

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

NORFOLK BRANCH

NEWSLETTER NO.240



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,

Wednesday 9th September 2020 10am the postman has just delivered the mail. There is a letter from Paul Rainbird to say that he and Peter Lawrence have had a meeting with Lorna and Frances at the Feathers Inn, which is now open for business and can accommodate our meetings.

They discussed a date for the Branch AGM and agreed the 20th October 2020 at 12 noon. There will be a buffet.

There of course is a programme of social distancing which complies with all the government guidelines for Covid 19.

Paul has been in contact with members who regularly attend meetings to obtain their views on attending on the 20th and had a good response. So all systems go.

Now the only TV programme I watch in the day time is Bargain Hunt and then the 1pm news headlines. (unless there is snooker on). I was just eating a sandwich when the headlines are announced - Covid 19 Clampdown.

So in 3 hours we have gone from Yay to Nay. Now everything is back on hold. What the position will be when you receive this I do not know.

Therefore, if you will be joining us when some sort of normal service allows - will you please contact Paul on (01328) 856560 or Peter on (01603) 438802 and they can send you all the details for social distancing, and we will know numbers for the buffet. Could you please do this by the 12th October - just in case we can go ahead by the 20th. Well you never know!.

MANY THANKS

I have recently had a total (R) hip replacement and am still on crutches but making progress. I thank everyone for their cards, phone calls and messages of support over the past weeks.

And Alf and Joyce Newton also send thanks

for all help and support with their recent health problems. We are all most grateful and it really does make a difference .

Our Branch is a family of good friends. That's nice. That's Norfolk!

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR DIAMOND WEDDING - TOM AND GISELA GILES.
17th September 2020.

I served with Tom in the 1950's at RAF Wunstorf, Germany, on 31 LAA Squadron RAF Regiment.

So how did Tom meet Gisela? Tom was on camp guard duty with his friend Barry. Now Barry was seeing a young lady who with her good friend Gisela, called by to have a chat. Tom had never met Gisela before..

The chat ended with Tom asking Gisela out and they married in 1960. Settled in Wunstorf, they raised their family and where they still live..

In 1998, I organised a visit to Hannover, Wunstorf and the lovely surrounding towns. Thanks to Tom and Gisela who arranged for us to visit the camp, our billets and Squadron HQ after 40 plus years. We were made very welcome and repeated the visit some 6 years later. We also met up with old comrades and several joined Norfolk Branch. A wonderful time.

Like most 'Rock Apes' we enjoyed our service and really benefited from the experience. It set us up for later life,

We all enjoyed sport and Tom and I were in 31 Squadron Tug-o-War team that reached the final of the 2nd TAF Championships. Tom was also on the books of Aston Villa FC and others on Sheffield Wednesday and Grimsby Town. We also had a Class 1 Football referee, basketball coach and good Welsh boxer. I once scored 5 goals for B Flight and this increased my transfer value to 10 Woodbines (cigs 9d - 4p a packet). I never made it, I had dodgy knees

TRIBUTES

AIR VICE MARSHAL DONALD ARTHUR
POCOCK MBE
Commandant General RAF Regiment (1973-75).

AVM Marshal Arthur POCOCK, born on 5 Jul 1920, died on 30 Jul 2008 following a long period of failing health, aged 88 years. He was a 'foundation' member of the RAF Regt and, while he was the third Regt officer to become CG, he was the first to hold the post after a career spent entirely in the Corps; all his predecessors had either been Army or RAF General Duties at some time in their careers. Commissioned on 25 Jul 1941 for ground defence duties, he was automatically incorporated into the new Corps upon its formation in 1942.

His first appointment was to a light anti-aircraft (LAA) sqn in defence of a RAF Tactical Fighter Wing of the Desert Air Force in North Africa in 1942. While such an appointment is quite typical for a junior RAF Regt officer today, in the instance of the young Pocock and because of the seniority he subsequently attained, it had a significant impact upon the RAF.

In those early days, there was no 'corporate memory' of previous RAF ground and anti-aircraft operations. The RAF Regt was a novel concept, a self contained experiment; consequently, it was open to interpretation by anyone as to how the Regiment might operate and how it might be used. Many mistakes were made then and for many years afterwards.

