

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

NORFOLK BRANCH

NEWSLETTER NO.238 May 2020

President: Squadron Leader Paul Bruning (Rtd)

Chairman: Mr. Tony Leonard + Standard Bearer

Vice Chairman: Mr. Paul Rainbird + Programme Secretary

Secretary: Squadron Leader Peter Lawrence (Rtd)

Treasurer: Mrs. Sue Lawrence



DEAR MEMBER,

It's nice to be back - to be back nice! I hope everyone is managing OK during the coronavirus. Our sincere thanks to everyone who is looking after us. We are all grateful for their care and attention, especially us seniors.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the Annual Association and Branch Subscriptions form and details of David William McEwen's Award for Brave Conduct.

The March AGM was cancelled and we will have to wait until we can resume meetings and events. You will be kept fully informed. The Annual Chairman's and Treasurer's Reports will follow.

OBITUARY.

It is with regret that I inform you of the death of our Branch Secretary David William McEwen and late Branch member Cyril Charles Creed.

David William Mc Ewen died on the 19th March 2020 aged 79 years. He lived with his wife Gill at Kings Lynn, Norfolk.

The funeral was held on the 3rd April 2020 at St Faiths Church, Gaywood, Kings Lynn. Due to the coronavirus only family were able to attend but a Memorial Service may be held in the future.

In memory of David's life, donations if desired, can be made to Norfolk Hospice, Tappin House - Wheatfields, Hillington, Kings Lynn, PE31 6BH. Cheques should be made payable to Norfolk Hospice, Tappin House. Alternatively at the next Branch meeting, when Paul will collate donations and forward to the Norfolk Hospice.

David served his country in the RAF Regiment from 1961 to 1983 and in the RAF Auxiliary Regiment from 1984 to 1999 in the rank of sergeant. His Squadrons included 63 (Field/LAA), 48, 16, 34, 15, 51 Helicopter Supp 183 and 2620 (Auxiliary Squadron).

His postings included Tengah, Odiham. Aden, Catterick. Akrotiri. Wittering. Bruggen. Hong Kong. Guttersloh and Marham.

Awards: David was the holder of the GSM 3 Bars, LSM, Veterans Medal, Malayasia Medal and Oak Leaf Medal for Brave Conduct.

David's hobbies were caravanning and gardening and he was a keen supporter of Kings Lynn Football Club and Kings Lynn Speedway.

David and Gill joined Norfolk Branch in 2014 and when Louise and I retired as Secretary and Treasurer in 2016, they kindly took on our duties, which they continued until David's recent ill health. Both doing excellent work and giving great support to the Branch at meetings and events. David was also a Standard Bearer for Norfolk Branch and Dersingham RBL.

David was a great family man, very caring, with a lovely sense of humour. always very interesting to talk to, had a wonderful rapport with everyone and liked by all.

Our thoughts and prayers are for Gill, daughters Wendy, Helen and Lisa and the family.

WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

Cyril Charles Creed died on the 26th March 2020 aged 89 years. He lived with his wife Mary at Dereham, Norfolk. Cyril's funeral was held on 9th April 2020 at St Faiths Crematorium, Norwich.

Cyril served his country in the RAF Regiment from 1951 to 1953 as a Corporal Despatch Rider on 33 LAA Squadron at Yaver, West Germany. His other postings included Wheaton. Dumfries and Catterick.

In civilian life Cyril worked as a plasterer and his hobbies included stamp collecting. Cyril was a late member of Norfolk Branch.

Our thoughts and prayers are for Mary, son Andrew and the family.

WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

Dear All,
[Distribution suppressed to comply with
DPA/GDPR 2018]

AWARD OF THE BATTLE HONOUR 'AFGHANISTAN 2001-2014'

It has been announced that the Battle Honour '**AFGHANISTAN 2001-2014**', with the highest honour of the Right to Emblazon on their Standards, has been awarded to the extant **Nos II, 1, 63, 15, 51, 27 and 34 Squadrons RAF Regiment**, and to the now disbanded **Nos 58 and 3 Squadrons RAF Regiment**.

The award is fitting recognition for the Squadrons' exceptional achievements during the difficult and dangerous fight in Afghanistan, particularly in the operations to protect Air Power at Kabul Airport, Kandahar Airfield, Camp Bastion, and the Medical Emergency Response Teams.

