

**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**

**SPECIAL
ELECTRONIC
EDITION**

The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT

BRANCH
Special self isolating edition



ISSUE 4

Branch
Membership

186



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Registered Charity: 226686 (England & Wales) SC037673 (Scotland)

RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association

RAFAGEN

The official newsletter of the Letchworth & District
Branch of the Royal Air Forces' Association



ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT

BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2020

Vice President:- Dennis Dawson

Chairman:- W.O. Shaun Griffin

Vice Chairman:- Alan Millard

Secretary:- Ken Needham

Assistant Secretary:- Marie Mahoney

Treasurer:- Ken Needham

Wings Appeal Officer:- Roy Newbury

Branch Welfare Officer: Mark Howell

Contact details :- Tel :-07874015229 email :- markhowell65@gmail.com

Membership Secretary:- Headley Parkins

Branch Padre:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew

Contact details :- Tel :- 01462742165

email :- lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

General Committee:

Dean Meek ; Donna Cook ; John Airey ;

Lesley Starr ;

Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin

Monthly Meetings are held at the Letchworth Rugby Club, Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City Herts (Behind the Letchworth Leisure Centre) on the 3rd Monday of each month at 19.45 hrs. License Bar Ample Parking

NAAFI BREAK is held at The Par 3 Golf Centre, Willian Way, Letchworth Garden City on the 1st Tuesday of each month 10.00 hrsn 'til 12.00 hrs

VIRTUAL SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION - AIR FORCES MEMORIAL, RUNNYMEDE

I am writing to let you know that due to COVID 19 the Annual Commemorative Ceremony at the Air Forces Memorial, Runnymede, will not be held this year in the usual way. However, there will be a virtual service that will be shown on various media platforms on Sunday 17th May 2020.

The virtual service is a unique collaboration between the Royal Air Force and the armed forces broadcaster (BFBS). The collective intention is to ensure that the service is shown across as many Nations and as widely as possible. In this unprecedented year we have just commemorated the 75th Anniversary of VE Day, we will commemorate the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day in August and in September we will commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Battle Of Britain. And while not forgetting our history and reflecting on the huge commitment of our forebears we will also be reflecting on the tragic loss of so many around the World to COVID 19, the hidden enemy.

The Royal Air Force are asking that nationally and globally we join together to remember those who lost their lives in World War 2 and, to this day, have no known grave; reflecting on the devastation it brought to their loved ones. We would be grateful if you would join us on 17TH May and invite your media outlets to advertise the service more broadly to attract the best possible audience in respect of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice to secure our freedom today.

How to watch and listen to the virtual celebration, created by BFBS, on Sunday 17th May:

Watch on TV Forces News Weekend at 17.30 (UK time) on BFBS Extra overseas or on Forces TV in the UK on Sky 181, Virgin 274, Freesat 165, Freeview 96 and YouView 96.

Mrs Michèle Small SO3 RAF Ceremonial Events

RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association

Details on how to watch online are at forces.net/runnymede where you



Ken's comments

All correspondences regarding the RAFAGEN to
Ken Needham, 68 Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3HJ.

Telephone: 01462 671534

E-mail Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk



A few years ago my wife found this aircraft in a hanger at R.A.F. Scampton and thought she might take it for a spin. I found this photo whilst going through a box full whilst doing a bit of Spring Cleaning during my Self Isolating.

Kings College have now partnered with the UK's leading charities and all of the Royal Medical Colleges to get a better understanding of the virus in those who are more vulnerable. From pre-existing health conditions, to age and pregnancy - we're enabling research that helps us beat COVID-19 for all.

To help support this important initiative, we need more volunteers using the app. Which can be obtained from the App store on your mobile phone. Just search for 'Covid 19'

Once you have registered on the App,, you will report how you are feeling daily.



Project HELPLINE

Having no one to talk to can be incredibly isolating, particularly if you're used to sharing your home and time with others. We know that shielding and self-isolation due to COVID-19 is causing many people among our RAF community to feel very lonely. Something as simple as a friendly chat can make all the difference.

We are determined to ensure that no single member of our community is alone and struggling through these difficult times.

We are providing a freephone friendship line for anyone in our RAF community to call if you are feeling isolated, in need of more specific support, or simply want to chat with someone who understands.

