

BRANCH  
MEMBERSHIP 178



 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCES**  
**Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

# RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT  
BRANCH

**SPRING 2019**



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# 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 2019**

*Life President:- Gordon Collinson*

*Vice President:- Dennis Dawson*

*Chairman:- Lisa Berry*

*Vice Chairman:- Roy Newbury*

*Secretary:- Ken Needham*

*Treasurer:- Ken Needham*

*Wings Appeal Coordinator:- Roy Newbury*

*General Committee:*

*John Airey: Rev. Lindsay Dew: Marie Mahoney: Alan Millard:*

*Mark Howell: Deen Meek*

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

*RAFAGEN Edited by Ken Needham*

*Branch Welfare Officer: Sue Chester*

*until a replacement is found, all requests in confidence please to the  
Branch Secretary*

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Telephone: 01462 671534

E-mail [Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk)

***Monthly Meetings are held at the Letchworth Rugby Club,  
Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City Herts (Behind the  
Letchworth Leisure Centre) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month  
at 19.45 hrs.***



### *Ken's comments*

So much has happened since RAFAGEN was last issued, I'm not quite sure where to start. I suppose the best place is where we left off in the Winter issue.

You must know by now that due to economic reasons we had to leave the Letchworth Conservative Club, after many happy years there. We were sorry to leave, but leave we had to. New premises were found, and we held our first monthly meeting at the Letchworth Rugby Club in February. The attendance was the best it has been for a long time. Let us hope that the numbers continue. Just one point before I leave the Rugby Club, our Life President, Gordon Collinson, has his name scattered all around the room, for in the past he was a 'big name' in the Rugby Club.

The Annual General Meeting came around again in March, when members selected their officers and committee for the next year. All of last years crew was re elected plus three new names, that of Alan Millard and Mark Howell. Alan is well known by locals, as the photographer for the Comet newspaper. Now retired he has time on his hands, and is now involved with us. Mark is our new Standard Bearer, and a great job he is doing too. Deen (Dixie) Meek is a fairly newcomer to the branch, but in the background has already showed is worth, and we are looking forward to his part on the committee, and has agreed to assist Roy with the Wings Appeal.

That brings you up to date, so what about the future? Branch social events are listed on later pages for you to peruse. This year will be remembering D Day 6th June 1944. 75 years ago. I remember it well. One of our members



John Stoddard MBE, JP.

who remembered it better than I, was John Stoddard. Who actually took part. John has sadly passed away, but he talked of his experiences on many occasions. He would tell of sad moments, but he also found humor in those sad days. It may be just me but I always, or at least until I spoke to John, associated the D Day landing with the army, but John was in the Royal Air Force, in the Intelligence Corps, He, along with others of the Corps, were in those landing crafts

which ran up on to the beaches. I have seen the notes he made for a talk to the Letchworth Rotary Club, and later to our branch and others on his D Day experiences. These later appeared in the book he wrote on his life story "MEMORIES". Before I close my tales of John Stoddard, his claim to fame is that on his 21st birthday, and here I quote his own words, "I had the pleasure of sleeping with twenty WAAFs!". The man was a marvel.

By the time you read this issue of RAFAGEN, a new venture for the branch will have had it's first airing. **NAAFI BREAK**. At the suggestion of our Branch Support Manager, we are trying a day time meeting. It is being held on the 1st Tuesday of each month, in the Dimples cafe at the Letchworth Par 3 Golf Centre, Willian Road. Timed at 10.00 hrs until 12.00 hrs you will get a (non alcoholic) drink for £1.

Want to know all more, just come alone on a Tuesday and find out. Just one more point, guests are welcome, also any ex RAF personnel. We won't have a NAAFI vehicle, but we will have the memories of our days in the Royal Air Force.



## Female RAF Two-Star Officer On Equality, STEM & Success

Air Vice Marshal Tam Jennings, of the RAF Legal Branch, was one of many influential women at a STEM day at RAF Museum Hendon.

“It’s easy to think the Royal Air Force is just made up of pilots. It is much, much more than that.”

The words of Air Vice Marshal Tam Jennings, head of the RAF’s Legal Branch, as she and a team of other influential Air Force women welcomed around 150 teenage girls to the RAF Museum at Hendon.

