



**THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
NORFOLK BRANCH
NEWSLETTER NO.234 June 2019**

President: Squadron Leader Paul Bruning (Rtd)
Chairman: Mr. Tony Leonard + Standard Bearer
Vice Chairman: Mr. Paul Rainbird + Programme Secretary
Secretary: David McEwen
Treasurer: Gill McEwen



DEAR MEMBER,

Enclosed is your Association membership receipt and card sticker.

Branch Spring Lunch, The Old Rectory, Crostwich, 2nd May 2019.

Forty six members and friends booked for and enjoyed an excellent meal with good service and great company. Again the chance to meet up with those members who are unable to attend meetings. All facilities are on ground level and there is ample parking.

Many thanks to generous Branch members for their support of the raffle which raised £149 for Branch funds.

The next Branch lunch is at The Old Rectory, Crostwich, on 1st October 2019 -12.30pm for 1pm. Do come and join us - to obtain your menu please give Paul Rainbird a call on (01328) 856560. Lovely grub.

APRIL BRANCH MEETING

This month Sue Pearce from the Nelson Museum, Great Yarmouth, gave us an interesting talk about Nelson's Women, he certainly had a 'busy life', eventually leaving his wife Fanny in Burnham Thorpe, while he made his home with Emma Hamilton, having a daughter, Horatia, who came to live in Norfolk.

BRANCH MINUTES:

Today's meeting started with members standing for a minutes silence in memory of Joan James, who died on the 9th April 2019.

Joan was a Branch member for many years and will be sadly missed by everyone. Alan informed members that the funeral will be held on Monday 29th April.

Chairman's Report:

Tony was not able to attend today's meeting.

Secretary's Report:

David said there was no news from Honington. He reminded members about the Commemoration Service at Catterick and Armed Forces Day at the Arboretum on 29th June. Also the Freedom of Thetford Day on 9th June, times will be given later.

AOB:

Paul reminded members the Anzac Day Service would be held in the St. Peter Mancroft Church, Norwich, on 28th April.

Paul said 46 people would be coming to the Spring lunch.

Suggestions for the Branch August outing included: St Georges Distillery, Flixton Air Museum, St Peter's Brewery, Bressingham and Thursford organ collection, members can decide at a later meeting.

Paul said Peter will be making enquiries about a visit to the Tower of London next spring.

Colin said there is to be a Memorial Service for members who served in Northern Ireland on Operation Banner at the NMA on 14th September at 11.30am.

Dedication and Commitment was said.
Meeting closed at 2.15pm.

MAY BRANCH MEETING

This month David Moreton gave us a very informative talk about the new Joint Strike Fighter F35A. The aircraft is a joint production between America, Britain and several other countries, each with their own options.

Secretary welcomed new members William and Susan Hunt to the Branch.

Chairman's Report:

Tony was unable to be at today's meeting.

Secretary's Report:

There was no news from Honington.

AOB:

Paul said all went well with the Spring meal and he has already had bookings for October. Two dates have been reserved at the Old Rectory for next year. Paul was thanked for all his good work.

There was a brief discussion about the August Branch outing. Members would like to have information about the proposed 2020 visit to the Tower of London.

Dedication and Commitment was said.
Meeting closed at 2.15pm.

ALAN BARKES
2810 (Field) Parachute Squadron RAF



Alan served with 2810 (Field) Squadron RAF Regiment. He vividly remembers when Air Chief Marshal Keith Mountbatten visited the squadron asking for volunteers to join the new 2810 (Parachute) Squadron (Operation Zipper). They were to parachute behind enemy lines in Malaysia, liberate it from the Japanese and this involved dense jungle fighting. Including being ambushed on one occasion. Preparation for Operation Zipper was all but complete when two days before the launch date, America dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

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On Saturday 27th April 2019 our very own Alan Barkes was received as an honoured guest at the annual Godmanchester Bomber Command Veterans Day

Eleven of the twelve invited veterans were in attendance at this auspicious event with the last surviving Dam Buster, Jonny Johnson being the only one unable to make it.

The Veterans Day started 5 years ago to raise money to fund a suitable memorial to the crew of a Short Sterling Bomber of XV Squadron which crashed on its return from a raid on Essen on 11th April 1942. Two of the crew lost their lives that night.

The money for the memorial was achieved in the first year and since then fund raising has continued with the proceeds going to good causes.

