



Royal Tank Regiment Association London Branch



www.rtr-london-branch.org.uk

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Newsletter

January-March 2022

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RTRA London Branch newsletter is now published every two/three months
Newsletter Contributions are always welcome by post or email to Sue Hill

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

Editorial



In February Betty Atkinson, Peter Bennett, Alex Hamilton, Peter MacFarlane, Phil Mason, Eddie Parkin, Beryl Shepperdley, Dick Weatherley are, we hope, enjoying a slice of birthday cake. Followed in March by Ralph Bagnall Wild, Adrian Clarke, Graham Edwards, Bill McMinn, David Owens, June Phelps, George Smith, Norm Spicer, Robert Vaux and Jack Woods who will be blowing out the candles. [If you had a birthday in February or March and your name isn't here it means we don't have your full details! Please get in touch – Ed.]

Membership Renewals have been flooding in. Remember annual subs for those 90 and under are £11.00 per annum. If you haven't already renewed, please send your money by cheque or by bank transfer. You cannot vote in the AGM unless you have paid your 2022 dues. Reminder that all non-payers will be removed from membership on 31 March. PLEASE NOTE THE NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Roger Burton – his details are on Page 1.

Sending out renewal notices costs us precious £££s so please pay asap OR let us know you no longer wish to be part of the Branch.

The next issue of the Newsletter will be April May 2022. Contributions by 30 April please.

Sue Hill

New Members

No new members to report but we do have some guest readers from other branches. They are Jack Wilson (Preston), Doreen Ridyard (Preston), Michael Cotgrave (Devon), Graham Burge (Devon), Les Reeves (Birmingham) and Ron Cook (Medway). Also Ray McKenzie. It is lovely to be able to share our activities and news with them. Our Newsletter also goes to Secretaries of other branches.

London Branch Meetings

No news on when we might return to Royal Hospital Chelsea for face-to-face meetings but we hope it will be soon. The February meeting was conducted on ZOOM with 24 attendees and 7 apologies.

Business was completed in 28 minutes - Points of note discussed were the AGM on 12 March, nominations for Chair sought, the Wyboston Lakes 2RTR Reunion 11-13 March and Bournemouth 8RTR Reunion 18-21 March which incorporates the Regimental Church Service and the Annual Curry lunch. Several members stayed on to chat and catch up but there were also important Rugby and Football matches to watch as well! A very sociable meeting. I even managed to get everyone to 'smile for the birdie'.



Kiwi Humour

Satirist John Clarke who graced NZ TV in my youth as Fred Dagg, a stereotypical Kiwi farmer told an old army story:

In 1945, the 2nd New Zealand Division fought a costly street-by-street battle against the retreating German army to take the city of Trieste, in northern Italy. Once the city was secured, the Americans decided a victory parade was in order, to be headed by the elite US Marines. It was pointed out that the Americans had arrived after the battle had finished and that the fighting had been done by the New Zealanders. The Italian campaign was nevertheless being run by US Army command and the parade went ahead as planned. In front came the US Marines, with a large banner bearing their emblem and the words "US Marines. Second to None." Behind them marched the New Zealanders, carrying a large sheet on which was written the word "None".

Reminisces

Leave Train

On leave from Germany in the late fifties, it was the system that you would join a military train, which grew in size as it picked up leave parties etc. from various Bahnhofs around the Rhine Army area, were conveyed to the Hook of Holland and then placed on a small troopship. This took you across the North Sea during the night, arriving at Harwich in the early morning. There you were given an army breakfast before being conveyed to Liverpool Street station in London. Leave started at that point. The journey was undertaken in uniform so our first port of call was Euston for the Glasgow train. We had a habit of changing into civilian clothes and leaving our luggage in a left luggage cabinet and spending the day in London. We would then take the overnight train, sleeping in our seats. On one such journey, we woke early, at daylight and with time on our hands, we found something to do. A civvy sitting opposite us had taken off his shoes, which were of decent leather. We got a tin of shoe polish out and with a yellow duster spent some time bulling his shoes. When this man woke up, his expression was priceless. He thought that he had the wrong shoes.

John McLintock

A Thursday Morning, 66 years ago

On 4th February 1954 I took a train to Catterick (Roman: Cataractonium) to start my two years' National Service at 66th Training Regiment of the Royal Armoured Corps, at the very edge of the wild Yorkshire moorland. Along with others of that particular intake, I was accommodated in a Nissan hut. Four months later I was posted to the 8th Royal Tank Regiment, stationed in Paderborn (then part of West Germany). Perhaps when the Russians realised I'd been sent to 8RTR in Paderborn, and put in command of an office typewriter, they thought it prudent to call off their imminent planned attack on Western Europe.

