

NORTH YORKSHIRE'S UNSUNG HEROES THEIR STORIES



Acknowledgements

We are indebted to the men and women who have given their time to share their valuable stories and kindly allowed us to take copies of their personal photographs. We are also extremely grateful to them for allowing their personal histories to be recorded for the benefit of current and future generations.

In addition, we would like to thank Dr Tracy Craggs, who travelled the length and breadth of North Yorkshire to meet with each of the men and women featured in this book to record their stories. We would also like to thank her – on behalf of the Unsung Heroes – for her time, enthusiasm and kindness.

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Foreword

North Yorkshire has a strong military history and a continuing armed forces presence. The armed forces are very much part of our local lives – whether it's members of our own families, the armed forces' friends in our children's schools, the military vehicles on the A1, or the jets above our homes. The serving armed forces are visible in our county – but the older veterans, our unsung heroes, are not necessarily so obvious.

With the Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire project we wanted to raise the profile of older veterans across North Yorkshire. They risked their lives for their country and the project aimed to ensure that in their later life they would know we remain grateful and are looking out for them. Working with a range of partners to offer support, we hoped to let our older veterans know we are right behind them and right beside them- whether they needed practical help or friendship.

Over the life of the project we met incredible and inspirational men and women and it made us realise we had to collect their stories to ensure they were heard now and kept for future generations. It has been an honour to be able to record their stories for this book. Many of the men and women we spoke to were modest about their contributions, but we know there is nothing modest about their achievements. I hope that you will read these stories and remember the sacrifices so many gave to ensure we can live in freedom.



Leah Swain

Chief Executive
Community First Yorkshire

Introduction

***North Yorkshire's Unsung Heroes: Their Stories* has been produced to mark the end of the Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire project, a consortium led by Community First Yorkshire involving a number of organisations across the county. Between April 2017 and March 2020, the project has supported over 1000 older ex-service men and women with services and activities not routinely offered by statutory organisations or military charities. These include support in the home and garden, befriending services, local skills and friendship groups, specialist advice, financial support, access to grants, support for carers, day trips and events.**

The three-year project was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust and involved the following partners: Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington, Age UK Scarborough & District, Carers Resource, Citizens Advice Mid-North Yorkshire, Community First Yorkshire, Groundwork, Just the Job Environmental Enterprise, North Yorkshire Sport, North Yorkshire Youth, Richmond Community Voluntary Action (RCVA), Richmondshire District Council, Rural Arts, Saint Michael's Hospice, White Rose Home Improvement Agency (Scarborough Borough Council), Yorkshire Energy Doctor, and Yorkshire Housing.

Working together, we have provided person-centred, practical, financial and holistic support to men and women aged 65 and over who were living in North Yorkshire and had served in HM Armed Forces at some point in their lives. This included those who completed National Service and those who saw active service while in the Merchant Navy. The project's core objective was to improve the lives and wellbeing of older veterans living in North Yorkshire.

Men and women who had received support through the Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire project were invited by Community First Yorkshire to tell their personal stories to an oral historian, Dr Tracy Craggs, in order for them to be permanently recorded in *North Yorkshire's Unsung Heroes: Their Stories*. Those who took part volunteered to give their time and shared their memories and experiences for current and future generations. Images included are the veterans' own.

This collection of personal memories has been produced to recognise the, often understated, personal contribution of ex-service personnel living in North Yorkshire. Many served in conflicts during the twentieth century, sometimes being witness to traumatic events and making huge personal sacrifices to serve their country. Their stories provide a valuable, and often moving, insight into military life and the social and personal lives of our older veterans.

Robert Hembrow

Robert was born in Stafford in August 1918 and lived with his grandparents as a boy. His grandmother had a handy sweet shop next door and Robert's father served in the army during the First World War, before becoming a commercial traveller for a tea firm. Due to his job, the family had the only car in the street.

Attending school was not a favourite activity for Robert and he specialised in producing wall charts for his teachers. After leaving school he became a barber's assistant, then a gents' hairdresser where he met his wife Nada, also a hairdresser. Being aware that war was coming, they married in 1939 and Robert was called up the following year.



Robert registered at the Potteries in Stoke, hoping to serve in the Navy but ending up in the Infantry. He started his army life at Park Hall near Oswestry and initially wore a Royal Warwickshire cap badge. A posting to Newhaven followed, where Robert helped with the troops returning from Dunkirk and joined the 1st Battalion Ox and

Bucks Regiment where he lived under canvas. He did his basic training, learning about weapons, carrying out manoeuvres and marching. One of the tough instructors was 'a devil for digging in' and insisted they dig their trenches a bit deeper, but Robert was thankful for that later. They would march thirty miles on a Friday then head out to a dance in the evening. Robert said 'it was the making of me. I was quite a hefty bloke in those days'.

By the time the battalion reached the Ardennes Robert was the coldest he had ever been

For three years the battalion guarded installations, trained for mountain warfare at various places in England and Northern Ireland, and acted as anti-invasion troops. The battalion then sailed for Normandy



on D-Day + 1. As a Corporal, Robert and his men moved up through damaged villages and patrolled first at Granville-sur-Odon near Hill 112. At Hill 112 they dug in, in slit trenches, but were troubled by mortar and shellfire, flies, and mosquitos. Heavy casualties followed before the battalion liberated Antwerp. They had to cease their planned involvement in Operation Market Garden and attacked 's-Hertogenbosch in northern Holland. By the time the battalion reached the Ardennes, where Robert was the coldest he had ever been, he was a Sergeant, with a platoon of men in his care. From clearing the Reichswald Forest, Robert then took part in the Rhine crossing, in a Buffalo (Landing Vehicle Tracked). At Winterswijk he was travelling in a Kangaroo, which was a converted Sherman tank, in a line of vehicles which came under fire, killing and wounding many men. As Robert dived out of his tank it was hit and he had a nose bleed which lasted two days. Robert had his first leave for twelve months after the battalion reached Hamburg, then at the end of the war he volunteered to teach art as part of the Army Educational Corps which he really enjoyed.

After Robert was demobbed in 1946 he went back to hairdressing, before becoming an instructor for a driving school then latterly a driving examiner. Until recently he painted regularly and revisited France every year for commemoration events.

David Evans

David was born in December 1918 in Glamorganshire. His father worked in a mine as a shot putter, placing dynamite into the coal face, until his eyesight failed. David had six brothers and a sister, and attended the local school in Hengoed. He left at the age of fourteen and went down the mine; there was no training in those days and David was involved in three accidents, the third one was a roof fall and David ended up in the Miners' Hospital in Caerphilly.

He decided to join the Army and in 1936 enlisted into the 1st Royal Dragoons, which was a mounted cavalry regiment then and David did drill, 'over the top of the horses' heads'. He had been brought up near a farm and was familiar with horses and became used to the discipline and high standards of cleaning the tack. As war loomed, the cavalry regiments were equipped with armoured vehicles and he learnt to drive tanks and Bren Gun Carriers.

David was stationed at Shorncliffe Camp when war was declared. His regiment was posted to India but David was in hospital with tonsillitis at the time so he went to the 13th/18th Royal Hussars as a tank driver. The light tanks they were issued with were no match for the German tanks. The regiment formed part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France during the Phoney War over the winter of 1939-1940. The troops were entertained during this period by singers like Vera Lynn and would have egg and chips in the estaminets, like the soldiers of the First World War (WW1).

David did drill, 'over the top of the horses' heads'

The Germans turned their attention to France and the Low Countries in May 1940, and David found himself in action as the BEF was forced back from the improvised defensive line in Belgium. Each village the British troops pulled back to was bombed and shelled. David was ordered to drive back to one of the villages to pick up stragglers, he shouted to one lad to jump on the front of the carrier, and was pulling him up when the soldier sighed and was dead, shot by a sniper. If he hadn't been shielded by his comrade, David would have been killed.



It deeply affected him. Making his way back to Dunkirk, he had to disable his vehicle and abandon it in the water, completing his journey to the harbour on foot. After queuing with men of many other mixed units, David climbed down a ladder into the hold of a boat and was taken back to England.

David ended up in a camp in Epping Forest where he had a mishap in a football game and his leg was badly injured. He was hospitalised in Aldershot then posted to the Inns of Court Regiment when finally fit for duty, but had been medically downgraded, from A1 to B7. David finished his service at Lord Lonsdale's Castle in Cumberland where he was employed as a driver.

On discharge he made his way back to Folkestone, where he had met Violet, soon to be his wife, and joined the police force. He also became a Branch Secretary of the Dunkirk Veterans' Association and organised their outings.



Joy Storrs Fox

Joy Fox was born 19th April 1920 in London. Her father was a research chemist who developed a method of fog dispersal for the Air Ministry. She attended Blackheath High School and was a member of the school choir.

Joy felt that the war started for her in 1936 when she was with a German Jewish girl listening to Hitler giving a speech. She was aware of Kristallnacht and the Kindertransport and some Jewish girls were given places in her school.



In January 1938 she won a place at Girton College, Cambridge, to read English Literature. When war broke out in September, she remembers her mother's tears, as for her it was 'here we go again'. During her time at Cambridge she also undertook war work and qualified as an auxiliary nurse.

At the age of twenty-one Joy got her call-up papers and as soon as she had completed her degree she was sent to Middlesbrough for a medical and given an intelligence test. From there she went to Glencorse in Scotland and was allotted a Nissen hut and uniform for the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). Her time in the Girl Guides stood her in good stead. Tall, with a strong voice, she was made an Unpaid Acting Lance Corporal. Shortly afterwards Joy was awarded her promotion to Corporal and then trained new recruits in drill which she enjoyed. She had a very good friend, Jean and met her future husband, Michael, when he was on leave from India.

When she got a bad attack of tonsillitis, the army hospital gave Joy M&B, a new experimental drug which was an antibiotic. Recently she discovered that Winston Churchill had been given the drug about the same time!

Then the War Office Selection Board called Joy to Leeds where she undertook initiative tests and passed as an



officer. She did a three week course on military law and went on to Windsor for more training.

At the end of the training Joy was sent to Northern Ireland, to a gun site where there were three platoons of ATS, and then on to Belfast Lough as the only female officer in charge of about sixty Irish women. Most worked in catering and the store rooms, but a special team had charge of range taking and search lights. The gun site faced out to sea, so all instruments had to be adjusted according to the tide. She got on extremely well with the girls and accompanied them to a local American base for dances. There were lots of destroyers in the Lough to protect, and then one day they went and didn't come back. It was D-Day.

Joy was on a promotion course to Junior Commander at the end of the War but didn't take that up because she was going to be married. She was posted to Ripon and drilled her platoon for the Victory Parade. After the War Joy accompanied her husband to India where she remembers Independence Day and the death of Ghandi.

She has a daughter and son and four grandchildren. Joy now lives in a cottage on the Castle Howard Estate.

Basil Jewitt

Basil was born in Barkisland, Halifax, in 1921. His father had been in the Royal Flying Corps in WW1, and became a bus driver at Wetherby. Basil was the fourth of six children. The family moved to Walton in 1924 and Basil went to school at Thorp Arch, moving to Wetherby School when he was eleven. He began his working life as an errand boy at Boston Spa and then got a job working at a brewery in Tadcaster.

At the age of eighteen he volunteered for the RAF expecting to be called up straight away but it was six months before his papers arrived with instructions to report to Blackpool for basic training. The RAF recruits marched up and down the promenade, swam every week and did PE in the ballroom. He was trained as a wireless operator, gradually learning Morse code. Basil was then posted to Compton Bassett, Wiltshire, where he learnt more of the technical aspects of radio, while increasing his Morse speed to eighteen words a minute, in between much physical exercise. Basil was posted to Driffield as a radio operator for three months and was then granted embarkation leave before sailing for Malta in 1941.

Basil travelled to Swansea, via Wilmslow where the draft picked up tropical kit. They boarded the *Dunedin Star* which took them to join a convoy assembling in the Clyde. Escorted by several warships, the convoy left the UK on 16th September 1941 for an unknown destination. At Gibraltar the convoy was joined by some



**Basil Jewitt
right 1943**

large warships and an aircraft carrier. Two days out of Malta the convoy was attacked and a merchant ship was badly hit by Italian bombers, but the crew was saved, however one of the crew on the *Dunedin Star* was killed by shrapnel.

On reaching Malta, Basil was sent to the naval air station, Hal Far, where his first job of the day was to check and charge the aircraft batteries for the Swordfish, Albacores and Hurricanes, which were in action nearly every day while the Italians carried out high level attacks. Basil got back to Morse code in Malta for a while but lightning struck an aerial and destroyed all the wireless sets. All the messages had to be passed by teleprinter and telephone because the wireless sets couldn't be replaced. Fortunately the landlines never got destroyed. The raids and the rationing were very bad for all on Malta until the invasion of Sicily in 1943, and Basil lost two stone in weight during this period. He had a narrow escape during one raid on the airfield when he opted to stay behind a wall rather than heading for the shelter. Sadly most of those in the shelter were killed by a direct hit.

Returning to the UK Basil served six months in a wireless room in Norway, before being demobbed. He later joined the George Cross Island Association and returned to the island for the 50th anniversary where he was awarded a commemorative medal. Basil and his wife Enid had three children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

John Jeffries

John was born in Warrington in March 1922, but was orphaned from the age of two. He was placed in a convent, Greenfield House, near Wigan, which was 'like a prison'. He was sent to an all boys school, St Vincent's School, in Preston and split up from his sister. The dormitory accommodation was spartan and discipline was severe but he excelled at sport and athletics. On leaving school, the nuns found John a job as an errand boy in Warrington, which he disliked.

When war was declared John's call up was deferred as he was studying at college for a City and Guilds qualification. He became a fire warden at seventeen and was called up in 1942 into the Royal Signals and posted to Prestatyn for six weeks' basic training, where physical training was held on the foreshore, in thin T-shirt and shorts. He was also trained in electronics and Morse code, qualifying as a radio operator.



