

## The Post War Years (1945-2012)

### Royal Navy (RN)

**Sidney (Sid) Robert MUNSON** (b1934) Leading Airman.

He was born in West Ham, evacuated to the Minehead area during the war then joined the Fleet Air Arm as a Boy Entry aged 17. His father served in the RN in WWI and eldest brother, George, in WWII. His elder brother, Ernie, joined the RN two years before Sid (see note\*) and his younger brother, Brian, served in the RAF.

He served on the Aircraft Carriers *HMS Illustrious* - at the same time as his brother - then *HMS Bulwark* and lastly *HMS Eagle* which took a very active part in the Suez Crisis (1956). He was one of the small team of men highly qualified as Pilot's Mates who were totally responsible for ensuring their pilot's aircraft was ready for combat.

He was very interested in sport and was a keen boxer as a boy (Youth Championships, Wembley, 1949) and continued to box for his ship in the navy.

On leaving the RN in 1959 he moved to North Oxfordshire where his wife's family lived (Brenda) and then eventually to Deddington. After a short period driving horses on the Stilgoes' farm he became a Fireman in the Banbury Fire Station but also worked at Deddington Station occasionally.

Note\*: Sid's brother Ernie served as a Boy Seaman on *HMS Amethyst* (1949). She was fired on by Communist Forces and then made a run down the Yangtze river still under fire - a story told in the film *Yangtze Incident* starring Richard Todd.

### Royal Marines

**Barry John Kinley SMITH** (b1954) Sergeant.

Served in 41 Commando from June 1972 to June 1981. They were the first British troops to clear base areas when the Turks invaded 1973-1974. See also page 46.

**Jesse Nigel SMITH** (b1957) Stoker (RN) then a Marine.

He joined the Royal Navy in 1972 just 16 years old. He served on *HMS Russell*, a Blackwood class anti-submarine frigate employed on home sea service which included the Icelandic 'Cod War' (1972-76). In 1973 he transferred to the Royal Marines, 3 Commando. He carried out Amphibious Training at the RM unit in Poole, Dorset, and then was based at Lympstone, Devon, where he served until he left the service in 1980. See also page 46.

### Army

**Terence (Terry) Harry BLISS** (b1949) Trooper.

9/12 Royal Lancers, Armoured Regiment. Joined in 1970. Served in Germany, Northern Ireland and Canada (briefly) as a driver and left in 1973.

**John Adrian Claude FORTESCUE** (1927-2004) National Service 1946-48. Private.

Royal Corps of Signals. He was a motor-bike Despatch Rider and a member of the 1947 Display Team. He subsequently moved to live in the USA and Canada where he died. See his Personal Story about growing up in wartime Deddington on page 65.

**George HARRIS** (b1931) National Service 1949-51. Sapper.

He served with 11 Field Squadron, Royal Engineer. His Personal Story is on page 65.

**Michael (Mike) Edward O'NEILL** (1930-93) National Service 1948-50. Private. He served with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME). He qualified as a Master Carpenter and Joiner. While in the REME he also developed a passion for motorbikes and became a crack shot. See also page 42.

**Aubrey Frederick Harold PLASTED** (b1929) National Service 1947-49. Sapper. Royal Engineers. He left school at 14 to work on Welford's chicken farm then became a Great Western Railway (GWR) porter at Aynho Junction and Park stations. On being called up in September 1947 it was therefore inevitable that he would be sent to the Royal Engineers railway training facility in Longmore, Hampshire, where he learnt plate laying followed by mines and demolition and building Bailey Bridges in Portland, Dorset.

In April 1948 he was shipped out to the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt where he very happily ran the Quartermasters' stores until his time was up in September 1949.

Back in Clifton, he rejoined the GWR and, in 1954, became a signaller manning the box at Aynho Junction. He and his wife Agnes (née Moreby) married in 1955 and lived in the Railway Cottages at Aynho for 28 years. They now live in Bodicote.