All is as clear in my memory as though it happened only a couple of years ago (being 'apposite') and the regimental song, coincidentally called, *It Wasn't the Tanks That Won the War, it Was Our Boy Willie*.

David Wilkinson 8RTR

[David had just sent me a DVD of the film *Tanks for Stalin* see below]

[<https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Cataractonium>]

Tanks for Stalin

2018 'Танки' Directed by Kim Druzhinin but released in the UK 2020. Set in 1940 a prototype of a new cutting-edge tank is being taken on a secret mission to Moscow, to Comrade Stalin. Soon the cross-country run turns into a ruthless race Followed by Nazis, the tanks' team defeats their pursuers and proves the great ability and vast superiority of the machine that is about to become a legendary T-34. This is Russia's version of jingoism - they love to show off their tank that crushed the Germans! They've made many movies about it - including one called T-34 . It is reminiscent of Mad Max but with tanks.



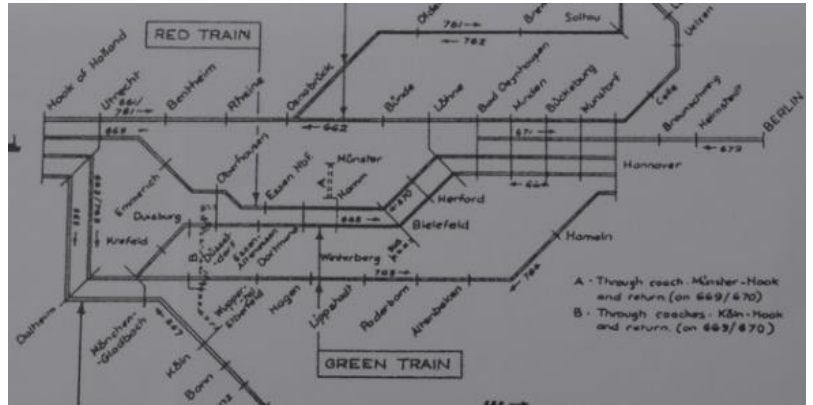
Driving Lessons Sir?

My oldest friend signed up for three years in the Royal Military Police instead of waiting to be called up for National Service. During his training at Aldershot, he was taught to drive. One morning he was driving a 3 ton truck, fitted with L plates and a sign on the rear stating "Caution driver under instruction", through the town when he had to stop at a red traffic light. When the light changed to green, he stalled the engine and, immediately, the driver behind started hooting. The instructor, who was a very tall RMP sergeant-major, said to my friend "Switch off, lad." The sergeant-major then climbed down from the truck, walked to the car behind, from where the hooting was coming. Towering over the Morris Minor, he tapped on the driver's window. The rather frightened driver wound down the window and was told "Right, sir, you go and teach him to drive and I'll blow your horn!"

Graham Edwards 8RTR

The Green Train Home

Sometimes I feel that I could wake up and still be there in Germany, in spite of my vivid memory concerning the final journey home. The train slowing to a very steady pace as it neared the Hook of Holland, the bright glow from the acetylene burners where night-work was still being carried out on some of the ships whose funnels could be seen rising well above the rooftops as I lowered the window in the space between two of the coaches and felt the chill night air upon my face. There was



time, before boarding the ship which would carry me back to Harwich, to go into a very basic canteen for sausage, egg and chips, which tasted like manna from heaven and then it was up the gangplank with kitbag and small suitcase for my last trip across the North Sea on the Empire Parkeston/Wansbeck/Vienna. I forget now which, but one of them, for certain. Once aboard it was imperative to get a top bunk to avoid the drunk in the bunk above you leaning over, puking from a great height and spattering you with bits of half-digested 'whatever he'd recently consumed', all accompanied by the smell of regurgitated ale; and all atop an already heaving North Sea.

When the boat docked you didn't get off immediately because it was too early. This allowed time to get to the washroom and shave in cold water after treading gingerly around piles of by- now-congealed sick scattered in and around the sleeping area. Then it was by train to London's Liverpool Street Station. The fact that I'd been placed on Army Emergency Reserve meant that on arrival I could proceed directly home, while the rest of the intake went to Bovington for a further couple of weeks. Imagine the (good-natured) banter I was subjected to as I waved them goodbye. They thought (perhaps not unnaturally) that, because I worked in the office, I'd fixed it for myself.



Some 40 years later I made contact with quite a few of them again and amazingly shared at least 12 annual reunions with the 8RTR regiment as a whole and in particular with some of the guys with whom I worked closely during my service.

David Wilkinson 8RTR

Help Needed

Can you help identify old comrades of 3RTR?

Sheila Darvill would be grateful if any Branch members could assist with information.