But while Fg Off Pocock gained his initial experience in war at a very junior level, he also learned from the errors he saw around him, as much as from the good. Fortunately, Col Morrey Salmon, Commdr RAF Regt, Mediterranean, was convinced that 'his' RAF Regt existed for the sole purpose of sustaining air operations in the face of the enemy and he made certain all his officers followed the same doctrine.

This made a lasting impression on the young Pocock, who remained an ardent lifelong advocate of the need for the RAF's own untrammelled protection of its air resources against both ground and air attack.

He argued this in later years, not on the grounds of petty inter-service 'empire-building', but from the pragmatic stance of offering the other Services a force-

multiplier of serviceable and thus available-air power without distraction from their own operations.

Donald Pocock was promoted rapidly to Sqn Ldr in 1943, to form 2932 Sqn RAF Regt at Castel Benito, Benghazi, during the advance to Tunis. Subsequent to the Axis defeat in North Africa, his Sqn was re-deployed to Syria, as part of Operation TURPITUDE. A move intended to divert Germany's attention from Operation OVERLORD preparations for the invasion of NW Europe and to help tip neutral Turkey to the Allies.

However, the success of Operation OVERLORD in 1944 led to the abandonment of the former operation in the Autumn and, in October 44, 2932 Sqn was sent to Foggia in Italy and thence to Vis, a Dalmatian island, for the LAA defence of the RAF's Balkan Air Force there and of Tito's rear partisan HQ.

By late 1944, the main counter-air threat there from the enemy was not from the air but from sea-raiders. Pocock's Sqn was, therefore, incorporated into a joint raiding group of highly trained Army, RM and RAF Regt commandos, who operated from Vis against enemy forces on the Yugoslav mainland. They inflicted many casualties and the Yugoslavs held them in high regard.

Sqn Ldr Pocock also provided boarding parties for RN vessels in the Atlantic, their role being to capture as many enemy sailors as possible for interrogation. Post war, he remained an active member of the Joint Commandos Association and was often invited to social functions at the Yugoslav Embassy in London.

On his appointment as CG RAF Regt in 1973 among many congratulatory messages he received were several from senior RM officers with whom he had served at that time.

Donald Pocock was promoted to Wg Cdr in 1946 while in Austria, and on the disbandment of his new Wg very shortly afterwards, he was posted to the Aden Protectorate (APL) to raise a new Levy wing. Resulting from the extension of Trenchard Doctrine of 'Air Control' of protected territories to the Aden Protectorate (some 30 autonomous tribal States under treaty of Protection with the UK) this tribal Force now came under RAF command.

When the Palestine Mandate ended and the war of 1947-48 broke out, the centuries of harmonious co-existence between Arabs and Jews in the Arabian Peninsula was destroyed.

The indigenous Armed Police and the residual Army garrison could not contain the resulting violent rioting in the Aden Colony. Pocock's Levy Wg with others, was called in from the hinterland to restore order. It was unprecedented for the tribal Levies to be deployed in the Colony and it proved a flawed decision. Some Levy units mutinied and attacked those they were supposed to protect, but Wg Cdr Pocock maintained discipline in his Wg.

In 1961, a distinguished civilian eyewitness of these events described his immense relief at the sight of Donald Pocock's powerful, commanding figure amid chaos, bringing order to it. In his opinion, it was largely because of Wg Cdr Pocock that casualties and damage were minimised.

20 Wing RAF Regt, with 58 and 66 Sqns RAF Regt under command, was sent rapidly in from Egypt, to be joined later by 62 Sqn. With these British reinforcements in place, the APL returned to their up-country duties.

Compared to the huge contemporary conflict in the Indian sub-continent and the war in Palestine, the Aden Colony riots were ascribed to a footnote of Imperial history. Wg Cdr Pocock returned to the UK in 1948, after seven continuous years overseas, much of it on active service.

Thereafter, he was one of the first RAF Regt officers to attend the RAF Staff College, followed by a succession of staff and command appointments in British and NATO HQ's at home and overseas, including Cyprus and HQ Far East Air Force, Singapore.

Shortly before the latter posting, in 1965, as Gp Capt and Deputy Director of the RAF Regt, he was instrumental in establishing the successful RAF Regt/USAF Officer Exchange Programme that continues uninterrupted to this day.