**Aubrey Plasted 1948**

**George William SMITH** (b 1928) Private. See also page 45.

**Thomas (Tom) Lee SMITH** (1928-2012) Private. See also page 46.

**Ross WESTCOTT** (b1988) Lance Corporal. See also page 45.

### **Royal Air Force (RAF)**

**Elizabeth CARTER** née Kent. Pilot Officer.

Elizabeth joined the WRAF on a short service commission in 1953, and after recruit training at Wilmslow, Manchester, was sent on an administration course to Bircham Newton in Norfolk. This was followed by three months' training at RAF Hawkinge, following which she was commissioned as a Pilot Officer in 1954, and then posted to RAF Netheravon as Accounts Officer. On marrying in 1956, she had to resign her commission because at that time married women were not allowed to remain in the service.

**Iain Roderic GILLESPIE MBE** (b1941) Squadron Leader.

He was commissioned as a Pilot Officer in 1963. His experiences flying in Shackleton and Nimrod anti-submarine aircraft during the 'Cold War' can be read on page 33.

**Edward Peter (Pete) SMITH** (b1929) National Service. Aircraftman 1<sup>st</sup> Class. Flight Mechanic (Engines). He served at RAF Cosford.

**Richard Peter TERRY** (b1929) Flying Officer.

He joined the RAF in 1947 on leaving school and gained his wings in 1950. His subsequent career flying B29s, Lincoln bombers and later as a commercial pilot can be read on page 49.

**Donald (Don) Perce WALKER** (b1934) National Service 1952-54. Aircraftman.

Initial training was at RAF Hednesford and he was then posted to RAF Rudloe Manor, HQ Fighter Command, where he was in charge of the bedding store. He managed to get home most weekends to play football for Deddington in the Castle Grounds. His pay was £1.16.0d a week of which £1 was sent directly to his mother so that, if anything happened to him during his NS, the ministry would be obliged to pay £1 a week to his mother until his two years had expired.

**Roy Gardener WALKER** (1932-2000) Corporal.

He was a member of the Deddington section of the Air Training Corps from 1949 to 1951 in which he was promoted to Sergeant. He joined the RAF Police in 1951 and signed on for four years. After initial training at Pershore he was then stationed at Hopton-on-Sea, then RAF Sutton-on-Hull where he met his wife Jean who now lives in Banbury.



## Royal Observer Corps Nuclear Monitoring Post RAF Barford St John

The following information is additional to the article on p.105 in the book. It has been provided by John Giddings MBE, National Chairman of the Burma Star Association (served in the RAF in the Far East 1941-46), a member of the ROC (1950 to 1988) and a former Mayor of Banbury (1994-95). He was a Leading Observer (Instructor) in the crew of RAF Barford St John's underground post from 1979 to 1988 under the command of Bill Dunkley (Chief Observer) who lived (as he still does) in Banbury.

Three pieces of monitoring equipment were located on the surface within easy reach of the top of the vertical access shaft to the underground bunker. A member of the crew had to exit the underground post in order to operate/read them.

- A ground zero indicator would record the direction and height of any nuclear burst by burning an image of the flash on photographic paper within a dustbin shaped container.
- A blast strength meter would record the maximum pressure wave in pounds per square inch above the post.

- A nuclear radiation meter would measure the level of radioactivity in Roentgens as the fallout cloud passed overhead. Post crew also wore individual dosimeters and if the level reached 75 Roentgens they were to return underground for protection.

The comments that follow are entirely mine, based on personal knowledge obtained while serving in the Royal Navy's Polaris Force in the 1970s.

The post would have been a death sentence if there was any severe nuclear fallout. While the underground bunker had an air re-circulation system, the access shaft did not have any sort of air-lock.

The nearby parishes of Deddington, Barford and Adderbury would have been alerted to a nuclear attack by the firing of three rockets (similar to lifeboat 'Maroons') which had different sized charges such that the noise they made on exploding would be a longer bang followed by two shorter bangs - the sonic equivalent of the letter D in Morse code. One wonders how many residents of our Parish in the 1970s and 1980s knew that three maroons were a vital piece of information!

Another piece of equipment was more familiar; the WWII sound of the 'All-Clear' siren indicated that it was safe to come out from whatever cover had been sought. As long lasting radioactive fallout was an inevitable product of a nuclear explosion - even an air burst - the time before the All-Clear was sounded could have been weeks.

