



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

NEWSLETTER NO.242 February 2021

President: Squadron Leader Paul Bruning (Rtd.)

Chairman: Vacant

Vice Chairman: Mr. Paul Rainbird + Programme Secretary

Secretary: Squadron Leader Peter Lawrence (Rtd.)

Treasurer: Mrs. Sue Lawrence



Dear Member,

First many congratulations to Norfolk Branch member Alan Barkes, who on 6th January 2021 celebrated his 100th Birthday. Alan received many cards, letters and presents including of course from H.M. The Queen, CG of the RAF Regiment Air Commodore Scott Miller (plus a telephone call), Chairman of the RAF Regiment Association, Norfolk Branch President and Secretary and Branch members. On pages 2.3 and 4 of this Newsletter are reports from Alan's local newspaper the Spalding Voice, further reports from Alan and photographs.

Alan is the first Norfolk Branch member to celebrate a century. There has been much interest on the - Regiment website and other websites. The item on the Regiment website has been one of their most visited.

Thanks to Alan and his lovely wife Lynne, for giving us an insight into a centurion and some more Regiment History.

Also enclosed are the Branch Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports. These would normally be discussed at the AGM but as you know we are still dealing with the virus. So again no AGM at present. If you have any comment on the reports please contact the Secretary Peter Lawrence, on email peterlawrence@ntlworld.com or (01603) 438802.

Annual Subscriptions for Full and Associate members are due on the 19th March 2021 and a payment form is enclosed. Please return this to the Branch Treasurer with your cheque for £12 - made payable to the RAF Regiment Association -Norfolk Branch.

This year the Branch have decided that there will be no charge to members for Branch Subscriptions. Please send your subs in on time, it does so help our Treasurer. Thank you.

NEW MEMBER

We welcome Mr. Glenn Bradley from Swaffham

Glenn served in the RAF Regiment from 1990 to 1994 on 19 and 3 Squadrons. His postings included Brize Norton and Aldergrove.

We trust he has a long and happy association with Norfolk Branch.

During my time in the Regiment in the 1950's we were told very little of its history. And what we were told was just general information - we were at 'D' Day, served in Europe, Burma and the Canal Zone. Nothing about campaigns we fought in, the many awards or stories of those who served.

So I was pleased when Association member Reg Proctor sent me an extract from the Canal Zone News 1952, where the Wing Commander gave a broadcast to the troops on the history and achievements of the first 10 years of the Regiment. You can read about this on page 5.

Daily Mail 27.12 2020.

PACEMAKER WARNING ON NEW IPHONE..

APPLE has warned that the magnets inside its new handset could interfere with medical devices such as pacemakers and defibrillators.

The iPhone 12 uses the company's 'MagSafe' technology to allow wireless chargers and other accessories to attach to the back of the mobile. The tech firm has now warned that the electro-magnetic fields produced could pose a risk and recommend that the phone is kept six inches away from medical devices.

It added that the iPhone 12 should be kept 12 inches away if it is being wirelessly charged to prevent interference.

It comes after a study published in the Heart Rhythm Journal found that Apple's new model could 'potentially inhibit lifesaving therapy in a patient'. The risk applies to all iPhone 12 models as well as MagSafe accessories.

The growth in sales of the phone which was released in October and starts at £700, means Apple is set to post its first-ever \$100 billion (£73 million) revenue quarter

The Spalding Voice

January 2021.

Veteran Alan's RAF call for 100th

A call from one of the top members of the Royal Air Force was among the highlights as a World War Two veteran celebrated his 100th birthday last week.

Despite lockdown cancelling the planned parties, there were still some fantastic surprises for Holbeach's Alan Barkes as he reached his centenary on Wednesday, January 6.

Several people visited him and his wife Lynne by standing on the drive at the High Street home Alan's lived in for nearly half of his life and where he used to run a wine merchants with his first wife Mabel.

Alongside the telegram from the Queen there was the phone call from RAF Air Commodore Scott Miller.

The pair spoke about the RAF, Alan's time in Burma during World War Two, planes and another of his loves, boxing.

'He rang me and said they were organising something in March,' Alan said. It was fantastic you cannot get much higher than him.'

Leading Aircraftman Alan was a member of the 2810 (Parachute) Squadron RAF Regiment formed in 1945 to parachute into Malaysia and attempt the liberation of the country from within, in what was designated as Operation Zipper.

After several practice jumps, what looked like a potentially suicide mission was due to take place just after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima

Japan's subsequent surrender meant the operation was not needed.

He previously said of that day. 'I don't think I would have been at Holbeach like I am now if it hadn't have happened then.'

