

MAJOR KENNETH GEORGE MAYHEW RMWO (R29-34)

He was born on 18 January 1917 the son of a farmer near Ipswich. At the College he was a Foundation Scholar, prefect and a fine sportsman : he was in the Cricket, Football Hockey and squash teams. After leaving the College he joined Fisons and was there until the war.

Prior to the outbreak of war he played cricket for Suffolk and hockey for Norfolk.

In January 1940 he entered the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He was 2nd lieutenant in the 1st Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment, where he served from 1939-1945. His battalion was part of the 3rd Army Corps, led by the legendary Field Marshal Montgomery. During D-Day, he was commander of a company with 13 Carriers, armored tracked infantry. On 28 June 1944, they fought a bitter battle for the Château de la Londe at Caen, which left some 161 dead on the British side. After that he progressed through to the Netherlands where on 24 September 1944 his battalion arrived in Weert. He had been promoted to captain and was in charge of detecting German positions. To find them, they sometimes had to draw the attention of the Germans - if they started shooting then their position were known. This was then passed to the British mortar units and the Germans then came under fire. During these actions he was injured.

Mid October 1944 he was sufficiently recovered to take part in the Battle of Overloon and Venray. In Venray they had to make a bridgehead so that the allied tanks at Loobek could cross. On 16 October he was again wounded, this time by shrapnel in the boggy ground. He was evacuated and taken to a hospital in Brussels. In November, he came back to his unit, which experienced a cold winter in Blitterswijk. During the march to the Rhine he got injured again on 25 February 1945 and he was evacuated to England.



On 24 April 1946 he was awarded the Military Order of William for achievements in Venray and Overloon and the liberation of Weert (22 September 1944). He had "During the fighting for the liberation of the occupied Dutch territory distinguish themselves by committing excellent deeds of courage, and loyalty. They repeatedly demonstrated exceptional devotion to duty and perseverance, and in all respects, by a laudable example, had been an inspiration for all in those glorious days. "

The Military William Order is the oldest and highest honour of the Netherlands. The order was established on 30 April 1815 by King Willem I and was presented for feats of excellent bravery on the battlefield and as a

meritorious decoration to senior military officers. The Military William Order is a chivalry order of merit open to everyone regardless of rank and nobility, and not only to Dutch military but also foreigners. To date the Order is extremely rarely awarded and only for excellent bravery in battle.

After the war he represented a fertilizer company and played cricket, hockey and squash for Norfolk.

On retirement he started to play golf and achieved a handicap of 20 and still played at the age of 97, carrying his own clubs.

In 1994 he came to Venray to attend the unveiling in honor of the Suffolk Regiment. He was presented at that time with the highest military decoration in the Netherlands. On 18 September 2011 at the age of 94 he attended a commemoration of the war victims in Venray. In November 2011 he received the insignia of the modern Willems on behalf of the Royal Order of Knights of the Military Order of William from Colonel BD GJC

Slots. On 9 May 2012 he was received by Queen Beatrix and in the afternoon he received the Medal of the City of Venray.



In 2014 he was the oldest living knight and the SOF Norfolk Supper in November 2014 was dedicated to him and his wife Trish.

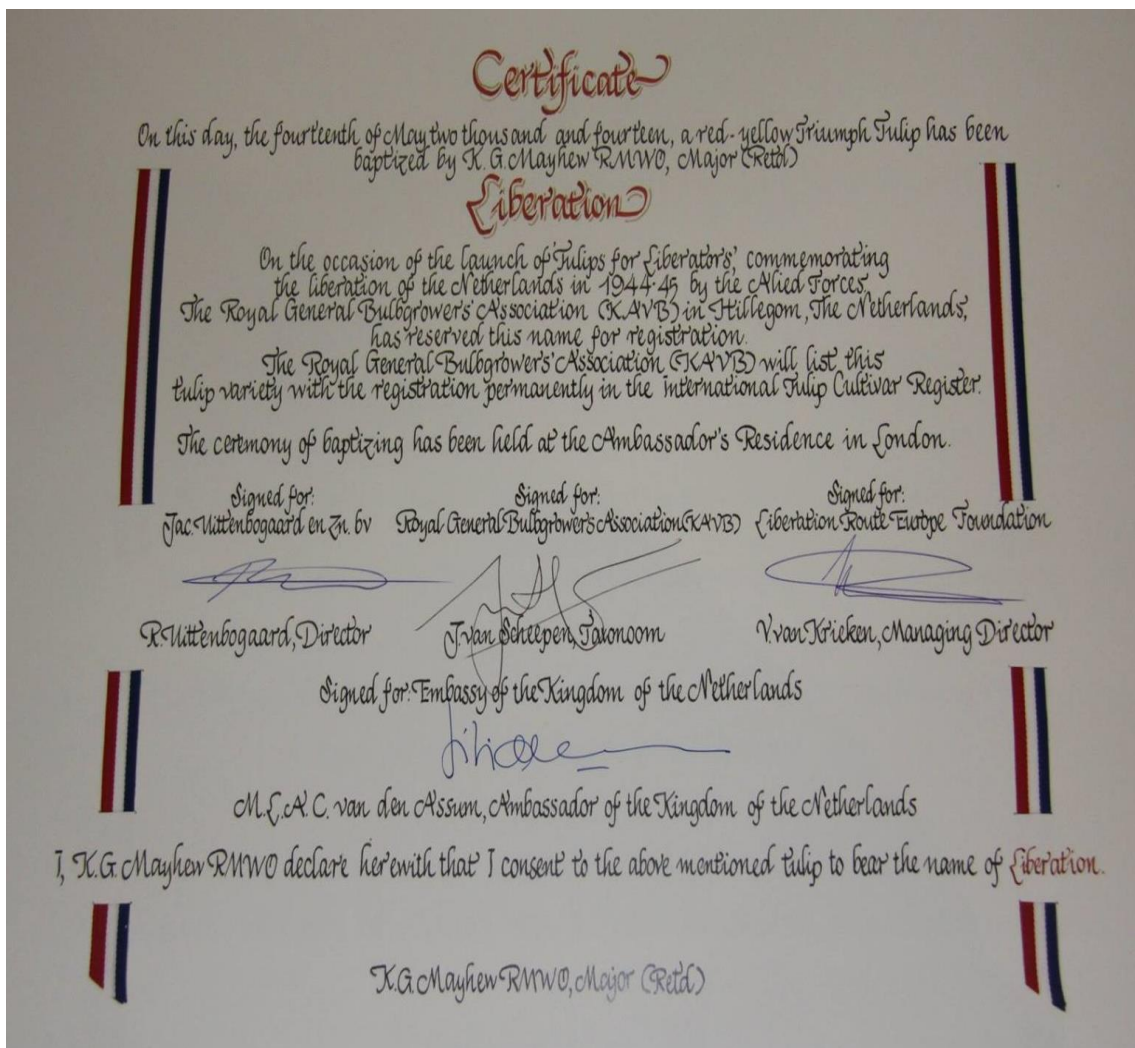
In May 2014, to mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Holland by the Allied Forces there was ceremony at the Dutch ambassador's residence in London called Tulips for Liberators, at which he was the honoured the guest.



