



**THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
NORFOLK BRANCH
NEWSLETTER NO.245 Dec. 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,

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE
PRESIDENT**

It seems Colin wants me to write a message every year so I will do my best. I looked up what I had written last year and noticed I had mentioned that turkeys would be smaller. Well apparently this year, it looks like we won't be able to get pigs in blanket and not any turkeys at all!. It seems we are going from bad to worse. You all know the state we are in without me telling you and no doubt we all have our own opinion on whom or what to blame.

But actually, we should count our good fortune because, despite some severe difficulties we are facing, we have (we are about to) come through the most difficult 18 months this country has faced since the second world war. We had to stay indoors last year and not see our families. As the Home Secretary said 'No Mingling!'

But all things are relevant. How did all those families manage to survive those dark Christmas's between 1939 and 1944? And it was dark because of the blackout! So many families lost their homes and loved ones and never saw each other for months at a time. 'Always look on the bright side' was a saying then and is still very apt today.

I remember some Christmas's I spent as Duty Officer, but they were memorable as we had real comradeship in our service. And this continues in our Association. I am sure you will agree that despite not being able to meet till the summer this year our members are getting frail and through sickness and other issues are not able to attend. This is mainly owing to the efforts of Paul Rainbird who seems to work tirelessly to ensure we have a programme of events.

Paul has been awarded the Commandant General's Commendation, you will agree that he has fully deserved this. (This is the 3rd

for Norfolk Branch, all earned through considerable efforts and dedication).

But there are still others who should not be forgotten including yet again Colin Clarke who continues to produce newsletters despite his health issues. And all the Committee and the wives who help us keep going. I make no apologies for thanking those who keep our Branch on track and organised every year and also to all those who, make the effort to attend our socials.

It is important for us to try and keep meeting as loneliness can be a real killer. My sincere condolences to members who have lost their spouses. And of course to all those who have lost family and friends from Covid; (my brother in law caught it in hospital being treated for cancer - he was dead in 3 days).

But I must try and end on a cheery note. It's not all doom and gloom out there. Simple joys can be a pleasure. I look out of my window each day and see a magnificent sight of my maple tree with its leaves changing colour to a vibrant yellow before they are all blown away. Nature is truly beautiful and we have to preserve it as best we can. I wonder what our grandchildren will see in 50 years time.

Reading this now I realise it may sound I am giving a sermon! But I am glad I never became a vicar because I would then have missed out on being in the RAF Regiment and having some of the most interesting and rewarding times in my life!

Have a peaceful, happy and joyous Christmas this year and every day, count your blessings.

Otherwise the ship will really sink!

Per Ardua

Paul.



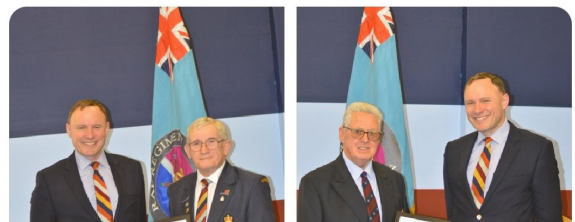
RAF Regt Assoc
@RAFRegtAssoc

Assoc pleased to announce the CG's 2021 Commendations awarded to, two stalwart members, Tom Magee (L), National Treasurer and Paul Rainbird (R) of Norfolk Branch.

Awards were presented by Gp Capt Jason Sutton at #RAFHonington
Congratulations



#RAF_Regiment
#RAFFPForce



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Nomination by Branch (name of originator)

Peter Lawrence (Branch Secretary).

Paul Rainbird, now 84 years old, has been a member of the RAF Regiment Association Norfolk Branch since 2006.

Within a very short time Paul Rainbird immersed himself in the running of the branch. For a number of years, he has been the Vice Chairman and the Programme Secretary. His dedication to the Association, meticulous attention to detail and his calm confident manner has earned him total respect within the Branch. As Vice Chairman he is in regular contact with the members; moreover, during the pandemic when the members were unable to meet, he maintained that contact by weekly phone calls and where possible visits.