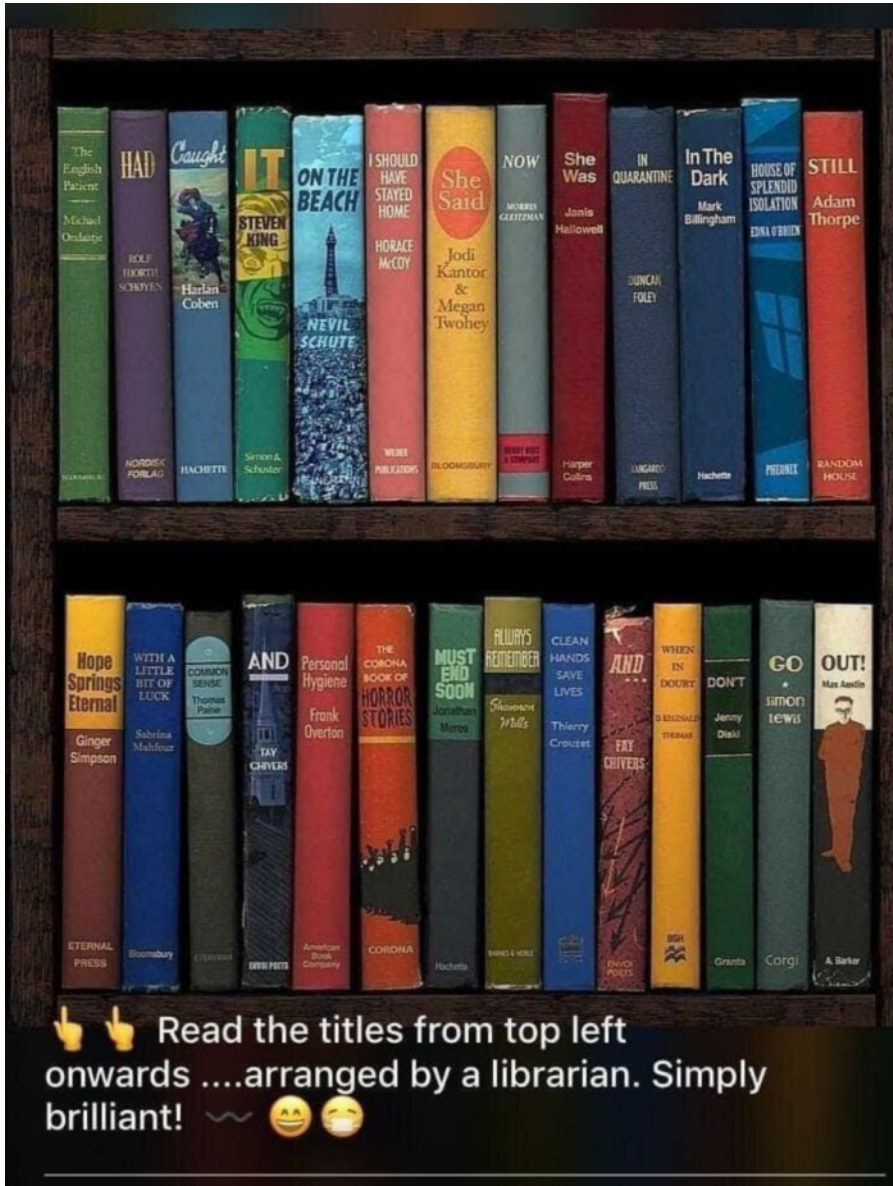
We can also arrange for a dedicated friend from our amazing army of volunteers to make regular telephone contact.

If you need someone to talk to, please call 0800 018 2361 or email opconnect@rafa.org.uk.

To volunteer your services to our friendship helpline or to become a telephone befriender, please email opconnect@rafa.org.uk.

We are here and will continue to be here for anyone that needs us. We are united, standing shoulder to shoulder with our RAF community in these times of crisis.

Member Fred Maryon found this and thought we may all appreciate it.





ACTION CALENDAR: MEANINGFUL MAY 2020



MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

"Start Where You Are. Use What You Have.
Do What You Can" ~ Arthur Ashe



4 Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't do

5 Send friends a photo of a time you all enjoyed together

6 Take a step towards one of your life goals, however small

7 Let someone you love know how much they mean to you

1 Take a minute to remember what really matters to you and why

2 Do something meaningful for someone you really care about

3 Reconnect with nature today, even if you're stuck indoors

11 What are your most important values? Use them today

12 Be grateful for the little things, even in difficult times

13 Today do something to care for the natural world

14 Show your gratitude to people who are helping to make things better

15 Find out about the values and traditions of another culture

16 Look around you and notice five things you find meaningful

17 Take a positive action to help in your local community

18 Hand-write a note to someone you love and send them a photo of it

19 Find a way to craft what you are doing to give it more meaning

20 Reflect on what makes you feel really valued and appreciated

21 Share photos of 3 things you find meaningful or memorable

22 Ask a loved one or colleague what matters most to them and why

23 Share an inspiring quote with others to give them a boost

24 Do something special today and revisit it in your memory tonight

25 Give your time to help a project or charity you care about

26 Recall three things you've done that you are really proud of

27 Today link your decisions and choices to your purpose in life

28 Tell someone about an event in your life that was really meaningful

29 Think about how your actions make a difference for others

30 Find three good reasons to be hopeful about the future

31 Look up at the sky. Remember we are all part of something bigger

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



www.actionforhappiness.org

31 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together

Keep Calm · Stay Wise · Be Kind

THE ANSWER TO LAST WEEKS TRUE OR FALSE QUESTION

Queen Elizabeth II is a trained mechanic.