Alan, of course, is a veteran of 2810 (Parachute) Squadron RAF Regiment and fought in the Burma Campaign and therefore was not part of Bomber Command. However, as a highly regarded and much loved RAF

WW2 veteran, the organisers were still keen to have Alan at the event

Thanks must go to Alan's wife Lynn and step daughter Claire, who attended and looked after Alan's needs

The doors of the Godmanchester Comrades Social Club opened to the public at 10:30am and a constant stream of enthusiasts flooded in

We estimated that Alan and his colleagues must have signed in excess of 200 books, paintings and photographs and talked of his wartime experiences with the visitors as they passed along the line.

The very keen and enthusiastic attendees donated £5 per item signed which all goes to such good causes as The IBCC, RAF Benevolent Fund, Combat Stress, MacMillan Cancer Research, Marie Curie, The British Heart Foundation, The Alzheimer Society, The British Legion, RAFA Wings Appeal and many more.

Well done to Roger Leivers, his wife Michelle and the team of organisers for arranging the event and ensuring all went smoothly on the day.

75 years ago, Alan showed his courage and heroism in the jungles of Burma and it is amazing that at 98 years young he is still selflessly doing his bit for his country and for those less fortunate than himself

What a wonderful man and an example to all.



Editor: The photographs and article were sent to me by Nigel Fallow. Nigel is the son of the late Thomas Fallow, who served with Alan Barkes on 2810 (Parachute) Squadron. Nigel read about Alan's service with his father in Graham Deely's book 'Never Not Ready'.

Nigel contacted Alan and they have become firm friends.

Thank you Nigel, a lovely story and well done Alan for helping the charities.

As you know Brian Clough (Football) and Peter Allis (Golf) did their National Service in the RAF Regiment. But did you know we had a boxing champion in our ranks. The following is from Centurion Magazine 2003.

Neville Meade - Former British Heavyweight Champion and ex Rock.

By Squadron Leader Gil Lee (Rtd).

I thought readers, especially those who are over 60 and retired, would enjoy this short article on Neville, who served in the RAF Regiment (1962-74).

I first met him at the Depot (RAF Catterick) in 1970. I had just returned from an overseas tour, in Cyprus, and was posted into Training Wing to run the Special Safety Training (SST) Courses. I had a long association with boxing, being judge and subsequently a referee over some 20 years. I seemed to pick up the job as IC boxing wherever I went and the Depot was no exception.

I met Neville one Wednesday afternoon in the gymnasium. I went along to meet the boxers and have a chat. Apart from Neville there were novice, intermediate and open class boxers. Some of them went on to win RAF titles. I remember Flying Officer Mick Richards who eventually moved on to the Provost Branch. He was a middleweight but enjoyed getting into the ring for a sparring session with Neville. They were a happy group with some good trainers and lots of support from the PFO and his staff.

Neville was a natural heavyweight, he had the height (6ft 1in), the weight around 15 stone, with a knockout punch in both hands. I think he was about 23 at the time. There was a lot more about him too. He was keen on athletics, rugby and played a fair game of golf. I got the impression that boxing was not, at that time his whole life. However, it did take over in due course.

He was also very popular with the lads. He given the nickname 'The General'. The name suited him well, he was quite proud of it. I remember him stepping off an aircraft with about six gunners carrying his kit!

The problem was finding sparring partners for Neville, like his opponents they were in short supply. We had to look outside the service environment and found the answer by contacting clubs in the ABA. We travelled all over the north east, where he took part in several boxing shows. My son, Barry, who was

in awe of Neville, use to travel with us, he was about 15 at the time.

I remember at one boxing show in Newcastle, I had barely sat down on my seat when Barry came rushing over saying 'Dad he has done it again'. I looked up into the ring and there was Neville standing over an opponent. He had knocked him out within seconds of the opening round! Nothing new for Neville, he obviously wanted an early night.

During his time in the RAF Neville won the following titles: The Lord Wakefield (Novice) Championship 1965; The RAF Title - 1965 successfully defending this five times until 1970; The Amateur Boxing (ABA) Title - 1974; The Combined Service Boxing Association (CSBA) title-1965, which he successfully defended four times; The Commonwealth Game (New Zealand) Gold Medal 1974.

He won two belts. The Lonsdale Belt (British Heavyweight Champion) and the Lonsdale Welsh Belt.