John was posted to North Africa, sending messages from Alexandria, Cairo, Tripoli and Beirut, which he found boring so he volunteered for the Paratroops and ended up in a camp at Kibrit (formerly Kabrit) for some basic parachute training, which John loved. To gain their wings the volunteers had to do a number of jumps

on different terrain. After qualifying, he wore the Royal Signals cap badge on his red beret and soon afterwards his unit embarked for Italy. He was then sent back to the UK to join 4th Parachute Brigade.

They were there for five days with no food and little water, under mortar fire

On 18th September 1944, John took part in the Arnhem operation as a brigade radio operator, carrying a big 68 Set when he jumped, under enemy fire, onto Ginkel Heath. He was wounded on the way down and then twisted his ankle when he landed on his radio. Unable to



move and concerned about the proximity of the burning trees at the edge of the Drop Zone, he was picked up by two medics in a Jeep, after a Dutch girl had asked politely if she could have his parachute! Unable to go to the local hospital, which was in German hands, they were directed to what had been General Model's house, Tafelberg, where a temporary hospital had been set up and he received basic medical aid. John then set fire to the radio codes he was carrying and passed his ammunition to a glider pilot to resupply the defenders.

They were there for five days with no food and little water, under mortar fire. The hospital staff arranged for the wounded to be sent to a prison camp by cattle truck. After a long and miserable journey John ended up in Stalag XIB at Fallingbostal, where he was taken to the camp hospital. Here the prisoners had very little food and were afflicted by lice. He managed to escape for four days but was picked up. Later he was transferred to Stalag IIA near Berlin, where he was eventually liberated by the Americans. After recuperating, John elected to stay in the Army and for a while was a dispatch rider in Germany.

After leaving the Army John worked for Warrington Council but applied for a civilian post at RAF Burtonwood where he met his wife. They worked together in approved schools before setting up a family business, helped by their children, Lynne and Paul.

Joe Weaver

Joe was born in July 1922 at Silkworth, County Durham. As a boy, he remembers his mother sending him to the soup kitchen during the General Strike of 1926 and the pit head baths opening in 1936, where the boys were allowed to bathe for a penny on Friday night when the pit was closed.

He went to St Leonard's RC School and at fourteen he left school and went to join his father and three brothers at the mine. Two of Joe's brothers worked down the pit but Joe's father got a position for him on the surface, sorting the coal from the slag.

Joe remembers the radio broadcast of war being declared in 1939. He was seventeen at the time and joined the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV – nicknamed 'Look, Duck and Vanish'). They had no weapons to start with, but eventually got American rifles and five rounds of ammunition. They patrolled the sea front at night, four hours on duty, four hours off.

Joe decided to join the Army and heard that they were recruiting at Leamington Spa where tank parts were being produced. On arrival he was told that he had, 'come down here to beat the call up' and he said, 'no, I've come down here to GET called up'. He went to Arborfield for basic training and, after a month, was sent to train on 3.7 and 4.5 inch anti-aircraft guns. After this training he was posted to the Oaklea Anti-Aircraft



Gun Battery at Coventry. In 1941, Coventry was heavily attacked and they fired eight hundred rounds in one night. There was a crew of loader, fuse setter ammunition carriers and elevator with Joe sitting in the traverser's seat. Coventry was blasted that night, 'it was terrible, you've no idea how flattened it was'.

Joe then moved onto the 4.7 inch AA guns on the west coast of Scotland for a while, but was selected for mobile operations as he was good at figures. Equipped with 3.7 inch guns again, his new unit (158 Battery) started preparations for the D-Day landings at Whitby, running up and down the ninety-nine steps to the Abbey even in ice and snow. By this time, Joe had been promoted to Bombardier, No 1 on the gun.

'It was terrible, you've no idea how flattened it was'

Landing in Normandy on D-Day + 3, behind the Canadians at Juno Beach, Joe followed the Infantry through the Falaise Gap, into Belgium. At Knokke-Heist he suffered a leg injury from shrapnel and was sent to hospital. After convalescence he was posted to 159 Battery in Italy, where they had no record of him because he had been sent there by mistake, but they made him welcome.

Joe ended the War in Milan in 1945, and some local ladies made him a silk wedding dress to take home for his wedding to Kathleen in 1946. He wore his demob suit.

After the War, Joe worked as a semi-skilled engineer making safety valves for the petro-chemical industry in Batley. He and Kathleen were keen dancers and he enjoyed playing snooker. He has one daughter and two granddaughters.



Eddie Trobridge

'Eddie the Airman' was born July 1922 in Leeds, and had one brother and a sister. Having attended St Matthew's School then Dewsbury Road School, Eddie left at fourteen and started an apprenticeship at Roland Winns, Leeds, a Vauxhall Bedford dealership, where he trained as a motor mechanic. He had already worked previously – running errands for neighbours and having a paper round.



Before war broke out, but aware that war was imminent, Eddie joined the Local Defence Volunteers and had a greatcoat, side cap, and rifle, but no bullets. The volunteers would cover all the road junctions and attack German parachutists in the event of an invasion. Eddie's attempt to join the RAF while underage was followed by his volunteering again

in January 1941. In April he was called to Padgate to collect his uniform, then he moved to Bournemouth for basic training. Here he was in civilian billets, which he didn't enjoy as the couple he was living with only fed him fruit salad and bread and margarine. Eddie was posted to No 5 Wing at No 6 School of Technical Training in Hedgesford. Having spent three months under canvas, Eddie's Wing finally moved to the main camp and he started his trade training, which covered carburettors, electrics, ignitions, and all elements of aircraft engines. He passed his trade test, and after a leave he reported back for a nine-week conversion course as a second-class fitter, engines, which meant extra pay of threepence a day on successful completion.

In January 1942 Eddie reported to North Cotes camp where he worked on the engines of Bristol Beaufort torpedo bombers. The role of 86 Squadron was to hunt submarines and pocket battleships. It was here that Eddie's life was endangered when he had a ride in a Lockheed Hudson with a pilot who was checking the compass by following a triangular course. After several circuits Eddie realised that the aeroplane was being

flown over a bombing range, and planes flying overhead were dropping dummy bombs as Eddie's pilot flew underneath! That same year Eddie was posted to RAF Skitten, Wick, where on one occasion he was proud to be tasked with warming up the engines on four planes which were leaving on a successful operation to Norway.

In December Eddie started an eventful journey to India and was sent to 307 Maintenance Unit in Peshawar in March 1943, where he stripped down engines on Fairey Gordon aircraft. He had two local men working with him, who taught him Punjabi in return for Eddie teaching them English. He was later transferred to Dum Dum near Calcutta to No 4 Civilian Maintenance Unit where he worked on Merlin engines, fitting crankshafts and bearings. His next role was as a despatch rider on a motorbike which he really enjoyed, then Eddie became a truck driver.

On returning to the UK, post war, Eddie was demobbed and returned to Leeds. He married Rona in 1951 and they ran a village grocery store before he went into the engineers' department at a hospital in York. He has a daughter and his hobbies are music and writing stories.



Douglas Petty

Doug was born 11th January 1923 in Shilden, County Durham. His father was a manager for the local authority and had served as an officer in the Northumberland Fusiliers during WW1. Doug had an identical twin brother and a sister. After leaving school, Doug spent five years as an apprentice mechanical engineer, servicing generators at gun emplacements along the length of the Yorkshire coast.



Doug volunteered for the RAF in 1943. His initial military training was in Torquay for three months, after which he moved to Cardiff for a flight engineer qualification. He trained on Rolls-Royce Merlin and Bristol radial engines in preparation for working in the role of flight engineer and second pilot with Canadian crews

operating out of RAF Leeming. On arrival at RAF Leeming the crews needed a flight engineer to fly four engined aircraft. Doug completed thirty-one successful operations with 429 Bison Squadron.

The Canadian crews were made up of a pilot, navigator, bomb aimer, radio operator and two gunners. As flight engineer, Doug had to be ready for anything – to fly the plane, sort out ammunition blockages and sometimes to drop bombs manually.

As flight engineer, Doug had to be ready for anything

The bomb aimer in Doug’s crew was particularly accurate, so they were put on mining operations. The crew carried out nine low-level missions dropping mines in the Baltic and Norwegian fjords to protect merchant shipping. The Germans tried to stop them by attacking them from underneath with their Junker JU88 upward firing cannons. On one raid, Doug’s plane was the only one of four to return to RAF Leeming.



Doug Petty, back row right

Doug completed twenty-seven of the operations in Halifax aircraft and four in Lancaster bombers. He much preferred the Halifax because there was more room to move about. He wore electrically heated flying gear which he had to keep unplugging as he moved about the aircraft during the operation. On longer flights to Dresden for example, Douglas had to keep calculating fuel consumption. The margins were tight and sometimes there would only be enough fuel left for fifteen minutes flying. On foggy nights the planes were sometimes diverted to Lincolnshire and would be guided in by flames to burn the fog off either side of the runway (FIDO).

The same crews always flew together and also lived together in the same house, regardless of rank. Encouraged by his mother, Doug took his Canadian crewmates back to the family home and then kept in touch with them once the War was over.

Doug met his wife, Betty, while doing his training in Cardiff and they got married in 1945. He was then posted to India for two years and most of that time was spent in Delhi. He took a troop of airmen to the Victory Parade at the end of the War and had to carry a loaded revolver in case they were attacked.

Once home, Douglas continued his career in engineering until he retired as chief mechanical engineer for the Forestry Commission at the age of sixty-two. He has one daughter and one granddaughter. He is still in demand to attend functions at RAF Leeming and has been awarded the Legion d’Honneur in recognition of his service.

Jack Raistrick

John Charles Raistrick, known as Jack, was born in Bradford on the 19th May 1923. His parents both worked in the mill, his mother as a cook. He describes his upbringing in Manningham with his older sister as poor but happy. He left school at fourteen and went to work as a cutter in the clothing trade.

Jack was called up when he was eighteen and spent the next four years in the Royal Navy. His initial training was on HMS *Ganges* where one of the initiations was to climb the ship's mast. He then joined the main base at Chatham Barracks and was drafted to the Destroyer HMS *Opportune* as a gun operator.

HMS *Opportune* took part in about twenty Russian convoys, travelling through treacherous seas in freezing conditions round Scapa Flow, Orkney; Iceland; Norway and up to Murmansk. At times everything would be covered in ice and they would be under constant threat from above and below. A shadowing enemy aircraft would pick out a convoy and circle round it out of range of the ship's guns to guide the bombing and torpedo attacks.

Leaving the ship was like having your best friend taken away from you

On the 26th December 1943, HMS *Opportune* assisted in the sinking of the German Battle Cruiser the *Scharnhorst*, a chase in the dark that lasted seven hours. HMS *Opportune's* torpedoes helped to sink the vessel off the North Cape, with only thirty-six survivors out of 1,968 men.

Jack was also involved in the Battle of the Atlantic, the North African invasion and the Normandy landings. In September 1943 HMS *Opportune* formed part of the escort for HMS *Renown* which was carrying the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.

The *Opportune* saved many seamen from sinking ships and famously assisted in rescuing survivors of the torpedoed SS *Henry Bacon* in February 1945. This ship had many Norwegian women and children on board including a 'bundle of rags' plucked from the sea, who turned out to be baby Sofie Pederson.



As well as being one of the crew of the forward four-inch gun, Jack was also a buoy jumper. This dangerous task involved being taken by boat to the buoy, tying a line to it from the ship, then being thrown another line so he could be hoisted back on board. He was given an extra tot of rum for this!

He enjoyed his time at sea despite the constant dangers. One time they depth charged a shoal of cod and had a good helping of fish and chips for tea. He trusted and admired Commander J.L. Barber who brought his bull terrier on board with him.

Jack was demobbed at Chatham Dockyards at the end of the War and said that leaving the ship was like having your best friend taken away from you. He has enjoyed reunions with the crew of HMS *Opportune* over the years but says that he played a small part in a big war.

He met his wife Margaret after the War at Bradford Ice Skating Rink. He returned to his trade of cloth cutting and moved to Harrogate where they raised their family. At retirement they both qualified as dance teachers. Jack has written articles and poems about his experiences during the War.

Sheila Hutchinson

Sheila was born in Wakefield in 1923, the only child of a banking family. She went to boarding school at eleven which she loved. Her parents wanted her to go to university, but when war broke out she saw an advert for girls with School Certificates to go into the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). She joined in July 1940, just before the Battle of Britain. She was only seventeen, although they were supposed to be eighteen!



She was sent to the Operations Centre in Newcastle, for 13 Group RAF in Fighter Command. Here they received information about enemy aircraft from the Observer Corps. This information was put on blocks, which were pushed into position on a large map. Up above the table there was a balcony with

controllers who were in touch with the fighter stations, so that they could be scrambled to intercept the bombers. She enjoyed her time in Newcastle and met her future husband there. Sheila went to the cinema and theatre a lot, as people in the forces were often given free seats. She lived in digs at first before moving to a 'waafery' where she made a good friend, Beryl. They had to report in at 10pm and were lucky to get one bath a week.

After two years the Newcastle station closed, so Sheila applied to Bomber Command. As a Corporal she'd been recording all aircraft flying over the area, such as civilian planes or the delivery of military planes. She also had to report all the hazards en route such as barrage balloons, it was a busy and responsible job. In Bomber Command Sheila went to RAF Burn near Selby for training. She was amazed to pass the exam and was sent to RAF Marston Moor, which was a conversion unit where bomber crews came to learn to fly new aircraft. Every time there was a bombing raid going over Germany they had to do all the work as if the crews were actually going, although they didn't go from that



station. This could be sad for Sheila because she knew many crews would be killed, but the War seemed to be worthwhile at the time.

She remembers D-Day, seeing the planes going over, the ships in the Humber and hearing the bombing in Hull. Sheila used to go home to Withernsea by train through Hull which gradually disintegrated due to the bombing. In Withernsea her father ran the Home Guard as a Lt Colonel and her mother drove the NAAFI van to all the army huts along the coast.