Her uncle Eric - Albert H Turner [possibly on the right of the picture] was a Desert Rat and driver of a Firefly, B Squadron 3RTR and was killed in action 18 July 44 at Hubert Folie, Calvados and rests in Ranville War Cemetery north of Caen.

In the book *The Pendulum of Battle* by Christopher Dunphie MC. There is an account of the action that day which came to the author originally in the form of a letter from Bill Close MC. The letter was written by Eric's Tank Commander Sgt Eric Whittaker who sent it to Bill when he was writing *A View from the Turret*.



In Sgt Whittaker's letter he states the three other members of his crew that day as Harry Palmer, Titch Everett and Jack Turner.

Might any of that crew Whittaker, Palmer, Everett have been family members of members of your Branch after the war?

In the attached photograph Eric Turner is on the right the other two crewmen who we believe to be Palmer and Everett but not sure who is who in fact. We believe the photograph itself was taken in the spring of 44 on 3 RTR's move down from the North of England for embarkation on D-Day. Many thanks to you and your members for consideration to our request for your time and attention. But for these men always at the sharp end.....

Sheila and Richard aedalexvill@hotmail.co.uk [Please reply directly to Sheila.]

[The municipality of Hubert-Folie is located to the northeast of an area called Verrières ridge that overlooks the area between Caen and Falaise. Defended by elements of the 272. Infanterie Division, in accordance with the plan of Operation Goodwood, launched on July 18, 1944, it was the 11th British Armoured Division which was entrusted with taking a foothold north of the ridge of Verrière and seizing Hubert-Folie.

The armoured regiments began their progression after one of the largest air bombardments of World War II in Europe and arrived near Hubert-Folie in the late morning after having recorded very heavy losses. ...The Germans, a formidable battery of 88 mm guns, were ordered to open the fire only at the last moment in order not to reveal their positions. Unfortunately, the tanks of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (29th Armoured Brigade) did not anticipate the new danger that awaited them and were committed to Hubert-Folie: at 1100hrs the Germans then triggered a terrible deluge of firing on the British. In just a few minutes, the 3rd RTR lost 11 of its tanks and stopped its progress less than a kilometre to the north of the village. The Germans launched furious attacks against the village until 21 July and it was not until the launch of Operation Spring the night of 24-25 July that Hubert-Folie was definitely out of the reach of the 1st SS Panzer Division. – Ed.]

Courtesy of

<https://www.dday-overlord.com/en/battle-of-normandy/cities/hubert-folie>

Further reading

https://www.flamesofwar.com/Default.aspx?tabid=112&art_id=551

Some videos of the can also be seen on

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060019562>

Sir Leonard Blavatnik, Britain's richest man, endows photography gallery at the Imperial War Museum

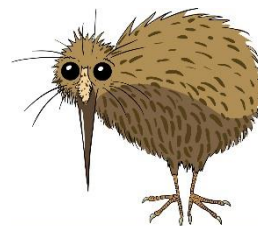
Millions of war-photographs will have a new focal point at the Imperial War Museum from late 2023 after a multi-million pound contribution to the Imperial War Museums gallery from Sir Leonard Blavatnik.

The gallery at IWM London will explore how photographers, artists and filmmakers bear witness and document and will display works by Cecil Beaton, Peter Jackson and Steve McQueen along with "more private photographs" from the nation's collections. The museum holds approximately eleven million photographs and over twenty thousand hours of footage covering conflicts from the First World War to the present day.

Helen Mavin, the museum's head of photographs, said that while there would only be a very small proportion of the 11 million-strong collection on display, the galleries would "allow us to explore how photographers and artists and filmmakers together bear witness and document the stories of conflict. We also want to explore more private photographers, photographers that aren't famous. Soldiers, nurses, civilians, amateurs who had their cameras with them and felt compelled to record their experiences."

More Kiwi Humour

During the campaign through Greece, Crete, the Middle East and up into Italy, the New Zealand Division experienced a steady procession of successes and setbacks, not always of their own making. One danger would be averted, one cock-up survived, one victory won, when a fresh disaster would arrive and all hope would seem lost. In response to this pattern the division adopted intelligence officer Paddy Costello's sardonic and perfectly balanced "Hooray f*ck".



Out and About

No, I did not write to the Colonel in Chief

For 20 years, I cruised in my boat for three weeks every year on the west coast of Scotland. In the 80s with my family on board, we were making our way near the end of the holiday towards the Clyde where we lived. We decided to spend the night at Salen, halfway down the Sound of Mull. After a meal the boat became wind rode broadside to the swell. In many cruising areas this would not prompt a move. On the west coast, anchorages are so plentiful that there is no need to sleep in a rolling boat, however moderate this might be. We decided to run down to Loch Aline several miles further along the Sound of Mull for a peaceful night.