In 1972 I was posted away from the RAF to a Joint Service Establishment the NBC School. This took me away from the scene for some years. Then in 1982, I was now retired and working in the City of London, I happened to notice in an evening paper that Neville Meads, the British Heavyweight Champion, was defending his title in Cardiff. I eventually tracked him down, he was living in Swansea.

It was some 10 years since we had met. Barry and I decided to attend the fight, which was at the St David's Hall in Cardiff. Neville who had won and defended the title three times, was now up against a young very strong opponent, David Pearce. The former was in his mid-30's. Pearce won, it was not a knockout.

The odd thing is that Neville had beaten him in a previous fight some years earlier. The only thing that beat Neville was his age. It comes to us all in time. However, for professional sportsmen it is much harder and eventually retirement beckons. Neville retired in 1984. He is married and has five children.

Coming on he scene at that time was young Frank Bruno. He and Neville were friends and used to spar with each other. They were both managed by Terry Lawless.

However, Frank did the American circuit,

Meeting many of the top heavyweights. He went on to win the world title. Neville speaks highly of his RAF trainer (Jackie Baker). If you are reading this article Jackie, Neville sends his regards and says you made him what he is and that your endeavours for him was 'music on the pads'. He says thank you.

My two sons and I visit Neville every year. We are still good friends. We enjoy a few beers together and reminisce over old times. He still keeps fit and enjoys company. He is by nature a very modest man, quick to give credit and praise to other people. However, he has a lot to be proud of. He made a name for himself both in and out of the service.

You will find him listed in all the record books. I am proud to have known him and to call him my friend, I know he remembers his time in the Regiment with great affection and winning the British Heavyweight title he says 'was a great honour'. Not bad for an ex Rock. Good luck Champ, see you soon, box on!

Editor: Great story and I certainly didn't know Neville had served in the RAF Regiment. Did you serve with any well known sportsmen or celebrities? Do let me know.

During my time at Wunstorf, West Germany, on 31 Squadron in the 1950's, we had three lads who were good footballers and on the books of Aston Villa, Sheffield Wednesday and Grimsby Town. Also a first class football referee and basketball coach.

Along with Tom Giles I was a member of the 31 Squadron tug-o-war team that reached the final of the 2nd TAF Championships in 1956. We were runners up. Plus, while playing for B Flight I once scored 5 goals in a match -this put my transfer value up to 3d.

AND From Gordon Coe

Dear Colin,
Thank you for a really excellent newsletter.

Mention of Squadron Leader Bill Hitchcock brought back so many memories as I went to Egypt with his squadron. We had a nick name for him 'Wild Bill' after the famous cowboy Wild Bill Hickock.

I was so disappointed not being a member of Norfolk Branch when he was around. Quite a surprise to find my old C.O. from the Canal Zone and Owen Thompson, Adjutant, from Aden.

I would liked to have reminded him of the time when two young gunners went to see him

at Yatesbury to ask for extra leave at Christmas as we were getting married. Our leave was due on 21st December and we would not arrive home until that evening and we were getting married next day 22nd. We assured him we were not in trouble and that the marriages were planned.

He said that we could not have extra leave as we would be on embarkation leave. The other lad Peter Pamment lives in Cumbria and still married to his wife Audrey. Iris and I met up with them a few times at our reunions.

I know you like to read snippets of information, although judging from the information you gave in your newsletter about the solar system you prefer the new scientist. I enclose reports of incidents in the Canal Zone shortly after we arrived.

While the firefight between the army and Egyptian police was going on, I was on a road block a few miles away at El Firdan. Our Squadron was responsible for that road block and we spent four days at a time there, two hours on and four off, for four days.

No facilities. No undressing, rifles strapped to our arms when sleeping. Only food was the packed rations supplied when we left camp. The army trucks taking supplies from Port Said to the camps passed through our road block and would often give us a couple of loaves and tin of jam, much appreciated.

Have sent pictures of the result of a fire fight which appeared in the newspapers we got from time to time. The tank had blown a gaping hole in one of the buildings and it was thought bodies were inside so a guard was put on.

Reg Proctor who you wrote about before, was one of three from our squadron sent to join others to do guard duty the following day.

Sorry, its your fault I have rabbitied on but you stirred up the memories with your newsletter and I have one else to annoy

Thanks again for a very interesting newsletter.

