



**THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
NORFOLK BRANCH
NEWSLETTER NO.235 Sept 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

If you know of anyone who needs and would qualify for advice and assistance from the RAF BENEVOLENT FUND please give them the following information. There is lots of help available.

RAF BENEVOLENT FUND

A guide to our services - Supporting current and former members of the RAF, their partners and families, providing practical, emotional and financial support whenever they need us.

WHO WE HELP

All serving Regular members of the RAF and RAF Reserve Forces. All former members of the RAF who completed one day's attested service including Royal Auxiliary Air Force and The University Air Squadron.

Immediate family members of those who served (spouse, civil partner, widow/widower, dependent children).

Separated/divorced/spouses/civil partners during RAF service and other circumstances.

Live-in carers (relatives or friends) of long standing commitment to the needs of the beneficiary also considered.

Air Cadet Organisations, former members of the Royal Observer Corps, Air Transport Auxiliary and their dependants, several other categories (need to check) and all forms of National Service.

A summary of assistance:

Financial with day to day living costs.
Unemployment, retraining and resettlement.
Help with housing.
Disability adaptations and aids around the home.
Mobility equipment.
Care costs, support for carers.
Wellbeing holiday breaks.
Help with funeral costs.
Benefits advice.
Housing and Care Advocacy.
Emotional health and wellbeing.

Editor: There is help with just about everything.

So if you know of anyone who might need a helping hand - for more information the three contacts are www.rafbf.org
Tel. 0800 160 2942

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund,
67 Portland Place, London, W18 1AR.

FOOTBALL

For those that like to see the highlights of the Championship and Leagues 1 and 2 - these are shown on the TV QUEST Chanel at 9pm on Saturdays and repeated 10am Sunday. You can view the games on Freeview 12, Freesat 172, Sky 144 or Virgin 172 (HD 217). You can also see highlights of mid-week games on Wednesday evenings.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

We hear a lot about mathematics and the standard of the exam papers. So when I found a maths paper (enclosed) we sat for the corporals exam in 1954, I thought you might like to ask the younger generation and their parents how it compared with today's exams. Any answers please and comments to c.l.clarke@talktalk.net. Plus more Regiment history - 2829 Squadron, West Germany.

JUNE BRANCH MEETING

'The way holidays used to be' was the title of Richard Mann's talk today. He told us how holidays or Holy days began and evolved to the present day extravaganzas.

The slides brought back happy memories for all of us. Thanks Richard for a very entertaining talk.

Branch Minutes:

Chairman's Report:

There was nothing to report.

Secretary's Report:

David said the British Legion now provided hearing tests for members whose hearing loss was caused by their time in the forces.

AOB:

Paul said there were two options for the August outing, after a show of hands it was decided to visit The Thursford Collection.

Dedication and Commitment was said.

1 Meeting closed at 2.25pm.

This report was first published in 1994.

2701 SQUADRON AFTER D DAY

As members of the Second Tactical Air Force, 84 Group, 2701 Squadron RAF Regiment, we had come all the way from the Normandy Beaches, moving about every fourth day, until at last we crossed into Holland and pulled off the main road at Mill.

In the darkness we went down a small farm track, past a farm and pushed our Bofors through a gap in the the hedge, After the usual positioning of the gun into standby position and erecting our tent, we wished for a cup of tea but the wood was wet and we could not get a fire going.

Two of us went back down the lane to the farmhouse carrying a dixie and two rifles (we were issued with a small stove later). A young girl, Anna Selton, opened the door and we said 'Can we have some boiled water for tea?'. We had great difficulty in explaining to we wanted water boiled and not just hot. Anna told us that a person had come to the door previously and was a German officer who had said he was collecting for the Red Cross. We took tea back to the boys and told them that a woman there could understand a little English.

The next morning we were awoken by Anna's father shouting to us 'It is cold for the feet, come and get some straw from the barn for the floor of your tent. The 'moff is over there.' So we knew he meant the Germans.