Sheila was in the WAAF for five years and became a Sergeant. She was badly paid, worked shifts and suffered from lack of sleep, which she said was the worst part. At the end of the War she threw away her uniform, 'I'd had five years of my life gone, I wasn't wasting any more'.

She married Angus in 1948 who was now a doctor. Sheila trained as a domestic science teacher and they moved to Thirsk. She has two daughters, a son, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Geoffrey Cooper

Geoffrey Thornton Cooper was born in Scarborough, on 31st January 1924. His father was a joiner and his mother was a housewife, and he had one brother and a sister. During WW1, his father served in the Royal Engineers in Salonika, but never spoke of his experiences. Geoff left school aged fourteen having been in the top class at school. He became a telegraph boy in June 1938 and stayed with the Post Office for forty-seven-and-a-half years.

Geoff was delivering telegrams at Seamer Road when war broke out, and he soon had to start fire watching at night, which he didn't like to do because it interrupted his sleep. Geoff was in the Air Training Corps (ATC) and attended a training camp for a week at Driffild. Having never flown before, he was taken up in a Wellington and thought 'by Jove, this is grand'. To ensure he got into the RAF, he went to the recruiting centre and volunteered. Geoff then went to RAF Padgate for a medical and was passed fit for flying duties, but because they were recruiting so many, he was sent home on deferred service for about a year. He was keen to get going, as all his friends had been called up.

'By Jove, this is grand'

After an initial period at 8 Initial Training Wing in Newquay, Cornwall, where there was plenty of drill, weapons training and fitness, Geoff then went to RAF Shellingford, Oxfordshire, where he had twelve hours flight training on Tiger Moths, which he loved, before being sent home on leave. Following his leave, Geoff was sent to Heaton Park, Manchester, under the care of the RAF Regiment, where he was 'creeping about in the wet grass in the wet weather' and taking part in parades. One day he saw a blackboard asking for volunteers, but it didn't say what for. Having volunteered, he spent ten weeks farming, sleeping in tents at a crossroads, opposite a pub where he got his meals.

In 1944 Geoff was posted overseas to America and Canada for further flight training. After arriving in New York everyone got on a train and went to Monckton in New Brunswick and from there to Falcon Field, Arizona, taking the best part of a week to arrive. For



Thanksgiving Day Geoff was part of a group of three to be entertained by a civilian couple, Mr and Mrs Hellworth, who gave them an enormous turkey and pumpkin pie. There were also weekend passes to Phoenix and Geoff went riding.

After returning to England Geoff went on a course to Yatesbury in Wiltshire, for radar. Latterly he worked in Movements Control, guiding groups or individuals to trains that had been allocated to them.

Geoff was demobbed in 1948 and was in no great hurry to return to the Post Office, so he signed on for another year. Then sadly his father died so he had to go home and look after his mother. Geoff remained at the Post Office and worked his way up to a post office executive B before retirement.

Geoff and Audrey have two daughters and a son, four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Audrey Cooper

Audrey was born on 13th March 1924 in Weaverthorpe, North Yorkshire. Her father was a ticket collector for United Buses and she had three brothers, Norman, Derrick and Clive. After a row with her twin brother, Audrey went to the recruiting office on impulse, and came home one lunchtime to tell her mother that she'd joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and was leaving home the following Monday. She was eighteen.

Audrey loved her WAAF uniform, although you were supposed to wear woolly stockings and instead Audrey bought some posh ones. She was initially sent to RAF Blyton near Gainsborough with her friend and at first they were stationed together. This was where she met her husband Geoff. Someone told him that there was a girl in camp who was from Scarborough whom he should see. She was always happy there, it was a great life and according to Audrey it was better than being at home during the War. She was then posted to RAF Lindholme, near Doncaster. Audrey was the Corporal



in charge of Central Registry which was where all the camp mail came in. She had to ensure it was distributed to the different departments. She was in charge of eight staff and she had one man who said 'I'm not working with a bloody WAAF' so they moved him. She liked her work very much and was in the RAF for four-and-a-half years.

It was a great life

After the War, Audrey went back to work in the fruit shop in Scarborough as a window dresser. She loved the job. She married her husband Geoff on 17th September 1949, then her children Pamela, Barbara and David came along, after which she didn't work for a long time and was quite happy at home. On returning to work, she worked at her brother Clive's fruit shop and then moved onto the Post Office. Audrey always enjoyed gardening and craft making, she was so happy in the garden that she would forget what time it was! In 2019 Audrey and Geoff celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.



Ken Smith

Ken, nicknamed 'Smudger', was born in Leeds on the 25th February 1925 above his parents' chemist shop. At the beginning of the War the family moved to Kent. From the cliff tops he witnessed Stuka planes bombing the ships and if one was shot down nearby, he would try and get souvenirs. He left school at fourteen and was called up when he was eighteen.



He was sent to Mark Eaton Park Camp, Derby, where he was placed in the Infantry. He then went to Colchester into The Royal Sussex Regiment and did a course on Infantry signalling. He also trained with an armoured division in Scotland and Northumberland preparing for the Normandy landings.

For D-Day Ken crossed on a flat bottomed boat in a twelve-foot swell. The rough sea meant he was unable to manage his breakfast before the landing. He described Gold Beach as hell on earth, brushing against what he thought were logs in the water, but were in fact bodies. A fellow signaller lay dead in the sand, later Ken had to return and take the set off his back and use it.

The true heroes of the War are the young men who never came back

At the battle for Hill 112 they had to march through the cornfields with bayonets. Men were falling in lines because either side of the track were German machine gunners, and the casualty rate was getting on for 80%. Food was scarce, they were on edge all the time, and sleeping on their feet. Ken didn't know that he was displaying symptoms of shell shock and he went on for another month before he was wounded. He had gone through Normandy, Belgium and onto Holland and transferred to the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. It was in Groesbeek on the 24th October that he received shrapnel wounds and was flown back home. He was injured when he was climbing out of a slit trench and German tanks bombarded the trenches with high

explosive shells. Ken said this was his best day because he knew he would survive. When he was on a stretcher someone shouted, 'you lucky so and so Smudger'. He described finding six men who had been playing cards in slit trenches, sitting with the cards in their hands, not a mark on them but dead from the blast.

When he was fit again for active service, he was sent out with the 1st Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry to Palestine where he was stationed for two years. He doesn't really remember the end of the War because he was at Clacton training for the invasion of Japan. He finally came home two years after the War ended. Ken was demobbed in York and called in at the first church that he passed. He took an oath that he would never again handle a weapon, not even a toy gun. He said the true heroes of the War are the young men who never came back. As a mark of respect Ken has returned to Normandy and visited the cemeteries many times.

Ken 'Smudger' Smith is one of five veterans whose memoirs have been used in an acclaimed stage play named 'Bomb Happy'.

After his service Ken worked in the insurance industry. He has one son and Ken met his wife Gloria, who has three children, about forty years ago.



Charles Beecher

Charles was born in Wakefield on 11th May 1925. His father had served in the Army towards the end of WW1 and had since worked at the municipal filtration plant. His mother had left her native Cambridge to find work in Yorkshire. Charles had an older brother, born in 1923, who served in Signals in the Second World War.

Charles left school at fourteen and started work in the office at a textile mill. He remembered the outbreak of war very clearly and his father's view that Dunkirk would mean surrender to Germany.

Charles joined the ATC 127 City of Wakefield Squadron at sixteen. He studied the theory of flight, aircraft construction, wireless, Morse code, astronomy and navigation. Charles' squadron was attached to 51 RAF Bomber Squadron in 1941-2 and regular visits to the base provided the opportunity to take part in test flights of the Vickers Wellington Bomber. The planes were noisy, uncomfortable and hazardous, and on one occasion a cadet lurched into an escape hatch and almost fell out of the aircraft.

Charles joined the RAF at eighteen, but due to a problem with his eyesight he was not able to fly



and became a wireless mechanic instead. The training course was in London but Doodlebugs started to land on the capital, so after nine months in No 8 Radio School, Charles was posted to RAF Cranwell. Attached to 51 then 578 Bomber Squadrons, wireless mechanics like Charles worked in groups of three, they cycled out to the aircraft and firstly checked

any faults that had been reported. One essential piece of equipment was the accumulator trolley, for testing the aircraft's electrics, which had to be hauled across the airfield to be plugged into the aircraft. There was also a small box unit they used for checking that the voice transmission system between aircraft and control tower was working. It was often a very cold job and the mechanics were frozen while working on the aircraft.

Charles had a short posting to RAF Snaith and then on to RAF Burn near Selby, where he started work on Halifax bombers. The radios were robust, seated in rubber so that they could withstand the landings. Although specifically trained to service Marconi equipment he had sufficient knowledge to also service other makes.

In December 1944 Charles was sent to the personnel dispersal centre in Blackpool. He left by ship from Glasgow, heading for Gibraltar and then Egypt. He was in Cairo when VE Day was announced. Charles was posted to East Africa Command and moved around different bases including Nairobi, Mombasa and Mauritius for the next two-and-a-half years.

Charles met his wife, Amy, through the Women's Junior Air Corps. During the War, Amy worked for the Land Army, and they married in 1948, a year after Charles returned from East Africa. They had one daughter, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Charles went back to the textile mill when he was demobbed and continued to work in various management positions until he was seventy-nine.



Arthur Goldsack

Arthur was born in Sandwich, Kent, on 11th December 1925, and attended primary school there. He did not wish to go to the local grammar school as he didn't want to wear a straw boater, and he left school aged fourteen, just before the beginning of WW2.

Arthur saw numerous dog fights between British and German planes and, on one occasion, witnessed a collision between a Spitfire and a Messerschmitt Bf 109. The German pilot managed to bale out but the British pilot was killed, which he found upsetting. Arthur picked up bits of the aircraft. He also saw many bomber formations heading for London. There were many aircraft crashes nearby and a few bombs fell in the locality. At this time he was working for a family friend who ran a radio shop and helped to deliver batteries in the firm's van, including to an army camp. On one occasion Arthur spilled battery acid on his clothes but suffered no injury. He was a member of the Air Training Corps and was excellent at aircraft recognition, instructing his fellow cadets in the subject.

'It was always going to be the RAF for me'

In December 1943, aged eighteen, Arthur was called up and he volunteered for the RAF, saying 'it was always going to be the RAF for me'. He reported to Regent's Park, London, where he saw much bomb damage and had difficulty moving round the Underground due to the number of people sheltering on the platforms. The recruits were equipped with uniforms and did a lot of drill – and had to become very good at it.

On passing out they moved from London to Tooting, where they learnt to fly in Tiger Moths. It was from here that Alfred's bicycle was stolen. Shortly afterwards, Alfred embarked on the SS *Vollendam* (which he nicknamed the 'Vollendam and Blast It'), suffering a rough crossing. Landing in Nova Scotia, they were warmly welcomed by the Canadian Red Cross. As Aircraftsman Class 2 'Plonk' he continued with flying training; a 'fantastic feeling'. On one occasion the instructor, seated behind him, told Arthur to, 'land in



a field, beyond that tree', so he banked round, nearly hit the tree, and landed. The instructor remarked, 'that was close!' The training was discontinued when the Japanese capitulated. Although Arthur was disappointed, because he wanted to gain his 'wings', he was glad that the War had finished as he, 'didn't want to fight the buggers'. He returned to England on a more luxurious ship and was posted to a Station Post Office, before being demobbed with a nice demob suit and a trilby hat.

He met his wife-to-be, Kathleen, through a mutual friend after a shopping trip in Manchester, when they all had tea together. Although Arthur hadn't been much of a dancer in the Air Force, he and his wife won a bronze medal in a dancing competition. They lived in Bentham, where Arthur worked for a firm that sold accumulators for radios, and had a son and a daughter, and now grandchildren. He would have liked to stay in the RAF, he thoroughly enjoyed flying, but took up many hobbies, including constructing model planes, painting, music and drawing.

Norman Appleton

Norman Appleton was born on 27th January 1926 in Middlesbrough. His father was a hairdresser and his mother a housewife and he had one brother. His father served in the Green Howards during WW1, and volunteered for the RAF at the outbreak of WW2 where he continued hairdressing.

After war was declared, Norman soon experienced the devastation of aerial bombing as the first bombs of the war were dropped just two miles away. Norman joined the ATC, 1442 Squadron Middlesbrough, and started learning aircraft recognition. His first flight was at RAF Driffield in July 1942 where he flew in a Fairey Battle.

Norman volunteered for the RAF when he was seventeen-and-a-half. After passing medical and aptitude tests he was called to Aircrew Reception in Scarborough where he met his wife, Joyce. Although Norman signed up for the pilot/bomber/navigator scheme, pilot training was stopped as the Second Front was approaching, so he re-mustered as an air gunner. He chose this over signalling so that he could see out of the plane!

Within three weeks Norman was on his way to Rhodesia. His job on board the ship was to man the 40mm Oerlikon twin-barrelled cannon. He was in a team of four and they worked four-hour shifts. After arriving in Capetown in 1944, Norman saw a flaming meteor while on guard duty, and produced a painting of it. Following initial training in Bulawayo, Norman was posted to Gunnery School at RAF Moffat in Gwelo. He flew in Anson Mark T1s and the Fairey Battles towed drogues for the gunners to shoot at. They fired from a Bristol turret using a Browning 303. Besides the training Norman recalled a plague of locusts, his first taste of maize and fried banana.

Norman passed out as an air gunner and was posted to the

Middle East. He arrived in Cairo in December 1944 and was posted to RAF Shandur Canal Zone, to train with the South African Airforce with a task of taking supplies to Yugoslavia. The teams were crewed up on the new very fast American B26 Marauders. Norman's training finished just as the War ended. He was put on ground duties for a year. During that time, Norman joined the RAF Ismailia concert party and toured the Middle East. In Jerusalem, he signed up for a further three years, but was posted back to the UK and RAF Waddington. His flying duties continued with five-hour trips to the continent in Lancasters. These aeroplanes were notoriously cold, and the crew wore electric suits to stay warm. Norman also flew in Lincolns, which were warmer and had space for backpack parachutes in case of emergency. After a series of fatal accidents occurred in Lincolns, Norman left the RAF in 1949.