Best wishes.

Gordon .

Ablutions Orderly, Dumfries. (Rtd).

Editor: The newspaper reports that Gordon mentions will be in future newsletters. Gordon also enclosed a report by his C.O. Squadron Leader Bill Hitchcock, this follows on page 5.

With 37 LAA Squadron in the Canal Zone 1951-54. By Squadron Leader W.L. Hitchcock RAF Regiment (RTD).

In November 1951, I was serving on the Staff Officers Course at the RAF Regiment Depot at Catterick and for the past thirteen weeks had been employed as Chief Instructor to a group of Canadian and Norwegian officers.

The course had been intensive, the main subject being weapon training and tactical handling of troops in the defence of air installations. The course having ended, I was looking forward to a rest and perhaps a few days leave.

This was not to be, I had hardly drawn breath after my final period with my students, when I was sent for by the Commandant, Group Captain David Wenham MC, and told that I was being posted to RAF Yatesbury and there to form and command 37 LAA and take it to Egypt, to the Suez Canal Zone. Because of the deteriorating political situation in the area, the British Garrison was being reinforced.

Needless to say, I was delighted to be given the opportunity of commanding a squadron on Active Service and as I had been a Royal Artillery Officer throughout the war, I was doubly pleased to be returning to 'the guns', different guns may be, but to a gunner, all guns are marvellous.

My first task was to hand over my married quarters and move my family back to our West London home, after which I set off for Yatesbury where I promptly caught the flu. Consequently, I attended to the paperwork of forming the Squadron in bed, while my 2nd i/c Flight Lieutenant Peter Taylor, the Adjutant Flying Officer Paul Le Bosquet and the Squadron Warrant Officer Mr Bradbury, organised the troops as they arrived.

In early January 1952, following a mysterious journey to Lytham St Annes in Lancashire for further administration and the paperwork, I re-joined the Squadron and spent a cold and cheerless night at Clyffe Pypard in Wiltshire, then moved to RAF Lyneham, where we boarded four Hastings aircraft and flew by night via Malta to RAF Abu Suir in Egypt, where we spent the next two and a half years. There we joined 27 LAA Squadron, who had arrived some weeks earlier and 36 LAA Squadron, based at Ismaila, forming 3 LAA Wing.

Our guns and transport would not arrive for some weeks, the Squadron was employed mainly on internal security duties, guards and patrols on the station perimeter, roadblocks on the road into Ismaila as part of an overall anti-terrorist plan - there were occasional incidents.

However, I have no wish to, dear reader, to bore you with a blow by blow account of our sojourn in the land of the Pharaoh's, so I will content myself with a brief recollection of some of the highlights of our stay in that colourful and often intriguing country.

The first 'Red Letter' day was when our guns arrived by sea at Port Said and having by this time received our compliment of vehicles, we joyfully journeyed north to collect them, twelve L60mm Bofors Anti Aircraft Guns, readily painted in desert camouflage. From then on, we were able to intersperse our internal security duties with training for our primary role.

During this period there were frequent alarms when it seemed likely that the British bases would be attacked by Egyptian forces, consequently we had many opportunities to practice rapid deployment to protect the airfield, also there were regular 'Lookout' exercises together with Number 208 Fighter Squadron, flying Meteors and our re-inforcement Squadron Number 6 Fighter Squadron from RAF Habbaniyah, flying Vampires.

The Squadron was also responsible for desert rescue operations, the - rapid recovery of aircrew unfortunate to crash in the desert. Many reconnaissance journeys were made in order to establish the best routes to likely areas. We also went on regular marches up to eighteen miles, followed by a rifle firing course on the range, keeping us fit and in tune with the Squadron's motto, 'Versatilis'.

On another occasion, the Squadron, organised as a field squadron carried out a mock assault on Aquaba, a town on the southern tip of Sinai. Following in the footsteps of Laurence of Arabia, (he went by camel), we flew in three Valletta aircraft to an airstrip on the outskirts of the town. No entry was made (this would probably have caused an international incident), so we contented ourselves with a practice deployment, after which we re-embarked and flew back to Abu Suir.

Whilst we were on the airstrip, an enterprising local sold to some of the squadron, bottles of lemonade. There were some sickly faces on the flight home. On the return flight, we passed close to Mount Sinai, on the summit of which Moses received the Ten Commandments, my mind went back to the bible stories at school and I tried to imagine what it was like for the twelve tribes of Israel who wandered this inhospitable country for so many years.