As the Programme Secretary he has organised many excellent guest speakers and very successful coach trips to events in the

UK such as the National Memorial Arboretum Normandy and Europe; all well supported and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Furthermore, he and his wife Pat, willingly and enthusiastically spend many hours preparing for branch events.

Moreover, he has made a significant and valuable contribution to the welfare of members that are unable to attend Branch meetings. Of particular note is his refusal to accept any expenses for the numerous phone calls, miles travelled during visits and postage. Over the years he has undoubtedly spent a significant sum of his own money.

Paul Rainbird has, over several years, achieved exceptional results. He is an inspiration to all and sets an impressive example for others to follow. Despite having to deal with personal medical issues, he has selflessly devoted his time to the success of the Branch. I strongly recommend that Paul Rainbird be awarded the Commandant General's Certificate of Commendation.

And from SCOTT MILLER
(a) CGRAF Regt 33
Replying to (a) RAFRegtAssoc

Sincerest congratulations to Tom and Paul.
Awarding CG's commendations to these
great individuals was a great pleasure
and fitting recognition for their efforts.

And from Peter Lawrence:
AWARD OF THE COMMANDANT
GENERAL'S CERTIFICATE TO PAUL
RAINBIRD

I received the call in September to say that
the award had been approved by the
Commandant General, Air Commodore Scott
Miller. The challenge was to keep it quiet
until the day of the Association Annual
General Meeting which took place at the
RAF Heritage Centre on Saturday 16th
October. Paul said he would attend the
meeting, so all was going to plan.

At the meeting the National Secretary
announced that Paul was being awarded the
commendation and read out the citation. I
think it is fair to say that Paul was a little
stunned as he always likes to know what is
going on and plans things well in advance.
Unfortunately the Commandant General was
unable to attend the meeting so the picture
shows Paul receiving his award from the
Deputy Commandant General, Group Captain
Jason Sutton.

Editor: Sincere congratulations on the
award Paul, and many thanks for all the
good work you have done and continue to do
for the Branch.

OBITUARIES

It is with regret I inform you of the death
of two Norfolk Branch members. Mr.
Wilfred John Robertson and Mrs. Joyce
Newton.

FROM THE BRANCH SECRETARY

Sadly, one of our members, Wilfred John
Robertson has marched into the RAF
Regiment 'Roll of Honour'. John was born on
the 20th September 1937 and died on the
16th August 2021. John lived with his wife
Patricia (Pat) at Hevingham Norfolk.

The funeral was held at St. Faiths
Crematorium on the 10th September 2021

John was a staunch supporter of the
Association and even though he was unable
to attend our meetings he always paid his
annual subscription to the National
Association and Branch.

John, Service number 4177670 enlisted in
the Corps from 11th January 1956 and was
discharged on the 19th October 1958
having reached the rank of Corporal. During
his time in the RAF Regiment John served in
Aden and Korea (as a member of the Peace
Corp).

He completed twenty nine parachute jumps,
qualified as a sniper, mortar fire controller
and was Mentioned in Despatches.

He was shot in the ankle and hip in Korea
and was laid up in hospital for a while.
However, he soon became bored and decided
to play a trick on the nurses by putting a
skeleton in a wheelchair with a light inside
and leaving it in of the lifts. The nurses saw
the funny side of his humour but as
punishment they put him on the ladies ward
for one week - after three days he was
begging to go back to the men's ward.

Whilst on night guard duty with a colleague
at a bomb dump in Aden, they heard a
strange noise. Being a little frightened
they both forgot to issue a challenge and
instead fired in the direction of the noise.
At daylight they discovered the strange
noise was a donkey, they were both rapidly
moved to another location.

After leaving the Regiment, John worked as
a Mechanical Engineer for several years
before entering the pub trade for 34 years
in various locations and finally as Landlord
at the 'White Hart' in Marsham, He retired
in 2002.

