

Service History of
681887 CAA VERRINDER. R C (ROGER)
7th May 1956 to 6th November 1973

1956 -1959	RAF Halton	Technical Training Command	Apprentice Training (Engines)
1959 -1973	RAF St Mawgan	Coastal Command	Avro Shackleton servicing

RANK WHEN DISCHARGED (MEDICAL)
Junior Technician

SOME RECOLLECTIONS AND MEMORIES

The following is a collection of memories that have been compiled after Roger's eldest son Ian discovered the 83rd website and, purely by chance, was amazed to find a photograph of his father among the 83rd Engine Fitters (clearly visible in the centre front with another bloke sat on his lap!). Ian contacted me in the hope of finding out more about his father's time in the RAF and to obtain more pictures because the family have only a few.

Sadly, Roger passed away in his early 30's when Ian and his younger brother were still very young, so their quest is simply to find out more about their dad and to fill in as many gaps as possible. Needless to say, our members were very willing to help the family to achieve their objective.

Although I knew Roger at RAF Halton (I was also an Engine Fitter) I don't recall having a lot of contact with him other than at workshops and schools. We do know that Roger was in 2 Wing but I don't know which Squadron. In the 83rd Engine Fitters photo the chap sitting on Roger's knee is Brian Fairclough and in the Graduation Programme it shows that Brian and Roger both won their School Colours for representing RAF Halton at football (the only ones!). Brian was a goalkeeper but I don't recall Roger's playing position and the skills that got him his colours. Let's just say that Apprentices who won their school colours at sport were indeed the cream of the bunch.

The following are extracts from various 'e' mails between the family and our members as we gathered more information about Roger.

Johnnie Walker (C/A/A Walker, Pipe-Major 2(A) Wing - they used to call me 'stripey'!!) recalls:

"I remember Rog Verrinder very well. He was one of the 'crew' when we took a boat on the Norfolk Broads in Easter 1958 I think. There was self, Dave Lethbridge, Rog, and John 'Haj' Brabrook. Being almost experienced (I came from a fishing village in Scotland) I was the Captain (at least I thought so). Because he was an engine fitter, Rog was detailed to be i/c the engine. The fact that he had never worked on maritime engines was neither here nor there. At least he was engines!!

I don't know how I knew but I was aware some time ago that Rog had passed away. I must say I had forgotten all about it and I may not have mentioned it to our website keeper. He was in 2 Squadron 2(A) Wing as I recall, but he may even have been in 1 Squadron. He certainly wasn't in 3 Squadron 2 Wing.

Ian responded:

It is always nice to hear any anecdotes or information about my father and I would be very happy for you to include my father in the 'In Memoriam' section of the website, and any other section for that matter. I would also be happy to receive any anecdotes or photographs relating to him that may come in through your members. For my part I have written below what information I have relating to him, please feel free to reproduce any of it should you wish to.

Dad came from Harlesden in London. His only claim to fame from his early days was that he was good mates with Johnny Kidd (of Johnny Kidd and the Pirates fame)! I think dad joined the RAF straight from school. Obviously he was at RAF Halton from 1956 until 1959. Apparently, according to my mother anyway, he played the Last Post at the cenotaph on one occasion whilst serving in the RAF - would this have been whilst at Halton do you think?

He was taken ill whilst serving at RAF St. Mawgan, his first posting I believe. My mother tells me that he spent some time in hospital and was eventually sent back to Halton. He was diagnosed with Colitis and invalided out of the RAF. Having to leave the RAF was a big blow to him and he had a number of jobs before he was able to find a position at the National Gas Turbine Establishment at Farnborough. He was still at the NGTE when he was diagnosed with bowel cancer. Unfortunately, he was not able to beat the disease and finally passed away on the 6th November 1973, aged 32.

I was 9 and my brother was 3 years old at the time of our father's death, so our personal recollections of him are a bit sketchy. However, I do know that he was a talented footballer, as you say. My mother has a number of clippings from the local newspaper; apparently he was the star striker at Hartley Witney for a while in the 1960s. One chap from the 83rd Entry that dad did keep in contact with was John Cheesbrough (681888). Mum says that they were good mates and I myself remember visiting him as a lad. The last known location we had for John was Oxfordshire, quite near RAF Benson. He was still in the RAF in the early 1970s.

I spoke to my mum today and she tells me that she met dad whilst he was in his last year at Halton. She remembers attending the graduation dinner and also the 21st birthday party of one of the other chaps. She thinks she has photos of both and will try and dig them out. If they're any good I'll send some copies to you when I get hold of them. I do recognise one of the official group photographs on the website. I think I can spot dad in it but I'm not certain. Dad's sister is still alive and I think she had a copy of the picture. Next time I visit her I will check. Thanks for your help in filling in some gaps in our family history - it's most appreciated.

Johnnie Walker replied:

Your Dad certainly played the trumpet at the Cenotaph whilst at Halton. In those days, Chiefy Bailey used to take a party of trumpeters from Halton to the Cenotaph where they played the Last Post. In one year your Dad must have been in the party. The fact that the Apprentices played the Last Post on the Trumpet at the Cenotaph was jealously guarded. I think the Royal Marines got to play Reveille.