During a period of increased tension between the Egyptian Government and the British Forces in the Canal Zone, 37 Squadron, once again, was ordered to revert to the field role and was placed under the command of 32 Guards Brigade.

Should the political situation worsen, the British Divisions were to occupy specified main centres in Egypt and the Squadron's task was to spearhead the assault on the airfield at Alexandria. As it transpired nothing happened but it was exciting at the time and could have been a lively party.

To number 37 Squadron, emergency situations were becoming a way of life as later in the tour there were serious incidents on the border between Israel and Jordan and the Squadron was flown to Amman in Jordan and deployed in defence of an airfield there. This was an interesting break from the Canal Zone - an entirely different environment and was much enjoyed by all personnel.

Shortly after our return to Abu Suir, my tour in the Middle East ended: I was posted back to the United Kingdom. I look back on my time with 37 Squadron with immense pleasure and pride, they were a splendid unit. Whatever they were asked to do, (the tasks were many and varied), they did it with cheerfulness and efficiency, their conduct at all times was exemplary and in the highest traditions of the RAF Regiment, I count myself greatly privileged to have served with them.

Editor: I first met Bill in 1992 at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. I was chairman of the Association Birmingham Branch, who had organised a weekend 50th celebration of the RAF Regiment at the hotel. Bill was the Association National Chairman.

The next occasion was when Bill became a member of Norfolk Branch. He was a lovely man liked by everyone. As Louise said 'Bill, was an officer and a gentleman'.

OBITUARIES

It is with regret that I inform you of the death of Joan Valerie James, who died on the 9th April 2019 aged 79 years. She was the widow of Alec James.

Joan's funeral was held on 29th April 2019, at Wymondham Methodist Church. The large congregation of family and friends included 15 members from Norfolk Branch.

For many years Joan worked at Jarrolds, Norwich. She loved her family, garden and church. Along with Alec, Joan joined Norfolk Branch in 1995, was a great supporter and regularly attended meetings and events.

A lovely lady she will be sadly missed and our thoughts and prayers are with Lorraine, Sharon, and the family at this sad time.

RAF NEWS - March 2019

Former Regiment Commandant General - Air Vice Marshal David Hawkins.

Air Vice Marshal David Hawkins, who has died aged 81, rose from being a National Service gunner in the RAF Regiment to becoming its head as Commandant General.

Hawkins started his National Service in 1955 and was soon selected for officer training and received a short service commission in September 1956.

After a probationary period with 37 Squadron, a light anti-aircraft unit in Cyprus, he was awarded a cadetship leading to a permanent commission. He was the last RAF Regiment officer to complete the course at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, before the RAF assumed sole responsibility for training its Regiment officers.

In 1963 he was selected to be Aide-de-Camp to the Chief of Air Staff and this was followed by three years as an instructor at the RAF College Cranwell, before returning in June 1968 to 63 Squadron in Singapore as the deputy commander. He qualified as a parachutist and joined the 63 Squadron Parachute Team.

With the British withdrawal from Singapore, Hawkins was assigned in 1969 to the Air Attaches office in Bangkok, as member of a Commonwealth airbase defence team covering the Vietnam War.

Returning to the UK in 1971, he assumed command of 37 Squadron RAF Regiment (LAA) at Catterick.

Although equipped with the Bofors L40/70 anti-aircraft gun, the Squadron deployed

every year for four-monthly periods to Northern Ireland in defence of the airfields at Aldergrove and streets of Belfast.

In March 1974, he assumed command of The Queen's Colour Squadron, the custodian of The Queen's Colour for the RAF in the UK.

During Hawkins' command of the QCS was tasked with public ceremonial duties including Mounting the Guard at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Tower of London.

Hawkins and members of his squadron found themselves in demand on less formal occasions, including an appearance as guests of Bruce Forsyth on his Generation Game when they performed a sequence of their immaculate drill for the contestants to emulate. At the end of his three-year tour with the QCS he was appointed MBE.

From November 1976, he specialised as the MoD staff officer in the special safety of nuclear weapon convoys before moving in July 1979 as the head of the Survive-to-Operate Section within the Nato Headquarters of the Allied Forces Central Europe, based at Ramstein in Germany.