The Year 10s – aged 14-15 – had come from schools across North London to participate in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) activity day.

It was aimed not just at broadening their understanding of the subjects – but to get them thinking about what a career in the RAF, or the wider aviation industry, could do for them.

Under the dim lighting of Hangar 1, the girls crowded eagerly around what resembled an interactive war room. Poignant questions, designed to spark debate, flitted around a grey touch-screen map in the centre of the exhibition space.

### MORE HAPPENINGS AT HENDON

New technology is allowing visitors of the RAF Museum in London to visualise what happened during the dramatic Dambusters Raid.

Members of the public, historians and relatives of those who had taken part in the raid have been given the opportunity to transport to the skies above the Mohne Dam in 1943 aboard the Lancaster bomber thanks to virtual reality

*Two items taken from FORCES NETWORK an online newspaper for the military minded*



## A FEW WORDS FROM OUR BRANCH PADRE

### CANON LINDSAY DEW

Hello, a joyous and happy Easter to you all. First of all I would like to say thank you for your welcome to the Branch and for the honour of being appointed Branch Padre. I'm enjoying getting to know you and look forward to serving you in the best way possible.

I come from Wiltshire, and most of you will know that I served in the R.A.F. (1970-75) as a Ground Radio Mechanic. After square bashing at R.A.F. Swindon I completed my trade training at R.A.F. Locking with stops at R.A.F. Uxbridge (for the Royal Festival of Remembrance) and R.A.F. Lyneham in between while I waited for the start of my training. When my trade training ended I was posted to Locking as permanent staff servicing the training equipment. In Jan 1972 I was posted to R.A.F. Episkopi, Cyprus where I was attached to the NEAF Telecoms Flight mainly servicing teleprinters (a very boring job) based in a workshop – but at least it was air conditioned, one of the few places that were – not for the comfort of personnel you understand but rather because the machines needed to be kept cool! It was while there that I met Bobbie who was also a Ground Radio Mechanic (very unusual for women) – she and I fell in love and were married at the Station Church of All Saints' in 1973. We returned to the UK in 1974 and were stationed at R.A.F. Stanbridge until we were demobbed in 1975. We both responded to the 'call' to enter full time ministry in the C/E and I joined the Church Army with Bobbie's support and we spent 10 years with them. After training I worked in a parish in Harrow and was then sent to join the Chaplaincy team at Wakefield top security Prison. I spent three years there and was accepted to train for Ordination in 1985. We continued in Parish ministry in the Wakefield area for almost 25 years. Sadly Bobbie died from cancer

in 2007 just after becoming a teacher. We have three grown up children now living in different places in the UK. Melanie and I met and we were married in 2009 and I moved from West Yorkshire to share her home and become a part of her family in Ashwell. Melanie has three children – one still at home but soon to start at University. I was appointed a Rector of three rural parishes near Biggleswade in 2009 and became Rural Dean of Biggleswade and a Canon of St Alban's Cathedral. I retired last year following a serious illness and several months of treatment for cancer. So that's me in a nutshell (more or less!). All of us have stories to tell about how life has happened for each of us and I hope that I shall have the opportunity of getting to know at least some of you as time goes by. 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 as well as serving on the Committee or you can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at [lindsay.dew@btinternet.com](mailto:lindsay.dew@btinternet.com)

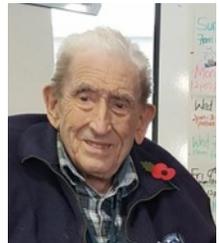
Kind regards & blessing  
Lindsay



It is with deep regret that we  
have to announce the passing of

**GORDON OVERTON**

1928 - 2019



It is with deepest sorrow that we have to announce the death of Gordon Overton. Gordon was, for many years our social secretary along with the late Jean Williams. The two would arrange arrange, quiz nights, our branch evenings and outings to various places. Coincidentally, it was Gordon and Jean who organised the first branch visit to Cosford Military Museum. After standing down from the committee, Gordon continued to be a regular visitor to branch meetings, until health took over. He moved into a local care home, where he was visited by members. A regular visitor was Our RAFALO, Sgaun Griifin , who brought Gordon along to our day out at Shuttleworth. Although wheelchair bound at the time, I know that Gordon enjoyed himself, being with his friends of RAFA again.