TRUE

FALSE

Known as Second Subaltern Elizabeth Windsor, she donned a pair of coveralls and trained in London as a mechanic and military truck driver. The queen remains the only female member of the royal family to have entered the armed forces and is the only living head of state who served in World War II.

RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association

REQUIRE THE SERVICES OF OUR NEW WELFARE OFFICER?

Here are the contact details of the branch Welfare Officer :-

Mark Howell

Tel :-07874015229

email :- markhowell65@gmail.com

If you need to contact Mark urgently and he is not available, contact the branch secretary, Ken Needham



LETCWORTH COVID-19 VOLUNTEERS

A group of volunteers from the Letchworth, Hitchin & District branch of R.A.F.A.

The branch Covid-19 volunteers are continuing to contact branch members who are 70 plus. Ensuring that they have no problems whilst Self Isolating, and if required, doing an odd errand to the shops or getting prescriptions.

The weekly reports that go off to Area H.Q. Show that there are no major problems with any of our members. The thing that is on everyone's mind is 'when can we get back to normal?'. This week the Government have lifted a few of the restrictions, but we still have a long way to go to get back into full swing. We are looking forward to opening up our evening social nights and NAAFI Break.

Padre's Hour - May 2020 – VE Day Special

Hello again,

I hope you are well and safe. But if you are struggling please keep in mind that RAFA is here for you, so do contact your Branch to ask for help if you need it. There are volunteers who are happy to help.



The national remembrance and celebration on VE Day was very muted – all the plans came to nothing because of the coronavirus. At home we put the TV on in the afternoon and then went to stand by our front door to listen out for a lone piper playing at 3pm (sadly the wind was blowing in the wrong direction) but we had a drink ready to join in the national toast to ‘the heroes of WW2’. In the evening we watched the concert with the band playing in the ground of Buckingham Palace and listening to the singers and watching the dancers. It was perfectly coordinated with the magic of all that is possible as people from different locations joined together in helping the nation remember and celebrate. Then Her Majesty the Queen addressed the nation. With dignity and graciousness she spoke of her memories but also spoke of the situation we as a nation and as a world face today.

‘At the start, the outlook seemed bleak, the end distant, the outcome uncertain. But we kept faith that the cause was right – and this belief, as my father noted in his broadcast, carried us through.

I vividly remember the jubilant scenes my sister and I witnessed with our parents and Winston Churchill from the balcony of Buckingham Palace. The sense of joy in the crowds who gathered outside and across the country was profound, though while we celebrated the victory in Europe, we knew there would be further sacrifice. It was not until August that fighting in the Far East ceased and the war finally ended.

Many people laid down their lives in that terrible conflict.

They fought so we could live in peace, at home and abroad.

They died so we could live as free people in a world of free nations.

They risked all so our families and neighbourhoods could be safe. We should and will remember them. As I now reflect on my father's words and the joyous celebrations, which some of us experienced first-hand, I am thankful for the strength and courage that the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and all our allies displayed.

The wartime generation knew that the best way to honour those who did not come back from the war, was to ensure that it didn't happen again.

The greatest tribute to their sacrifice is that countries who were once sworn enemies are now friends, working side by side for the peace, health and prosperity of us all.

Today it may seem hard that we cannot mark this special anniversary as we would wish. Instead we remember from our homes and our doorsteps. But our streets are not empty; they are filled with the love and the care that we have for each other.

And when I look at our country today, and see what we are willing to do to protect and support one another, I say with pride that we are still a nation those brave soldiers, sailors and airmen would recognise and admire. I send my warmest good wishes to you all.'

The speech ended with Vera Lynn singing "We'll meet again", followed by a compilation of members of the public joining in with the song.

'Never give up, never despair' – that was the message of VE Day.

Did you notice the cap on the Queen's desk? - no doubt a memento of her service during the war years as a driver and mechanic. As well as the photograph of her father who addressed the nation on the evening of VE Day 1945. Her father described the end of the war as 'a great deliverance'. The bleakness of the situation and sense that as a nation standing alone we faced overwhelming odds were very real at the beginning in 1939, yet gradually as time went by the tide turned and we were able, through the bravery, resilience, and commitment of everyone, both civilian and those in active service, to begin to sense light and hope.

I enjoyed watching the films that were broadcast over the weekend telling the story of bravery and dedication. Then old films are good but equally more modern portrayals of war, films such as Saving Private Ryan and the series Band of Brothers perhaps show more of the rawness and reality of war and the havoc and disaster (both national and personal) that everyone knew personally especially those close to the battle.

We have much to be thankful for because of VE Day, but of course there is more to come as we prepare and commemorate VJ Day on August 15th. I hope that by then we might be able to have more freedom to honour all those who served and struggled and fought for deliverance.