He had already seen armed conflict and still has a Japanese flag taken from enemy soldiers who killed two of his colleagues.

Alan subsequently flew to Kallang, in Singapore, where he helped oversee the Japanese surrender.

He didn't fly again until just three years ago when Nigel Fallow, the son of one of Alan's colleagues from World War Two, got in touch and took him up in his own plane.

A large model aeroplane from his wife was among the many gifts on his 100th birthday and Alan said he'd enjoyed the occasion, even if his family including twin great, great granddaughters were unable to visit him.

'I had a lovely day, it was wonderful to get the photo of the Queen and I stood in the lounge as people came on the drive to give me cards and talk to me. We had a lovely Thai takeaway too and I've had some nice messages.'

Lynne added: 'Alan had an amazing day despite the restrictions, with messages from all over the world as well as lots of presents and cards including one from the Queen.'

AND Alan's birthday was celebrated with a notice on the Association's website with over 225 'likes' which is one of the highest recorded. The notice read:

I joined the RAF in 1940. After training in the UK I was posted to Beachy Head as an anti-aircraft gunner. I was later sent overseas to Bombay via the Suez Canal. We were posted to RAF Regiment HQ in Secunderabad where I joined 2846 Squadron and was posted to Burma. Here we engaged with the Japanese enemy in the jungle in the Magwe. There was bitter fighting and dreadful conditions.

Sometime later all squadrons were informed that there was to be a Parachute Regiment formed and that volunteers were needed. Together with LAC Fallow I volunteered. After short training at Chaklala with 6 daylight jumps and one at night we were deemed qualified! We were now 2810 Squadron under the leadership of Squadron Leader Sullivan.

We were then called on parade and addressed by the Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Parkes and Lord Louis Mountbatten and told to remain there and be prepared to parachute into the Malayan jungle with other troops and that there would almost certainly be bitter fighting, as it was intended to retake Singapore.

The following day we boarded the aircraft but were amazed to hear that the war was over as the Americans had dropped the A bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This meant we were no longer needed to engage with the enemy.

Later the Squadron was flown to Kalang Airport in Singapore where we took over

I was an amateur boxer before the war so while waiting to be demobbed I took up boxing for the Regiment. I fought at the Happy World in Singapore and became South East Asia middleweight champion. I was demobbed in 1946.

Editor: I asked Alan more about the boxing. He told me it was early in 1946, that while having a stroll around Singapore with his colleagues he noticed a poster about boxing outside the Happy World, a sports stadium. While reading the poster he was approached by a giant of a man dressed in a white suit who asked if was interested in boxing. Alan said he was and the man said he could arrange some fights, he was a local boxing promoter.

So Alan went into training with three of his squadron colleagues, all Welsh lads. They soon had him really fit. He had several fights winning them all and was then put forward to fight for the South East Asia Middleweight Championship.

After 7 rounds his coach suggested he concentrate on body punching - this worked and his opponent was down twice for counts of 8. Alan won the contest and became champion. A return contest was arranged for later in the year.

On the 19th October 1946, his CO called him into the office and told him he was on the next list of squadron members to return home. So he could either box or return to the UK - No contest. Alan came home.

On his return to civilian life Alan became a boxing correspondent for a local newspaper.

One evening he went to Kings Lynn where George Cooper (brother of Henry Cooper) was fighting. At the ringside he was asked by another reporter if he could borrow some notepaper. Alan gave him a note pad and this was the start of a long friendship for both families. The man was Harry Carpenter who for many years was a boxing correspondence on national TV and famous for his long and happy relationship with World Heavyweight Champion - Franck Bruno. Who on one occasion when waiting to be interviewed after a fight asked - what became a national quoted phrase 'Where's Harry.'

Alan and his wife met Harry and his wife, Phyliss, on many social occasions. When Harry came to Holbeach he always went home with a pork pie and sausages from the local butcher. When Alan visited Harry he

had to take the same. Alan attended Harry's Memorial Service at Fleet Street, London, where he met up with many old friends.

Over the years Alan met many well known boxers including Henry Cooper, Dick and Randolph Turpin, Freddie Mills, Johnny Williams, Jack Gardner, Wally Swift, Frank Bruno and Dave 'Boy' Green who became and still is a very good friend along with his wife Kay.

Branch members will remember excellent talks at the Feathers by Alan and Dave 'Boy' Green.

Alan did say that all the boxers he met over the years were very nice people and a pleasure to know.