Norman spent the rest of his career in local government. He and his wife have two children, five grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. While in the concert party after the War, Norman learned to play the trumpet and clarinet, he also loves to play the jazz piano and to paint.



Ron Herrington

Ron Herrington was born 10th October 1926 in Hackforth near Catterick. The family then moved to Tunstall and he attended Catterick School until the age of fourteen. He went to work in the garage of Catterick village gravel pit, as an apprentice mechanic for twelve shillings and sixpence for a forty-eight hour week.

At seventeen, Ron volunteered for the Royal Navy. He had to report to Plymouth and was sent to HMS *Raleigh* to complete three months' basic training. 'That took a bit of doing did that, believe me!' At HMS *Raleigh* he did seamanship training, knots and splices, boat handling, parade ground training, and gas mask training, which all took place on land. After this Ron was transferred from Devonport Division to Portsmouth Division and was now a 'Pompey sailor!'

Ron joined a group at Stokes Bay, preparing for the advance into France for D-Day, where he was working on loading and unloading landing craft. He was then posted to Gosport, where he received his papers to join HMS *Berwick* at Scapa Flow, which was a heavy cruiser carrying eight, eight-inch guns. Ron was on X turret on one of the guns down in the bottom of the ship and as an ordinary seaman he scrubbed the decks, painted and took part in gun drills.

'My service made a man of me, you were made to think and do things for yourself. It made you more independent and was a good grounding for life'

He used to escort convoys to Murmansk which was often a grim task with freezing conditions and mountainous seas. During this time Ron knew they were delivering food and supplies. The escorts went between the convoys and the coast, because the German battleship *Tirpitz* was there and they patrolled the coast to keep the *Tirpitz* in while the convoy went past. Murmansk is about ninety miles inland from the sea and it was a revelation. The people had strict rationing and in the town Ron saw what looked like old



fashioned tar boilers, in fact they were full of soup and people were queuing up to get some. On one occasion up north, they got a 'ping' so some depth charges were dropped and they saw something coming up, it was a huge whale. After VE Day Ron's ship sailed back to Portsmouth, having hosted children's parties in Trondheim and Bergen in Norway.

Ron was posted to HMS *Golden Hind* in Sydney. He carried out a staff job for a dental surgeon, which was followed by a return to England to join an ex-German destroyer, the Z38. Tied up alongside was the Z39 with a German crew on, waiting to be repatriated. Ron was a gangway quartermaster on board for quite a while and on one occasion he was privileged to pipe Prince Phillip aboard.

After demobilisation Ron returned home and went back to where he used to work. He had to go back on apprentice pay so had very little money for two years.

He left for the REME workshops at Catterick Garrison and after a time Ron and his wife Doreen emigrated to Australia where they lived happily. Ron feels that 'my service made a man of me, you were made to think and do things for yourself. It made you more independent and was a good grounding for life'.

Ethel (Ena) Bullement

Ena was born in 1926 in Darlington, she had seven siblings and her father was a design engineer in a foundry. She attended the Cockerton village school before moving to Blackpool, aged nine, to spend time with her grandmother. Ena enjoyed living at the seaside, and attended Roseacre School at Blackpool's South Shore. When war broke out, she carried her gas mask to and from school and would see the RAF recruits marching up and down.

In 1944, aged seventeen, Ena decided to volunteer for the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and she went for an interview in Middlesbrough. She told the board that Signals would be her preferred role, as her brother, who had served in the Royal Navy and had been killed at Narvik, had been in Signals. Ena was medically graded as 2, Home Service only.

Winston Churchill was a frequent visitor. He was always very polite and would doff his hat to the ladies

Following basic training, Ena qualified in signals codes and signed the Official Secrets Act, which she was aware of all her life. Then she was posted to RAF Middleton St George (known locally as Goosepool) a Bomber Command station near Darlington, home to a number of Canadian bomber squadrons. Here Ena was responsible for the signals traffic for the Operations Room. The Signals Section had to sort the messages and use their discretion to grade the different priorities;

each signal was timed and if anything went wrong the operators were accountable. Part of her duties took her into the control tower where she would watch the bombers return to base. Being a signaller meant that she would be aware of any that were missing. She was able to see the crews get out and the ambulances arrive. Her sister was an ambulance driver at the same base, and the sights she witnessed upset her a lot at first but she became hardened to it eventually.

Ena's next posting was to RAF Uxbridge, where she eventually worked in air traffic control. From the control tower she could see the many important visitors to Hillingdon House, the Signals HQ; Winston Churchill was a frequent visitor. He was always very polite and would doff his hat to the ladies. During her service Ena prided herself on being spick and span and was very particular about her uniform, paying to have her collars starched and pressed. She would also buy silk stockings in preference to the issued Lisle stockings, and enjoyed attending dances.

There were trips to London from time to time where they witnessed the devastation of the bombing. Ena preferred the peace and quiet of Uxbridge.

Ena was demobbed in 1947 and was particularly grateful for the sturdy shoes from her demob outfit, which proved excellent for gardening. She returned to the family home and got a job with the Police at Aycliffe as a teleprinter operator. Here she married Ted, a mechanic at United Buses in Darlington. After he died, she later married Andy, and moved to the south of England before returning to live in North Yorkshire. Ena has three sons, all from her first marriage.



Ena, seated third from right



Alf Skinner

Alf was born in a rented terraced house in 1926 in Horbury Bridge, Wakefield. He left school at fourteen and became a butcher's boy while also furthering his education, enrolling in a night school class in Dewsbury, and passing out at the top of the class each year. He became a branch manager of a butcher's shop at the age of sixteen.

Alf volunteered at the age of seventeen-and-a-half to ensure a place in the Navy, expecting to be called up at eighteen. To his surprise he was called up immediately, reporting to Leeds for registration. From Leeds he was posted to be fitted with his uniform with wide trousers and a collar before moving to Butlin's Holiday Camp at Morecambe for training, where he qualified as an ordinary seaman.

After passing out, a notice appeared on a board allocating the newly qualified sailors to their service stations on the Isle of Man, but Alf's name was not on this list. When he pointed this out, the petty officer told him to keep watching the board. He was eventually sent to Glasgow, where a girl was waiting for him with a car. He had told one of the interviewing officers that he



liked to operate on his own, 'just tell me what to do and I'll get on with it'.

He started training as a radar operator on a Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship. Radar was secret at the time and Alf had to sign the Official Secrets Act and pass a six-week course on the highly complicated equipment. Alf was then sent to Liverpool and embarked on a troopship, the *Reina del Pacifico* which had previously been a cruise liner. The radar cabin had been placed at the top of the ship alongside the funnels, with a small sleeping berth a bit lower down for the four operators, where they also ate. The operator sat on a swivel seat in the telephone-booth like cabin with a wheel to turn the radar wherever he wished to point it. Electrical transmissions would be sent out on a sweep and the indicators would show the return signal from an object. By manipulating the antenna it was possible to determine the size and movement of the object, which was then reported to the bridge. Alf found it very interesting work.

They sailed as part of a convoy, with four small escort vessels, to Colombo. It was a hectic journey, and there were a few frights as the U-Boats were active and one or two ships in the convoy were sunk during the outward voyage.

'Just tell me what to do and I'll get on with it'

After the War, Alf's ship picked up troops from various parts of the world and returned them to England, after which his unit was disbanded and he went back into general service. He spent his last period of service ashore in different places, including Glasgow, 'cleaning up the mess' once the War was over. Alf then returned to Horbury Bridge and back to his job as a butcher.

Alf married Christine and had a daughter, then was made manager of the Malton Co-op butchery department, which was very successful. Later he bought his own shop in the town, becoming President of the Rotary Club in Malton. Alf has three children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Tony Dilling



Tony was born in Deptford on 5th October 1929 and his family then moved to his grandmother's house in Peckham. Tony's father was a sheet metal worker and his mother was a cashier at Marks and Spencer. At the outbreak of war, two uncles, who were ABA boxers and had taught Tony to box from an early age, were called up to serve in the forces, while Tony's father had a reserved occupation working on Sunderland flying boats.

Tony was evacuated to Honiton, Devon, where he had a 'lovely time'. The head of the house was also in the forces and his wife and daughter welcomed two evacuees and looked after them very well, Tony still remembers the apple pies she baked. He attended the local school, just one mixed-age class, where the local boys were not very welcoming but soon learned to respect his boxing abilities. Unfortunately, after about eight months, Tony contracted impetigo, so his parents came down in their car and took him back to London, just as the bombing started. A near miss in the garden didn't wake Tony in the air-raid shelter.

The local children would hunt for shrapnel and watch the lorry mounted Bofors guns firing from the streets. Tony attended Central School but education was disrupted due to the raids and the use of schools as community shelters for bombed-out families. When his mother was promoted to manage the Gravesend Branch of M&S, Tony went to Gravesend County Grammar School. He enjoyed sport and joined the Air Training Corps. Leaving school at seventeen, Tony had an opportunity to go to Camberwell Art School, which he attended for a year, while learning to box at Bradfield Community Centre.

Tony was called up in November 1947 and chose the RAF as he wanted to fly. Graded A1 on his medical he was sent to RAF Padgate, Cheshire, for his basic training, however he wasn't able to fly as it was discovered Tony was colour blind. The recruits were split between a red hut and a blue hut. The red hut was under the control of an NCO who was a bully and chose the largest, loudest recruit to back him up. Tony wouldn't be bullied so was transferred to the blue hut. At the boxing match, Tony was matched with the bully's sidekick and knocked him out. He became the hero and a mentor for the less experienced recruits. He enjoyed the sports and joined the boxing, rugby and cross country teams.

Posted to RAF Henlow he continued with his sports, especially boxing, while working alongside a very good communications engineer. Tony completed his two years National Service then became a salesman in Peckham, before getting a job with Dolcis, where he was promoted, eventually moving to Harrogate as area manager for the north of England. Tony and Sylvia met through their shared love of dancing, and have two sons, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

John Wilkinson

John was born in Sheffield on 2nd March 1931. His father was a boot repairer and they lived at the back of the shop. John attended Pomona Street Primary School and during the Blitz he was evacuated to Edwinstowe to stay with a family for a year.

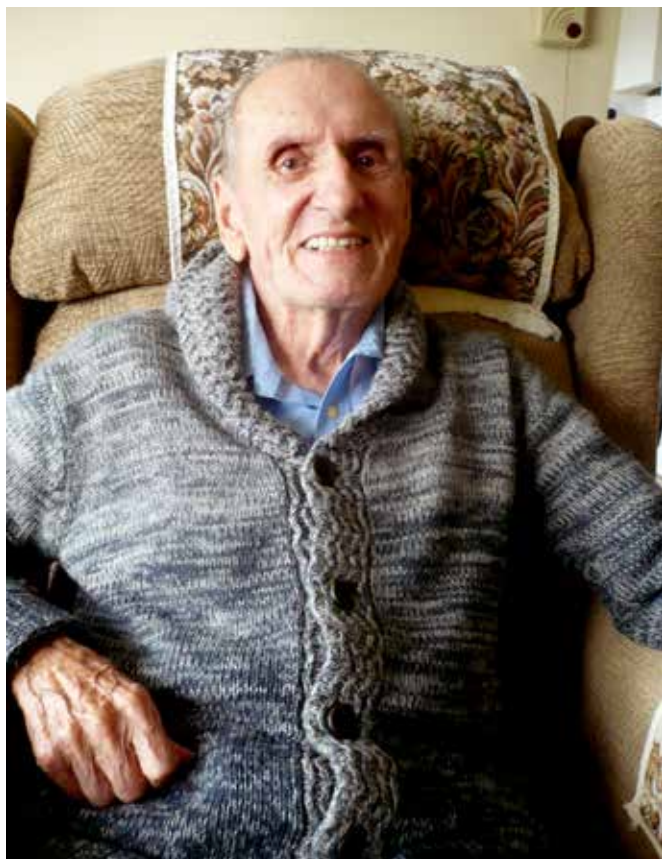
Their son did not get on with John and his time there was not a happy one. His parents visited once on a motorbike then took John home. Not long after that the Blitz started. The house was hit but not severely, although John received a scar from an incendiary bomb. On one occasion the children, including John, ran to Endcliffe Park where a German bomber had crashed and collected souvenirs. John left school at the age of fourteen at the end of the War and wanted to be a motor mechanic, but had to help his father in the cobbling trade. John stayed with his father due to his ill health, which necessitated a move to Tunstall where the air was better. He volunteered as a Bevin Boy at Treeton Colliery in order to be nearer to his father and continue to help out in the shop, until he was called up at the age of twenty-one and volunteered for the RAF for three years.



His first posting was to RAF Cardington for basic training where he was one of the oldest in the draft, before being sent to Kirkham, Blackpool, for weapons training. From there John was posted to RAF Kynesly, where the B29 Bombers were stationed, for more training on the electronic remote-control gun turrets; firstly the FH turret on the Lancaster Bombers before moving on to the B29 turrets, which led to an interest in electronics. He had already built his own radio.

Later, John moved from RAF Coningsby to RAF Marham where they were involved in more complicated servicing of the B29 gun turrets. On one occasion, John was trained up as an air gunner on the B29 to be the first line of defence if they were called into action. By now he had been promoted up the ranks from AC2 to SAC and was enjoying his work. John was then posted to Egypt, flying there in converted Lancasters, with a stop-over at Malta. They were based at Kasfareet, employed in armament maintenance but, as it wasn't an operational air base, there was little to do and mundane jobs were invented to keep them occupied. Here John went on tour with the Starlight Quintet Band as a roadie and had a short stint playing double bass.

After a year, he was sent back to UK for demobilisation and he went into the TV rentals and repair trade, moving on to become a TV engineer in Stockton until retirement. John married in 1959 and they had a son. His RAF days changed him and gave him a lifelong love of electronics, which is still one of his hobbies, along with the electronic organ which he taught himself to play.