John is survived by his wife Pat, his
children, Deborah, Linda, Andres, Ellena and
Paula, along with eleven grandchildren and
nineteen great grand children.

Peter represented the Branch at John's funeral where a donation of £221 was made to Branch funds - thank you very much Pat and we all look forward to seeing you on the 16th December at the Old Rectory Hotel.

JOYCE NEWTON

Joyce died on the 27th October 2021 aged 95 years. Joyce lived with husband Alf at Cromer. The funeral was held on 17th November 2021 at Cromer Crematorium. Branch members attended and formed a 'Guard of Honour'.

Joyce was a lovely lady, liked by everyone and along with Alf, a great supporter of the Branch and as long as she was able, attended all meetings and events.

Joyce did secretarial work and in leisure time she and Alf were keen cyclist, touring England and visiting France.

Joyce will be sadly missed and our thoughts are with Alf, and daughters Penny and Caroline and sons Robert, Phillip and Neville and the grandchildren.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

REMEMBRANCE DAY PARADE

Again, huge support by the people of Wymondham. Our President Paul Bruning proudly laid the wreath on behalf of the Branch. The Abbey was full and it is so good to see the younger generation there.

BRANCH CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Thursday 16th December 2021 - 12.30pm for, 1pm - at The Old Rectory Hotel, Crostwick, Norwich.

An excellent menu with a choice of four starters, five main courses and four sweets. The cost is £25. Ample parking and the restaurant and facilities all on ground level.

If you will be joining us please contact Paul Rainbird on (01328) 856560 for a menu and return it to him by the 6th December.

BRANCH CHRISTMAS BUFFET and exchange of Christmas Cards.

Tuesday 21st December 2021 - 12noon - Feathers Inn, Wymondham.

Again, if you will be joining us please let Paul

know by the 11th December - to allow for catering arrangements. Thank you.

BRANCH PROGRAMME FOR 2022.

Meetings, Speakers and Branch visits. All meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month unless otherwise stated.

18th January 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - Richard Mann - 'The Dambuster Raids'.

15th February 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - Gordon Wilcox - 'My experience on Christmas Island during Atomic Tests'.

15th March 2022 - Annual General Meeting with buffet.

19th April 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - Sue Pearce - 'Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Banks - Voyage from Botany Bay to Kew Gardens'.

Thursday 5th May 2022 - Spring Lunch at the Old Rectory Hotel, Crostwick.

17th May 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - George Rockingham - P.A.C.T. Animal Sanctuary.

Thursday 9th June 2022 - Visit to the Stalham Museum of the Broads - for usual picnic. Small boats will be available for short trips on the broads.

21st June 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - Richard Mann - 'The John Christie Murders at Rillington Place, Notting Hill'.

19th July 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - To be Advised.

August - No Branch Meeting.

20th September 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - Richard Mann - 'The Thetis Incident' - Story about a naval submarine.

18th October 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - David Morton - Talk to be Advised.

Thursday 27th October 2022 - Autumn Lunch at the Old Rectory Hotel, Crostwick.

15th November 2022 - Meeting - Speaker - Sue Pearce - 'Captain Cooks Voyage from Antarctica to Hanali'.

20th December 2022 - Branch Christmas Buffet and exchange of Christmas Cards.

MEMOIRS OF BOB ELLETT

Bob Ellett from Gorleston writes. As a lad I was keen to join the RAF and remember many an occasion sitting on my bike in Gt. Yarmouth, listening to Churchills speeches and looking forward to fulfilling my ambition.

This came about in 1939, when at the age of fifteen I became an RAF apprentice wireless and electrical mechanic (W.E.M.). It was a busy three years course which involved hard work, so much so much so, that in 1940 the trade was split into two, with one half becoming wireless fitters and in order to shorten the courses to two years we had to attend evening classes.

In July 1941, I was posted to Cranwell No 1 Radio School, for my training and after completion to Feltwell, near Thetford, 3 Group Bomber Command - Wellingtons. Things were going along smoothly until September 1942, when an overseas posting came through. Still, I had joined to see the world and do my stint, so I was looking forward to this.