We were slipping along nicely when Mary my wife said, "Look out, there is a ferry ahead". Looking under the spinnaker I recognised the Royal Yacht Britannia and a Frigate behind her. I was steering but I readied myself to dip the ensign also as we passed both ships. Mary watched Britannia with our binocular and James, our son, got his camera ready. Just before we got to Britannia's wash Mary spoke. "There is a woman on her quarterdeck, not tall, something in her hands, she is taking a photo of us". Looking up, I saw this also with my unaided eyes. "That will be the Queen" I replied. Both Britannia and the Frigate acknowledged our dipped ensign salute by dipping theirs.

We anchored in my favourite place, in the middle of Loch Aline in 10 metres depth, away from all other boats, plenty of room to swing on a 40-metre veered cable, and too far from shore for midges. Previously we had weathered a storm there, the holding is good.

Before turning in I drafted a letter. Mary asked about it. "It is to the Queen. Your Majesty. On {date} at {time} in the Sound of Mull, our red hulled boat *Feu de Joie* with large spinnaker passed your yacht *Britannia*. My crew thought that you took a photograph of us. Certainly, we photographed your *Britannia*. You will know as I do that it is difficult for owners to photograph their yachts when aboard and underway. Please may we exchange photographs?"



"You can't send that" Mary said, "It is grossly impertinent". So, I did not. Pity, because the picture of our boat would be spectacular if it exists. The background would be the hills of Morvern in evening sunshine, with Ben Nevis in the far distant background. The photograph above depicts same boat, same sails set, but on another occasion. Then we were approaching Inverie on Loch Nevis. The background is Knoydart the land inaccessible by road, between Loch Nevis and Loch Hourne. We were being overtaken by a boat under power. I called them on Ch16 low power and requested a photograph if they had a camera. Later, in the pub at Inverie, we exchanged addresses. There is no road access to Inverie, just a ferry from Mallaig.

Ralph Bagnall-Wild (Major) 2, 5, 8 RTR

Snippets and comments re Nov-Dec 2021 Newsletter

Under "Snippets", Edward Smith queries my, or perhaps his, memories of Catterick. Fortunately, I don't have to rely on my memory, entirely, as I have my army record! I arrived in Catterick on the 1st February 1955 and joined the 68th Training Regiment RAC. Four weeks later, the training role, of 68 TR, was taken over by 7 RTR.

The other two Training Regiments in Catterick Camp at that time, which made up the RAC Training Brigade, were the 65th Trg Regt RAC and the 5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards. I believe that the 16th/5th Lancers took over from either 65th TR or 5 IDG early in 1957, which would agree with the date of Edward's arrival in 1958.

Graham Edwards



Catterick Camp training huts 4TR 1954

Many thanks for this latest Newsletter. Wonderful to sit and read all this. So well put together. You are a great Branch and I can see it going on and on.

We, The RTR Oxon Branch, had our Bi-annual lunch gathering just a week or so back. [27th Nov]. We only had 9 sit down but as always it went very well.

Regards to you all in London Branch.

John Walker, Oxon

Thank you so much for the birthday card, it was a lovely surprise and totally unexpected. I'll look at the Rothbury Collection, I like cards like that one. Thank you too for the Newsletter, always interesting, well written, and it must take time. I keep dipping into it. I still have my 1974 London Branch Membership Card when Membership was 50 pence.

Alan Rigby

I think your article on 'Famous Tankies' might reveal a remarkable number of names who served in the RTR. This is perhaps unsurprising as we had some eight regiments post-war, so many famous faces completed their National Service with us. However, Murray Walker is perhaps not the best example, as he never served in the RTR, although in later years he was very helpful towards the Tank Museum (which is both the Museum of the Royal Armoured Corps and Royal Tank Regiment). But there are plenty of 'real' Tankies out there. For example:

- Bruce Kent, who became a senior cleric and at one time chaired the CND
- Chris Bonington (2RTR) the famous mountaineer
- Frank Bough (2RTR) – a well-known TV reporter
- Johnny Gold (6RTR) who owned 'Tramp' the famous night club
- Andrew Mitchell MP (1RTR) who has just written an autobiography [News Nov 2020]
- Johnny Briggs (aka Mike Baldwin of 'Coronation Street') [News Mar & May 2021]

These are just those that I know of. I'm sure there are many others. Best wishes and well done,

Rob McAfee

[Thank you. Some research and writing to do for future issues. More suggestions are sought. – Ed.]

Re the New East Anglian Branch – contact details: eastanglianbranch@gmail.com

Thank you for writing about us – however the spelling of my last name it is Catchpool, also we currently do not have a treasurer.