Among the first to arrive in Theatre on Operation FINGAL and the last to leave on Operation HERRICK, the RAF Regiment's task was strategically significant and tactically complex. Our personnel acted with the highest professionalism in the face of an implacable and deadly enemy, while enduring a punishing tempo of deployments and operations.

The nature of our fight was such that we had to operate in the same areas repeatedly, making ourselves vulnerable to enemy attack as a necessary measure to protect our bases and their aircraft. Many friends and colleagues made the ultimate sacrifice for their Country and many others were wounded in action, yet we continued with our duty showing consistently high courage and fortitude.

The performance of our Corps in Afghanistan is, rightly, a matter of great pride and a clear demonstration of our professionalism and the importance of our role. In addition to adding to our inspiring history, the award of this Battle Honour serves as yet another reminder for us of our duty to live up to the fine example set by those who have gone before.

PER ARDUA

The following is a short report from a two page article in the Daily Mail 2nd April 2020.
Just 19 and 5ft 4in, how Georgia fought her way into the RAF boys' club.

Georgia Sandover sips her cup of tea and tries to explain how it feels being the first - and only - woman in the RAF Regiment.

A few weeks ago in January she passed a gruelling selection course to become the first female member of the RAF's frontline infantry regiment, which defends British bases overseas from attack. Georgia's unit - 1 Squadron is now on standby to help tackle coronavirus, guarding key sites such as Downing Street, Parliament and the country's nuclear power plants.

Georgia signed up for a gruelling 20 week RAF Regiment selection course alongside 42 male recruits, though only one other woman has ever tried it since a ban on females in frontline roles was lifted two years ago.

To pass, the would be recruits had to perform a series of fitness tests including 4km carrying 40 kg (over 6st) - then speeding up and doing 2km more in just 16 minutes. Georgia dragged a 110kg (17 st) sandbag at speed and carried 40kg the length of a rugby pitch and back. Both exercises to test her ability to get a wounded colleague out of trouble.

Then there were the 'live fire' drills with an L85 automatic rifle and bayonet practice to 'channel aggression'.

Just 18 recruits made it through, Georgia was one of them, despite being just 5ft 4in; she did nothing differently to the other trainees but admits: Sometimes you have to put in double the effort to be able to do well.

In September 2017, the RAF became the first service to open all combat roles to women, followed swiftly by the Army and Navy.

Georgina grew up in the countryside on the outskirts of Kings Lynn and then in her parents home in Downham Market.

She signed up for a 'uniformed public service's' course at the College of West Anglia, near her home. One of her teachers - Rob Cooke, a former Gunner - inspired her to join the RAF Regiment.

Editor: Well done Georgina, you have passed the test - and joined the best!

Branch Visit to Great Yarmouth 14th to 17th February 2020. Report by Paul Rainbird.

This was our fourth year visit to the Carlton Hotel, Gt. Yarmouth. Fourteen members attended.

As usual we all had a good time together. The weather was poor, high winds and rain but this did not dampen our spirits.

It was good to see Alan and Lynne Barks, from Holbeach, Lincolnshire, and Colin Clarke who joined us on Saturday and Gordon Coe's friend Reg Proctor who served with him in the Canal Zone in 1952. Reg had travelled down from Dromfield, near Sheffield, and was made very welcome.

Before departing for his train home, Reg said he really enjoyed his visit and all the kind friendship he was shown. He wants to come again next year. Thank you Reg for making the trip and glad you arrived home safely, it was a great pleasure for us to have met you.

The food was good as was the usual evening entertainment together with Bingo.

Apart from the weather all went well, an enjoyable week-end break.

BRANCH MEETING FEBRUARY 2020.

Today, we were scheduled to have a talk by our chairman called 'My life as a schoolboy in Africa'. Sadly this was cancelled.

However, instead, we had a very interesting presentation by Peter Lawrence, regarding the situation relating to the RAF Regiment Association amalgamating with the RAFA. There will be a full discussion of this proposal at the Branch AGM, and a report in the next Newsletter. There will be a postal vote of members in 2021.

Branch Minutes.

Chairman's and Secretary's Reports; Nothing to report.

AOB. Visit to Gt Yarmouth discussed. (as above) everyone agreed they had enjoyed the long week-end..

Visit to National Memorial Arboretum. A 16 seater coach has been booked and deposit £50 paid. There are 15 seats booked with 1 seat left. The payment will be collected during the end of June.