He was Aide-de-Camp to HM The Queen from 1967 to 1970 and commanded the RAF Regt Depot, Catterick from 1968-70, at a time when the Northern Ireland 'Troubles' were once again mounting, and saw his subordinate Wg and Sqns deploy in 1969 with the start of the Corps 38-year long involvement in Operation BANNER. On promotion to Air Cdr, he moved from there to the MOD as Director Ground Defence (RAF).

Although the Regt's 'Tigercat' short range air defence missile system, introduced under a previous CG, was the first in British land

service, his major post-war attainment was arguably his successful leadership, as D Regt (RAF) and, subsequently as CG, of the introduction to RAF service in 1974 of 'Rapier' then the World's most potent short-range air defence missile system.

The RAF Regt thus became, for the first time, the prime customer and lead UK Forces Training Authority for a significant weapons system.

On his retirement in 1975, he became Air Defence Advisor to the British Aircraft Corporation Guided Weapon Division. He was appointed subsequently as general manager for a large contract to supply and support the Rapier missile deal with Iran until that project came to an abrupt end with the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. He then became director of the British Metallurgical Plant Constructor's Association, before finally retiring in 1988 to take up voluntary appointments with RAFA and St John's Ambulance.

A dynamic, far-sighted and charismatic leader, AVM Donald Pocock's enduring legacy to the RAF was to convince successive generations of the indispensability of organic local defence of air resources to the successful execution of air power in military operations at every level, against each and every threat and in the need for adaptability to any change that might be demanded of the Regt to meet that requirement.

Neither the RAF as a whole, nor any individual RAF Regt officer or gunner, has any doubt about this today. It is doctrine which the parent RAF has itself reviewed time and again over the past 66 years, invariably to return to the same conclusion until budget cuts imposed on the RAF in 2006 transferred RAF Rapier wholly to the British Army, in contradiction to all UK 'Survive to Operate' doctrine and experience over almost seven generations.

The quiet family funeral was held on 8 Aug 08 in Reculver, Kent, and the RAF Regt Secretary represented the Corps informally.

Donald Pocock married Dorothy Griffiths, a PMRAFNS sister in 1947. She died in May 2006 and their two sons and three daughters, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences, survive him. A Service of Thanksgiving in the future is being considered.

(Ed: This Tribute is based upon the same material provided largely from Regimental sources in the Daily Telegraph for AVM

Pocock's Obituary, posted on 11 Aug 08. It has, however, been expanded and is published in 'Centurion' by mutual agreement with the Telegraph's Air Obituaries Editor)

THE VETERAN

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast, and he sat around the Legion Club telling stories of the past - of a war that he had fought in and the deeds that he had done, and his exploits with his buddies, were heroes, everyone.

And tho' sometimes to his neighbours his tales became a joke, all his Legion buddies listened, for they knew whereof he spoke. But we'll hear his tales no longer for old Bill has passed away and the world's a little poorer for a veteran died today.

He'll not be mourned by many - just his children and his wife, for he lived an ordinary and uneventful life. He held a job and raised a family', quietly going on his way and the world won't note his passing though a veteran died today.

When politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state and thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great. Newspapers tell their stories from the time that they were young, but the passing of a veteran goes unnoticed and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution to the welfare of our land, a person who breaks promises and cons his fellow man - Or the ordinary fellow in times of war and strife, goes off to serve his country and offers up his life?

It's so easy to forget them, for it was so long ago, that the 'old Bills', of our country went to battle, but we know it was not the politicians with their compromise and ploys, who won for us the freedom that our country now enjoys.

He was just a common fellow, and his ranks are going thin, for when countries are in conflict, then we find the veterans part, it is to clean up all the trouble that others often start.

If we cannot give him honour while he's here to hear the praise, then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days. Perhaps a simple notice in a paper that would say, our country is in mourning for a veteran died today.

Sent in by the late: Les Frost (SEAC)

Editor: Written some years ago I have just found the poem in my archives.

The following was first published in the Birmingham Branch Newsletter, July 1995 and reproduced with consent of Tom Magee

MEMORIES OF SALALAH IN MUSCAT AND OMAN.

I joined up some years ago after Colonel Mike Mitchell, ('Mad Mitch') and the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders had moved into the Crater District of Aden in 1967. It was the first time that television had broadcast live, or very nearly live pictures of an operational area and this had a profound effect on me.