Bob Catchpool, East Anglian Branch

I would like to wish you a very happy healthy peaceful Christmas and New Year. Thank you for editing the RTR Newsletter which brings so much pleasure to so many people.

Marie McQuirk

Thanks Sue, a really good & interesting newsletter, well done.

Paddy Carroll, Merseyside Branch and RTR Trustee

What a great read. Thank you so much.

Mick Wilby, 5RTR

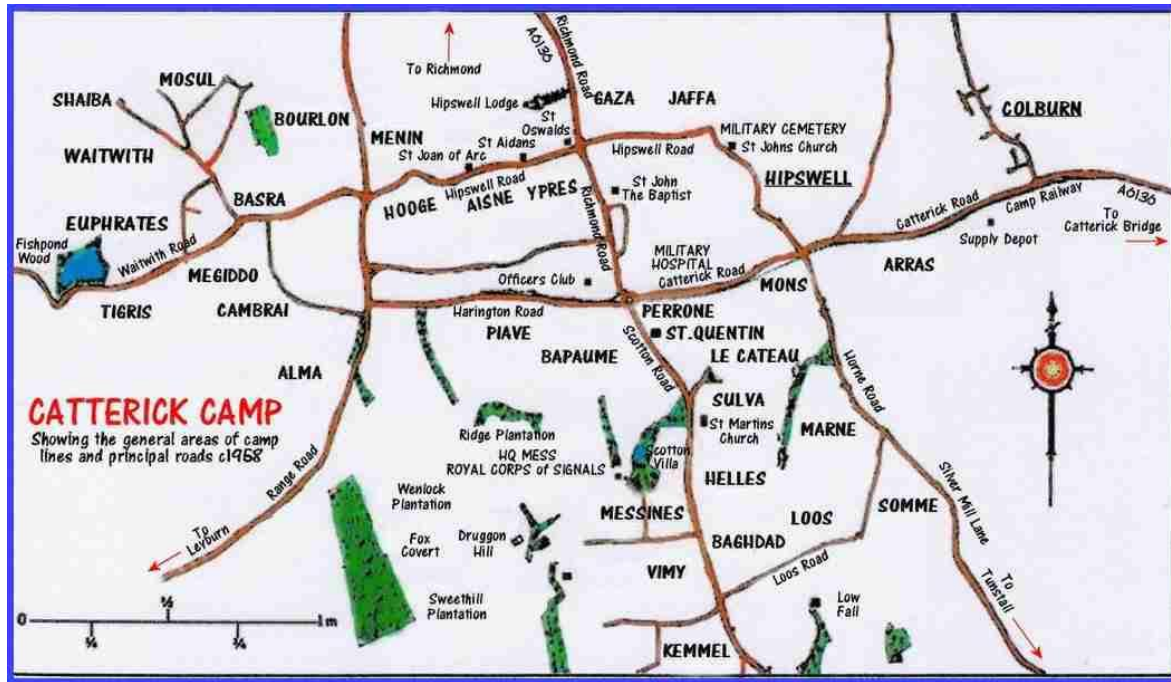
Report from Bob Swiniarski, Welfare Officer

The lovely Carley Ansell has offered to help me with telephoning members for a catch up and chat and to check all is well. She is looking forward to 'meeting' some of you over the telephone soon.

A reminder to let me or Carley know if you or someone you know of is not well or needs a boost with a call.

Stay safe and stay healthy, **Bob**

Catterick Camp, Yorkshire



Thank
you to
Roy
Jones
who

allowed me to use the illustrations on Pages 4 and 6, left and above from his site *Royal Corps of Signals*. <http://www.royjonesroyalsignals.co.uk>

You will find a link to a page which features RTR Trooper Gilbert Knott. This is extremely interesting reading and gives an amazing insight into life as a POW. A must read.

<http://www.royjonesroyalsignals.co.uk/Gilbert%20Knott.htm>

Trooper Gilbert Knott was in the 54th Royal Armoured Corps in WW2. In 1941 he did his training at Catterick before going to the Middle East. There he was posted to the 4th RTR and was captured at Tobruk in June 1942. Incarcerated to May 1945, he worked at the Himmelfahrt Fundgrube mine, work camp F57, Freiberg, Saxony. Find his diary here: <https://www.pegasusarchive.org/pow/frames.htm>

Troop Base moving to the Middle East

An recent article in *The Telegraph* stated that the British Army is to leave Canada and set up a new training base in the Middle East (Duqm in Oman) as part of plans to modernise the armed forces, according to reports in November and December 2021. A new facility is being developed in Oman.