*Get your diaries out, because our R.A.F.A.L.O. W/O Shaun Griffin has been busy ensuring that our Branch Social evenings are entertaining.*

*Please note that speakers may change at short notice due to circumstances, especially those speakers who are serving members of the Armed Forces.*

15 Apr - Chris Balmforth - Letchworth Model Aeronautical Society.

18 Apr - Branch Visit - RAF Cosford Aircraft museum.

20 May - Dr Rudi Newman - R101 Imperial Airship scheme 1924-30.

17 Jun - Paul Jiggins - The history of measurement.

29 Jun - **Letchworth Armed Forces Day.**

15 Jul - Gary Fisher BA - The history of Hatfield House.

19 Aug - David Davis - Letchworth Garden City cottages.

16 Sep - **Battle of Britain Dinner - details to follow.**

21 Oct - Jim Box - The Westland Lysander.

24 Oct - **Branch visit - Bletchley Park.**

18 Nov - Ian Waller - Family history and genealogy.

16 Dec - **Branch Christmas Bash - tbc.**



# LISA'S COLUMN

Thoughts from our Chairman  
Lisa Berry

Welcome to the latest RAFAGEN and my first attempt at filling a rather large page full of my bumph! Thank you, Ken, for the picture in the top left there – I'm not entirely sure what I'm supposed to be doing there, perhaps it's an opportunity for a competition? Okay, it's a bottle of wine for the best caption right there...I want to know what I'm doing and what I'd be shouting! Entries to the Editor please!

So, I suppose I'd better crack on and perhaps on my first time in writing this column I ought to tell you a little about myself? I'm originally from



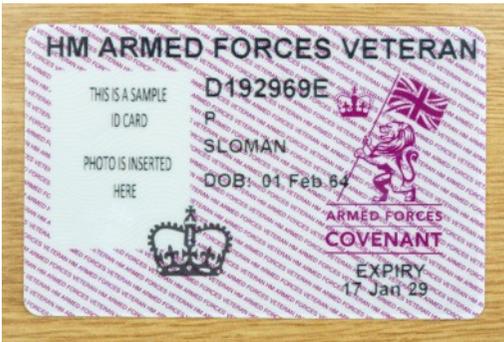
Lancashire and I was good as gold as a child (honest) anyway, I joined up at 16 years old on the YTS scheme as an Aerospace Systems Operator. I cried all way through my basic training, I cried even harder when I got chased by a member of the SAS in a ghillie suit after I accidentally kicked him in the head whilst I was on a patrol. I had nightmares for weeks after that. Despite disliking training very much I went on to serve a total of 14 and half years. I had a grand time, I caused havoc wherever I went, and I made many ~~partners in crime~~ friends!! I was also the C in Cs favourite briefer (but that's another story) I then transferred to the Army and I served 9 years with the pongo's.

I retired from the forces in 2015 and I missed it terribly at first but there are pro's to being a civvy, I can put as much weight on as I like and just buy bigger pants! I joined R.A.F.A. when I joined the R.A.F. in 1989 and had very little to do with it until I joined the R.A.F.A. committee on base where I became the R.A.F.A.L.O. for the branch. I became a general committee member when I left the forces. Though I am now the Chairman of the branch and always involved in all we do as a branch, I am also heavily involved in raising funds for R.A.F.A. on base too. I have helped on many events on camp to raise money, this includes car washing, Colour runs and wing walking to name a few. I hope to do a sky dive this year for R.A.F.A. also, would anyone like to join me? Eric? Marie?

Thank you for taking time to read my column. It is an honour to be the Chairman of our branch and I am at your service, my priority is you as a member of R.A.F.A. Please come down and support your branch, enjoy the banter over a beer and be part of something special, part of our R.A.F.A. family

**Be part of something special**

## Forces veterans can now apply for ID cards recognising that they have served in the military.



From 11th January 2019, any personnel who have left the military since December 2018 will automatically be given one of the new ID cards, which will allow them to maintain a tangible link to their career in the forces.

Veterans who have already made the transition to civilian life will be able to apply for a service leavers ID card by the end of the year.

The initiative is designed to give veterans easier access to public and charitable support including healthcare and housing.

Veterans are also being asked to identify themselves with their GP as having served, so that they can receive appropriate support.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said: "We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the ex-forces community, and we are working hard to ensure they receive the support they deserve.