On promotion to Group Captain in 1982, he served in senior RAF Regiment posts at HQ Strike Command of the RAF Regiment at Catterick, where as Commandant, he was responsible for the support of a number of high-readiness operational Regiment squadrons and for the specialist training of all ranks.

He was promoted to Air Commodore after attending Nato Defence College.

His final years of service were spent in senior posts in MoD, before becoming the Director RAF Regiment in September 1990.

In January 1991, on promotion to Air Vice-Marshal, he became Commandant General and the Director General of Security (RAF), the last two-star officer hold these appointments.

His roles included providing specialist airbase defence and security policy and guidance to the Air Force Board, together with the development and implementation of all RAF capabilities in ground, nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) defence together with ground-based air defence. He retired in March 1993 having been appointed CB.

In November 1994 he was appointed a Gentleman Usher to HM The Queen, a post

he held until his seventieth birthday in 2007 when he was appointed LVO.

In 1994 he was also appointed as the Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod, responsible for the management of Black Rod's staff and deputising for Black Rod when necessary, he stood down in 1999 on completion of his five year appointment. David Hawkins died on 31st January 2019.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

I expect like me, you watched on TV the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings. So I thought you would like to read the following from Centurion in 2004.

LAC Miles 2819 Squadron RAF Regiment (LAA). An account recalled of D Day and on, 1944.

At the time I was a leading aircraftman gunner with 2819 Squadron, RAF Regiment. Ours was one of the first RAF Regiment squadrons to land at Normandy. We were an anti-aircraft unit attached to Wg Cdr 'Johnny' Johnson's Fighter Wing which we had joined at the beginning of May. For an inspection by Johnny, all brasses were polished and webbing blanched to the nth degree; and there was a lot of brass about in those days.

The following day in contrast, we had to rub mud on our webbing, paint our brasses and dull our cap badges - we knew then the time was approaching for which we had waited.

Towards the end of May the squadron moved to the dock area in the east of London where we were quartered in troop concentration camps, which in our case consisted of rolls of dannered barbed wire surrounding flattened bomb rubble. The conditions there were bad, tented shelter, pitched on bomb rubble, bad food and no forms of recreation.

This gave cause to a lot of unrest among many of the troops, lots of whom had come straight from Italy and had not been granted leave and whose homes were scattered throughout the country. There were lots of desertions from the camp and I, in the company of other members of the squadron, had the daily task off going around the tents and collecting arms and equipment left behind.

No doubt Tommy Trinder remembered that camp. A show was put on by him and his company to raise the moral of the troops: and those dear old ladies who lived in the

surrounding shattered streets would bring bottles of beer for us, which they tossed over the barbed wire, while the armed sentries on the outside looked the other way. Those old ladies have never been forgotten, I felt proud to be a Londoner.

It must have been 1 or 2 June when our squadron was driven to the dockside and we embarked onto a 'liberty' ship. Our heavy equipment, lorries, Bofor guns, ammunition etc, was already aboard so as soon as the troops were loaded we headed down the Thames and anchored in the Southend Roads.

We stayed in the company with many other ships until we sailed on 5 June for Normandy. Passing, I think it was Pas de Calais or Cap Gris Nez, the German shore batteries opened up on the convoy and the ship behind us was hit - I do not know what happened to it but it was on fire when last seen.

In the early hours of 6 June, those of us who were not below decks watched the Horsa gliders and their tugs flying low on their way to drop the first wave of airborne troops. I said a prayer for them, for they were paving the way for us, and breaching the German defences. RAF and RCAF fighter bombers also did their share of wiping out many of the enemy forts and gun emplacements.

Still early on D Day we anchored off Juno beach, on the right flank of the Canadian Army and left flank of the British Army. Just after we had dropped anchor, our first echelon disembarked into landing craft tanks (LCTs), their guns and lorries were craned in and some of the men went down scrambling nets into the craft as an advance party.

Early the following day, 7 June, it was the turn of the rest of us. We were glad to get off the ship as we had been under attack the night before and had been battened below deck while the crew manned the ships guns. That sort of situation is unnerving.

When we approached the shore the Yankee skipper of the LCT stopped the craft about 70 yards from the beach and dropped the landing ramp and would go no further because he said the tide was on the ebb and he had no intention of being beached.

Well, we, the gun crew and OIC climbed onto our Bedford and with the gun in tow drove down the ramp. We had only gone a few yards when the engine died on us despite it being partially waterproofed.