Anyone who is a trumpeter knows that the Last Post is the longer and more important of those two trumpet calls. I had forgotten until you mentioned it that your Dad played the trumpet. On the boat we were on in Easter 1958 John 'Haj' Brabrook also played the trumpet, I think that is why Haj and your Dad were mates. Dave Lethbridge also played the trumpet and I was a piper. So we were all in the station band together and of course we were all in 2(A) Wing.

I shall never forget one amusing story from Remembrance Sunday. Chiefy Bailey took the customary party of trumpeters to the Cenotaph one year, and it was only when he was in London and getting ready to take up position when Chiefy Bailey realised that in his haste he had forgotten to have a shave!!! The day was saved by an RSM in the Guards I think it was who lent Chiefy Bailey a razor!!!! Memories are made of this!!

Ian responded:

Thanks for the anecdote. I never really thought of my old feller as playing the trumpet. I've attended the Last Post at Ypres on many occasions and I've always thought that it must be terrifying playing such an important piece in front of all those people. Playing it at the Cenotaph must be very stressful.

That's a great story about the Chief. You ought to put a few of the old tales on the website. One yarn will always bring out a few more decent memories.

Ivor John recalls:

Being an Engine Fitter, I of course knew your dad at Halton. I remember him well. When I started to bring together the ex 83rd members and doing all the research I could via various means to trace people, your surname should have been easy to locate Roger. The mystery why I could not find Roger has sadly been solved. I am pleased you decided to contact us as it is important to remember mates and friends.

I was never a member of the band fraternity at Halton like the two John's who have already replied. However, I do have one trumpet story to tell. It would be the Saturday prior to the 1958 Cenotaph parade. Bandmaster Bailey was rehearsing the corp. of trumpeters outside the Maitland Gym and I was passing by going back to my block. They finished playing and Bailey said "Great, play like that tomorrow and there will be no problem. But remember this, bang goes the gun, up goes the pigeons, down comes the shit but you keep playing". I have never forgotten that as it made me laugh at the time. I assume from what has been said previously that Roger must have been in that group that day. Do keep in touch as we are now an 83rd family.

Ian responded:

I've just been speaking to my younger brother about the contact we've had with Dad's colleagues from the 83rd and, as he pointed out to me, you're the first chaps we've spoken to in our adult life who knew our father. Everybody else we've spoken to about him has been family. Thanks for taking the time to write.

We both love the story about practicing for the 1958 Cenotaph parade and think that you ought to put it on the website. I will apologise in advance because I can see myself using that one, it's most amusing. Rest assured I will give you a name check.

Brian Fairclough recalls:

Your father and I represented the 'Halton Apprentices' at soccer. I also knew him through our training together as engine fitters, and it is strange that I have often thought, "I wonder what happened to Roger in the years since our ways parted". Now, sadly, I know.

The Halton Apprentices football team played in what was then known as the 'Hellenic League', I don't know what that equates to today. We played against teams such as Staines, Stokenchurch, Princes Risborough, and Thame. Your father was an inside forward, but I can't for the life of me remember if he was left or right sided, but he would probably be known now as an attacking midfield. I have in my possession a photo of the team prior to a home match which I am happy for you to have.

Ian responded to Brian:

It is great to have a few more details of my father's background. I'd certainly love to have a copy of the photograph but I don't want to deprive you of it. Do you have access to a scanner?

Since making contact with you all, my mother has been sifting through her old photographs. She tells me that she has found some of the graduation parade, although she says it's hard to pick out any individuals in it. She has also found a photograph from a 21st birthday party held for one of the apprentices. The photograph has the name of the chap concerned on it. I will scan it and pass it on to you all. Mum says that the chap was good looking! Does it ring any bells? Thanks once again for sharing your memories.

Brian responded:

Only too glad to help you build a picture of your father. The photo I have is a copy of one I already have, which you may have with pleasure. Can't shed any light on the 21st Birthday bash, and anyway in those days most of us were still in our late teens and we were all good looking!!

Ian responded:

The photograph arrived yesterday and it's a cracker, thank you very much for letting me have it. You certainly look a formidable bunch.

I've been to see my mum today and she has let me have the photographs that she has from the Halton era. I've scanned the ones that might be of interest to you in case you want to use them on the website. One photo (below) is from a dance at Halton in 1959 (according to my mum). She has identified the following people on it (left to right): ? - Stan Dudley's sister - Peggy (Stan Dudley's mum) - Stan Dudley - ? - Marlene Moon (later Verrinder) - Roger Verrinder - ? - ?



[Click-on image to enlarge](#)

The other photographs are from a trip to Switzerland made by my dad with some mates from Halton. It was before my mum met him, which is a good job as there are some women of unknown origin in one photo! John Cheesbrough is the only other person my mum could name in the photos (seated on the right at the table). John was the best man at their wedding. Feel free to use the photo's as you see fit.



Click-on images to enlarge

John Cheesbrough recalls:

We were all great family friends for a while; Rog's death was a great shock. We were in touch for a while after, but lost each other about the time they all moved: Rog's parents went to Welwyn somewhere, and Marlene remarried. I doubt I have any photos of those days, but I'm sure I can supply quite a lot of information. Yes, I was Rog's Best Man; and incidentally Rog was godfather to my son! (Who's now a captain on 747's flying out of Dubai - cheeky sod.)

Resulting from this stream of correspondence, John Cheesbrough and Ian have been in touch to renew their family links. A great story.