The next meeting will be on the 17th March, which will be our AGM. Followed by buffet.

Dedication and Commitment was said.

Meeting closed at 2.20pm.

TIME FOR A LARF!

A married couple viewed a house in the country and decided to buy it. They suddenly remembered they had not seen the WC, so wrote to the vicar who had shown them around to ask if he knew where it was.

Being ignorant of the meaning of WC, he thought they meant the Wesleyan Chapel. Imagine their surprise when they received this letter.

Dear Sir and Madam,

This, of course, is very unfortunate if you are in the habit of going regularly. However, it may please you to know that some people take their lunch and make a day of it.

By the way, it is made to seat 500 people and the committee have decided to fit plush seats to ensure greater comfort. Those who can spare the time walk, while others go by train and get there just in time.

The last time my wife went was ten years ago and she had to stand. I never go at all.

They have special facilities for ladies presided over by the minister, who renders assistance where necessary.

The children sit together and sing during the proceedings.

P.S. Hymn sheets can be found behind the door.

AND

A man went into a pub with a lump of tarmac under his arm and said to the barman, 'I'll have a pint please and one for the road.'

Customers in a fishmonger's were startled when a fish on a slab started cracking jokes. 'Take no notice,' said the fishmonger, 'he's a funny old sole.'

What do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back.? A stick.

A stag night is a deer night out.

Why did Shakespeare have so much trouble in choosing what to write his plays with? 2b or not 2b.

What fish can be found in hospitals? Sturgeons.

To celebrate his tenth wedding anniversary, a husband pinned a map of the world on the wall, gave his wife a dart and said we will go to wherever it lands. This summer they are going to spend two weeks by the skirting board. Ouch!

CENTURION 2009 TRIBUTES

LAKE-BULLEN

Former RAF Regt SNCO Leonard George LAKE-BULLEN, Born 13 Feb 23, died on 26 Nov 08 aged 85, following a short illness. He was the first RAF Regt recipient of the Military Medal (MM) in May 43. The citation published in the London Gazette on 28 May 43 read:

'Aircraftman 1st Class Leonard George BULLEN, Royal Air Force Regiment: 'In November 42, this airman with his flight, was on the coastal road proceeding in the direction of Sollum,

When the convoy had reached a point at which the road was crowded with transport vehicles, an enemy bomber approached, dropping bombs that caused casualties. Aircraftman Bullen, with great presence of mind and coolness, manned his gun which was mounted on a lorry and successfully shot down the intruder before any more damage was done.

By his prompt action, Aircraftman Bullen undoubtedly saved many lives and much material from destruction..

In December 1942, he repeated this feat, destroying an enemy aircraft which was making a low-level attack on dispersed aircraft.'

Promoted to LAC in May 43, Bullen continued to serve in North Africa throughout the remainder of the campaign, serving with 260 Sqn RAF Regt before joining 2930 (LAA) Sqn RAF Regt. He remained with the Sqn, serving in the Italian campaign before transferring to 2913 Sqn RAF Regt in mid 1944.

In 1945, he re-mustered to the RAF Police until he was discharged from the RAFVR in 1947.

He then re-enlisted in the regular service, re-joining the RAF Regt. Following training at RAF Catterick he was posted to Nethertown where he subsequently joined the newly re-numbered 15 (LAA) Sqn RAF Regt as a Sgt.

In 1950 he was posted to the Far East where he saw active service once more serving with 93 (Rifle) Sqn RAF Regt (Malaya). Here he was promoted temporarily to the rank of A/FS following the death of his flt cdr in action against Communist bandits. As patrol comdr, he mounted frequent patrols lasting many days in search of bandit gangs in jungle

or forest reserves.. They were engaged in many actions that resulted in the discovery of six bandit camps.

On his return to the UK in 1953, he served with the newly formed 33 (LAA) Wg RAF Regt at Innsworth before his discharge on 23 Mar 54.

On his marriage in 1948, he changed his name to Lake-Bullen, which was the full name on his birth certificate. Following his discharge he worked as a security guard at the Palace of Westminster before turning to work in agriculture. He was a member of the Hereford Branch of the RAF Regiment Association.

The funeral was held in Hereford on 9 Dec 08. He is survived by his sons, Chris and Richard, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

NORMANDY by Bill Rogers.