It is fair to say that the cost and efficacy of protecting even Emergency Services such as the ROC must have been known by the Government to be largely a waste of time if nuclear weapons were fired. While the protection of several feet of concrete above the bunker might have meant some survived it was doubtful that they could have out-waited the period until radiation levels fell. It was not for nothing that the UK policy of retaliating to a nuclear attack with its own counter attack (using the Polaris Missile Submarine Force in which I served) was called 'Mutually Assured Destruction' - or MAD for short.

As recently as 1989 the ROC issued a training handbook for use by Barford and other similar posts. It contained full details of the physical and radiological damage that could be expected from nuclear explosions. It makes sober reading.

The Corps was not stood down until 1992.

## Police Service

**Arthur Geoffrey (Geoff) TODD** (b1939) Police Superintendent. Surrey Constabulary 1955-1978. Thames Valley Police 1979-87 as Area Commander for North Oxfordshire based at Banbury. On retirement from the Police Service he worked for the next 10 years at Cherwell District Council as the District Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO) during the Cold War Period. The District Emergency Centre (Nuclear Bunker) under Banbury Town Hall (p.26) was under his control.

He has lived in Deddington since 1983. He was a Parish Councillor 1990-2011 and was both Vice Chairman and Chairman. He has been a member of the Market Management Group since it was formed in 2001 and Chairman since 2008.

## Fire Service - early 1950s

Despite the poor state of the original photograph Colin Robinson has managed to recover enough image to recognize faces if you know the names; fortunately these came with the photograph.



*Photograph and names courtesy of Albert Humphries*

*(Back row l to r)*

**Perce Humphries** - worked at the Northern Aluminium factory in Banbury. He appears to be wearing a WWII army helmet and cape?

**Alf Williams** - Painter who worked for Douglas Hopcraft.

**Albert Ray** - Shepherd for the Belchers at Nell Bridge farm.

**George Busby** - Carpenter.

**Stanley Hall** (Chief Officer) - Publican of the King's Arms and Hall's Coaches.

**Albert Sanders** - worked at the car works in Cowley.

*(Front row l to r)*

**Fred Davies** - Publican of the Red Lion and an engineer at RAF Croughton and Barford.

**John Harry Cox** - Mechanic with firm called Electrical Installations in Bicester.

**Ernie Callow** - worked at the Council Yard.

**Jack Callow** - Coal merchant.

**Ben Kerridge** - Coach driver/mechanic with Stanley Hall's company and gardener/chauffeur to Mrs Collin (p.14).

## Cold War Bunker - Banbury

*Geoff Todd*

'The District Emergency Centre (Nuclear Bunker or DEC) under Banbury Town Hall was my responsibility from 1987 to 1997. It was constructed in the existing basement of Banbury Town Hall during the 1980s<sup>6</sup> as part of the Prime Minister's (Margaret Thatcher) concerns over the Cold War situation. Each of the five District Councils had similar or new build facilities as well as the County Council's County Emergency Centre at Wood Eaton Manor. It was designed to withstand nuclear radiation and to house a team who would help the population recover from the effects of a nuclear attack.

The DECs were linked together by a telecommunications network. Villages and towns in Cherwell, including Deddington, and throughout the county were encouraged to have teams of Community Volunteers (CVs) and a Parish/Local Plan. Group Captain James Marmion RAF (book p.103), Doreen Smith and Daphne Lambert led Deddington's efforts. They, along with CVs from other communities, attended regular training sessions in the DEC. Contact was maintained with the Royal Observer Corps and the civilian uniformed organisations (Fire, Police, Ambulance, etc.) as well as local First Aid, Search and Rescue and Civil Aid organisations locally. Contact with Military Liaison Officers also occurred.

Then, as the threat of nuclear war receded, it was realised that much of what had been put in place for war conditions could actually be applied to peace time emergencies (severe weather conditions, road, rail or plane crashes, etc.). The Lockerbie Air Disaster occurred while we DEPOs were planning an exercise involving a similar scenario.

We had logged an enormous amount of detail of facilities and resources available in the District and County. The DEC and salaries of DEPOs and their staff were paid through a Home Office grant. This grant continued even after the Civil Defence aspects diminished. The DEPO role evolved into an Emergency Planning and Public Safety role in which crime prevention, town centre CCTV and similar initiatives were to the fore.'

<sup>6</sup> The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) staged a protest in Banbury at the opening of the bunker on 26 February 1987.