I was brought up on Errol Flynn and Saturday morning film heroes and to see live heroes actually going into action with bag-pipes and an officer strolling along with a walking stick-to protect him, was to me the epitome of bravery and the true picture of the British Bulldog spirit.

I had joined up in November 1967 and by the summer of 1968 was LAC in the RAF Regiment, up to that date it was my greatest achievement.

Having taken on everything that could be thrown at me and passed, being presented with my RAF Regiment shoulder flashes was a moment to savour.

I was posted to the best Squadron in the RAF Regiment, Number 51 Squadron, at RAF Catterick and was assigned to the Support Wing Flight for Mortar training.

My Flight Sergeant was S Flynn (who I am glad to say is a member of Catterick and District Branch), who after some 'homely chats and sidelong glances', got me trained up in the duties of Mortarman.

The Squadron had roulement duties at Bahrain in the Persian Gulf and it was there that the Squadron moved with LAC Magee in tow.

Our main duty was to patrol the airfield at RAF Muharrag, which at that time was both the civil and military airport for the area. We made patrols in Landrovers on the perimeter track and of the radar installations and domestic areas of the camp, 24 hours a day, keeping a steely eye out for anyone taking a short cut out across the runway, or generally breathing in a suspicious manner.

We had the only vehicle in the RAF Regiment that could turn left all on its own, as all our patrols were made in an anti-clockwise direction.

This was not what I thought our roles were going to be. Where were the bag-pipes and the officers with swagger sticks?

After 10 weeks of boring patrols, I was recalled from patrol one day, with my driver Keith Rawlonsion, (from Coventry) and told that the RAF Police would be taking over our patrol duties and that we were to change into combat kit and along with the rest of the Flight, report to the dispersal area in thirty minutes.

There, we were briefed about the mission by the Squadron CO. We were going to an airfield called RAF Salalah, in Oman, to relieve the Station personnel who had come under attack from rebel forces opposed to the Sultan of Oman.

We were issued with ammunition and ration packs and then marched over to an Argosy aircraft, in which we were flown some 500 miles around the coastline of Oman, to RAF Salalah, which is in the southern most part of the country.

As we made our approach we were told to make ready to disembark as quickly as possible. The aircraft taxied along the runway until it approached the nearest dispersal area to the control room tower.

We were still some 500 yards from it when the tailgate was lowered and we marched off the plane in two single files, one either side of the aircraft at the high port and with eyes scanning the area for the enemy.

As we approached the domestic area around the control tower, we could hear cheering coming from the buildings, 'Hooray, the Rocks are here!!' It was the moment I could, hear the bag-pipes wailing and see the officer with his swagger stick. After all the training, I was now to be put to the test.

The temperature was over 100 degrees when we left Bahrain but here in Salalah, it was the monsoon season and the temperature was only about 60 degrees and very misty but I was still sweating.

We were greeted at the compound around the control tower, by a sight I shall never forget. Besides the RAF personnel, mostly clerks, cooks or fitters, the Station was defended by local tribesmen, (Dhofan's) and was made up of all age groups, young boys of 12 or 13 and old men up to about 80 years of age. They were all dressed in traditional costumes, with curved knives in their belts and Shamacks on their heads, just like in the movies.

The age range of their weapons must have covered at least 200 years, ranging from old 303's to muskets of the 18th Century. All of which had been heavily inlaid with Ivory and Brass studding. I hoped that I would not be anywhere near to any of them when the time came to fire.

We took over the defence of the Station immediately, laying out our defensive positions in the best traditions of the RAF Regiment. (NAAFI, WRAF BLOCK, MESS HALL, in that order, only joking) and we soon had patrols out in the desert looking for signs of enemy presence.

By the end of the second day, we had the defence of the airfield covered and the Station relaxed to some sort of normality (whatever that was) although we were a lot more aware of being in a hostile situation and the old routine of patrols had resumed.

On one such patrol, together with Don Wilcox who was also from Birmingham, we came across an Arab walking across the desert towards the town of Salalah. We of course challenged him in the prescribed way and got the usual reply - NOTHING!

It was only when I cocked my rifle that we got the response we wanted. After a quick search we could see he was just a traveller, as all he had was a small bag containing food and a water skin but the three foot broadsword he carried did worry us a bit, so we let him go and carried on with our patrol.