Firstly, I moved to Birkenhead - a staging post for embarkation. While waiting for the call - I found myself attached to 2771 Squadron RAF Regiment. This was the first time I, or anyone else had heard of or met the Regiment, as they were still in the process of being formed - this was soon to be remedied.

As a tradesman, I naturally thought I would carry on with my wireless work, but oh no! The next thing I knew, I was in with them - full kit and training with all the gunners, assault courses, climbing, marches with all the weapons - 303 including firing at one mile targets, Sten - Tommy guns and half inch anti-tank rifle which you had to hold really tight as they had a strong recoil.

Mind you, there were no exceptions to the training and all ranks were involved, even the C.O. who at the time was about 45 years and he wouldn't ask us to do anything he couldn't do himself, including being under fire with live ammunition. My dream of a quiet life as a tradesman was rapidly disappearing.

After nine weeks of intensive training, I was at least fit and knew as much about weapons, as wireless but still the Regiment were being kept under wraps.

Some two months later we were put on two hours standby and then moved out at 1.00am by train to North Scotland, a twelve hour

journey. On arrival we joined other units and prepared for convoy.

Half of 2771 Squadron set sail on the Strathallen and other half the Straithaird. It was a large convey but no one was told the destination

We headed west for two/three days then turned around and back again, onto the Straights of Gibraltar - it was then we were given our destination, North Africa - Operation Torch.

We were sailing through the Mediterranean, the Straithaird was torpedoed and badly listed but fortunately didn't sink and was towed to port. There was however, one casualty, a lad was injured when the lifeboat was launched.

We arrived in Algiers a day or so after the main force had landed - there had been no opposition, the Germans hadn't expected us. Landing on the 10th November 1942, 2771 Squadron consisted of five flights of gunners and one armoured car flight. The other squadrons were infantry or LAA.

When 2771 landed, along with five other lads I was put on the luggage party and had to check all the boats as they docked and unloaded their equipment - which was anything from a three ton lorry to spare clothing and then guard it, mainly from the other squadrons and the Arabs.

The Squadron moved across North Africa, capturing and then guarding airfields. There was very little opposition, we just had the odd skirmish with the Germans.

By July 1943 we reached Tunisia, camping on the beach, waiting to move into Italy. It was pleasant waking up in the morning just feet away from the water - with a warm day to follow. All very relaxing, everyone took part in swimming and water sports, along with other British troops and Americans.

All our food was compositions, I never saw bread for three years. We crunched the hard tack biscuits and mixed them with water. McConochies tinned veg, corned beef and steak and kidney puddings were a regular part of our diet.

North Africa was swarming with chickens, so eggs were plentiful. To be sure though, we bought ourselves some chickens and kept them in a pen and when we moved they came with us on the lorry. This way we ensured a regular supply of fresh meat.

I suppose an early meals on wheels but they were the best protected chickens in North Africa. We entered Naples in December 1943, continuing through Italy.

As the aircraft moved airfields, so did we. It was the allies front line with the advance. Part of our duties were to provide guards for forward specialists units, to examine abandoned German equipment to see their latest technology.

One day our guard unit went to an airfield, it was all quiet, the specialist unit were examining an aircraft, when a British army bomb disposal squad arrived, informed us the whole area was mined, we all stood to attention and never moved until the all clear was given - talk about a hot spot.

We continued advancing until arriving at Monte Cassino, which as you know was a monastery built on top of a mountain, seventeen hundred feet above sea level and part of the Apennines range. The monastery was founded by St. Benedict in A.D. 529. In 1886 it became a National Monument.

Troops occupying the monastery had a perfect view in front and around them and could see virtually anyone or anything that moved, certainly in daylight and accordingly had an excellent field of fire. The approach to the monastery was over very difficult terrain.