Prayers

Royal Air Force Collect Almighty God, who has promised that they who wait upon thee shall renew their strength and mount up with wings, as eagles, we commend to thy fatherly protection all who serve in the Royal Air Force. Uplift and support us in our endeavour, that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth and a sure defence to our homeland. Help us to fulfil our several duties with honour, goodwill and integrity, and grant that we may prove to be worthy successors of those who by their valour and sacrifice did nobly save their day and generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those who served and died in World War II

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those men and women who have died in active service, particularly in the Second World War, whose sacrifice brought Victory in Europe. As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. Amen.

A prayer for the Sovereign

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and all who are in authority under her; that they may order all things in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace, to the honour of your name, and the good of your Church and people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Whether you are someone with a faith or not, I am more than happy to be contacted if you think I can offer support and friendship, help or advice. I will usually be at the monthly Branch meetings and the NAAFI Break, (once they re-start) as well as serving on the Committee. For the time being you can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

Kind regards & blessings

Lindsay



Cpl Needham K.

INVESTIGATES UPDATES



More military news wanted on two former branch members Marie McCormick (Nee Armiger) and her husband Dennis. Marie was once the branch secretary.

As we learnt in the last issue Dennis McCormick was a member of 148 Squadron. A little on the Squadron

No.148 Squadron went through three very different incarnations during the Second World War. In April 1939 the squadron became a Group Pool Squadron, operating a mix of the Vickers Wellington and Avro Anson. This first incarnation ended on 4 April 1940 when the squadron was renamed as No.15 Operational Training Unit.

After a false start in April-May 1940, the squadron was reformed on Malta from detachments of Nos.38, 99 and 115 squadrons on 14 December 1940, once again operating the Vickers Wellington. This time the squadron was an active bomber squadron, carrying out attacks on Axis bases in Italy and Libya, first from Malta and later from Egypt. This second incarnation ended on 14 December 1942.

The third and final incarnation of No.148 Squadron was as a special duties squadron, formed from the Special Liberator Flight (X Flight) at Gambut (Libya). This incarnation of the squadron used a wide range of aircraft, starting with the Consolidated Liberator but then adding the Handley Page Halifax, the Westland Lysander and even the Short Stirling for a month late in 1944. This version of the squadron carried out supply drops to resistance groups across the Balkans. After a move to Italy in January 1944 the squadron also began to carry out pick-up missions. The squadron was also used in an unsuccessful attempt to fly supplies to the besieged Poles in Warsaw (the flights themselves successfully reached Warsaw and were amongst the longest combat missions flown during the war, but in the chaotic circumstances of the urban warfare inside Warsaw the Poles were unable to reach many of the supplies)..



The wall painting with the letters R.A.F. & 1941 found in a home in Letchworth

I am hoping when times change and can get out and meet people, I will be able to report more. In the meantime if you think you might be able to help with my enquiries, please contact me. Details on the second page.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS YOU NEED TO KNOW - JUST IN CASE

LOCALLY

MARK HOWELL WELFARE OFFICER

0787 401 5229

E MAIL [*markhowell65@gmail.com*](mailto:markhowell65@gmail.com)

REV. CANON LINDSAY DEW - BRANCH PADRE

0754 587 8082

E MAIL [*lindsay.dew@btinternet.com*](mailto:lindsay.dew@btinternet.com)

KEN NEEDHAM - ACTING BRANCH COORDINATOR

01462 671 534

EMAIL [*secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk*](mailto:secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk)

NATIONALLY

R.A.F.A. HEAD QUARTERS -

0800 018 2361

Or

0116 266 5224.

RAFAGEN SPECIAL

75 YEARS ON



gettyimages
Fred Morley

V-E Day THE STARS AND STRIPES **D+336**
Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces in the European Theater of Operations
Wednesday, May 9, 1945
ONE FRANC

Allies Proclaim:

IT'S OVER

Surrender Is Signed At Rheims

By GEORGE S. HALEY
Just one more great event.
SHEIMS, May 8 (The Times)—The Third Reich surrendered unconditionally to the Allies here at Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's forward headquarters at 2:41 AM Monday.
The surrender terms, calling for cessation of hostilities on all fronts at one minute past



Announce the Victory

Peace came to Europe at one minute past midnight this morning (Nice-Marseille time) when the cease-fire order to which Germany had agreed went into effect.
Formal announcement of Germany's unconditional surrender came nine hours earlier in radio proclamations by President Truman and Prime Minister Churchill.
As they spoke the last "all-clear" sirens sounded in London and Paris, and the streets in both cities were the scenes of frenzied celebration. America took the announcement lightly and quietly, having staged its celebration Monday when the German announcement of the surrender was made.
All hospitals had not closed yet, however. Some German gunboats were reaching the Rhine in Coblence and on islands in the Baltic Sea. Moreover, up to a day later the state of Moscow had not proclaimed victory.

Daily Mirror
Thursday, May 8, 1945
No. 12,812
Published at G.P.O. as a Newspaper

VE-DAY!