John (Jack) Wilbor

Jack was born on 22nd September 1931 in Northallerton. His father was a WW1 veteran and worked at Cow and Gate. He went to Allertonshire School and left in 1945. Jack worked as an apprentice mechanic in a local garage, but decided to sign on for twelve years with the Royal Navy when he was due to be called up for National Service at the age of eighteen.

In April 1950, Jack set off from Newcastle to join HMS *Raleigh* in Cornwall for his basic naval training. He enjoyed the marching, the fitness and learning the military ways, and progressed to become a stoker/mechanic. He qualified as an engineer mechanic after taking the exams at HMS *Victory*, Hampshire, in 1951. Jack's first posting was to Simonstown, South Africa, on HMS *Actaeon*. His job involved monitoring the various gauges in the engine room under the supervision of a petty officer. He also worked in the boiler room where he would be watching the sprayers which sent oil into the boiler and heated up.

He saw the world and would do it all again

The *Actaeon* patrolled the southern African coast but Jack also spent a lot of time ashore, working in the dockyards and getting to know the locals, competing against them in sporting and rowing events. This was during the Apartheid era, however the sailors would often choose to ignore the restrictions.



Jack, front row second from right



In 1952, Jack did an auxiliary watchkeeper's course and was transferred to HMS *Warrior* in 1956, heading for Christmas Island via Hawaii. The following year, during Operation Grapple, the ship's company was to witness Britain's H-Bomb tests; they paraded on the flight deck, with special badges on their uniforms and they 'were told to sit down with our backs facing the bomb. It was an air explosion, then you felt yourself going forward and could feel the heat on your back. After that we were told to stand up and face the bomb.' They could see a cloud, like a big mushroom. No protective gear was issued, other than dark glasses, and there were no medical tests afterwards.

In 1957 Jack was promoted to leading stoker/mechanic, which led to a mechanical training course in 1958. That year he transferred to HMS *Albion*, travelling widely, including Gibraltar, Malta, Athens, Suez Canal, Panama Canal, Aden, Hong Kong, Karachi, Japan and Trincomalee, going ashore at each port.

In 1959 Jack married Rose and in 1962, despite inducements of promotion, he left the Navy when his time was up. In Gosport, he got a job with the Merchant Navy refuelling ships in the dock and Rose worked for a TV engineering firm. They eventually returned to the north of England, and Jack worked for the council and other jobs, becoming a car park attendant for twenty years after retirement.

Jack is concerned that no compensation has been paid by the government to the servicemen that took part in the nuclear bomb tests. Even so, Jack is proud of his Navy career, he says it made him grow up, he saw the world and would do it all again.

Jackie Young

Jackie was born in Wanstead, East London, in 1933 and is an only child. When she was a baby the family went to stay with her maternal grandmother and maiden aunt on the outskirts of York. As her father was in the Merchant Navy they saw him infrequently.

York was bombed in 1942 and this changed Jackie's life because her parents offered her the chance to go to the same boarding school as her friend. Soon afterwards, her father, Charles Wilfred Young, was killed when the *Empire Star*, the ship he was on as a passenger, was torpedoed as it headed for Buenos Aires. His role was to have been to speed up shipping as the Shore Captain. Jackie was only eight at the time and it affected her greatly. He is commemorated in Nunnington Church.

At school, she was taught by the Anglican Order of Sisters. Half the school, including Jackie, was evacuated to the Earl of Strathmore's shooting lodge in Middleton in Teesdale. When the War ended, she returned to Whitby to the middle school.

When asked about hobbies she said she liked looking after cows, causing not a little concern about lack of cows in the RAF!

At school the Bishop of Gambia came to do a talk and he told Jackie that she should be the matron of his first mud hut hospital! That made her decide to do nursing and she trained as an SRN for three years at York County Hospital.

Her first job was at Ampleforth College to nurse the Asian Flu, and this made a mark on her life because of the stability it gave her and the wonderful friends she made.

Jackie then decided to go into the forces and chose the RAF even though she had no particular connection there. She had an interview at the Air Ministry in London. When asked about hobbies she said she liked looking after cows, causing not a little concern about lack of cows in the RAF! She joined up, aged twenty-five, as an



Jackie, front row, second from right

officer on a short service commission of four years in December 1958, and was initially stationed at the RAF Hospital Uxbridge.

If there was a party at the mess, she went on night duty to avoid it because she was so shy! She also managed to get her leg medically treated so she wouldn't have to march at RAF Hawkinge, although Jackie now feels that as an officer she should have marched as a sign of her patriotism. At the hospital there were several matrons whom she admired, including Audrey Steinbach, who became a lifelong friend and her son's godmother.

After her first year, Jackie was called to the Air Ministry and asked if she would consider joining the *Devonshire*, a RAF troop ship and hospital ship. She went on two tours with the *Devonshire* in 1960. The first tour was through the Mediterranean with just two nursing sisters on board; herself and a senior. It was a very desirable posting. The second tour was to Bahrain and Mombasa. Once they were radioed by a Dutch ship about a sick seaman who was transferred to the *Devonshire* for an operation using a Neil Robertson stretcher.



Jackie loves the countryside and wanted to come back to Yorkshire to have a family. She got married on her terminal leave and has four children and five grandchildren.

Terry Ford

Terry was born in Homerton in London in 1933 and was brought up by his mother and grandparents. After war broke out, Terry's grandfather sacrificed his right to a pension from his signalman's job and moved the family to Trowbridge in Wiltshire, thinking it would be safer than living in the capital. Ironically a bomb fell locally while his former home in London was unscathed!

The family later returned to London before moving to Blackpool when Terry was about eleven. He went to a technical school there before leaving at the age of fifteen and volunteering for the Navy. For the first two years Terry was a sea cadet due to his age. He spent nine years altogether in the Navy, starting by doing basic training and ending up serving on a gun on a destroyer as well as being on the *Ark Royal*. It was not a time in Terry's life that brings back good memories – he found the regimentation of naval life restricting, he was not keen on taking orders, and was not happy at sea. His happiest memories are of cycling – he even had rollers fitted to his bike so that could cycle while on board ship. He also remembers a wonderful holiday with friends cycling from Rome to Naples while on leave. In the UK Terry would use his leave to cycle around Devon and Cornwall.

His naval training in knot tying came in handy when he developed an interest in macramé



Terry on the right



Terry had no qualifications when he left school, but a kindly senior officer in the Navy encouraged him to take O and A levels, so when he came out he could go to University. He studied mathematics at the University of Strathclyde, then worked at British Aerospace, before taking a postgraduate qualification in Physical Education which led him into teaching. Terry lectured in electrical engineering at West Ham College, was head of mathematics in a secondary school, and then taught mathematics to Gurkha soldiers in Catterick, who were trying for promotion. He also ran a small photography business when he left the Navy.

Not only was Terry a keen runner and cyclist, his naval training in knot tying came in handy when he developed an interest in macramé. Later in life he discovered a brother Bob whom he knew nothing about, and who lived in Australia. Terry travelled to Australia to meet him.

Terry has four children, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren and lives with wife Carole whom he met when both were taking postgraduate courses in Leeds.

Alec Hornsby

Alec was born in Guiseley, Leeds, in 1933 and spent his childhood in Gomersal. His father was an experimental engineer and worked on artificial harbours during WW2. Alec went to the grammar school in Heckmondwike and joined the School Combined Cadet Force, which he enjoyed, doing PE on the beach in Scarborough and learning how to fire rifles. At sixteen and wanting a career in agriculture, Alec left school and joined the British Boys for British Farms scheme. He worked at a farm in Great Hatfield, 'for a grand family' before starting an agricultural course at Askham Bryan College, near York.



Having had his National Service deferred for three years, due to his course, Alec was conscripted into the army in 1954 and reported to Imphal Barracks, York, where he started basic training in the West Yorkshire Regiment, gaining the prestigious Best Recruit trophy on passing out and being selected for NCO training. He was promoted to Corporal for the journey and led

the draft of the reinforcements, by sea, to the 1st Battalion, then stationed in Malaya. It was a rough crossing in the Bay of Biscay and the Red Sea. On arrival at Kuala Lumpur, via Singapore, Alec did four weeks' jungle training at Kampar and then carried out operations against the communist rebels in Malaya from various bases in the country, often resupplied by air and battling the difficult living conditions as well as the enemy. Serving in swampy areas meant living in wet clothing with no clean water, and leeches were a particular problem. On one patrol, one of the men from Leeds was shot, and despite a doctor landing by helicopter, he could not be saved. The patrol was sent on a short rest period to the coast. Alec got jungle sores in Malaya and ended up in hospital where he was given penicillin every four hours and streptomycin twice a day. Then on his last operation Alec's patrol was attacked by hornets and he was badly stung, recalling 'I was in a right state'. It took him three days to reach camp for treatment.



The battalion returned to the UK on HMT *Empire Fowey*, taking three weeks, after the ship got stuck in the Suez Canal, blocking it for some time. Alec's next posting with the battalion was to Omagh, Northern Ireland, as the Intelligence Officer's Corporal in HQ Company, moving to Ballykinler soon afterwards where they conducted Cold War exercises.

He regarded the men he served with as his family

Prior to leaving the army, Alec was ceremonial guard commander at Hollywood House for a week, and in Ballykinler was Orderly Sergeant in charge of setting up the ceremonial guard on one occasion, which he completed successfully. After discharge, he had a further five years' service with the TA and joined the Field Security unit at Leeds University.

Alec married Freda and worked on different farms before returning to Askham Bryan College as a teacher until retirement. Despite the difficult conditions in Malaya, Alec never regretted joining the army and says it made a man of him. He regarded the men he served with as his family. Sadly, Freda has passed away, however Alec has three daughters, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Alan Kirk

Alan was born in Bramley, Leeds, in 1937. His father worked in Pilkington's Glassworks in Leeds and his mother worked at Albion Street Co-op. His father was called up during WW2 as a private and later promoted to warrant officer in the RASC and served in the Orkney Islands, where Alan and his mother went to visit him in Stromness for 15 months. On their return to Leeds, Alan went to Armley Park Secondary School until the age of fifteen, then started work as an apprentice in the drawing office at Dunlop & Rankin Ltd, a structural steelwork engineering factory, while studying for ONC and HNC qualifications.



His National Service was deferred but he was called up at the age of nineteen and chose three years in the RAF rather than two years in the Army. He went for trade training to Middle Wallop, qualified as an air defence operator on radio and telecommunications and was posted to Gibraltar for almost two-and-a-half years at RAF New Camp. There were good leisure facilities, including swimming and RAF coach trips to Spanish towns along the coast.

Alan normally worked at the highest point of the rock on the radar, where he and his colleagues used planned position indicators to plot sorties for Gloster Meteors and Hawker Hunters. At other times, he would work inside the naval headquarters under the rock. Here he was involved in fighter plotting, usually looking for enemy aircraft which might be acting as friendly planes, using radio and Morse code to keep in contact with pilots and ground crews during large exercises.

At this time, Alan was a senior aircraftsman but there were no vacancies for promotion. He was able to get back home on leave on three occasions, once on a Shackleton aircraft and also on the cruiser HMS *Cumberland* which had been involved in the Battle of the River Plate in WW2. His third trip was a return flight



on a Vickers Viscount costing £37, expensive for the time when his spending money was just £1.70 a week.

When he returned to the UK, Alan was posted to RAF Leeming. Though he would have liked to stay in the RAF, his mother wanted him home so it was not to be. After discharge, he worked at St James's Hospital in Leeds for two years, followed by three years with Leeds City Architects. Later, he worked for the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority in Harrogate, where he spent over twenty-seven years as an architectural technician within the estates department, completing hospital building drawings, management control plans and liaised with engineering services.

He also joined the Harrogate RAF Association and carried their standard for thirty-four years, an enjoyable task which he had to eventually relinquish due to health issues.

He and his wife Mary adopted a baby girl at six weeks old, which was a great thrill. His daughter Susan now lives in Australia with her husband Stuart, and Alan's three granddaughters. Sadly, Mary died in 2018 not long after their golden wedding anniversary.

Alan maintains an interest in his hobbies; gardening, woodworking, crown green bowling and art lessons.

Keith Wadsworth

Keith was born in 1937 in Tadcaster where he attended Tadcaster Primary School and then Harrogate Technical College, where he did very well. He found that he was good with his hands and learnt joinery, bricklaying and plumbing. He left school at sixteen and obtained a job as a signal boy on the railways, working at Church Fenton South.

Keith was called up for National Service in the Army in February 1956 as a late entrant, because of his job on the railway. A letter arrived informing him that he had to report to Malvern where the reception at the camp was not a good one. The new recruits were put into an abandoned barracks with no heating until they managed to take some coke from nearby dumps. They were also forced to take cold showers in February. Understandably, Keith suffered from a chesty cold that stayed until July! From Malvern he moved to Aldershot where Keith became a driver in the Royal Engineers. He was taught how to drive Bedford lorries and passed his goods vehicle test.

Shortly afterwards, Keith's unit went to pick up forty tipper trucks and took them to Southampton Docks, from where they embarked on the *Charlton Star* for Christmas Island, which was an 'unknown quantity'. It took a month to get to Christmas Island, via the Panama Canal, Curacao and Honolulu. On Christmas Island there was a small harbour, a local village, coconut plantations for the manufacture of copra, an airfield and a camp. The job was to build an army camp, including a



cookhouse, roads and an airfield in support of Operation Grapple. The conditions were dreadful. Keith worked six days a week, for ten hours a day, and slept in tents which didn't keep out the rain during the rainy season. The rain lasted mercifully just two weeks a year, but required the issue of a bucket of tea and a bottle of rum to prevent pneumonia.

He did see an H-bomb on the airfield and, on one occasion, there was a 'bit of a panic on' when all the servicemen on the island were concentrated at the harbour so that the Navy could evacuate them in the event the V-bomber needed to do a crash landing.