There are various stories about the monastery and the decision of the Germans to occupy it. We understood that the German C.O. was a very religious man and wouldn't allow his troops into the monastery but after the allies bombed it, he decided that as they had defaced the monastery he would allow his troops to enter - which of course they did and had considerable protection in what was now a fortress.

On our arrival our C.O. said, this was the front line - I again thought being o H.Q.. Flight I would miss out but he informed me that the field telephones were up to the front line and the Germans kept hitting them with their mortars and of course they had to be repaired or relayed. So I joined the front line with the rest of the gunners. I found this was a good cure for constipation.

We were about three quarters of the way up Mount Castelowe, to the side of the monastery, of which we had a clear view. To our front was a Wahdi, (African dried river bed). Below was a small village, Cairo, which

was at the end of a five mile road running across the valley. This was the only supply route in and out and in full view of the German artillery, so nothing moved during the day, except ambulances.

We could see for the whole five miles and as an ambulance appeared on the road, the Germans would stop firing but once it had passed through, the bombardment would re-commence. It was a most unusual experience.

Troop movement only took place at night, our patrols would go out to see what the Germans were up to. Daytime was the never ending shelling of the monastery.

The lads used to count the German mortar shells which landed and didn't explode - about 50 per cent. Some of their ammunition was made in occupied countries, so somewhere, someone, was doing a good job in saving lives.

Cassino was a long hard battle, the Regiment Squadrons including 2771 were between two New Zealand Units who fed and watered us. They were fantastic guys who filled the water bowzers withn vino from the local village - you just helped yourself. They also had the equivalent of our N.A.A.F.I. which was run by Australian civilians they were well organised and again looked after us.

The lads were in the front line for ten days, then a short break and back in. Rumour had in there were more troops at Cassino than El-Aleman. Fortunately, none of 2771 were injured but there were casualties on other squadrons including fatalities.

All our movements took place at night. We drove without lights across roads full of pot holes and under fire but this was the only way to get the men and supplies to the main bases, then they were often taken further up the mountain by mules.

There were vineyards by the steps to the side of the mountain and half-way up a house which, fortunately, was out of direct view of then Germans, this was our telephone exchange and guard -post. The Regiment did guard most nights and the C.O. would check them out. There was always a daily pass word normally relating to food.

One evening the C.O. was challenged by a regiment lad, who said, 'Halt or I'll blow your bloody brains out.' he didn't have a reply for that.

Another evening, I was 'listening in' on our radio when the Australians were talking, one squadron to another. One said, 'We are coming up to relieve you,' the other replied, 'Watch out for those regiment blokes next door, they will shoot you on sight.' They certainly had some respect for us.

On another occasion I was at H.Q. (a cave), when a Polish Tank Regiment stopped nearby. The tanks were Shermans, one of the tank crew spoke to my mate who was on guard duty and indicated that they would like to speak to our C.O. Now my mate had a very broad accent. He led the way to H.Q. with the tank crew following, talking amongst themselves in Polish. On arriving at the C.O.'s door he knocked and was called in, he entered with the tank crew following and talking in their own language. He informed the C.O. that the Shermans were here, the C.O. leapt out of his chair, thinking he had said the Germans were here. After he got over the shock everyone had a good laugh.

We were at Casino for some three weeks and it was towards the end of our second spell of ten days in the front line, that the final assault took place and the Monastery was captured. It did seem a shame that such a magnificent building had to have been destroyed.

Along with the British Army and Americans we moved into Rome and were among the first RAF personnel to take and hold the airfield.

On arrival, a couple of Medical Officers went into the city, they were given a great reception. What they didn't know was the army photographers were filming and pictures of them and all the Italian girls sitting on their jeep were published - we never did hear what the wives said about it.

We continued through Italy, capturing and holding airfields. As the line was changing so fast, no one could guarantee its position, so someone decided it would be a good idea to lay flares to show its position, and who did they volunteer - 2771 Squadron. A very dangerous practice under the nose of enemy guns. Fortunately, the idea was scrapped before it could be put into operation. Shortly after the Italians surrendered.

