

# YOUR MEMORIES

Do you have memories of *your* past? They don't have to be from the Thirties or Forties or earlier. Share them with our readers. Contact us with your memories on 204020, or email [news@cleethorpeschronicle.co.uk](mailto:news@cleethorpeschronicle.co.uk)

## A terrible accident down on the beach



TONY Fleming, *left*, of New Zealand, wrote to the Chronicle about his late father, Flt Lt E G Fleming.

"I wonder if you would be interested in a little anecdote written by my late father, Ft Lt Edward Greer Fleming, Royal New Zealand Airforce, in his wartime diaries during the Second World War.

"He was stationed at the time in 550 Squadron, Royal Airforce, in North Killingholme, near Grimsby, piloting Lancaster bombers, after approximately three years as a flying instructor on Airspeed Oxfords. This instructing role took him to a number of different airfields around England.

"On this particular day, around May 9, 1945, he and a number of his Lancaster crew took a taxi to Immingham Docks, then an antique train to Grimsby and on to Cleethorpes Beach.

"While at Cleethorpes he helped a young boy who had found a cordite cartridge and, thinking it was a 'firework', held it to a small fire that he and some of his friends had lit. The result was an explosion that blew off the boy's thumb and a

finger.

"My father and one of his crew assisted the young boy until an ambulance arrived.

"I have attached the transcript from his diary, which gives the story in his own words and also a photo of he and some his crew, taken about the same time. My father is the one in the middle of the group wearing the officer's hat. Names of the crew can be provided.

"The reason I have contacted you with this tale, 70 years later, is that that boy, or someone who remembers him, may still be alive (although rather old now) and perhaps wondered who had assisted him on that fateful day in wartime England.

"I felt that it would make an interesting story in your local paper."

**Tony Fleming,  
Wellington, New Zealand.**

### APPROX MAY 9, 1945

“Taxi to Immingham Docks then an antique train to Grimsby by 4pm. It was a much better day, sunny and warm.

We (Ken, Joe, Fritz and I) – his crew – went back to the same cafe and by luck, not arrangement, met the girls again.

Our next move was by bus to Cleethorpes Beach. It was lovely out there. Strolling the promenade.

We thought of going boating on the artificial lake but finished up just strolling on 'till we dropped on the beach in the sunshine to smoke and talk and gaze at the sea.

And then came tragedy. A bang on the beach across the dunes, people looking, a little boy of 12 running with what a moment before was a good hand now dripping red held out before him while some clot of a man in a lovely grey suit ran on ahead – to get a doctor no doubt.

But why couldn't he have taken the kid instead of leaving him to run 'till he staggered and fell on the beach?

Fritz and I were longer than we should have been in realising what was wrong but we still got there ahead of the other gapers.

The poor little beggar had blown his left hand to pieces taking his thumb and I think a finger off. The amazing thing was his courage and he didn't faint, worse luck.

I grabbed the pressure point and kept him from looking at his hand while he told us how "fed up" he was and that he should have gone to school.

Eventually a Wren came up with a first aid kit and after an age of messing about an ambulance, not to mention wretched enquiring "cops".

Apparently the kiddies had



Flt Lt Fleming's crew as pictured, dated May 1945 at North Killingholme, left to right: Sgt Joe Ward RAF mid-upper air gunner, Flt Lt Fleming, Flt Sgt Ken Derwent RAF navigator (at back), Flt Sgt Alan Morgan RAF bomb aimer, WO Fritz Hansen RCAF wireless operator, Flt Sgt E F (Ted) Groom, Flt Engineer. (W L Howell, rear air gunner absent).



Left: The Cafe Dansant was a popular haunt for locals and servicemen allowed off their bases, though on this particular evening it was 'very muggy indeed'.

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found a "firework", probably a cordite cartridge and had held it to a little fire with disastrous results. Two others were injured in a less violent way but bad enough.

And so finally the panic died down and Fritz and I, a couple

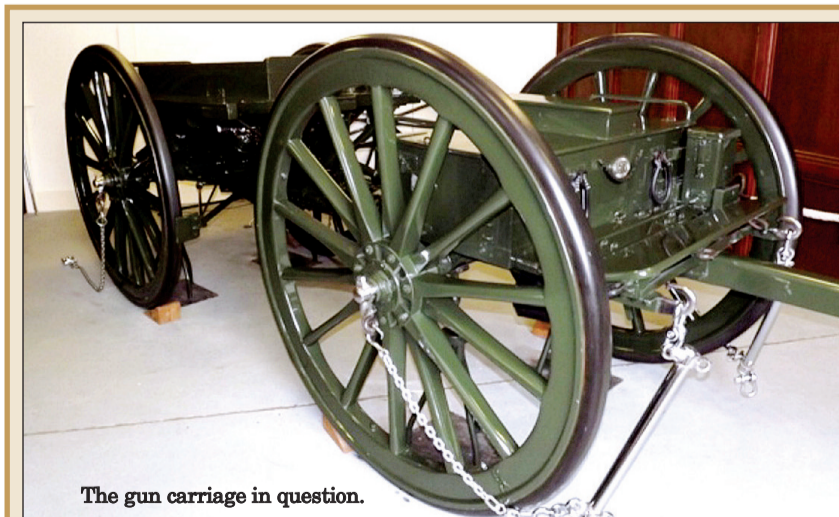
of slightly shaken escorts, returned to our ladies and took up our strolling.

We had tea in a small private hotel and went to the Cafe Dansant until 10pm. It was pleasant but very muggy indeed inside.

Back into town by bus, a stroll in the park and home with the girls. Got a taxi to camp, crowded with Joe and Ken and six or so others by 12.30 to find that we were due to eat at 1.30am before a day-break trip to Brussels.

The trip EG Fleming was referring to would have been, I suspect, the "Operation Exodus" mission to repatriate POWs on May 10, 1945.

More info, stories and pictures relating to Edward G Fleming can be found on the 550 Squadron website on the following link: <http://www.550squadronassociation.org.uk/documents/public/Lancasters-Crews/FILtEGFleming/index.php>



The gun carriage in question.

## Connection to Churchill

FEW people will be aware, but the hubs – or pipe boxes – for the gun carriage which transported the coffin of Sir Winston Church in 1965 were manufactured in Cleethorpes.

We have local resident Peter Matthews to thank for this information, and he should know because he helped to make them!

The 50th anniversary of the great man's death and funeral was commemorated last month.

Mr Matthews worked for a Cleethorpes engineering company called Torbinia which had offices and workshops in various parts of

town including Mill Road and Cosgrove Street. The company was owned by a Richard Oldham.

He said the order came several months before Churchill's death because the Ministry of Defence suddenly realised it did not have a gun carriage in working condition if it was suddenly faced with organising a state funeral.

"The original order was for 60 pipe boxes, but they asked us to supply eight of them in a hurry in case they were needed at short notice. As it happened Sir Winston died fairly soon afterwards."

The actual gun carriage was built

around the beginning of the 20th century, but needed updating.

Mr Matthews said the hubs, which were 56 inches in diameter and weighed almost 56lbs, left Cleethorpes for Kent where they were fitted to the wheels.

He joined Torbinia in 1950, not long after leaving the RAF and worked for the company until 1980.

"We did a lot of work for the Ministry of Defence and for the local food industry," he added.

The company was later bought by Christian Salvesen, but it eventually closed.