IT'S OVER IN EUROPE

3 p.m. ANNOUNCEMENT WILL CLINCH IT

WAR WINNERS ON AIR TODAY

TODAY is VE-Day—the day for which the British people have fought and suffered for years, eight months and four days of war. With unconditional surrender of Germany to all the Allies, the war in Europe is over except for the return of Eastern Europe to national politics, such as Prague.
The Prime Minister will make an official announcement in accordance with arrangements between Britain, Russia and the U.S.—at three o'clock this afternoon.
All towns and villages will observe a moment of silence in celebration of this victory.
We also remember and share with you the great loss and sorrow which followed and still in many places endures—and the men and women in the front lines who have sacrificed their lives for us.

THE WAR IN EUROPE ENDS!
Nazi Surrender Unconditional
Capitulation Signed
Reims, France rendered unconditional and final surrender today.

THE COURIER-MAIL
LATE CITY EDITION
GERMANY ANNOUNCES SURRENDER

THE WAR IN EUROPE IS ENDED
SURRENDER IS UNCONDITIONAL
V-E WILL BE PROCLAIMED TODAY

Daily Mail
3-POWER ANNOUNCEMENT TO-DAY; BUT BRITAIN KNEW LAST NIGHT
VE-DAY—IT'S ALL OVER
All quiet till 9 p.m.—then the London crowds went mad in the West End

PM put off the big speech
UNTIL TODAY

The letter on the following page, from Air Commodore Allen Vaughan O.B.E. B.A. To Branch Chairmen. The letter was intended to be read prior or on VE-Day 75, and has been shown to as many members as possible. It may be a week late, but we thought that readers of RAFAGEN would like to add it to our own celebrations of VE-Day.



From: Air Commodore Allan Vaughan OBE BA (Hons) RAF (Retd)



The charity that supports the RAF family

rafa.org.uk | 0800 018 2361

South East and Eastern Area
Headquarters
Royal Air Forces Association
Atlas House, 41 Wembley Road
Leicester
LE3 1UT

Dear Branch Chairmen,

6 May 2020

On this coming Friday, May 8th, our country along with most European countries will celebrate and commemorate the formal end of World War II's European Theatre. I am sure in better times we would have been participating in local celebrations, street parties and within our Branches, remembering our friends and comrades who would have been in uniform 75 years ago. We still have veterans in our numbers who will remember the day vividly. I know from my own relatives, the immense joy that was felt in the cessation of war, the thought of returning to loved ones and returning to normal life. I'm not sure if those around in 1945 would have used the phrase 'the new normal' but there certainly would have been an optimism that life could only get better.

Locally, Basingstoke Branch was going to lead the organisation of a Veteran's Parade supported by other veteran and cadet organisations, civic dignitaries and RAF Odiham and other military units. The Parade was to have taken place at Milestones Museum who were going to have a VE/VJ Day exhibition for the next few months. Sadly, all of the arrangements have had to be cancelled. The Mayor of Basingstoke has arranged for celebrations and prayers to be held virtually and I'm sure many other Local Authorities have done the same for we should not forget the immense sacrifice made by many.

In the present climate of Covid-19 lockdown, many of our members are in the 'most vulnerable' classification. Reports I get from the Association, both nationally and locally, confirm that the Association's membership is ensuring that our vulnerable members are looked after. It was this spirit of comradeship that forged the growth of the Association in the late 1940's and from all accounts to be strong and healthy today.

On the 8th of May, you and your Branch members may wish to take part in both National and Local events to mark the day. In particular there is the national moment of Remembrance and Reflection at 11.00am followed by The Royal British Legion VE Day live streaming events on their website. There will also be a range of events on the Association's website including a virtual Parade of Standards.

It is with great sadness that we cannot commemorate VE Day in the spirit that the British people reserve for such Anniversaries or events. Celebrate and remember as best you can but above all please stay safe and urge your members to do likewise. Remember the Association stands by to help those of the RAF Family who may need additional support and look forward to the day we can all meet again in comradeship.

Yours aye,



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
Registered Charity 2286686 (England & Wales). SC037673 (Scotland).