The experience was life changing but [he] didn't take to the rules and regulations and the chain of command that went with army life



At the end of the year's tour of overseas duty, Keith returned to Liverpool on the *Empire Clyde*, received forty-nine days leave, during which he went potato picking, and was then posted to 28 Field Squadron at Ripon where he painted a lot of officers' houses to fill his time before discharge. Keith never thought of staying in the Army, he thought the experience was life changing but didn't take to the rules and regulations and the chain of command that went with army life.

On discharge Keith went back to the railway, then got a job with British Telecom as a telephone engineer for better pay. He took redundancy, which meant early retirement. He met his wife, Muriel, through a shared hobby of ballroom dancing and they have a son.

John Leadley

John was born on 6th October 1938 and grew up in a small cottage in Paradise Yard, Whitby. The house was one of three that John's Granny owned in the centre of town. He attended Cliff Street School at the top of the road from where he lived and this was followed by West Cliff Boys School, until leaving school at fifteen. Straight away, he started work at the local shipyard making wooden boats. He stayed there to finish his apprenticeship until he was called up for National Service aged twenty-one in 1960.

He received his medical in Middlesbrough and was put into the Green Howards. 'I thought I might not have to go as I had bad ears but they syringed them and classed me A1'. John didn't want to go as he'd just got married, but once he was in the Army he enjoyed it. He had to report to Richmond for his basic training. He can remember doing shooting on the ranges and lots of drill every morning. 'When you got out of bed you had to put your sheets and blankets into a square (Bed Block) and if it wasn't good enough, it got chucked out the window!'

Basic training lasted ten weeks, which culminated in a passing-out parade. 'We'd practised drill every day. The Band of Drums played Richmond Hill at the end and I felt two foot taller when I heard that'. John received the prize for the best shot on the small machine gun. Then followed a fortnight's leave, after which he was immediately posted to Iserlohn in West Germany.

He played football all the time and trained every day in the gym. John then passed his driving test, was given a vehicle and took petrol and oil on training exercises for larger wagons. He was based at the garages where they cleaned the wagons and looked forward to the



daily pork pies with brown sauce served in the NAAFI! Like everyone, John had to do guard duty, but if he was playing football at the weekend he was excused.

'We'd practised drill every day. The Band of Drums played Richmond Hill at the end and I felt two foot taller when I heard that'

John played football before he joined the Army and was quite good. He played for the first and second teams, but was then chosen for the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) team as centre forward. The team played the RAF, a Belgian team and took part in matches in Holland and Berlin. They also travelled to Paris to play at the Supreme Headquarters.

After his National Service John came straight home. 'My service changed me – you had to look after yourself, but they were all good lads'. He might have been tempted to stay in and take his family to Germany, but he decided to come home to Whitby. He used to go to reunions at Strensall, York, with his Dad (who was in the Green Howards in WW2) and he continued to play football.

John lost his wife eleven years ago. He has two daughters, a son, five grandchildren and one great-grandson.



John, second from left

Ken Hudson

Ken was born in Hull in 1938. During the War he lived with his mother. His older sister was evacuated and his father, who was a builder, was sent down south to work on airfields and defences. They had to move out of their house in 1940 when it was bomb damaged, but Ken was too young to remember it.

Ken attended Mersey Street School and had to practise going into shelters. At eleven he passed the scholarship and went to Hull Grammar School. After his O-levels he went to work at the City Treasurers' Department as a junior clerk in housing. Then at eighteen he was called up to do his National Service.

Ken passed his medical and chose to sign on for three years to join the RAF. A National Serviceman got four and sixpence a day while a three-year regular got nine shillings a day. He was sent to RAF Cardington, a reception centre, then to RAF Wilmslow where he did eight weeks' basic and intensive training including drill and how to dismantle and fire old wartime 303 Enfield rifles. There was peer pressure to get things right and to obey orders as well as from the drill NCOs! After a week's leave he was posted to RAF Hereford to train as a clerk accounts dealing with pay records.

'My university was three years in the forces'

After passing his course he was posted to Cyprus which was an active service appointment. He went first to RAF Innsworth for inoculations and tropical uniform, before taking his first ever flight and visit abroad, to Nicosia. Ken was based at Episkopi, an administrative garrison and HQ for the Army, Navy and Air Force for the Middle East.

Episkopi was quite a large sprawling camp, scrubby because there was no rain in the summer. They lived four to a tent that had paving stone bases and walls all round. They had their own locker and wardrobe, with a light and one socket. Ken worked in the pay department, preparing manual accounts for airmen's pay, which was paid on pay parade. He had to take his turn on guard duty and sometimes as armed escort for military vehicles leaving camp.



Ken, back row third from left



In 1957/8 certain areas of Cyprus were out of bounds to the servicemen and one time children shouted and threw stones at them. On a number of occasions water and gas lines were blown up.

Ken was determined to make the most of his service and tried to keep positive. Unless on guard duty most afternoons were free to play sports and visit the nearby beach. He and two friends also went on a holiday in Lebanon and he managed to return home twice during the three years. He quite enjoyed the climate but was ready to leave at the end of his service. He feels that it did him good, 'my university was three years in the forces'.

His job was kept open so he returned there after his service. He met his wife, Margaret, in Hull through their churches and married in 1967. He has two daughters, a son and five grandchildren.

Richard Bradford

Richard was born in Evesham, Worcestershire on 3rd May 1940 and was the youngest of three siblings. He grew up in Belfast as his father, who had served in the air force during WW1, worked there as an engineer with the BBC.

Richard attended primary school on Antrim Road and then went to the Royal Belfast Academical Institution grammar school (Inst), saying 'it was a big mistake going to Inst, but I went because I was rugby mad'. After finishing Sixth Form Richard went on to Queens University Belfast to read Engineering, but struggled because he hadn't got a full grasp of pure mathematics, and as a result he left after two years to find a job. Richard started work with the BBC's Overseas Service in London, editing and putting out radio programmes, which he enjoyed. However, on television the RAF was advertising for direct entry aircrew and the idea appealed to Richard. He spoke with Wing Commander Candy about the opportunity and was selected to be an Air Electronics Officer (AEO). This meant working on radar and communications systems in various aircraft.

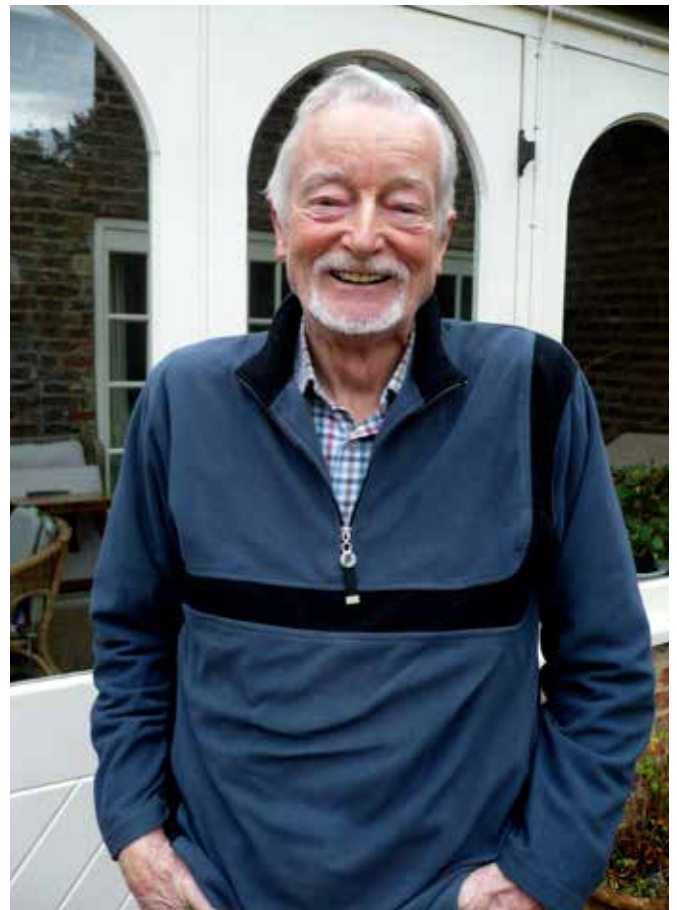
'I think I've had a good life. I've been very lucky'.

Richard completed his basic training at RAF Topcliffe and was then posted to RAF Kinloss working on Shackletons, which he really enjoyed as he was part of a close knit crew. 'We spent a lot of time up the Norwegian coast watching what the Russians were doing'. In those days, the patrols could last for up to fourteen hours. Richard was also involved in search and rescue missions, and at one time they were able to locate a missing ship. When working out of RAF Ballykelly in Northern Ireland, they dropped sonar buoys and carried out anti-submarine exercises around the north coast of Scotland.

Following a Vulcan conversion course, Richard was transferred to RAF Waddington, working in communications with an element of bomb aiming. He recalled that the Vulcan was a very different aircraft from the Shackleton, as it was designed to fly at high level and the crew wore space suits. He flew to America

and Canada quite often and the crew flew low over the Canadian lakes. Then the Vulcan was changed to a low level flying role and the crew used to carry out 'dummy' attacks on Malta, followed by a two hour attack exercise over the Libyan Desert which was rough for the crew as the aircraft 'was banging along in the heat'. The Vulcans were also the first line deterrent at that time, so the crews slept within running distance of their aeroplanes. Richard was then posted back to RAF Topcliffe, where he trained new sergeants to go onto the Nimrod using a simulator.

After eight years' service, Richard resigned his commission in 1973 and trained as a dentist, which he described as the best thing he ever did. His late wife Emma had twins already, then daughter Nancy was born. Richard, who also holds a Masters ticket for sailing, didn't retire from dentistry until he was seventy five, saying 'I think I've had a good life. I've been very lucky'.



Brian Fletcher

Brian was born in York in 1940, and at the age of three was in an air raid shelter at the bottom of the garden as bombs fell. At the age of four the family moved to Tockwith where he attended St George's RC School, where he excelled at sports and athletics. His father worked as a fireman on the railway.

On leaving school at about fifteen, Brian worked as a labourer on a farm for a while, which was relatively well paid, and he had a motorcycle that he sold when he went into the Army, which was precipitated by a row at home. He signed on at York with a mate from the village, whose father got him back out straight away. Brian thought he would still go to see what army life was like.

He joined the Royal Ordnance Corps and went to Blackbush for basic training in 1958. Although Brian didn't take to the discipline initially, he settled down and got the hang of it. His mother came down for his passing out parade, even though she had been against his joining up. He was then posted to a Base Ammunition Depot at Bramley, near Reading, where the facilities were not too bad, with Nissen hut accommodation. During his trade training he passed his driving test and became a crane operator. Brian was posted to Nigeria for about six months where he worked from four to eleven each morning. Brian was a crane driver during the morning, the afternoons were generally devoted to sport, and at night he often did duties guarding the camp or acting as duty driver.

Following Nigeria, Brian was due to be posted to Singapore for three years. However during a PE test he badly injured his ankle and was sent to a military hospital near Reading. Due to complications with the injury, he was on sick leave for eighteen months. When he returned to duty, he was medically downgraded which meant he could not serve abroad. He was posted to Marchington, near Uttoxeter, for five years. During this time Brian was doing driving duties and he also spent six months in the Regimental Police, a job he enjoyed. He returned to Bramley for his last three months' service before discharge in 1966. Having originally signed up for six years' service, Brian eventually completed nine.



After his army service Brian became a heavy crane driver, then a delivery driver and finally he bought an ice cream van, which he did really well with for the last twelve years of his working life. He has five children, nineteen grandchildren and eighteen-great grandchildren, and has a large collection of model lorries and trains.

Jim Paton

Jim was born in Idlerton, Wooler, in 1941. His father was a farm worker and the family moved to Berwick on Tweed and then Kelso, where he worked as a coalman, while his mother worked as a cook in a hotel. Jim was one of seven children and left Kelso High School at the age of fifteen.

Jim joined the Air Training Corps in 1953 and in 1957 he enlisted into the RAF, at the age of sixteen, in Edinburgh, with the aim of being a mechanic. He received a rail warrant for RAF Cosford for his medical and selection process. After four weeks at home, Jim went to RAF St Athan for three months' basic training. The trained recruits then went to their technical training squadrons where Jim learnt his trade as a vehicle mechanic and, as he excelled at sport, he was picked for the station rugby team in 1958. Jim was then posted to RAF Swinderby, Lincolnshire, and went to the mechanical transport services section where he settled into the routine. His work consisted of carrying out scheduled vehicle servicing on a wide range of vehicles. Wednesday afternoons were reserved for sport and the airmen would have to walk the eight miles back from Lincoln to have a night out.



In 1963 Jim was sent to 317 Squadron for a second posting at RAF Bruggen, Germany, where he was promoted to junior technician. He then took an exchange posting to Butzweilerhof. He played rugby

for the RAF Germany team against the French Air Force in 1964. Later that year he was posted to RAF Wyton, Huntingdon, where he married Irene and was promoted to Corporal. Jim enjoyed this posting; he did ten-pin bowling and got his coach driving licence, but was then sent to Singapore for a year, while Irene temporarily moved back to Scotland. Jim joined 389 Maintenance Unit, receiving vehicles arriving on landing craft for servicing and repainting. He spent six weeks at Kotabaru in Malaya, travelling with his vehicles on the landing craft, sleeping on deck on the voyage, to provide a temporary base for long range bomber

aircraft. After ten days the base was dismantled and the detachment, with Jim as Convoy Commander, returned to Singapore.

Back in the UK in 1967, he was reunited with his family at RAF Wyton, where he was promoted to Sergeant, completing a course to supervise junior ranks. In 1970 Jim was posted to a Bloodhound missile squadron at RAF Wildenrath, Germany, where he worked on specialist vehicles and continued to play rugby for RAF Germany. He then went to RAF St Mawgan in 1973 before moving on to spend three years at Machrihanish on the Mull of Kintyre, which was his best tour. Jim was now a chief technician in charge of the servicing section. He had around one-hundred-and-twenty staff working for him. After a posting to Gutersloh, Cologne, Jim ended up at RAF Catterick, but it didn't suit him, and he returned to RAF Gutersloh as a Flight Sergeant. He left the RAF in 1985 then worked in retail and delivery driving, before moving to Spain for ten years, returning to the UK in 2017. Jim has a daughter and a son and two granddaughters.