The ground was very wet and we could not dig the gun in, if you took out a spade full of soil, the hole soon filled with water. We were given sand bags and built a wall round the gun, the barrel of which just clearing when at zero.

A landing strip was built nearby, just across the other side of the main road and Typhoon aircraft started operating.

For comfort, we now had a third Nissen hut. When one morning I was standing in the hut, I heard a loud bang and we all ran for the gun just in time to see a Typhoon aircraft cartwheeling over our gun - over and over it went, wing, nose, wing, tail and ended upside down in the field which Anna's father had just finished ploughing, making it very soft.

Petrol was spraying up in the air and we could see an arm sticking out from the canopy showing the badge of a Warrant Officer on the sleeve. We were quickly joined by a number of people from the 'strip' and using

our shovels dug under the canopy and so were able to release the straps holding the pilot in the aircraft, who then dropped into the hole. A Bren-gun carrier arrived and the aircraft was pulled away so enabling the pilot to be taken out of the hole

It appeared that on taking off he knew he was in trouble with the engine and decided to drop the bombs. One went off on the lane that led to the farm and the other slid along the field stopping near our hut. He had just scraped over the roof of the farm and his wing went under our barrel taking the sand-bags out, this of course caused him to trip up and start the cartwheeling.

The pilot wrote to us from England saying he was OK, having received a bang on the nose and leg and thanking us for getting him out. His ground crew told us he had had several crashes and, so far, had got away lightly each time.

The next day Anna's father re-ploughed the field, finding a large quantity of 20mm ammunition.

I still keep in touch with Anna each Christmas, having visited the family a few years ago. The farm is now owned by her two brothers.

C J E PEARCE.

JULY BRANCH METING

Today, Alan Womack took us on another journey around this beautiful county with his DVD of North East Norfolk, starting at the coast we saw many of the villages and towns of the Broads and visited Norwich, then back to the coast. Then we visited South Norfolk, including Diss and some of the surrounding villages. Many thanks Alan.

Chairman's Report:

There was nothing to report.

Secretary's Report:

David welcomed Penny a friend of Alan's to the meeting. David had managed to purchase 6 of the Norfolk Branch Ladies Medals and was pleased to present one to Penny.

AOB;

Paul informed members that we would meet at Thursford Car park on August 13th 11.30am. If more than 25 people attend we have half price entry. The September Meeting talk will be the Air Ambulance.

Dedication and Commitment was said.

Meeting closed at 2.15pm.

The following is from Centurion 2008.
TRIBUTES.

Former RAF Regiment Squadron Leader Bertram 'Jimmy' James, who died on 18 January 2008, aged 92, was an inveterate escaper during his five years in captivity during the Second World War.

James was one of the few to escape execution after the Great Escape, and joined two others at the notorious death camp at Sachsenhausen, from where he made another daring escape by tunnel, only to be recaptured 10 days later.

He had already made a number of unsuccessful escapes by the time he arrived at Stalag Luft 111, near Sagan, in the spring of 1943. Plans were being made to dig three tunnels and he was soon recruited to the organization and appointed to the security team.

After the discovery of one of the tunnels, work was temporarily suspended. When it resumed in January 1944, James was put in charge of dispersing the sand excavated from the tunnel 'Harry'. More than 40 tons was deposited under the camp theatre.

On the night of 24 March 1944, the tunnel was ready. James was to be the 39th man to travel along the 365 feet long tunnel, which surfaced in the open a few yards short of the intended spot on the edge of the woods, and the escape suffered long delays.

Eventually James and his travelling companion, a Greek fighter pilot, emerged into the open at 1.30am and made their way to the local station to catch the 5am train for the Czech border. They travelled south, and after leaving the train, headed for the mountains. The cold was intense and after two days they were recaptured and taken to Gestapo headquarters north of Berlin.

Fifty of the 76 escapers were shot. James and two others, including 'Wings' Day, the senior officer to escape, were sent to Sachsenhausen. On meeting James, Day commented sardonically: 'The only way out of here is up the chimney.'