One evening, it was decided that due to our presence on the station, there was no longer any need for the Station personnel to carry weapons with them at all times. There had been some incidents of small arms being fired indoors, accidentally of course, so we were detailed to go to the billets and collect in all the weapons from RAF personnel.

To this day, I am not sure which scared me most. The enemy, or Penguins sleeping with Stirling Machine Guns under the blankets.

Our presence at RAF Salalah obviously had the desired effect on the rebels, with our patrols out, they could not get close enough to attack the airfield again during our time there.

We had arrived at RAF Salalah after 10 weeks in Bahrain and we were very tanned, some of us could actually have passed for Arabs as long as we didn't speak but after 10 days at Salalah, we were as white as the day

we had arrived from the UK. We were eventually relieved by (I think it was) 15 Squadron, whom were diverted to Salalah instead of Bahrain.

We flew out of Salalah to return to the UK via Bahrain, where we held the traditional Mahsalam party at the Moon Rocket Club (the NAAFI at Muharraq at which copious amounts of 'falling down water' was consumed). (I never liked that part!).

Those of us who had been 'blooded' could reflect that real soldering was not like you see on the TV or on film but 1 hour of action and 23 hours of routine boredom.

AND THE TV SHOTS OF CRATER IN ADEN AS MY CORPORAL SAID TO ME, 'WHY DO THINK THEY CALL HIM MAD MITCH'?

(I can't understand Tom not liking 'falling down water' then, as he has developed a healthy interest in it since, he MUST be joking).

Editor: Just a note to say that Tom Magee has been doing an excellent job as National Association Treasurer for many years. Our sincere thanks Tom for all your hard work - it is much appreciated by all members.

CHAIN LETTER

(The following was seen in a (RAFA journal)

Like many airman during the last war, Arthur Bower was posted many times; the occasion he recalls in mind happened in one of those hutted camps. The white-washed walls of men's lavatory were so covered with graffiti it was quite impossible to add another word.

Suddenly, as may be expected, this was dealt with and the place thoroughly cleaned. 'I thought the situation would not last long and wondered what the first 'insertion' might be.

Sure enough, very soon the following notice appeared on a prominent corner of the wall: The editor is pleased to announce that a new edition will be out shortly'

Editor: Senior members will remember this in the 1940's and 50's. You might also remember that just about every public toilet had the saying 'KILROY WAS HERE'.

I remember using the facilities in a small village in Northern Ireland and even there was 'KILROY WAS HERE'.

Now back in the 90's in the Newsletter I printed the story of the history of where this saying originated. I will see if I can find it and I am sure you will be most interested.

Today it might be considered artistic.

JUST IN TIME by Len Purkiss.

When the big push came out of Normandy 2717 Squadron, 2 Flight was attached to an army and naval group. On the second morning the major was sniped whilst having his early morning shave, so we were sent to sort things out. Nearby was a big field of pea-stooks from where the firing seem to come.

Fred Hodson was No.1 and I was No.2 on the Bren gun so we had to do a right flanking movement. We settled ourselves down in the bottom of a hedge, covering the bods in all the stooks.

Then I heard a track vehicle approach and stop. I just turned my my head and saw this gun come round trained on us. I jumped up smartly to let them know who we were, just in the nick of time, as they told us afterwards they had been sent on the same mission as ourselves and were just about to let us have it thinking we were the snipers. Some one was watching over us thankfully.

THIS AND THAT

How to get rich ?

Rise early, work late, strike oil.

I like a man who can be a real friend, has a good sense of humour, a good pair of shoes, and a healthy gold card.

Victoria Beckham

Some might say that the biggest crime involving pizzas is the ham and Hawalian. But police in Sussex found something to, er, top it. Officers received an emergency call from a panicked member of the public at the weekend to report one abandoned in the middle of the road near Haywards Heath.

'That tops the lot,' Inspector Darren Taylor declared on Twitter, alongside a photo of a large pepperoni pizza. 'Team had a few calls over the weekend of odd things which appeared on roads. A roll of carpet, a mattress, large cupboard boxes but the best one was a member who rang 999 to inform us there was an abandoned uneaten pizza in the middle of a road in Scaynes Hill.'

That's all for now folks! I look forward to our next meeting and get together - it will happen. So stay safe. If you feel like a chat please give me a call.

Best wishes,

Colin (01502) 585079