"These new cards celebrate the great commitment and dedication of those who have served this country, and I hope they can provide a further link to ex-personnel and the incredible community around them."

In addition to one of the new ID cards, personnel leaving the armed forces are also able to keep their military IDs, known as the MOD Form 90, and veterans can access a range of discounts through the Defence Discount Service, the official MOD-endorsed service for the armed forces.

Last year, when the ID card scheme was announced, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

*"It's absolutely vital that we remain resolute in our support for those who have served our country so well."*

Anyone interested in advice and details regarding the Veterans ID card should contact the Veterans Agency.

## AN INVISIBLE WORKPLACE

Norman Jasper describes some of his aviation experiences

### Part Four

1953 had been a memorable year for many reasons, but the Winter Ball was yet to take place. Our annual Winter Balls in the Officers' Mess were splendid affairs. For this Ball the theme was a London underground tube station and the round-roofed Nissen-type snooker room annex to the mess lent itself naturally to decoration in the theme. With others I was aware that some nursing officers from the QARANC Sisters' Mess at the British Military Hospital in Hanover had been invited to attend. --- Interesting?

I thought it courteous to be around to help welcome the ladies when they arrived. This was how Joy and I met and we gelled naturally! After breakfast I drove some ladies back to Hanover in the Horch. Whether it was me or the car, Joy was attracted to I'm not too sure!

Finally Joy I felt was love at first sight and we were able to meet often during the following months which flew by so quickly. However, less than a year after meeting her she was posted to Egypt, to the British Military Hospital at Fayid. Military tactics? Fayid again? My next tour was as an advanced jet flying instructor at No8 FTS (Flying Training School), RAF Swinderby near Lincoln, after qualifying at the RAF's Central Flying School.

Joy returned from Egypt and we were married on 22nd October **1955**, during the break between the basic CFS course on Piston Provosts at South Cerney and the advanced part of the course on Vampires at Little Rissington. Part of our honeymoon was spent at Ross on Wye and part at "The Old New Inn", Bourton on the Water, just down the road from Little Rissington.



The breaking up of Avro Vulcan VX770 on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1958 at RAF Syerston

During the tour of duty Stan Sollitt, our flight commander, started a formation aerobatic team, so once again I found myself expanding energy as number 3 in the single seat Vampire at various UK air shows such as the annual Battle of Britain celebration shows involving displays at different airfields on the same day - quite tiring!

One show I recall was the battle of Britain display at RAF Syerston, just north of Newark on 20th September 1958. As we were about to start engines at Swinderby, ATC hinted that our display may be cancelled. Start clearance eventually came through but we wondered what the problem may have been. At Syerston we found we were carrying out our display through some black smoke rising from one runway end.

The first prototype Avro Vulcan (VX770), flying as a Rolls Royce Conway engine test bed from Hucknall, had crashed from a high speed break-up during a flypast at over 400 knots. Fortunately no spectators were harmed but the Vulcan was a complete write-off and its crew and some ground staff were killed. The captain was Keith Sturt, a former Fellow Venom pilot based at RAF Wunstorf at the time I was there. It was decided the show should continue. After refuelling we carried out another Battle of Britain display at RAF Binbrook.

In early August 1957 I was called to meet the Wing Commander Flying, who explained that a new post was to be created at Swinderby with the title "Unit Test Pilot and Technical Wing Liaison Officer". He said he wanted me to take the post, and I accepted I was set up in an office in the Technical Wing Headquarters, but still continued with my other flying activities.

Soon after the new post of Unit Test Pilot was created, I was called back to see the Wing Commander Flying. This time Wing Commander Technical was also present and, in a somewhat low key but nevertheless urgent way, the proposed high speed tests on the single seat Vampire were put to me. I accepted the challenge willingly.

This kept me busy during the second half of August 1957 and into September. Every single seat Vampire on the unit had to be tested and I often did two a day. Each test result was studied and action by Frank Costin and in addition each individual aircraft had to be classified as 'fit for flying by students' - instructors only' or 'unfit to fly'.