Our next move was to Yugoslavia - Tito was having trouble with the Germans and needed close air support. Spitfires and Kittyhawks were allocated but first an airfield had to be built. Tito wouldn't allow the British Army

personnel into his country, so the RAF Regiment got the job and 2771 moved to just outside a town called Zadar.

The airfield was marked out on a rocky terrain, lorries were lined up side by side and as they moved along very slowly the regiment lads heaved the rocks into the back of the trucks. This is how the land was cleared and the rocks were used to mark the perimeter of the airfield. Then the Regiment moved in to guard the lot against the Germans and partisans.

After this I set up a radio station, with a British warship stationed off shore, our only contact with the outside world but this enabled us to provide air support.

Just off the coast was Pag island, occupied by the Germans who had 88mm guns set in rock emplacements. These were holding up the Partisans, who were keen to invade but the only way to deal with the guns was to skip bomb them, bouncing bombs into the guns off the ground. Firstly of course, we needed to establish a radio observation post on the island and again 2771 obliged. Then the air-force successfully completed their task.

On the day of the invasion the partisans moved out, you wouldn't believe it, they were loaded up with hand grenades, bandoliers of ammo and all sorts of guns, real comic book types, but they were quite dedicated and determined to succeed as they set sail in fleets of little boats.

All through the war, whenever we moved into a new area cook had contacted local traders and made all sorts of arrangements. While we were at the airfield I celebrated my 21st birthday - yes with a little drink? Unknown to me, cook made two large cakes and a tray of small cakes - rich fare indeed in this part of the world. We had a bit of a 'DO' in the tent that night. About half-way through the C.O. sent for me and gave me a tot of whisky.

A few days after this we were playing football when the C.O. stopped the game, within two hours we were on the move. I think it was something of a political decision.

We made our way back through Italy to Austria and then to Vienna. By this time the war was coming to an end and when it finally did - there was a massive celebration.

During our time in Italy we had camped in a vineyard, picked and fermented the grapes, then bottled the wine.

We decided not to open it until the war ended, which we did and very nice it was too.

Our duties in Vienna were guarding airfields and administrative duties at A.D.A.C. Austria H.Q. The C.O. had authority to employ as many civilians as he wished, this made things a lot easier and I had the assistance of an Austrian electrician.

We were accommodated in a German Officers Hospital, single rooms with mattresses - quite a luxury and we also had bread along with very good food.

It was here I met a young Austrian lady, who had been a Sgt in the Luftwaffe, she later became my wife.

In January 1946, we were told the squadron was to be reformed in Palestine and yes they didn't have any tradesmen - so off I went with 2771. We flew in a Halifax, (no seats) from freezing cold in Austria to boiling hot at Ramit David, not far from Haifa.

The RAF Radar stations and airfields became primary targets for terrorists, as the radar was spotting the boat people approaching the shores. In came the Regiment with security that was extremely tight and needed to be so, as the terrorists were very well organised.

I was the C.O.s radio operator and one day one of the lads put him in prison because he didn't have his pass with him. You ate and slept with your gun beside you. There was no living accommodation on the airfield, as it was mosquito infested, so we lived on a camp site two miles away.

I was in Palestine some six/seven months, when it came to return to England we had problems. There were no boats out of Haifa because of the trouble, so the army sent an engine from Cairo for the train, as the terrorists had destroyed all the engines in Haifa.

We eventually found a train but local drivers refused to take it out. Regiment to the rescue. 2771 would you believe, had a lad who was a train driver in civvy street. We reached the Sinia desert, stopped for water, only to find the tanks had been destroyed. We completed the journey across the desert by trucks to Port Said, Egypt, then boat to Calais and home.

I was then posted to normal duties at Boscombe Down. I had been with the Regiment from 1942 - 1945, it certainly was an experience. I was demobbed in 1954.