The men were housed in a special camp (a Sonderlager) near the perimeter with a few other British officers. James was horrified at the evil he witnessed, the daily executions and privation.

Undaunted, the team immediately started a tunnel. Using a table knife with a serrated edge, James and a colleague did the digging.

By the middle of September 1944, the 120 feet tunnel was ready, and on the night of the 23rd September, six men broke out.

Travelling with Jack Churchill, James headed north, hoping to reach a Baltic port and board a ship to Sweden. They walked for three days before jumping a goods train to Neustrelitz, where they took to the woods again. After 14 days of freedom they had travelled 100 miles, but were captured whilst they were sleeping and returned to Sachsenhausen. Himmler ordered their execution but they were reprieved and spent the next five months in solitary confinement.

The son of a tea planter, Bertram Arthur James (he would always be known in the RAF as Jimmy) was born in India on April 17 1915. After the King's School, Canterbury, he sought work in British Columbia but the prospect of war brought him back to England, where he was granted a short service commission in the RAF. After training as a pilot he was posted to No 9 Squadron based at RAF Honington in Suffolk.

On the night of 5 June 1940, James was the second pilot of a Wellington bomber sent to attack Duisburg. The aircraft was shot down south of Rotterdam on the outbound and James parachuted to safety. He was captured 24 hours later and was one of the first to arrive at the new camp at Stalag1 on the Baltic.

He was soon involved in tunnelling his way to freedom but, as he was about to escape, the plan was discovered. Undeterred, James started another tunnel, beneath an incinerator. On the night of the attempted escape he was trapped as he moved in the dark from his hut to the tunnel entrance and was captured, but his colleague, John Shaw, already in the tunnel, managed to escape and returned to England.

For the next two years, James was constantly attempting to tunnel his way to freedom. but each effort was thwarted before the break out.

One night, when the security lights failed, he made an attempt to walk out of the camp in disguise, but the lights came on just as he approached the main gate. On another occasion he started a tunnel whilst still in solitary confinement.

In February 1945, as an increasingly paranoid German high command ordered the execution of many prisoners, James and his colleagues

were moved to Flossenbergl, where the conditions were particularly harsh. James was with a group of notable individuals - the Prominenten - who were being held as possible hostages as the German Reich collapsed.

With the Allied armies advancing, the party was moved to Dachau before being segregated and taken by road to the Austrian Tyrol, where there was a tense standoff as fanatical guards considered executing them. Eventually an American Army column liberated them, and James arrived back in England on 13 May 1945.

Throughout his time as a PoW James could think of nothing but escaping from his German captors and returning home. He utterly refused to accept incarceration, even when recapture carried the prospect of summary execution. He once said, 'It was our contribution to the war effort.'

When the full extent of his exploits came to light he was awarded an MC and Mentioned in Despatches. James elected to remain in the RAF and for three years, worked in Germany on intelligence duties.

During his captivity, when not attempting to escape, he had learnt Russian, which he developed further on a course at London University before returning to Germany for intelligence duties.

In 1953 he transferred to the RAF Regiment, retiring in 1958.

For the following 20 years, James worked for the Diplomatic Service, holding posts in Africa, Western and Eastern Europe and in London before retiring finally in 1975.

For a period he was the General Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office - sponsored Great Britain USSR Association.

James was an intensely modest man who described his experiences in a laconic style that almost belittled his extraordinary experiences; one noted historian considered him to be the greatest escaper of the war.

Although reluctant to return to Sagan, he joined other survivors on the 60th anniversary in '04, at which they laid a wreath. James observed: 'Having lost 50 of my comrades, the ghosts of the past will inevitably rise up, and one feels a great loss in that respect. I never thought 60 years ago when I crawled out of the hole in the snow that there would be a ceremony to commemorate the event.'

During the ceremony soldiers of the Polish

Army stood guard as candles were lit along the length of the tunnel in memory of the 50 murdered airmen.