PERSONAL WARTIME STORIES

My Father's experience

By

Member Jim Box

This is short story of my father's participation on VE day back in 1945

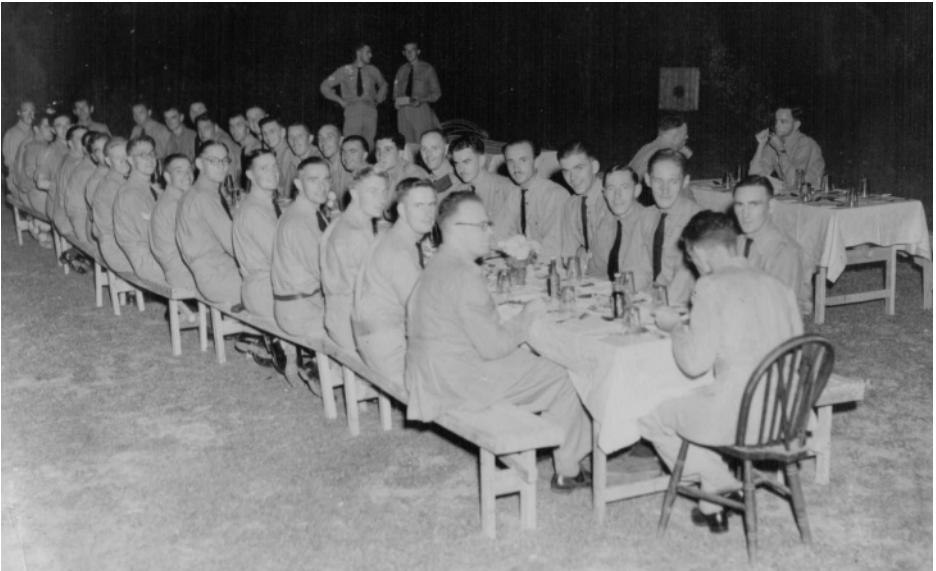
My father joined the RAF from 1940 and continued his civilian occupation of teleprinter operator in the Service.

I have a copy of my father's RAF record which shows that after training he was posted to Coastal Command 19 Group Headquarters, Mount Batten in the Signals Section. For the next three years he moved around various Coastal Command stations in the west country, before returning to Mount Batten.

He went on a teleprinter operator NCO course at No7 Radio School in December 1943. This is where a measure of mystery occurs, as I can find no mention of this training school on the Internet. I know that he operated a TypeX cypher teleprinter from stories that he told. Was he trained at this school?

Later in 1944 he was posted to the Middle East to Head Quarters 151 Wing in Habbaniya, Iraq. It was here that whilst on watch in the Signals Section he was the operator that received the teleprinter message from UK announcing the cessation of the war in Europe.

Below is a photo of my father at his VE Day dinner. He is in the top row, last on the right.



Memories

By Ken Needham

Listening to the radio last week I heard about the tales of what people were intending to do in the way of celebrating the 75th Anniversary of VE-Day. Street parties and fun and games in all sorts of ways would have been the order of the day, had this terrible virus not spoil everything.

It got me to thinking of the original VE-Day, all those street parties, singing, dancing and in general real celebrations, which the people of today were going to replicate.

There is one thing that, no matter how the celebrations were to be arranged, there is one part that can never be replicated. That is the atmosphere on that original day. I was only eight years old at the time, but I remember it well.

Yes there was street parties, and singing and dancing. All the things that would have been organised this year. That feeling that I and everyone

around you had on the day was indescribable. Everyone was happy, and I mean everyone, and I mean happy. Everyone greeted you as you walked down the street. The village in which I lived at the time became one big party. Yes the individual streets had parties, but everywhere, and everybody was in the party spirit. Where all the food and drink came from nobody knew or cared. There was not a lot of food or drink as we were rationed, but what there was, was good. All the mums and wives put on a wonderful spread in the circumstance.



A Spondon Street Party

Although the village in which I lived was close to Derby, and we did see action when the enemy tried to destroy the Rolls Royce factory, but nowhere near as bad as London, Coventry, Plymouth and other cities, I remember the anti aircraft guns up on the allotments, and afterward when they had been taken away, how us lads would play in the pits left behind, shooting down the enemy. In the centre of the village was a large static

water tank. I remember how it attracted the frogs, and we would try and collect tadpoles. I say try because if any saw us anywhere near the tank we would get told off because of the deep water.



Another Spondon Street Party

We didn't have an air-raid shelter in the garden, because the house we lived in had a cellar, and as soon as the sirens

went, my parents and I would go below until it was all over.

My father was not in the services, as he was in a reserved occupation at The British Celanese. I don't know what the work was, as he never said. When not working he spent time fire watching.

The local greengrocer had hanging in his shop a large wooden banana advertising Fyffes Bananas. My parents told me it was a fruit you could eat like an apple, and that when the war was over, I would be able to eat one myself. When finally they came back into the shops, I was must disappointed when I saw the size was not the same as the one in the greengrocers.

We had no back garden, but a 50ft long front garden, which was full of vegetables. That is where I learnt the art of gardening, as it was my job to look after the garden when dad was not around. The veg garden was important to the family.

You often hear folk of my age say to the younger generation, "It was hard in our days". It was, but because we had never know anything different, we coped, and we used what was what available. Not dissimilar to what is happening during 'Lock down' The difference is that technology has progressed forward in seventy-five years, and that helped.



Another street party
somewhere in England

World War II in North Herts

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Museum

During WWII Letchworth was bombed from 28 High Explosive Bombs and 376 Incendiary Bombs, while this may sound serious, there were no civilian deaths as a result of bombing. Certainly bombs fell in Wymondley Road and near Letchworth Golf Course and at Norton. In comparison, 420 High Explosives and 4,700 Incendiaries bombed Hitchin Rural District.

Many industries in Letchworth contributed to the war effort, such as Irving Airchutes Ltd whose employees worked around the clock to produce thousands of parachutes which were used throughout the world. People who were saved by baling out of a plane with an Irving parachute became part of the Caterpillar Club, administered by Irving Airchutes Ltd.