August 1957 had been a busy month in flying terms. It was also a busy and productive time following the developments elsewhere! On the last day of the month we were totally delighted when Joy delivered Eleanor, our first daughter. I note from my log book that I was airborne twice that day carrying out formation aerobatic practices. This was essential team preparation in the build up to Battle of Britain air shows early in September.

As my tour at Swinderby drew to a close I completed a short conversion to the Hunter F4 at RAF Kemble, near Cirencester. The opportunity was offered to me in recognition of my earlier test flights on the Vampire. In those days, with no two seat Hunter or flight simulator, it was a case of classroom study, careful briefing and being sent off alone with a pat on the back by the instructor! Only 8 flights of 40 minutes or less were involved and the second trip comprised a flight exceeding the speed of sound over the Bristol Channel on 15th September 1959

More next issue

**CALLING ALL EX ROYAL AIR  
FORCE PERSONNEL FOR A  
NAAFI BREAK**

Join us for a coffee and a chat, at DIMPLES Cafe at the Par 3 Golf Centre, Willian Way, Letchworth Garden City, every first Tuesday of the month



For more details phone Ken Needham on 01462 671534

# D-DAY

JUNE 6, 1944

Part of story that the late John Stoddard wrote for RAFAGEN

I know you would like to know the part I played in helping Eisenhower make D-Day the success it was!!!!.

In the early days of the war, I was a reporter on THE CITIZEN, remember THE CITIZEN? Claimed to be the only local newspaper to be published and printed in Letchworth. At that time everyone had to do an extra voluntary job to help the war effort, so I joined the Auxiliary Fire Service on the grounds that if there was a fire or bomb damage etc. I would be on the spot to report the event. They gave me a BSA motorbike and I was designated a Messenger and Despatch Rider. There were no such luxuries as mobile phones. Messages had to be conveyed on the assumption that the lines were down or jammed. In 1940 I well remember during the London Blitz I was stationed at the end of Broadway and could see the great glow in the sky during the bombing. Letchworth AFS was in reserve and could have been called in to support the London Fire Service if necessary.

I knew my reserved occupation time would soon be up, so I joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve to be sure to get into the Royal Air Force rather than any other service. I was keen to be a pilot, but when I was finally called up I failed the medical. I was sick in the Link Trainer – that is the test cockpit which assimilated flying motion. I was then transferred to Special Duties, and was posted to R.A.F. Valley in Anglesey. Here I was trained as a Deputy Controller in the Fighter Command Operations Room. Our job was to control the fighter aircraft and the air sea rescue planes etc.

There were twenty WAAFs' on my watch of which I was in charge. These were Radio Operators and Plotters. We worked shift hours and one day after our tour of duty – we finished at midnight – and there was a heat wave at the time. It was June 30th and had been stifling in the Ops Room which was underground. The WAAFs' invited me into the kitchen area as they had found out that it was my 21st birthday, and they had a present for me. On the table was a large cardboard box, I opened it – wrapper after wrapper

until I got to the bottom, and there was a small parcel. Opening the parcel I found what turned out to be a super present, a small tin of Nescafe Coffee, a rare treat in war time rationing. We all had a cup of coffee and then they asked me if they could take blankets up on to the ground above the Ops Room, and in view of the heat and sleep there in the cool. I had to agree. Then they asked me to join them, to which I also agreed. So I can honestly say that I remember my 21st birthday very clearly, receiving a tin of coffee and sleeping with twenty WAAFs'

The peak of the Bombing was slowing down and one day a notice came round stating that there were vacancies in COMBINED OPERATIONS preparing for the invasion. The vacancies were on offer to volunteers from the Special Duties personnel in the intelligence section. I immediately decided this was the job for me. There was however one snag – applications had to have a second language. I had only taken schoolboy German for a brief period and had forgotten most of it – but I thought "Ah! Well here goes." And I put down German as my second language, hoping against hope that the interview panel wouldn't ask to demonstrate have fluent I was. Fortunately they didn't and much to my surprise I was accepted for training.

After signing the Official Secrets Act I was sent on a course at Baliol College Oxford, and then for three weeks at Worcester College to train in codes and ciphers, which was to be my new job.

There was about thirty of us on the course and we were all promoted on completion, with a special passing out ceremony to the tune of Moonlight and Roses, which was the favourite music of the Commanding Officer's wife.