We all took to the water and waded ashore,

then turned our attention to salvaging the gun and three-tonner. After breaking a winch, we finally got a tow chain on the vehicle and dragged it and the gun high onto the beach. There were specially equipped vehicles for this very purpose.

Our driver got to work on the engine and within half an hour we started off for our rendezvous, with the rest of the squadron. However, while driving to the rendezvous, the lorry slewed off the road and went into a ditch bordering a minefield, which was identified by boards with a painted skull and cross-bones with the word 'Minen' and lines of white tape marking out the mine-field.

We were well and truly stuck in that ditch, and our OIC had to scrounge a lift to the rendezvous while we were left to get our lorry and gun on the road again. In the end, despite being told by our sergeant, 'you can't do that', I stepped into the middle of the road and when the first heavy lorry came along towing a 'long tom' (a massive piece of artillery), I waved the driver down and although he was reluctant to do so, with the best of reasons of course, he had us out of that ditch in no time with the aid of towing chains; it only took us about five minutes.

We often said jokingly, that if he had not helped us we would still be there. When we arrived at the rendezvous I had a 'strip torn off' for changing my wet socks and nothing was said about using my initiative to get out of a sticky situation.

We eventually positioned our guns round an airstrip being constructed by special units.

About two weeks later I was sitting in a slit trench I shared with another chap writing a letter to my mother; to allay any anxiety on her part. I said in my letter that things were pretty quiet and I had got a nice comfy billet. As I was writing this there was a blinding flash, followed by a number of explosions. I had a set of body armour hanging by a strap to the small tent covering the slit trench and this, and the tent, were torn apart by the force of the blast. I was lucky as my head was below the ground level of the trench.

The explosion was caused by an ammunition dump blowing up about a mile away. I still sent the letter.

On another occasion, while scanning the sky at the gun post, I saw a Liberator flying about 2,000 ft above us and as I watched, I

saw a small figure jump from it, followed by eight or nine others. When I saw parachutes opening I realised the crew had bailed out.

This aircraft, without crew continued around the sky gradually getting lower. An American Thunderbolt took off with the intention of shooting it down, but after a few bursts from its guns, left it. The Liberator then began to fall like a leaf, diving down, then the nose would come up then drop again and the aircraft resumed the dive - eventually it stuck its nose straight up in the air and crashed tail first and exploded on the ground about half a mile away.

The first few days I was with the gun crew, only a few feet from our dug-out was the body of a German covered with rubble. I used my entrenching tool to cover him up and fashioned a cross to guide the men of the Pioneer Corps. Little is said about the Corps, they had an awful task to do but never did I hear any grumbling or curses. They treated all the bodies the same, with dignity; allied or enemy alike.

When the Battle of Caen was at its height there were hundreds of British and Canadians lined up at the side of the road - dead. There were so many, that volunteers off-duty were called to help dig graves. It was a terrible sight, each body was covered with only his boots showing. Thank God we could not see their faces or their wounds.

There were many more to die before the Battle of the Falais Gap and the capture of Caen (not in that order). But it was the beginning of the end of the German armies.

Still in Normandy, not long after D Day my eldest brother, Bert, who was a Terrier and serving with the RA anti-aircraft unit, managed to track me down and we had a reunion, which was an echo of the first World War, when my father met his brother and his father on the Somme'.

Shortly after his visit I was admitted to a field hospital in Bayeux and at the end of the war in Europe, I caught up with Bert again at Barmbeck, near Hamburg.

The Squadron finished the European war with a score of three-and-a-half ASC shot down - the Army had claimed half of one of ours. 2819 Squadron RAF Regiment served continuously from D Day until the time of surrender of the German Forces at Luneburg Heath. A detachment of 2819 Squadron flew into Copenhagen on 5 May

1945 with the advance guard the Liberation Force, and occupied the airfield there. December 1945 the Squadron was disbanded while at Travemunde.

EA Miles - June 1994.

Cheer Up Our 11 smiles every day.

If you're having one of those days when the milk has gone off and the car won't start, you might find this hard to believe.

But adults smile 11 times a day on average - and most of them are genuine.

Sunny weather is most likely to make us grin, according to a poll, closely followed by compliments from a stranger.

Old photographs, unexpected discounts and seeing a baby laugh also raise a smile from more than a third of us, a survey found.