The British Tabulating Machine Company Ltd produced Hollerith machines (used for storing and calculating information) which were used on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. Other 'Bombes' produced by Letchworth Garden City were the decoding machines, also produced by the British Tabulating Machine Company. Called Bombes because of the ticking noise made by their electro-mechanics these machines were used to decode the infamous German Enigma machine and were vital in turning the war in the allies favour. The German messages had 150 million million million different combinations! Over 200 Bombes, each one 6ft high and 7ft long, were made in Letchworth factories and many were used at the Government Code and Cipher School at Bletchley Park and other secret locations.

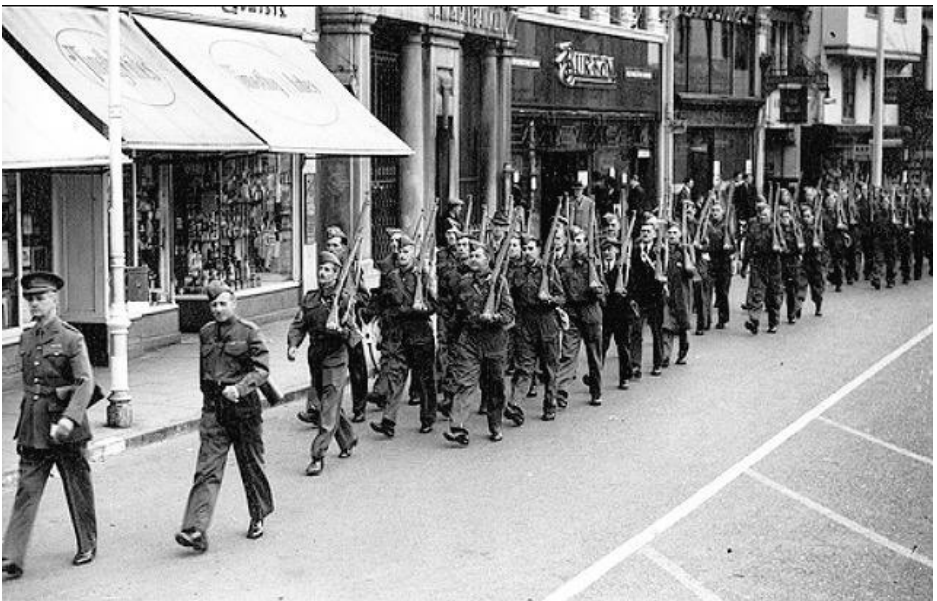
The dedicated staff of the Kryn and Lahy Steel Foundry, most of whom were women, worked a 60 hour, seven day week, producing a whole range of mortar bombs and shells, from three inches in size to 4000lb bombs (the same weight as around 29 people!)

Morse Chain Company and Shelvoke and Drewry produced components for a wide range of military vehicles and weapons. Shelvoke's other claim

to fame was the production of miniature submarines intended for service in the Far East.

Whilst suffering the nationwide hardships of looking after evacuees, blackouts, rationing and long hours, Letchworth Garden City also managed to run a series of savings campaigns raising over £830,000. This was the equivalent of £23,000,000 in 2001! These charitable adventures often provided a welcome relief from everyday hardships as the fundraising included dances, theatre performances, parties etc.

On VE Day and VJ Day Letchworth Garden City celebrated along with the rest of the country with street parties, singing and dancing. Many of those who had come to Letchworth to escape bombing elsewhere and to work in the factories chose to stay. A wonderful compliment for the town.



The local Home Guard (Dad's Army) parade through Hitchin Market Place

SHORT WARTIME STORIES WORTH TELLING

Beware of the Dog

RAF pilot Peter Williamson sustains a serious injury while flying a mission over German-controlled Vichy France. He bails out of his plane and later awakes to find himself in a hospital bed in Brighton, on the English coast. As he recovers, strange things keep happening, such as hearing the sound of German warplanes through the window when none would have been nearby. The nurse also mentions that the hospital water is very hard, when Williamson knows the water in Brighton is famous for being soft.

Suspicious and frightened, Williamson drags himself to the window and sees a wooden sign, "GARDE AU CHIEN" (French for "Beware of the Dog"). He now knows that he is actually in Vichy France, and that the English caregivers are Germans in disguise. When they send in a fake RAF commander to convince him to divulge his squadron's location, he stares him straight in the eye and says nothing more than "My name is Peter Williamson. My rank is Squadron Leader and my number is nine, seven, two, four, five, seven."

"Beware of the Dog" is a 1944 World War II story by Roald Dahl which was originally published in Harper's Magazine and later appeared in his Over to You collection. Its basic plot was adapted into the 1965 movie 36 Hours, starring James Garner and Rod Taylor, and the TV movie Breaking Point in 1989.