I was then assigned to the Second Tactical Air Force, and I joined a small unit of a jeep and two caravans. Our H.Q. was split up into several small groups in case we didn't all make the beaches. Our main task was to establish as quickly as possible landing strips near Bayeaux so that the Sptifires etc. could land and refuel to give them more time in the air over the battle area.

During my time in training we had to do some commando training, which nearly killed me, and then go under canvas in the New Forest to wait for the word to go to the dock for the great day.

One day we had an invitation to go to a party at Beaulie Abbey. I went with

unit, and as we walked into the great hall, with it's huge log fire burning, I saw a young Naval Lieutenant with his back to the fire enjoying a pint. It was Bim Imber. He was the only Letchworth person I met during my time in the Royal Air Force. Bim was part of the combined ops training and he later to become Captain of a Navel vessel which helped tow the Mullberry Harbour blocks to Normandy.

I have been surprised on how much detail some D Day veterans remember of the big day. I am afraid I only have certain things imprinted in my mind which I will never forget.

When the call came for our small convoy to move to the docks to embark on the landing craft our Chaplain held a short service. He said the sea would be rough, but we would be in the safe hands of the Royal Navy. He went on to say that when we got to the other side we had no idea of what to expect, but to take heart we would all be in the hands of Almighty God. We then sang a hymn, I call it the Navy hymn. Looking around at the mass of vessels of all kinds and the sea which seemed full of ships, it was a most appropriate hymn –“Eternal Father Strong To Save”. I chose that hymn sixty years later when we held a D-Day commemoration service at the War Memorial in Letchworth Garden City,, on a hot sunny day in June 2004 – quite different elements to 6th June 1944.

We were on board an LCT – one of the Kayser built U.S. ships. I have a vivid memory looking back at the ship from the front where our vehicles were sandwiched between two huge Sherman tanks, that ship was bending in the middle with each roll of the sea. I never thought that we would make it. We also had on board a Scottish Commando Regiment and they played their Bagpipes as we neared the beach.

Our first realisation that we were entering the danger zone was when there was a sudden explosion in the LCT behind us. It had evidently hit a mine and it was horrific when it completely disappeared in a matter of minutes. As we forged ahead all we could see was debris and bodies. A scene I will never forget.

Another memory I have is seeing the Barrage Balloons attached to some vessels swinging from one side to the other in the high wind. Each time the balloon would splash into the sea and rise to swing over the other side for another splash. We saw no Luftwaffe planes, only Spitfires overhead. We were seventeen hours on our LCT, and I was sea sick most of the time. Fortunately the beach had been cleared by the first wave of commandos

and already they were laying the roll mats for our vehicles to drive across the sand.

Once off the beach we followed tanks with flails, heavy chains rotating in front which exploded landmines were may have been in our path. It was minutes after landing that we passed the first scenes of war and devastation. As we drove quickly off the beach up one of the tracks which remains today, we saw two German tanks smouldering with black smoke, and by the side a charred body of a German soldier, and another hanging out of the turret. On an un burnt arm was he was still wearing his wrist watch. Memories that remain clear are one that you want to forget.

Across another field, flame throwers were at work attacking a Pill Box on high ground. I was surprised that the flame thrower tanks towed a trailer full of fuel. A venerable target if there ever was one.

Some of the great warships with guns blazing were also firing rocket launchers. They made a constant screaming noise, with clouds of smoke behind. A frightening sound, but a lot more frightening for the recipients. As we approached the road junction we were stopped by an officer who noted our markings and asked the Intelligence unit to search a command bunker located in some trees. I went in with another Sergeant, and we went through some filing cabinets, desks etc., looking for codes which could be useful. On a table was an unfinished breakfast with coffee still in the mugs. They must have made a hasty retreat. I took away some correspondence, some of which I have kept to this day, but no codes were found – only burnt papers.