Jim Martin

Jim Martin was born in Nottingham in 1942 and attended the John Player School and Glaisdale Secondary Modern, where he did well, particularly enjoying geography, history and sports. He was a middle distance runner and a member of the cross country team before leaving school at fifteen. Jim had been interested in joining the Royal Navy (RN) for a couple of years, so he went to the recruiting office in Nottingham to join up.

He was accepted and, still only fifteen, was posted to HMS *Ganges*, the RN boys training establishment for eighteen months' training. He wanted to be a radar operator, but after basic tests he was informed that he would be better suited to being a telegraphist in communications. While at HMS *Ganges*, in addition to basic training, he learnt how to touch type up to sixty words per minute. 'The keys were blanked off on the keyboard and we had to type to military marches, to build up rhythm'. He also learnt Morse code to a high standard. After training, Jim was posted to Singapore, based in the north of the island at Kranji wireless station. He was loaned out to HMS *Chichester*, which was a brand new aircraft direction frigate, supporting aircraft carriers, where he sent messages, did Morse and on his first trip got seasick. This overseas posting was an eventful time for Jim, who enjoyed sampling the new world that had opened up to him. He travelled to Hong Kong and then on to Calcutta in India, where the



poverty came as quite a shock. After serving on HMS *Cossack*, which was 'a brilliant ship, she could still do thirty-three knots' Jim returned to Kranji wireless station, then came back to HMS *Lochinvar* on the River Forth, where his ship, HMS *Yarnton*, was one of a squadron of minesweepers.

In early 1960, Jim decided that he wanted to join the submarine service and was posted to HMS *Dolphin* at Gosport. He discovered that the submarine service meant he learnt a little about everybody's job to cover for each other, and he really enjoyed that. Jim's first submarine was HMS *Alliance*, which was an old A-Class boat. As the radio operator Jim was also a periscope reader, helping the Captain to steady the periscope and calling out information such as distance to the target. He also steered the sub and enjoyed the great camaraderie. This was followed by two years on his second submarine HMS *Olympus*, carrying out six-week patrols inside the Arctic Circle, monitoring Russian activity. After training for promotion to leading radio operator, Jim joined HMS *Opossum*, where he spent around a year.

'The keys were blanked off on the keyboard and we had to type to military marches, to build up rhythm'

Jim decided he would like to serve on a nuclear submarine and was posted to HMS *Valiant* for four years. On one occasion he was proud to navigate the submarine up the busy English Channel. Jim was discharged from the Navy in March 1969 and managed an airfield in Zambia before enjoying a long career with GCHQ, including two postings to Cyprus. Jim has a keen interest in community work and local politics – he is a school governor, runs a community centre and was a local councillor for twelve years.



Alan Croft

Alan was born in 1942 in Harrogate General Hospital and lived in Ripon for his formative years. He went to Trinity Infants and Junior School and then onto Ripon Secondary School, after which he joined the RAF, aged fifteen-and-a-half.

Alan wanted to join the RAF because somebody came to his school and told him it was a good job. He went to RAF Cosford for an interview and thought that he didn't stand a chance of success, as he was signing up to be an electrical mechanic and didn't know anything about electricity. However he sat a short multiple-choice test and was accepted. Shortly afterwards, he went back to Cosford where he did his initial training, as at that time RAF St Athan was being used to house athletes for the 1958 Empire Games. After six months Alan was posted to St Athan in South Wales to No 4 School of Technical Training to complete his training as an aircraft technician. His next posting was to RAF Leconfield, where the discipline was no longer as strict. As long as he reported for work at the stipulated time, he could visit the local pubs and dance halls when he was off duty. Alan's rate of pay also increased. Due to being under the age of eighteen Alan was not allowed to work on the aircraft, so was put to work servicing generators and other equipment taken from the aircraft.

As soon as Alan was eighteen, he was posted to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus for two-and-a-half years. The climate meant he could go skiing in the Troodos mountains and swimming at the beach. While there he went on detachments to Bahrain and Nairobi, working on the Canberra photo reconnaissance aircraft. The planes flew over Egypt and down to Aden, refuelled then back



to Bahrain. He said that 'the Canberras were doing something secret over Turkey and they were bristling with cameras'.

Just as Kenya was gaining independence, they needed new maps, so his unit was deployed to photograph Kenya. This took six weeks and he was able to see Nairobi Game Park. After this came RAF Coningsby for six months and Alan then went to a Royal Australian Airforce (RAAF) base in Malaya, working on Vulcans, after a course at RAF Finningley. There followed a six-year spell at RAF Cottesmore still working on Vulcans. Alan was involved in checking all the batteries as well as routine servicing on the aeroplanes, saying 'all aircraft are cramped up, so you've got to be like a rubber man'! For his last three years he applied to go to RAF Topcliffe so he could live at home. He was married just after leaving the RAF at Topcliffe.

'All aircraft are cramped up, so you've got to be like a rubber man'

After his service, he worked at the Royal British Legion home at Lister House in Ripon as a care attendant. Alan then worked at various places while also acting as his wife's carer.

He remained in Ripon until 2013, when he moved to Harrogate. He is now involved with Spectrum, a social group, is a keen member of Hope Church, and is happily about to get married again, having met another Ann.



Alan, bottom right

Arthur (John) Adamson

John was born in Lambeth, London, in 1943, a true Cockney. He attended school in South Shields and passed the 11+ exam for grammar school where he got his O-levels. He left school at sixteen and went to work in a local department store, which wasn't very well paid, so he moved to the Tyne Wire Rope factory where the pay was better but the work more hazardous.

He chose to join the Army and took the Queen's shilling at South Shields Army Recruiting Office in 1961, and then went home to tell his mother. John decided to become a vehicle mechanic in the REME, starting out at the lowest grade, VM3, and was sent to 3 Infantry Brigade Workshops at Tidworth where he passed his driving test on motorbikes and Land Rovers, 'basic tin boxes on wheels'. On one occasion, the paymaster was unable to get through heavy snow to pick up the men's pay; the motor transport officer told John to have a go in an old Mark 2 Land Rover and, in low-ratio four-wheel drive, he managed to get the pay back, he was the hero!

'The best thing that ever happened to him'

After a posting to 5th Infantry Brigade, John moved back to Arborfield as a regimental policeman, working in the guardroom and responsible for discipline. He also escorted AWOL soldiers back to the barracks when they had been apprehended. He then took a signals radio operators' course, training on various radios, at a different part of the depot. After passing the course John was posted to Dortmund in Germany as a driver operator.

Here he found the job very enjoyable, becoming the Squadron Commander's driver. Captain Walder, who was 'one of the boys' considered John a superman because of his prowess on assault courses and twelve-mile route marches. John thought the world of Capt. Walder too. They had many memorable times together, including helicopter rides, confronting Russian soldiers in Wartbergs and adventures with foreign tanks. On one occasion Captain Walder shouted to John to move out

of the way quickly, as a Danish tank flattened the side of the tent in which he was sleeping.

At about this time he was tested for promotion to Lance Corporal. The potential Non-Commissioned Officers were tasked to identify and fix a fault on various vehicles. John's vehicle had a rotor arm missing and he showed that he was able to sort it with efficiency. As a result he was selected to go to the Royal Corps of Transport for B2 Trade Training. Here he learned to drive ten-ton Matador trucks and came top of the course.

John left Germany in 1968 and spent two years in Catterick before leaving the Army.

John considered the Army to be 'the best thing that ever happened to him'. After his service John tried a variety of jobs, such as a driving instructor and working at Butlins. He eventually ran a newsagents in Swindon. His hobbies include collecting model aeroplanes and listening to music. Now retired, John has four children as well as grandchildren.



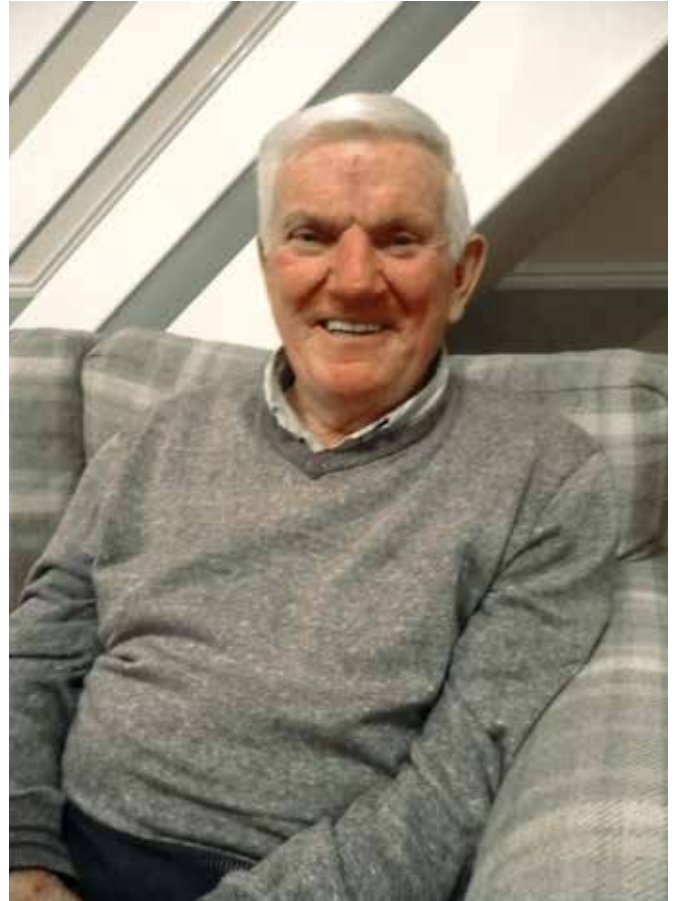
Reg Simmonds

Reg was born in 1944 in Scarborough, where his mother and father had settled with their four children after the War. After the tragic loss of his mother, Reg was taken to a children's home for a year and was then brought up by one of his aunts. Reg attended Gladstone Road School, where an inspirational English teacher 'turned his life around' by giving him interesting books to read. Reg left school at the age of fifteen and became a joiner, taking a City and Guilds course, until his employer died and Reg was suddenly unemployed at the age of seventeen.

He went to the Army recruiting office but he was told he would have to wait until he was eighteen years old, so Reg presented himself again in January 1963 and was accepted for the Royal Engineers. He went for his basic training to 55 Squadron where the recruits were toughened up, which Reg took to, being a bantam weight boxer in Scarborough as a youth. He enjoyed the assault courses and mixing with the men from different regions for the fourteen weeks he was there. His first posting was to Maidstone, Kent, but Reg was soon on a plane bound for Christmas Island to dismantle all the buildings erected for the nuclear tests. In 1963, Reg was back in the UK and went on a major exercise erecting Bailey Bridges on almost every river up and down the country, followed by his B2 Trade test and promotion to Lance Corporal once back in Maidstone. He then volunteered for a posting to 10 Squadron working on airfields in the Middle East and went to Cyprus. He was called back from leave to help evacuate British families caught up in the EOKA troubles in January 1965. Later that year, his Squadron went out to Aden and found their new camp at Bayhan was constantly under fire from the rebels.

He received the thanks of the nuns looking after the lepers and a pin badge from Haile Selassie

Whilst on 'Rest & Recuperation' Reg saw a notice for volunteers to work in Ethiopia and found himself building accommodation huts, laying on water and installing a generator for a leper colony, for which he received the thanks of the nuns looking after the lepers,



who had been living in squalor, and a pin badge from Haile Selassie. This was followed by the creation of another camp in Ethiopia for children suffering from TB, and then a third camp in Madagascar. He really enjoyed this work.

Back in Aden in 1967, Reg found it was in a state of emergency. He received a minor wound when a Land Rover was blown up, and he was evacuated by air at the same time the British finally pulled out of Aden.

From Chatham he was posted to Hameln, Germany, which he didn't like, before leaving the Army in January 1970.

Jobs were hard to come by in Scarborough, but an uncle found him a job in the Mother's Pride Bakery until it closed down. He got jobs in the hospital after that until 2002 when he sadly lost his wife Valerie. Reg then went back to work in the hospital until he retired in 2015. He has a daughter and three grandchildren.

Patricia Edwards

Pat was born in Everton in 1947, but was taken to Ireland as a baby to stay with her grandparents. Her mother was Irish and returned to Armagh to take care of Pat when she had another child. Pat's father had served in Italy during WW2 and found it difficult to settle to civilian life after his grim experiences in combat, which affected him greatly.

Pat attended the local all-girls convent school taught mostly by nuns. Although she enjoyed history and English literature, she never had the chance to take any exams before leaving school.



After school the options open to girls at that time were factory work, shop work, secretarial work or nursing. Pat decided on nursing and was looking round at various hospitals. The Army Nursing Service looked promising and, as one of her friends had

joined up, she applied, aged seventeen, being sent for an interview in the Belfast Army Careers Office. She soon received a letter saying that she had been accepted, got a new suitcase and got on the ferry, ending up in Aldershot for her basic training. Pat loved the uniform, the discipline, the feeling of belonging and the routine, although drill was a bit of a trial. The training included carrying people on stretchers and putting on gas masks. The other girls surprised Pat with her first ever birthday cake for her eighteenth birthday.

From Aldershot Pat was posted to the military hospital at Colchester. The medical training was split into shifts and they were caring for mainly military patients, but there were also civilians to look after as the wards were rarely full. She then continued the three years' training regime in Iserlohn, Germany. There were constant assessments as they rotated round the various wards; surgical, gynaecology, pre-natal, maternity and theatre. Pat came into contact with nurses and patients from many different nationalities. Here there were only military patients. The social life in Germany was really good, they sometimes used to sneak out at night, and there were balls and other events to attend. The majority of the Germans were easy to get on with.

After eighteen months Pat returned to the UK to complete the general nursing qualification. She went to the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, to nurse the Chelsea Pensioners and enjoyed working and living in London.