The Soham Railway Explosion

On June 2, 1944, just before D-Day, driver Benjamin Gimbert and his fireman, James Nightall, were in charge of a freight train delivering bombs to the USAF in White Colne, Essex, UK. As they approached the village of Soham in Cambridgeshire, Benjamin realized that the wagon coupled directly behind the locomotive was on fire. That's never a good thing, but this fire was particularly dangerous, given that the train was carrying tons of explosives. He stopped the train, and James came down from the footplate to uncouple the blazing wagon. Only 128 meters (420 ft) from the station in Soham, they attempted to ditch the wagon in the open countryside before the bombs exploded. They failed, and seven minutes after Benjamin originally saw the fire, the wagon exploded. It flattened the station building, damaged 600 others, threw Benjamin almost 200 meters (about 600 ft) away, and killed two other railway workers who had stayed to stop another train that was headed for the wagon's path of destruction. Despite the crater the explosion created that was 6 meters (20 ft) deep, the track was up and running again by that evening. Both Benjamin and James were awarded the George Cross, the highest award for non-combat bravery in the British and Commonwealth. Their actions are commemorated with two different plaques in Soham.



Operation Jericho

On February 18, 1944, 18 of the legendary Mosquito fighter bombers of the Royal Air Force, Royal New Zealand Air Force, and Royal Australian Air Force embarked on a plan to attack the Amiens Prison in northwest France to free the 700 French Resistance members imprisoned there. The weather that day was so bad that one of the RNZAF pilots thought that it was “either some form of practice or some form of practical joke.” Nevertheless, the group flew across the English Channel at just 15 meters (50 ft) above the waves, though five had to turn back due to radio and engine problems. Now down to 13 planes, Group Captain Charles Pickard carried on with the raid. At 12:01 PM, the bombers attacked the prison wall to allow the prisoners a route of escape. They went on to demolish the blocks where German officers were standing guard, many of whom were killed or wounded. Two Mosquitos also attacked the nearby train station, buying the prisoners time while the German garrison was distracted. Only two aircraft were lost in the attack, including the one flown by Pickard. While 258 prisoners escaped, 102 were killed in the raid and another 155 were captured. Even today, no one is sure who ordered the raid or why, but the sheer skill and courage shown by the Mosquitos is undeniable.

Bomber Plane Captures U-Boat

On August 27, 1941, U-boat U-570, captained by Kapitanleutnant Hans-Joachim Rahmlow, surfaced off the coast of Iceland. Almost immediately, it was spotted by James Thompson, the acting leader of a British squadron based in Iceland who was on an anti-submarine patrol. Immediately, Rahmlow ordered a crash dive, but it was too late. Thompson’s Hudson bomber dropped four depth charges, one of which dealt a critical blow to U-570, knocking out the lighting system. Being inexperienced in U-boats and commanding an inexperienced crew, Rahmlow panicked and surfaced again, fearing the release of deadly chlorine gas. When a number of the crew came up on deck, Thompson attacked the U-boat with the plane’s machine guns. The crew soon realized the futility of fighting the aircraft in rough seas and surrendered. Amazed, Thompson flew in for a closer look, but no other attempt was made by the

crew to defend their vessel, fearing more depth charge attacks. Thompson then radioed for more planes and to alert the Navy to collect the U-boat. In the time it took for the Royal Navy armed trawler to arrive, the U-boat crew destroyed the code books and Enigma machines on board. U-570 was then towed back to Iceland and beached to prevent it from sinking. The boat was repaired, and it was discovered that there was no evidence of chlorine gas. A more experienced crew would probably have escaped. U-570 was then placed into service with the Royal Navy as HMS Graph. The surrender of U-570 remains the only time a submarine has surrendered to an aircraft.

The Ready-Made British Resistance

After the disastrous campaign in France in 1940, the remnants of the British Expeditionary Force and the Free French Forces found themselves critically short of vehicles, ammunition, and other equipment. This led to the formation of the well-known Home Guard, but Winston Churchill also ordered the creation of a secret, underground army that was known simply as the Auxiliary Units. They remained secret until the 1990's. Its 3,500 members were recruited mainly from the civilian population and trained in a variety of tasks, including stealth killing, explosives, unarmed combat, and sabotage. To avoid suspicion, they were assigned to Home Guard units. Despite the shortage, they were equipped with the best weapons available, including Thompson submachine guns and PIAT anti-tank rockets. They were also given silenced pistols and rifles, sticky bombs, and single-shot cartridges that could penetrate steel at almost 100 meters (over 300 ft). Their operation bases were built 4.5 meters (15 ft) underground and held 6–8 men each, plus all of their equipment and weeks' worth of supplies. In the event of an invasion, the plan was to attack German communication lines, railways, airfields, fuel and supply dumps, and senior German officers. Perhaps most chillingly of all, they had orders to kill any British person collaborating with the occupying German forces. One advantage of the units was that the German army would not expect organized resistance so soon after an invasion. The fatality of such a mission was certain, but luckily, the Auxiliary Units never went into action, although many of its men joined other units after it disbanded.