A defence source close to the plans told *The Telegraph*: "If you only have 148 tanks and 22 of them are stuck in Canada, that's 22 tanks that are not at readiness and not available to do anything operational. If they are training in Poland or Duqm, the logic is that they are having a more operational and deterrent effect."

The British Army Training Unit Sheffield (BATUS) has been based in Alberta, Canada since 1972. With 2,700 square kilometres of training space the base is equipped with more than 1000 vehicles, including tanks. More than 400 permanent staff and 1000 temporary deployed staff provide the UK military with live firing and manoeuvred exercise training. A spokesperson for the MoS told the *Telegraph* that Batus would not close before 2023 as several big tank exercises are scheduled to take place. Between now and then

A small number of British army personnel will remain in Canada after the move. Many RTR personnel, past and present, have fond memories of their time undertaking exercises in Canada.

[If you have memories of time in Canada you would like to share, please send them to me by post or email. – Ed.]

London Branch Member since 2008 Tony Pyatt passed away with his family by his side on 28 January 2022 aged 105. I reproduce here his obituary published in the *Ipswich Star* by kind permission of *Archant Press*. It shows a man of inimitable spirit and a love for life and family.

'A fine journalist' - Tributes to former *Evening Star* editor and war hero Tony Pyatt

Professionally, he is remembered as the man at the helm of the *Evening Star* (now *Ipswich Star*) for more than a decade. For others, he is a decorated war hero who helped to oust the Nazis from France on D-Day. But by his family, Tony Pyatt is remembered as a “very good father” who treated everybody the same and always had time for his children.

“The thing about dad was, he would mix with all our friends,” remembers Tony’s son, Andrew. “Any of our friends could come into our house at any time, whereas the friends I had, I never saw their parents. But Dad always mixed with us, that was just what he did.”

Tony’s life spanned an incredible 105 years, of which, Andrew says, “he never wasted a minute”. Tony was born in Faversham, Kent in 1916 as the First World War continued to rage. “Dad never knew his real mother,” explains Andrew, “because she died from sepsis.” Tony was only three years old. His father, a commercial traveller, remarried three years later, and Tony was raised by his stepmother.

His lifelong love affair with newspapers began as a teenager, when he worked as an apprentice on the local paper, the *Wisbech Standard*, before moving to the *Surrey Weekly Press* and then the *Surrey County Herald*. It was an exciting time to be a journalist, and Tony was working as a reporter at the time of the abdication crisis, when Britain was rocked by the news that Edward VIII was leaving the throne to marry the American divorcee, Wallis Simpson.

With the Second World War on the horizon, Tony joined the Territorial Army in 1939, and was called up two weeks later to serve in the 48th Royal Tank Regiment. Years later, Tony told his family that he was struck by just how young many of his colleagues were. “He told me a lot of the people who joined up were only 15 or 16,” says Andrew. “They lied about their ages so they could go and fight the Germans. He thought they were brave boys because they just wanted to help out.” Tony’s war service took him to Suffolk, where he stayed in billets at Glevering Hall near Woodbridge and Orwell Park in Nacton, where tanks were being waterproofed before being loaded onto ships at Felixstowe.

In 1944, D-Day arrived and Tony landed with thousands of other British soldiers to secure the beachhead on Gold Beach. He was a signals officer in charge of communications for his regiment. On his 100th birthday, Tony remembered the day to this newspaper. He said: “We had some hairy battles in the landing area, Arromanches, Caen and Bayeux. I was with the regiment all the time as we moved through Europe and Germany to Berlin, where I spent my last six months in the Army before being demobbed. I was so thankful that I came through it all and I was never wounded.”

Tony was made a Chevalier of the Order of Légion d’Honneur for the role he played in liberating France from Nazi tyranny. On the 70th anniversary of D-Day, Tony returned to France with his sons and son-in-law.

We went to the Normandy beaches with Dad for D-Day, when the Queen was there,” remembers Andrew. “He enjoyed it, but he was very sad. He wanted to go there, but it was hard. We looked after him. He was feted wherever he went. Because he had his regalia on, everyone wanted to speak to him and take photographs. He was very well appreciated. They said, thank you for what you did in the war. You saved us.”

After the horrors of war, Tony threw himself into his career and family life. During his time in Suffolk, he met Audrey, and the couple married and had four children, first Stephen, and then Andrew, Elizabeth and Vivienne. He was, Andrew says, “a very good father.”



The family moved around to follow Tony's flourishing career. "He liked to move about," recalls Andrew. "I was born in Ipswich, and then he went to work for the *Birmingham Post*, which was night work as the paper came out in the morning. "Then he got a job with the Standard Triumph Motor Co, where he edited their paper. But then he realised that wasn't journalism for him, it wasn't enough."