Editor: I met Bob who was a friend of a late Norfolk Branch member. He was a lovely man who had enjoyed his time with 2771. I had Bob's story first published in the then RAF Regiment Comrades Newsletter in the 1990's and it attracted a lot of interest from members and those who had served at Monte Casino. However, when enquires were made to contact Bob at his Gorleston address he was no longer there

REMINISCENCE OF A PEACE TIME
GUNNER - PART 2. By Mr.B.D. Barraclough.

By the time AC2 Barraclough had survived the rigorous Corps initiation at Skipton-on-Swale, during a bitter winter, before progressing onto the real test which confronted him at RAF Catterick his 'Basic'.

For the first time in my service career I met another Barraclough on this course. It was quite unusual when on roll call to have to ask the NCO, 'Which one Corporal?' A bit of a change from the Jones and Smiths. I never met my namesake again. I think he was a National Serviceman from Yorkshire. As my family came from the other side of the Pennines I doubt if there were any family relationships.

One of the first things which I noticed at Catterick was about fifty per cent of the Officer and NCO Staff were wearing Khaki Battle-dress. In fact it was many years before it disappeared. I have been told by some, that the SNCO's had to be ordered to change into Blue battle-dress.

My course Flight Commander was Flying Officer 'Splash' Waterfall who came into the Regiment from the South Lancashires. I met him many years later as a Squadron Leader with the Aden Levies. Always a gentleman even when we came under fire 'Up Country' in Aden.

The basic Training WO was Chris Place, who we as a course met very briefly.

Our course SNCO was one Flight Sergeant 'Squeegie' Strachan. When he wore a bayonet, the end of the scabbard used to hang in line with his knee cap, but for all his lack of inches, he was not one to cross swords with and had a voice that could be very clearly heard.

My own Corporal Instructor was a Corporal Henderson who was a National Serviceman.

Most of our JNCO's were National Service. I sometimes wonder if this was done in the hope that they would join as regular

servicemen. Of course most of the NCO's were of good educational background with their futures planned but were just doing their two years in the service

There were of course a number of them who had seen war service, one I remember well was the then Corporal Mullen.

The Basic Gunners Course was then quite complex and covered the handling and firing of all the weapons liable to be found on operational squadrons. What impressed me most was the fact that each Squadron Corporal was present and usually instructed any subject the squad was involved in. This could include P.T. and games.

In those days W.O. Gourd seemed to have eyes and ears everywhere and also had an extremely good memory for both names and faces. Many was the time when a duty gunner was marching a squad he would find a mention that 'Danny's' coming', would achieve an immediate upsurge in the smartness of his squad.

When proceeding from the Airmen's Mess we were encouraged to march in pairs. In those days we carried our eating irons (knife, fork, spoon and mug) firmly grasped in the left hand and held in the small of the back whilst at the same time swinging the right arm shoulder high.

I feel sure that W.O. Gourd used to lay in wait until I was proceeding on this journey so that he could give me the verbal encouragement all gunners need, plus a little extra drill. 'Danny', also loved to make an appearance on pay parade, here he collected a number of 'Erks' for extra duty in the form of saluting drill which was of course carried out in ones own time.

Whilst on the basic training course the powers that be thought I was potential N.C.O. material. Possibly this was due to the fact that I had served in the Palestine Police and was in some ways used to wearing uniform and all that goes with it. I suppose it gave me some advantage over my fellow u/t gunners. So with the basic course complete I had another twelve weeks of training to look forward to in the form of a P.N.C.O.'s course. This was run in conjunction with the J.G.I. Course.

In those days the West Hanger was for Basic Training and the East Hanger was used

by all N.C.O. and Officer courses. The only names I can recall from those days are W.O. Mike Rastall and my own course instructor a Sergeant Tommy McCall. Sergeant McCall was an excellent instructor who later became the first RAF Regiment S.N.C.O. to join the staff at R.M.A. Sandhurst under the eagle eye of the famous R.S.M. J.C. Lloyd.

The P.N.C.O. course Commander was a Flying Officer Harding an ex Glider Pilot Regiment Officer. He was another who I never heard of after that course.