After serving an Apprenticeship at Cranwell, I passed out with the lowly rank of AC2 in March 1944. During our last weeks we were asked what we wanted to do in the RAF. About half wished to join as Wireless Operator Air Gunner.

.I wanted to travel and although air crew involved endless travel, one never really got anywhere. I volunteered for the Tactical Air Force which was a selection of the RAF which was being got together and set up in self contained units to go anywhere and do anything.

From Cranwell I was posted to RAF Upavon in Wiltshire for about two months. There I was doing radio servicing on second line bombers Wellingtons and Whitleys.

Upavon was only memorable for me because when I was put on guard at the Main Camp one night, my Guard Commander was Sgt Freddie Mills then World Light Heavy Weight boxing champion. When he met me at the gate he said; 'If there is any trouble, give me a shout'. A good man to have around if there was trouble.

In May I received my posting to 2nd TAF at Catterick camp in Yorkshire, 2880 Sqn RAFR. I wasn't thrilled to be joining the Regiment, they only used Army radios which I hadn't even seen, besides which there was no glamour in the Rock Apes with their khaki battledress.

I got to Catterick to find that the Sqn was already to move south to Sussex to prepare

for the invasion of Europe. We all knew it was imminent, but nobody knew where it was going to happen.

We settled down under canvas, eight to a tent, in a field at Chailey Common near Haywards Heath. The South of England was chock a block with troops of all allied nations. We did a little training, I saw three Army 19 transmitter/receivers for which I was responsible under Cpl Maurice Rowbottom. We went into town when we could and I started to learn to drive a 3 ton Bedford truck. We were in tents, with canvas buckets for washing, and a deep trench with a pole across for a toilet. All very matey.

After a couple of weeks we moved, in convey, to Ford, a little closer to Portsmouth. The South of England had been drunk dry of beer by the mass of soldiers, and one evening when I went out with Les Cole and Chang Humphreys (both dedicated drinkers) the only beer we could find was in a small railway buffet, so we drank that dry and staggered back to camp.

Sixth of June came and we all knew the big invasion was on. It was several weeks before we got the call to load everything onto our trucks which were all waterproofed for a wet landing. We made our way to Gosport and were loaded onto a couple of Landing Ship Tanks (LST's).

All night at sea and in the morning we were off to the Normandy beach where we had to wait in our ships until the German guns finished shelling the beach. In the middle of the morning we approached the shore and grounded on a rising tide.

We offloaded, all dry except for the Sqn WO who, I have been told, slipped his motorcycle off the side of the ramp and got wet feet. We drove to the top of the beach out of the enemy line of fire and stopped at a NAAFI van which was selling tea and cakes.

We made camp at Plumetot, near Bayeux, and the guns were set up to defend a small advanced Polish Squadron 303 Sqn RAF. The German army was pulling back all the time and the Luftwaffe was not in evidence at all. We of the Signals Section kept radio watch in our roughly dug German bunker.

Then came the big breakout and we loaded our equipment and set off in convoy across France. Through the notorious Falaise Gap where the Germans had been cut to ribbons, there were bodies of men and horses, hundreds of trucks and tanks, all the

detritus of war.

Somewhere around Arras we were taken off the road into a field where we camped at the bottom of a hill in the shelter of some woods. Our guns were deployed, and all our transport was taken from us to be used to ferry fuel from Normandy where Pipe Line Under The Ocean (PLUTO) ended, up to the mobile front line.. Back at our camp it rained continuously for days so that we all got bogged down.

I was on watch in the little radio van one night with Wally Simpson on guard outside. Wally came inside out of the rain and after a while we heard a jeep pull up outside. Wally got out and I heard a strange voice ask him 'Where is the blood bank?' Wally replied 'We haven't got a blood bank here, sir, there may be one at the airfield up the road'. The jeep drove off and Wally got back in and said to me 'He looked just like a bloody German'. Maybe he was. Of course there should have been a challenge like 'Halt. Who goes there'. We didn't hear any more about it.

When our transport came back we moved up to Vendeville, the airfield covering the city of Lille. Life was very relaxed there, we captured a large supply of German rations some very good, like a lot of honey which never appeared in our rations. One thing we did get was white bread. I didn't know until very recently that the reason we got white bread was that being attached to the Canadian army we got Canadian bread. It went well with the German honey. Incidentally, none of us English had seen white bread for five years, English bread was all grey.