In 1953 he published 'Moonless Night', an account of his wartime experiences. His wife of 62 years, Madge to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences, survives him.

(Article adapted - with acknowledgement from the Daily Telegraph Obituary dated 22 Jan 08)

Ed. The funeral was held at Ludlow, Gloucestershire, on 31 Jan 08. Trainee Gnrns from Trg Wg, RAF Honington provided the burial party and Pall bearers, and airmen from RAF Cosford provided the ushers and route-lining party. 1X Sqn RAF (Tornados) from RAF Marham provided a four-ship fly past in 'missing-man' formation.

The Regimental Secretary, Wg Cdr Martin Hooker, represented the HAC, Air Chf Mshl Sir Richard Johns, and the CG, Air Cdre Steven Abbot while Wg Cdr Tom Sawyer represented the Comdr RAF Honington and RAF FP Force, Gp Capt Russ La Forte. A more detailed review of Jimmy James time as a RAF Regiment officer could not be completed in time for publication but it is intended at a later date.

'Moonless Night' is printed in Paperback 224 pages by the Publisher, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, New Ed edition (Sep 2002) ISBN-10:085052900X: ISBN-13: 978-0850529005 at £12'95 + P&P.

The Greatest TV Detective of them all? A recent poll compiled by readers of the Radio Times.

1. Inspector Morse (1987-2000). ITV
2. Foyle's War (2002-15) ITV
3. Line of Duty (2012-)
4. Endeavour (2012-) ITV
5. Happy Valley (2014-)
6. Vera (2011-) ITV
7. Miss Marple (1984-92) BBC
8. Agatha Christie's Poirot (1989-2013) ITV
9. Shetland (2013-) BBC
10. Touch of Frost (1992-2010) ITV
11. Midsommer Murders 1997-) ITV
12. Lewis (2006-2015) ITV
13. Prime Suspect (1991-2006) ITV
14. New Tricks (2003-15) BBC
15. Broadchurch (2013-17) ITV

Editor: No -The Sweeney or Dixon Of Dock Green.



Branch members enjoying the day

BRANCH VISIT TO THE THURSFORD COLLECTION 13TH AUGUST 2019.

As there was no Branch meeting for August, 29 members of the Norfolk Branch met at Thursford at 11am and had an enjoyable day at this world famous attraction.

Many enjoyed rides on the carousel and gondola and also viewed the magnificent steam machines which I understand is the largest collection in the world.

At 12.30pm and 2pm the mighty wurlitzer show with unique sounds of the amazing machine and great music by Robert Wolfe, one of the leading theatre organists. He has been playing at Thursford for over thirty years. It was a pleasure to sit and hear his music.

We also heard an amazing original fair ground sounds from the beautiful collection of mechanical organs playing all day except when Robert Wolfe was playing the Wurlitzer..

All the shops were full and there was something for everyone.

It was a pleasant day to be amongst all our dear members.

Paul and Pat Rainbird.

YET ANOTHER RAMBLE FROM AN OLE SUFFOLK CHAP.

Well I've got to tell you a tale told to me the other day.

Well boy it's like this, we are standing in the old market town of Wymondham. Rum old job.

Outside the Feathers pub, an old chap with a white beard and a cap is walking down the road scattering white clouds of talcum powder on the path and on people's door steps, all the way to the Green Dragon, which he enters and says to the landlord a pint of your best ale and a roast dinner.



Bit of a do this, been going on for days. The whole road turning white.

Well now, an old lady living in the street says I will have to get the bobby to find out what's going on. Oh law!

The policeman goes to the Dragon and sees the old chap eating his dinner. Oh dear!

Well old fellow you will have to tell me just what is going on.

Well said the old chap, it's to keep tigers away. The policeman said my dear fellow, there aren't any tigers in these parts. The old chap took a long pull at his pint and said it goes to prove the talc really works.