It was at this time that Ralph Wilson, the managing editor of the *EADT*, wrote to Tony, asking him to return to the *Evening Star* as deputy editor. "Dad jumped at the chance, and that's when we all moved back from Birmingham to Ipswich." One year later, in 1965, Tony became the editor, and held this position until he retired in 1978. "He was a very fine journalist," says Andrew. "He would never be compromised."

Tony saw many big-news stories over his years as editor, from gruesome murders to Ipswich Town's FA Cup win in 1978. "One of the biggest things I can remember him doing was, before the Orwell Bridge was built, Dad had to go down to London and talk on behalf of the *Evening Star* newspaper to talk about what was being planned," says Andrew. "Dad pushed for a tunnel, but they said no, we're going to build a bridge. Dad did say afterwards that he'd probably been wrong, because he thought the Orwell Bridge was absolutely marvellous."



Tony remained a journalist well after he had retired. "He'd come and stay with us, and the first thing he'd do was watch the news. We'd say, OK, Dad, we'll watch the 6 o'clock news. But then at 7 o'clock he'd want to watch it again. I'd say, 'Dad, we've just seen the news!' 'But I'm a newspaper man', he'd say, 'that's my job!' You learned not to give him your

newspaper, because you couldn't read it afterwards. The pages would be all over the place! He lived and breathed newspapers."

Tony also enjoyed attending Kesgrave Community Centre's Active Adult sessions to improve health and wellbeing. The group brought in a special cake for Tony's 100th birthday.

When he turned 103, Tony was surprised by a visit from members of his old regiment, the Royal Tank Regiment. Retired Captain Dean Hutton said at the time: "We are family and Tony is part of that. Last September, Tony celebrated his 105th birthday, surrounded by his family at Grove Court Care Home in Woodbridge after a long separation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The day coincided with the happy news that Tony's youngest great-grandchild had been born in the early hours of the morning.

Tony passed away aged 105 on January 23, 2022. He leaves behind thirteen grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Again thank you to *Archant Press* for permission to republish. A direct link with more photos is here:

<https://www.ipswichstar.co.uk/news/obituaries/remembering-former-editor-tony-pyatt-8650890>



Photos: All are courtesy of *Archant Press*

Tony Pyatt, the former Star Editor, celebrating his 100th birthday at his home in Waldringfield. - Page 9
Tony joined other veterans for the Stars of Suffolk awards in 2019. Photo: Britany Woodman - above
Tony Pyatt receiving pins for his 103rd birthday from Lieutenant Tank Commander Kyle Moore who is in the same rank as Tony Picture: SARAH LUCY BROWN - above

Discounts

There are several organisations that offer discounts to Veterans. More info to follow in next issue.

<https://www.rewardsforforces.co.uk/forces-area.php> and <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>

Beryl Shepperdley wrote to say “Sadly my husband Bob Shepperdley died 13th January. In the years we were together he enjoyed meeting members at a London meeting and at a March 8th Reunion in Bournemouth.”

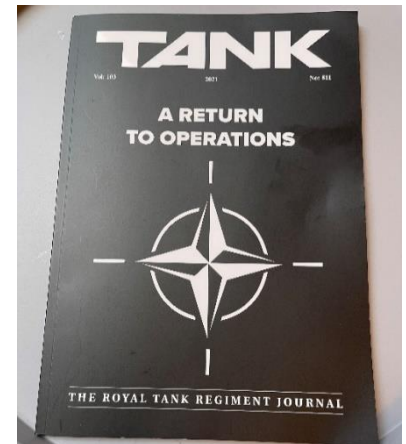
Beryl was a long-standing stalwart of the Committee and Newsletter Editor when she was a member of the branch and at that time married to the late John Rickson, a long-term member and Chair of London Branch. We extend our sympathy to her and her and Bob’s extended family.

Bob [Swiniarski] spoke to Beryl on the 15th of February and she asked to send her very best wishes to those in the branch especially those she knows.

Tank Magazine 2021 Now out



news from HHQ as well as documenting Regiment activities. It is an excellent read and is only £14.00 to UK addresses and £20.00 elsewhere. Several pages have items from London Branch and 8RTR. A form is available from HHQ should you wish to purchase a copy. Please send form directly to HHQ.



Tank Magazine is an excellent read and features many RTR branches and

Eddie Parkin Remembers

Eddie joined up in 1947 trained with 8th and 5th RAC then joined Royal Scots Greys 1948-50. He used to go to the 8RTR reunions and sometimes the 5RTR and started going about 20 years ago to Bournemouth 8RTR Reunions. People he remembers are Rose Ancorn [RIP]– and Ron Calcutt. His last reunion was at the Trouville.