During the course we also had contact with the well know Flying Officer P.D. Lee, who was renowned for being hard but fair. His favourite surprise for the unwitting, was to inspect the turnout of gunners by torchlight when the mornings of winter were still dark. This was usually prior to going out on the range. In those days we still wore blue blanched webbing, polished brasses and highly polished boots for all forms of training. So Flying Officer Lee used to have a large, 'Show Clean' parade each evening for those who took a chance with the cleaning of their kit.

Years later I met the same officer as a Squadron Leader when he commanded 66 Squadron in Aden. Still later I met him as a Wing Commander serving at the M.O.D. I don't think he ever forgot a name or a face. At least he always remembered me.

Alas I did not make the exalted rank of Corporal after the P.N.C.O.'s course. However, I was not the only one to be disappointed because with one exception the whole of my course, and the whole of the J.G.I. were failed by our friend Flying Officer Harding. I believe that there were questions asked about the wholesale failure by our lords and masters.

So ended my first experience of the Depot.

QUOTE; The way to good health is paved with good injections.

MY TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS (Anon)

On my first day of Christmas my true love
said to me,

'I'm glad we bought fresh turkey and a
proper Christmas tree.'

On the second day of Christmas, much
laughter could be heard.

As we tucked into the turkey - a most
delicious bird.

On the third day we entertained the people
from next door.

The turkey tasted just as good as the day
before.

Day four, relations came to stay; poor Gran
is looking old.

We finished up the Christmas pud and ate
the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the
snowflakes flurried.

But we were warm inside, for we had our,
turkey curried.

On the sixth day, I must admit, the
Christmas spirit died.

The children fought and bickered - we ate
turkey rissoles, fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas, my true
love he did wince,

When he sat down at table and was offered
turkey mince.

Day eight, and our nerves were frayed - the
dog had run for shelter.

I served up turkey pancakes, with a glass of
Alka Seltzer.!

On the ninth day our cat left home; by
lunchtime Dad was blotto.

He said he had to have a drink to face
turkey risotto.

By the tenth day the booze had gone
(except our home-made brew).

And if that wasn't bad enough, we suffered
turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas, the
Christmas Tree was moulting.

The mince pies were as hard as rock and the
turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day, my true love had a smile
upon his lips -

The guests had gone, the turkey too - and
we dined on fish and chips.

DID YOU KNOW

From the Daily Mail 3.8.2021.(Part report)

Q. 'On April 18 1930, the BBC proclaimed:
'There is no news.' Was there any?

Famously, after the BBC's news
announcer stated that there was nothing to
report in the 8.45pm bulletin, piano music
was played for the rest of the 15 minute
programme.

GRANNY SMITH APPLE

The apple variety was cultivated by Maria
Ann Smith in Australia in 1868.

By then an old woman, she had originally
emigrated from Britain, and was born in the
Sussex village of Peasmarch. By
extraordinary coincidence, a farmhouse in
the village is now owned by Sir Paul
McCartney who, along with the other
Beatles, started the Apple record label,
whose logo was...a Granny Smith.

TIMEM FOR A LARF!

Prenuptials: A couple in their sixties were
about to get married.

She said, 'I want to keep my house'

He said, 'That's okay with me.'

She said, 'And I want to keep my
Mercedes.'

He said, 'That's fine with me too.'

She said, 'And I want sex six times a week.'

He said, 'That's fine with me. Put me down
for Thursdays.'

Why didn't the skeleton go to the Christmas
Party? Because he had nobody to go with.

Do you watch spaghetti westerns on a
tagliatelly?

That's all for now folks! I hope you don't
mind, but this year I will not be sending
Christmas cards. Due to Covid - charities
have had a hard time, so they would benefit
from a donation. I will be supporting The
Salvation Army and Hillside Animal
Sanctuary. I wish all members and their
families a Very Happy Christmas and a
Healthy and Peaceful New Year.

Best wishes,

(01502) 585079.