At Vendeville there was a report that some Germans had been captured on the airfield and I was sent from the radio van to HQ with a message. This was in the middle of the night with the airfield being searched by trigger happy Poles.

We went into the city whenever we could.. My mate was Curly Corbett, a signaller from Norfolk. Curly was a year or so older than me but very quiet, not a great drinker. He was killed a couple of months later in Antwerp.

On 8th September we loaded every thing again to try to keep up with the war. This time we went into Belgium, to Antwerp which had just been liberated. All the way across France and into Belgium we had been close behind the fighting men, just far enough away to be out of danger, but as they moved

on to capture the next town or village, we turned up just in time to catch the civilian population coming out of their cellars to welcome the brave soldiers with their carefully saved precious bottles of wine.

AN EXCLUSIVE ACCOUNT BY LAC 'POP' CORTIS OF AN AIR DISASTER OF WW 11.

It was on the 25th August 1942, whilst I was stationed at Wick, Scotland, that we were called out at 3.0'clock in the morning. In those days as soon as we were called out we had to climb into F.S.M.O. and rifle. We reported at once to the sick quarters, but were told to take our kit back to the billets and report back again in 15 minutes time.

We drew haversack rations and were loaded in 3 ton vehicles, along with stretchers and the Ensign of the RAF. Whilst on a 35 mile journey we all wondered what was happening.

Eventually we reached a spot which was as far as the vehicles could take us, a place called 'Eagles Point'. There we debussed and were told to wait further information, still wondering what had happened.

Two farmers arrived and told the officer that they had heard an explosion which seemed come from the East. The officer then formed us into one long line, and we started to trek over the rugged moors and mountains of Scotland.

At times we could not see more than a foot in front of us the mist was so thick, but at 9.30 we stumbled on some wreckage. The Group Captain in charge formed us up and told us to keep a firm grip on ourselves, as there were many dead bodies lying about.

The first sight I saw was the head of a pilot lying on the ground, burned. Several more bodies were soon discovered, lying smashed in pieces amongst the mangled remains of what was once a fine Sunderland. Group Captain Pritchett, called for the first stretcher. I went over and heard him ask the S.M.O. 'Which one is the Duke of Kent?'

The doctor indicated a body, and as we were putting it on a stretcher I asked the S.M.O. who the man was. In a whisper he told me that this was the Duke of Kent! He had sustained terrible injuries. Now came the long journey back across the moors. We were not allowed to remove his flying suit.

We trudged with our gruesome burden mile after mile, until we reached the wagon lines where a Red Cross van was waiting to take the Duke to Dunrobin Castle, the residence

of the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland. There a coffin was made for him and we left for Wick, arriving back just after midnight.

At 8.0'clock the next morning the whole Squadron set out for Dunrobin and formed a Guard of Honour from the castle to the private station. The route was lined with a red carpet and we, acting as pall-bearers, laid the Duke in his private carriage alongside his batman and valet, who had also perished in the crash. He was then taken to London, where another Regiment Squadron formed the Guard.

The next day we set off to salvage the wreckage, and were very surprised to learn that there had been a survivor. His name was Flight Sergeant Jack, the rear gunner, who fell out of his turret just as the 'plane struck the mountainside - the death roll was fifteen persons. Now the really hard task commenced.

Large boxes were made to contain the various parts of the aircraft, and were carried away by us. It took three whole weeks to clear all the engines etc, thirty men pulling on a fifty feet length of rope to drag the wings across the rough ground that no vehicle could cross.

Finally, all that was left of the scene of the disaster was a burned patch of mountainside, and an event that burned itself into my memory, never to be erased.

About a month after the crash, the King came to visit the spot where his brother had perished. He sent a message to our Squadron 2749, and it was read out on parade the next day. It was to thank the Squadron on its great and loyal duty.

DATA PROTECTION

The National Association and Norfolk Branch Secretary's are updating Data Protection details of Full/Associate and Friend members. That is names, addresses, tel. no's. and emails. If any of your details have changed, or you wish to add or remove any, please contact Branch Secretary Peter Lawrence on (01603) 438802 or email peterlawrence@ntlworld.com

That's all for now folks! We look forward to the pleasure of your company at meetings and events (when we get back to normal).

Bests wishes,

Colin. (01502) 585079.