Back in Colchester to take her exams, Pat met her husband-to-be, who was serving in the Green Howards. When her three years' training was completed the Matron offered her rapid promotion and choice of posting, but Pat had decided to get married, which meant leaving the service at that time.

Pat loved the uniform, the discipline, the feeling of belonging and the routine, although drill was a bit of a trial

Pat found service life as an army wife much harder than expected, and felt isolated when her husband was away on operations or exercises. The family moved to York when Pat's then husband left the army and she did part-time nursing. Pat lives contentedly in Scarborough and enjoys many hobbies as well as being visited regularly by her three daughters, five grandchildren and one great-grandson.



Brian Spurden

Brian was born in a pub in Bradford in 1949, where his grandad was the landlord. His father had been in the Royal Navy during WW2 and worked for ICI afterwards. The family moved to Heysham for his work. Brian, the eldest of four, remembers the outside toilet, the tin bath and the freedom of his childhood. He attended St Peter's C of E School in Heysham, and Balmoral County Secondary School in Morecambe, after the family moved to a more modern house in Middleton. He left school at the age of fifteen and worked at Pontin's Holiday Camp, where he had had holiday jobs whilst at school.

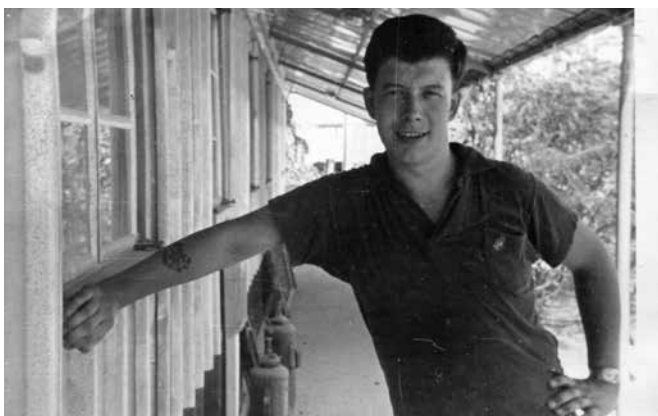
He decided to join the Army at fifteen, due in part to his uncle being in uniform and seemingly 'having a great time'. Brian was keen to get a trade in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers but was mystified by the algebra in the entrance test, never having done any at school. He accepted a place in the Infantry, the King's Own Royal Border Regiment being the local unit. Brian joined the basic training intake of September 1964 at Fulwood Barracks, Preston, but due to his parents living in Plymouth, he was transferred to the Junior Leaders' Battalion at Oswestry. He found the training very tough at first but he got used to it and served for three years as a junior leader and was a member of the Corps of Drums, before being old enough to join his Battalion, now in Bahrain. Having arrived in June 1967, it was less than a month before he found himself being shot at and mortared nightly in Aden. After a month of active service, Brian completed the eighteen-month tour in Bahrain before being granted home leave and posted, now a member of the Signals Platoon, to Episkopi in Cyprus, 'a fantastic place'.



Back in the UK at Roman Way Barracks, Colchester, he was employed as the families officer's clerk, as part of a team of three looking after the needs and welfare of the Battalion's families. Here he got married and did an accompanied tour of Ballykinler, Northern Ireland, between January 1972 and March 1973. From Northern Ireland, the Battalion went to Chester, where he was part of the advance party, preparing the married quarters for the families to take over. From Chester, Brian got an individual posting to Strensall Training Camp near York, as a clerk in the Quartermaster's Department. After a two-month posting back to his Battalion in Germany, as a clerk in Battalion Headquarters, Brian returned to Strensall in 1976 for his discharge.

The Army shaped him into the person he is today

Brian got a job with Securicor and then Dunlopillo. He kept busy after that by helping at his parents' pub, The Salt Box, when he was needed, and also worked for Harrogate Council for ten years, finally retiring at the age of sixty-five. He has three children and two grandchildren. Brian has an interest in music and attends the Army reunions. He feels that the Army shaped him into the person he is today.



Brian in Bahrain

Paul Addle

Paul Addle was born in Knaresborough in 1951 and came from a large family. He attended Manor Road School then Knaresborough Secondary Modern, but he hated school and was pleased to leave at fifteen. At that time the job situation was pretty good, 'you could change jobs almost straight away if you didn't like one'. He started in a supermarket as a butcher then worked for a local butcher's shop and really enjoyed it. He stayed two-and-a-half years and then decided to join the Army. Paul already had two brothers in the forces; his eldest brother was in the Royal Corps of Transport (RCT) and was travelling the world and 'that's what made me do it'.

He went to Leeds recruiting office, but he had to have his parents' permission to join the Army and they both said no as the Troubles in Northern Ireland had just started, so his sister signed for him without his parents' knowledge. He wanted to be a driver like his brother, but the recruiters said that with his butchering skills he'd be better off in the Army Catering Corps (ACC) and could transfer later on if he wished. Shortly after, he received his papers to attend the ACC College at Aldershot, where 'we did basic soldier and catering training for six months at the college and we were all reasonably fit'. Here Paul learned how to cook everything that was needed for up to eight-hundred people; soups, starters, mains and puddings. At the end of the training Paul had progressed so well that he was asked if he would like to remain at the College on permanent staff, but he preferred an overseas posting.



Paul Addle right hand side



His service life [was] an opportunity to gain independence, confidence and a sense of responsibility

Paul was posted to West Germany and had no idea what to expect. He took his first ever flight to Hanover and was taken by truck to join his regiment. He was attached to the RCT at a camp near Nienburg. After a while his Sergeant asked him if he would like to work in the Sergeants' Mess on his own. This meant he would have a better kitchen and a small number of German civilian staff cleaning for him. He liked working on his own; he had to collect the food from the main kitchen every morning and had to work with those ingredients, for three meals a day for up to fifteen people. It also meant he could enjoy a good social life most weekends. Paul served in Nienburg from November 1969 till May 1972. He had originally signed on for six years, but after three years he wasn't enjoying the Army as much, so he bought himself out. After his service career Paul worked for a long time in industrial photography and retired at sixty. He has a son and grandson and enjoys regular golf. Paul looks back on his service life as an opportunity to gain independence, confidence and a sense of responsibility. He considers it gave him a good start in life.

Andrew Archibald

Andrew was born in Penicuik, Edinburgh, on 8th April 1951. His father had fought in WW1 and worked for ICI chemicals. Andrew had six brothers and four sisters and he attended the Sacred Heart Primary School, then St David's High School in Dalkeith, about six miles away. He enjoyed his school days, especially playing football, and left at the age of sixteen. He started work at a photographic company, making negatives, and went on a day release scheme to attend the Napier College in Edinburgh, but then moved to a polystyrene factory, arranged by one of his brothers.

Another brother suggested that he join the forces and Andrew went to the recruiting office in Edinburgh, aged seventeen, not really convinced about volunteering at that stage, but choosing to be a photographer in the RAF because of his work experience. There was some resistance from his family due to disagreement about his religious preference on his enlistment papers before he left for training at RAF Swindon. Here he coped with the training and was then posted to RAF Cosford, West Midlands, for his trade training. Andrew joined the RAF Photographic Section, learning the chemistry, physics, mathematics and optics of producing photographs taken from the various cameras used in photo-reconnaissance aircraft. On passing his trade training Andrew was posted to 543 Squadron at RAF Wyton, Cambridgeshire, where he enjoyed working on Vulcans, fitting 'fans' of different cameras to cover large areas of ground as the plane flew overhead. Andrew enjoyed this posting, 'it was terrific. I felt I was doing a good job there, I was useful'.

'It was terrific. I felt I was doing a good job there, I was useful'

From his next posting in Honington, Suffolk, he got the chance of working in Singapore and flew out for six months working with Canberra photo-reconnaissance aircraft monitoring major exercises including Australia, Singapore, New Zealand and Malaysia, and was involved in surveying Indonesia for the government. Andrew returned home for leave and was then posted to Bahrain for nine months where they were asked to

photograph the aftermath of aircraft crashes and deal with the photographs of operational sorties.

Andrew's next posting was to St Mawgan, Cornwall, where he didn't fit in so well in the photographic section. Thankfully he managed to get a posting to RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, for four years, with his new wife, Dianne, and their young baby. As the photographic section was being wound up, Andrew moved into non-destructive testing whereby the engineers x-rayed the planes looking for stress points, especially where the plane hits the ground. Andrew prepared the film and the envelopes the film went into. After ten years' service the family decided to leave the RAF and Andrew went on a management course at Catterick, North Yorkshire, before his discharge.

Initially, Andrew found a job in management in the administration department of a drawing office in Edinburgh, where he was known as Wingco. Then he retrained as a miller, before working for the Post Office in Whitby for ten years. Andrew has been married to Dianne for forty-seven years; they have two children and six grandchildren. His hobbies are photography and painting.



Dianne Archibald

Dianne was born in Grimsby in 1952, where both her parents worked in factories. After moving to Stallingborough village, Dianne attended the local village school, which she enjoyed, and then Healing Secondary School. She left at the age of sixteen and did a secretarial course for two years before being employed at British United Trawlers in Grimsby which was good fun.

Dianne didn't want to stay in Grimsby but was hesitant to move to a city on her own. She wanted to become an engineer in the RAF but her father told her engineering was not a suitable trade for a woman. She compromised and signed up in the RAF to become an electronics engineer on ground to air communications. Dianne was then posted to RAF Spittalgate, Lincolnshire, for basic training at the WRAF Depot. Her father had predicted that she 'wouldn't last a week' but she was grimly determined to prove him wrong. She managed the discipline well and made some good friends during the team building. Her parents and younger brother came down for the passing-out parade.

Her father had predicted that she 'wouldn't last a week' but she was grimly determined to prove him wrong

Leaving most of her new friends behind, Dianne went on to RAF Locking near Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, where she found that the new draft were the first women in her trade and they were accommodated out of barracks, which was a real bonus. Their landlady had six daughters and looked after her new girls really well. The three-months' training took place in hot hangars, split into classrooms, where she learnt the importance of mathematics and how to fix valve radios, along with wiring and soldering. The four girls moved on to the control tower and landing systems, as well as vehicle radios. She found this great fun and loved her trade training.

Once qualified, she was posted to RAF St Mawgan, Cornwall, where she was the only female on base and although most of the men accepted her, a few didn't



want to work with women, so she had to 'prove herself twice over'. Dianne met Andrew, her husband-to-be, in Newquay. He was also in the RAF, and within ten months they were married, in November 1972. This meant she had to leave the RAF, as service marriages were frowned upon in those days. Life as an RAF wife was difficult financially, as they relied upon her husband's wage. As a family with two young daughters, they were based at RAF Waddington where they had a nice married quarter.

Dianne worked in a nursery school, then as a primary school dinner lady as the girls were growing up, but it wasn't until the family settled in Yorkshire that she could obtain full-time employment, ending up as an office manager at a secondary school in York for twenty years.

For Dianne, joining the forces was a fantastic grounding and made her a team player. She now has her hobbies, knitting and sewing for the Thirsk Yarn Bombers, which brings the community together and is a nice social activity.

Glossary and abbreviations

ATC Air Training Corps, officially established in 1941, trained young men in aviation skills on a voluntary basis, with a view to their possibly joining the RAF later on.

ATS Auxiliary Territorial Service, formed in 1938 and was the female branch of the British Army during the Second World War.

AWOL Absent without leave. Where a member of the armed forces is away from military duties without permission.

BEF British Expeditionary Force was the name given to the ten divisions of the British Army dispatched to France in 1939. They were evacuated in May/June 1940 after the German Army launched its offensive.

Bevin Boys Young British men who were conscripted to work in coal mines in Britain from December 1943. It was important work as they replaced miners called up for military service at the beginning of the war. Coal was vital for the war effort and domestic heating.

EOKA Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters). A Greek Cypriot nationalist organisation fighting a campaign to end British rule in Cyprus.

Estaminet A small café or bar, where alcoholic drinks are served.

FIDO Fog Investigation and Dispersal Operation. It was a system of fuel tanks, pipes and burners running along the runway which, once lit, could disperse the fog and enable aircraft to attempt a safe landing.

ITW Initial Training Wing. New entrants to the RAF underwent initial training on different subjects relating to RAF service.

NAAFI Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes which are recreational establishments for the armed forces, offering canteen facilities and goods to buy.

NCO A non-commissioned officer is a military officer who has not earned a commission (which is a formal document of appointment). NCOs are usually promoted through the ranks.

RAF Royal Air Force, which formed in 1918. During the Second World War, Fighter Command of the RAF defended the country during the Battle of Britain. Bomber Command carried out a strategic bombing campaign against enemy targets. Additionally there were Coastal and Transport Commands.

RASC Royal Army Service Corps, a Corps of the British Army, which was responsible for all provisions for the army except for weapons and ammunition.

REME Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, a Corps of the British Army, formed in 1942 which maintains and repairs the technical equipment of the army.

SRN State Registered Nurse. The training took three years as opposed to the two years needed to qualify as a SEN (State Enrolled Nurse).

VM Vehicle Mechanic (eg VM3 was a technical grade in the British army).

WAAF Women's Auxiliary Air Force, which was established in 1939 and was the female auxiliary of the RAF, whose members served in RAF Commands in a variety of roles.

WRAF Women's Royal Air Force, the female branch of the Royal Air Force, which was re-established in 1949 and whose members filled a number of roles.

WW1 World War 1, also known as The First World War or The Great War, 1914-1918.

WW2 World War 2, also known as The Second World War, 1939-45.



About Community First Yorkshire

Community First Yorkshire is an influential, regional body that works with voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and rural communities across North, South and West Yorkshire.

We are an independent charity and membership body. We are also a rural community council, part of the national ACRE Network (Action with Communities in Rural England) helping communities improve the quality of life for all people living and working in rural Yorkshire.

As well as running projects to support people in our county, such as Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire, we are the first port of call for voluntary organisations, social enterprises and parish councils looking for practical support. We can help with everything from governance and funding, to strategic planning and community engagement through our training and events, resources and networks.

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