Back when Ed was in the training regiment in Catterick for about 5/6 months he was friends with Stan Goodyear of the 8th and someone called Kirby and then was sent out to Germany. He was a gunner operator in Centurions and at that time was with Fred Smallwood.

Eddie eventually finished up in stores. Before the army he had worked in a garage in Shepherds Bush attending to the petrol pumps, car washing and changing oil. ‘That will be good experience for Stores’. they said! When he went to Germany, he drove a lorry out loaded with spare parts with Lieutenant Hanny.

‘We did a lot of manoeuvres there and a lot of radio work in code – a sliding code changed every day – [SIDEX?]. Captain Parker pulled me when I radioed out of order! Parker was a Major in the war. In Luneburg we would go to Belsen sometimes to do firing on what is now Hohne ranges.’

In 1949 Ed was in a patched-up Comet - it had a hole the size of a small plate which had been patched up. He often wondered what happened to the crew of that particular tank.

After the army Ed became a heating and maintenance engineer. He contacted old pals from his Suez days and met up with Fred Smallwood and Gerald Potter from the Greys. Ed attended the annual dinner at the Union Jack Club and then marched in the Annual Cavalry Parade in Hyde Park. At those reunions they took over the dining room, 100 plus blokes.

Regrettably he doesn't get around much these days as the old legs are not so good. Ed is a bit of a Bionic Man – over the years he has had four major ops: 2 new knees, a new shoulder and more plus a carpal tunnel op.

Notes from a phone call last year with Eddie Parkin who cheekily said Bob sounds like a right cockney. [No Eddie, Sarf London, Bob was born at the Elephant and Castle! – Ed.]

2022 Meetings and Events for your Diary

Please note that Spooners informal Lunch get-togethers are currently on hold.

March

Saturday 12th 1400hrs: AGM followed by Branch ZOOM Meeting – Zoom open from 1.30-4.00pm pm
You should be a paid-up Member to Vote.

Friday 11 to Sunday 13 2RTR Reunion Wyboston Lakes Fri £101 double – Bed & Breakfast Organise own Evening Meal Friday night (at Olive Tree) **Sat £137 double includes meal** if places still available organised by Phil Burton. Saturday Dinner Guest £24 pp
Wyboston Lakes Resort is just off the A1, close to Cambridge, Bedford and Milton Keynes.
Bookings 00333 7007 667 or stay in Premier Inn St Neots, opposite.

Friday 18 to Monday 21 8RTR Reunion Bournemouth Trouville Hotel £49.50 pp/pn - Bed Breakfast & Evening Meal with Evening Entertainment [Add Thursday and Sunday for £45 pp pn]
Saturday Dinner Guest £23.95 pp
Sunday RTR Church Service, followed by Curry Lunch by coach to Bovington
There will also be a memorial service for all who have been lost over the last two years.

April

Saturday 9th 1400hrs: Branch Meeting – venue to be confirmed

Saturday 23 0900hrs-1800hrs: Tiger Day at Tank Museum – see Tiger 131 in action, the worlds only running Tiger 1, other WWII-themed Tanks in Action – including German and Allied vehicles

May

Saturday 14th 1400hrs: Branch Meeting – venue to be confirmed

June [Four day Bank Holiday weekend Thursday 2 June to Sunday 5 June]

Thursday 2 June Trooping the Colour, to be held on the 70th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's coronation.

Sunday 5 June Platinum Jubilee Pageant, including a military ceremonial parade down the Mall to Buckingham Palace.

20-25 June Armed Forces Week, culminating in Armed Forces Day on the Saturday with the national event scheduled to take place in Scarborough

Friday 24th - Sunday 26th. Tankfest 2022 tickets are now available from the Tank Museum

July

Thursday 21 July Beating Retreat at Helles Barracks, Catterick, rounding off a two-week Corp of Drums concentration. Regular, Reservist and Cadet musicians will be taking part.

October

Friday 14 to Monday 17 Bournemouth Weekender Trouville Hotel £45 p.p.n

Bed Breakfast & Evening Meal with Evening Entertainment [Add Thursday & Sunday for £45 pp pn]
Guests welcome for Saturday night Dinner £23.95 pp

RAC Church Service at RHC, date to be confirmed

November

Friday 18 to Monday 22 Cambrai 105 – Trip to Cambrai

Sunday 20 November March to the Cenotaph

Volunteer needed to take over as Newsletter Editor and articles sought.

The frequency of the newsletter will return to 4-6 times per year in 2022. Would you like to take on the important role of writing and editing the newsletter? Please contact me or the Branch Committee if you would like to volunteer or contribute an article (or three).

Sue Hill, Newsletter Editor