10 ARMoured CAR SQUADRON ADEN PROTECTORATE LEVIES. By Derek John Trust BEM.**

Little or no records show that at about 1955-56, a unit consisting of both Regular and National Service personnel was formed in Aden. This unit was known as Number 10 Armoured Car Squadron, of the Aden Protectorate Levies.

It was probably a political decision made at that time, to order the removal of the red RAF Regiment shoulder flashes and replace them with the brass APL shoulder badge.

We were trained by the Lancers to operate Ferret Mark 2 Scout Cars, which had a .30 Browning Machine Gun. Communication was by means of No.41 and No.19 Radio Sets. In addition to these two sets, Car Commanders were trained in Morse Code.

Our main task was to escort Army Convoys from Aden to Dhala, Ataq, Mukerias and many other obscure destinations. Our re-supply came by air from RAF Khormaksah, compo, compo and more compo.

We came under fire quite often and although there were 'Rules of Engagement' in force at the time, we used our common sense and fired back and why not?

Our Squadron Commander was Squadron Leader Coote MC, the Warrant Officer was Don Gooch and we also had Flight Lieutenant Carroll, Flight Sergeant Stevenson and Sergeant Spencer. Does anyone recall anyone else?

Some of the memories that stand-out are; negotiating Dhala Pass at night with no lights, being under fire at Dhala from the fort over the border and crash landing at Ataq in a Hastings with two armed and fuelled up armoured cars, luckily with only minor injuries to Sergeant Spencer.

It was soon after that, I was posted back to

RAF Uxbridge where I was awarded the BEM for Meritorious Service with 10 Armoured Car Squadron. I believe that at the time I was the youngest member of the RAF Regiment to have this award.

## **SEASONS GREETINGS.**

Thank you all for your Christmas cards including one from 2620 Squadron to all Norfolk Branch Members.

## **AND FINALLY.**

I was stopped by the police last week for speeding. 'Why were you exceeding the limit', asked the officer. I said, 'Six weeks ago my wife ran off with a traffic cop and I thought you were bringing her back!'

A man is walking on the beach and comes across an old bottle. He picks it up, pulls out the cork and out pops a genie. The genie says: 'Thank you for freeing me from the bottle. In return I will grant you three wishes.'

The man says: 'Great, I always dreamed of this and I know exactly what I want. First, I want a billion pounds in a Swiss bank account.' Phoof! There is a flash of light and a piece of paper with account numbers appears in his hand.

He continues: 'Next, I want a brand new red Ferrari right here.' Phoof! There is a flash of light and a brand new red Ferrari appears right next to him. He continues: 'Finally, I want to be absolutely irresistible to women.' Phoof! There is a flash of light and he turns into a box of chocolates.

Well that's all for now folks! I look forward to the pleasure of your company at the next Branch Meeting - Tuesday 15th January 2013 12.45pm - Feathers Inn, Wymondham - for an Update on the Regiment by W.O. Rowlands and Henry's Quiz.

Best wishes,