Then in 2008 Alan joined the Association and later that year on 8th October, he was reunited after 62 years with his 2810 Squadron colleague Norman Hunt at the Carlton Hotel, Gt Yarmouth. The first time together since 1946. A wonderful occasion which reported in county and local newspapers. Sadly Norman died a few weeks later.

Norman's daughter, Shirley, is a member of Norfolk Branch and attends all meetings and events (when we can).

So there you are Alan, many congratulations on 100 great years. Rock On !

Editor: When I lived in Birmingham I worked with a colleague named George who did his National Service in the Army.

In those days part of the PT was boxing and men of equal build were given boxing gloves and put in the ring to box. George was 6'2" and well built and was matched with a lad of similar build. George was knocked out in the first round by his opponent - Jack Gardner who went on to become British Heavyweight





Dear Alan

On behalf of all ranks of the
 Royal Air Force Regiment
 serving and retired
 allow me to extend congratulations
 and best wishes
 on your 100th birthday.

Per Ardua,
 Air Commodore Scott Miller
 Commandant General



I am so pleased to know that you
 are celebrating your one hundredth
 birthday on 6th January, 2021. I send my
 congratulations and best wishes to you on
 such a special occasion.

Elizabeth II
 Mr. William Barker



From the Archives.

IN THE BEGINNING - By Sid Shaw.

Back in August 1941 after being in Filey Town for 5 weeks on basic training, we were relocated just 1 mile out at the then Butlin's camp site.

This of course was the first designated depot for the Royal Air Force Regiment development, and training by the Army.

We commenced there along with quite a large body of men from all over the country, just about every county from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. My particular section was billeted in E lines, the camp was organised on lines beginning with A and then right through the alphabet.

The training commenced and was to be quickly accomplished, as we were often reminded, it was very concentrated in all aspects. We were instructed in all the necessary aspects of infantry training, including grenades the No 36 HE, the assault course, including bayonet from trench to trench, which was pretty exhausting as they kept you going.

One small section was trained by Officers and NCO's of The Loyal Regiment, a North Lancashire Regiment, others by the Royal Marines and The Guards. I asked how long the courses had been running and was informed that we were the first - training had just commenced.

Finally, we completed the training and were allocated to stations throughout the country. I was posted to North Yorkshire, Dishforth, along with nine other men and we began our service on 715 Defence Squadron. The existing ground gunners were surprised when we produce our khaki - battledress uniforms, along with one suit of walking out blue, from the kit-bags.

They were taken aback when we informed them they too would soon be in khaki, and would be going into the RAF Regiment, which as you know was inaugurated in February 1942.

Now from Keith Waterhouse who writes in the Daily Mail and headed TOUGH TIMES.

My congratulations to the RAF Regiment, whose Scorpion tanks rolled down Whitehall in June 1992 - 50th birthday celebrations one of the toughest yet least known of our fighting forces.

What is even less known is that I was briefly a member of the Regiment - as unlikely a piece of casting as Ronnie Corbet playing Heathcliffe. It was of course a mistake.

What happened was that as a lowly conscript clerk in the RAF I was posted to a Godforsaken spot called Wombledon in North Yorkshire which was the RAF Regiment transit camp.

Arriving to take up my clerkly duties I was strolling through the camp with my kit bag on my shoulder when I was bellowed at by a Warrant Officer from a nearby orderly room. Before I knew what had hit me, I had been kitted out in RAF Regiment khaki and was doubling round a barrack square clutching a rifle above my head.

I had effectively been hi-jacked, in vain did I try to explain that I was a pen pusher and not cut out for this type of thing. For the next fortnight I spent my days swinging from ropes, clambering walls, bayoneting sandbags and jumping over and into ditches. It was only when pay parade came round did they realise that they had the wrong Waterhouse.

Meanwhile, my namesake who was supposed to be manning a Bren gun carrier, was leading a cushy life in the office block. Talk about a comedy of errors!

It was a nightmare couple of weeks but ever after I have the greatest respect for the RAF Regiment - Happy Birthday lads.

What a story, who was the Warrant Officer? Was it Danny Gourd?

Keith then goes on to say: Good heavens it was Warrant Officer Gourd - it never occurred to me that he had a first name. We all lived in terror of his bark.

He further relates: One night some lads had been on the toot in Helmsley and found a horse wandering down the road. It was taken to the guardroom and tethered to the fire-bell. One lad braver than the rest aroused Warrant Officer Gourd and told him a horse had just been posted to the unit.

Without a moment's hesitation he said 'we have no billets for horses, give it fourteen days leave with hay.' and went back to sleep.

That's all for now folks! I do look forward to the pleasure of your company at some time in the future. Stay safe.

Best wishes.