We moved on, but took the wrong turning and ended up in a quiet village. As we approached the main street we heard 'plops' around us, some of them hitting the vehicles, then belated cracks of guns. A soldier appeared from a hedgerow shouting at us that the Germans were still in occupation, and were shooting at us from the church bell tower. The village was Le Villers Le Sac. Needless to say we beat a hasty retreat pulling off the road into a field by trees for camouflage. We had to find our location. We could not get to Bayeux, so we decided to wait until we received orders to proceed after the Germans had been evicted. That first night we took in turns to man the radio and I was getting into my sleeping bag intending to sleep under the vehicle when two German soldiers appeared. They were carrying rifles and walking towards me. My weapon was in the jeep. I just stood there and was greatly relieved when they nervously approached me

handing out their guns in an act of surrender. They were more frightened than I was. I was in the Royal Air Force and not exactly trained in receiving prisoners' of war. WE put them in the Jeep and took them down the road where tanks were moving, and handed them over to the Army.

My memory fails as to the day and time we were heavily shelled, but I knew the shells were coming closer to us. My next memory was coming round after being sedated in a hospital tent. I looked up at the large Red Cross painted on the roof of the tent. Then I realised I was a casualty. Looking round I saw a soldier who had lost a leg and another who had been blinded. I felt myself to see if I was all there. What a relief to find I was in one piece, but heavily bandaged from waist to neck and in some pain. I learnt that the blast had thrown me some distance and there was shrapnel wounds and a collapsed lung. The lung was a write-off, but I have done fairly well in life. I am 89 years old and have played tennis and golf etc., all on one lung.

I was flown out on a converted DC3 to Swindon for immediate treatment and then by ambulance through towns and villages to a R.A.F. hospital in Church Village, South Wales. When the ambulance stopped in a town or village on way to Wales the drivers used to open the rear doors for fresh air, and the people were used to seeing chaps in ambulances en route from Normandy to a British hospital, and they literally showered us with sweets and cigarettes. Most embarrassing knowing the shortage of such items. I was kept in hospital for treatment and recovery for six months. I was in bed for four months and had to learn to walk again, weighing only six stone. I was eventually sent to Blackpool for three weeks recovery.

I was finally demobbed and awarded 100% pension, but had to go for regular checkups in Cambridge. Finally they offered me a lump sum. Well it did pay for a 1936 Morris 8 for me.

To conclude, a story comes from Normandy that some days after the break out from the beaches when a German General was surrendering to General Montgomery. They faced each other in Monty's caravan. Spread before them was a map of the area and the Nazi General was saying "I will surrender this hill top here, this village here, and this river bank here.....", but Monty stopped him and said "Sir, I demand everything, totalitarian surrender, nothing less". I believe that all engaged in Operation Overlord had that same resolve, to see the final defeat of the 3rd Reich and Nazi



# Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre

**THE HOME OF THE BRANCH NAAFI BREAK**

- Enjoy a round of golf with family or friends
- Play the traditional French game of pétanque
- Cafe offering wide range of coffees, teas, cakes and hot / cold food
- Fully licensed bar with wide range of beers, ciders, spirits and soft drinks
- Ample parking and free wi-fi
- Everyone welcome

**We support the R.A.F. Association and Wings Appeal**

Cafe open from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm  
Late nights on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre  
Willian Way, Letchworth SG6 2HJ  
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# BRANCH CHRISTMAS BASH 2018

## BROADWAY HOTEL LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY



Photos by Shaun Griffin



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



29th June 2019

# LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY ARMED FORCES DAY

When

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Location

Broadway Gardens

Letchworth Garden City SG6 3TA

We are once again happy to celebrate the Armed Forces Day to remember and salute our Armed Forces past, present and future. This year is also the 75th Anniversary of the D Day Landings.

There will be cadet challenges, military bands and vehicles, food and craft stalls, classic cars and lots more free for everyone to enjoy. Free parking at Spirella Building and Letchworth train station are just 5 minutes walk away. The event is suitable for disabled access. We look forward to seeing you there!



## **Dame Vera Lynn celebrated her 102nd birthday on March 20th 2019**

The 'Forces Sweetheart' who captured the heart of the nation with songs like 'We'll Meet Again' and '(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover' has supported ex-servicemen and many others over the years.

Ahead of the birthday, she said: "I am looking forward to having a glass of bubbly, but I am not sure whether they will be able to fit all 102 candles on my cake."

A little story about Vera.

“Dame Vera joined a group of the more elderly guests, whom she had correctly guessed were WWII Veterans. She quickly ascertained that one of the group had served for most of WWII on Night-fighters and had held a Commission but he had never joined any ex-Forces Associations. She sweetly admonished him for not joining the RAFA.”