Well if you are ever in Wymondham in your big old motor, might be a good idea to have a tin of talc in the boot.

Laurie.

Many thanks Laurie, you tell a good old tale.

RADIO 4 EXTRA.

I enjoy listening to Radio 4 Extra, as it has programmes going back through the years to the 1950's, I tune in on the TV - DAB Freeview 708, Sky 0131, Virgin 910.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

A grandfather was telling his grandson what a lucky little boy he was because of all the nice things he owned and what a lovely warm home he lived in.

He said that when he was his age, he was sent down to the station yard in the rain and snow with an old pram to get the week's supply of coke.

The grandson looked at his grandfather a big pensively, then smile and said; 'Yeh, but I bet you drank some before you got home.'

Why is it that a tin of evaporated milk is always full when you open it?

I once bought a dog from a blacksmith. As soon as I got it home it made a bolt for the back door.

CHAR

O, my lovely Rosie Lee,
You don't know what you do to me,
Without you magical mystery cure,
I don't know where I'd be, I'm sure.
You start my day, all steamy and hot,
Bubbling away in your big silver pot,
Then bronzed and brassy, you come flowing
out,
Frothing and foaming, released from the
spout.
Into my cup, like manna from heaven,
Prompt as ever as the clock turns seven.
Ooh what a rush, as I take my first sip,
My stomach responds with a quick backward
flip,
And then I sit back and munch on my toast,
And glance at the paper and look at the post.
Already you're drunk, as I sit there replete,
Warm and quite happy in drinking your heat.
But one thing I've wondered about your old
game,
Why is my second cup just never the same?
Claire Matthews.

REAL ANSWERS FROM QUIZ SHOWS. BBC NORFOLK

Stewart White: Who had a worldwide hit
with What a Wonderful World?
Contestant: I don't know.
White: I'll give you some clues. What do you
call the part between your hand and your
elbow.
Contestant: Arm
White: Correct. And if you're not weak,
You're?
Contestant: Strong.
White: Correct - and what was Lord
Mountbatten's first name?
Contestant: Louis.
White: Well, there we are then. So, who had
a world wide hit with the song What a
Wonderful World?
Contestant: Frank Sinatra?

BEACON RADIO, Wolverhampton.

DJ Mark: For £10, what is the nationality of
the Pope?
Contestant: I think I know that one. Is it
Jewish?

UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE (BBC 2)

Bamber Gascolgne: What was Gandhi's first
name?
Contestant: Goosey?

BEG, BORROW OR STEAL (BBC2)

Jamie Theakston: Where do you think
Cambridge University is.
Contestant: Geography isn't my strong point.
Theakston: There's a clue in the title.
Contestant: Leicester.

RICHARD AND Judy (4)

Presenter: On which street did Sherlock
Holmes live?
Contestant: Er.
Presenter: He makes bread..
Contestant: Er.
Presenter: He makes cakes.
Contestant: Kipling Street?

DOG EAT DOG (BBC1)

Urika Jonsson: Who wrote Lord of the Rings?
Contestant: Enid Blyton.

THE WEAKEST LINK (BBC 2)

Anne Robinson: In traffic, what is where two
roads meet?
Contestant Jool carriageway?

FAMILY FORTUNES

Les Dennis: Name a type of fork not used for
eating.
Contestant: Guy Fawkes.
Anne Robinson: What 'W' is the capital of
Poland?
Contestant: Worcestershire.
Anne Robinson: Which insect is commonly
found hovering above lakes?
Contestant: Crocodiles.
Anne Robinson: What was the name of the
prison which closed when the last convicts
were transferred in 1963?
Contestant: Australia.

BRANCH AUTUMN LUNCH.

The Old Rectory, Crostwich, 1st October
2019. If you would like a menu please give
Paul Rainbird a call on (01328) 856560.

That's all for now folks! I look forward to
the pleasure of your company at Branch
meetings especially 17th September a
demonstration by the Air Ambulance.

Best wishes.

Colin (01502) 585079.