However not everything is positive. Researchers found that two of our 11 smiles a day are false, with one in ten adults claiming they 'don't like smiling'.

The study of 2,000 [people, by shoe brand Moshulu, found that seven in ten people believe grinning at others makes them feel happy.

It also triggers 'warm emotions' and feelings of acceptance. Psychologist Dr Jessamy Hibberd said 'When the number of times you smile every day is added up, it can have great benefits to overall happiness.

So it's time for a smile and a LARF

People in Dubai don't like the Flintstones. But people in Abu Dhabi do.

Did you hear about the man who fell into an upholstery machine? Don't worry, he is now fully recovered.

If I had £1 for every maths test I've failed, I'd have £3.27 by now!

Speed limiters in cars are nothing new. I've had one for years-my wife.

Five year old Brian was chatting to his mum as she got dressed. As she put on her bra, he said: 'Mummy, is that called a booby trap?'

Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves. Abraham Lincoln.

There are two classes of rich people-the haves and have yachts.

Mountains aren't just funny, they're hill areas.

Norfolk Branch 25th Anniversary - Memories.

When we were fund raising in 1995 at Cromer, John Mott brought along an onion he had grown for customers to guess the weight. The onion weighed six pounds four ounces - and it was 10p a go to guess the weight. We raised over £5 and the winner guessed the weight as six pounds three and a half ounces. Not bad - he obviously knew his onions. Like many of our members John was a very good gardener.

Wally Gaff was a lovely, modest man. He attended meetings as long as he could get up the stairs. His wife Vi, was registered blind and they were both Salvationists.

When Wally died his Service was conducted by a Captain from the Norwich Citadel. I have never been to a funeral where there was so much happiness. There could be no doubt of belief in God and a life hereafter.

During the Address we were told of Wally's war time service in the RAF Regiment. On one occasion a plane had crashed and was on fire, Wally pulled six Polish airmen out of the burning plane - saving their lives. He did receive a ward for his bravery - but this was the first we knew about it.

A few weeks after the funeral the Branch received a cheque for £300, left to us in Wally's Will.

After Wally died, Alf, our Welfare Officer, used to keep in touch with Vi for a chat and keep her updated with the Branch news.

Since 1994, we have only had to cancel one Branch meeting - that was due to fog.

On one other occasion we were double booked at the Feathers - so we all adjourned to Betty's bungalow and 25 of us enjoyed an excellent talk by Norman Hunt.

DID YOU KNOW Marriage Tax Allowance

Two million couples are missing out on a tax break. HM Revenue and Customs allows non-tax paying spouses to transfer 10pc of their £12,500 personal allowance to their partners.

This can give you a tax rebate of several hundreds of pounds and you can claim back for three years. You can also still claim if your wife/partner is now deceased.

Just phone 0300 200 3300, or go on line and they will guide you through the procedure. It is quite straight forward.

Parade for the Freedom of Thetford. To Royal Air Force Honington. Sunday 9th June 2019.

Report by Paul and Pat Rainbird.

Our Norfolk Branch was represented at the parade by David and Gill McEwen, Gordon Todd and his daughter Dawn and Paul and Pat Rainbird.

David paraded the Branch Standard together with Standards from the Queen's Colour of the Royal Air Force Regiment, and 1, 15 and 27 Squadrons RAF Regiment, 2623 Auxiliary Squadron RAF Regiment and the Royal British Legion. Plus the Band of the RAF Regiment from Honington.

Dignitaries attending included Councillor Brenda Canham, who is Mayor of Thetford, and inspected the squadrons on parade.

The Mayor then addressed the parade saying how pleased she was and that it was an honour to present the Freedom of Thetford to the Royal Air Force Honington.

She then presented the Title Deed to Group Captain M M Radhall MA RAF, Station Commander RAF Honington.

There was a large crowd of spectators at the parade and as you will well know the Squadrons turn out and marching was of the highest standard.

After the parade we had refreshments and a chat with the Regiment lads. A very pleasant and enjoyable day out.
Paul and Pat.

Gordon, Dave and Paul.



That's all for now folks! I look forward to the pleasure of your company at the Branch meetings. The Branch Day Out on 13th August 2019 at Thursford. And lunch at The Old Rectory on 1st October 2019.

Best wishes,

Colin (01502) 585079.