The report reads "Major Kenneth George Mayhew RMWO, bearer of the highest Dutch military Medal of Valour, has officially baptised the new Liberation Tulip at a ceremony at the Residence of the Ambassador of Holland, Ms Laetitia van den Assum. The red-yellow Triumph Tulip was cultivated by bulb-grower JUB Holland for this occasion, which marks the first step in commemorating the liberation of Holland in 1944-45 by the Allied Forces, which started with Operation Market Garden in 1944.

Major Mayhew (97), who played an important role in the liberation of the Dutch cities of Venray and Weert and in the battle of Overloon, baptised the tulip on behalf of all Allied Forces who were involved in the liberation of the Netherlands. Representatives of British, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, Polish and US forces were also present, as was Major General Hoitink, Director of Operational Readiness, on behalf of the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff.

The launch of the tulip was the first milestone in a flower-themed commemoration project that will run until May 2015, when 70 years of freedom will be celebrated in Holland. The Tulips for Liberators project is a collaboration of the Liberation Route Europe, Keukenhof Holland, JUB Holland and the Embassy of Holland in the UK. The next step in the project will be the planting of two flower mosaics this autumn, one of which will be in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in London and the other in Lincolnshire, from where the RAF carried out Operation Manna. This was the first relief operation, which began on 29 April 1945 and lasted till 8 May. Countless sorties were made and tons and tons of food dropped over the Western part of Holland, for which the Dutch are still deeply grateful. Ceremonies will be held at the Kew Gardens and Lincolnshire sites on the occasion of the planting and flowering of the mosaics."





In early 2016 he additionally received the Legion d'Honneur from the French Government as a Normandy Veteran. The announcement in the autumn of 2014 embraced not only troops but Royal Navy and RAF personnel who operated support for the Landings on 6 June 1944 as well as wider campaigns at that time to assist in the Liberation of France. The award which is France's highest decoration is going to all living personnel; the Embassy expected some 300 to apply; in the event applications came in from 3,500 veterans so the process of distribution has been rather slow.

He was serving in 1st Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment and on D-Day in 1944 he was in the platoon HQ Carrier and driven on to Sword Beach by Cliff Kindred who worked for Jacksons of Bruisyard, near Framlingham.

He has attended many commemorations since and especially noteworthy on the 40th, 50th and 60th anniversary.



In the Gibraltar Barracks Museum of the Suffolk Regiment in Bury St Edmunds, James Ruddock-Broyd (G46-52) spotted recently in the Curator's Office a photograph of Ken leading the 40th parade as L-marker at Arramanches in 1984.

On the Normandy 50th Anniversary the President of the Royal British Legion was General Sir Patrick Howard Dobson (1921-2009) who was escorting the Queen on a walkabout in Bayeux Cemetery when he spotted Ken in the crowds of veterans and with his usual magnanimity Sir Pat brought the Queen over to speak to him – a moment never forgotten.

On the 60th Anniversary Bill Collard (S55-58) saw Ken at a distance in a 5,000 crowd in Caen during an hour's wait for the arrival of Prince Charles on 5 June in blazing sun. As soon as the formalities were over he and

James R-B dived through the crowds to meet Ken and Trish and later saw the coach taking the Suffolk Regiment veterans to anniversary events.

On 18 January 2017 he celebrated his 100th birthday and this significant moment was marked in a number of ways, starting off with a visit to his home on his birthday by the Dutch Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Mr Simon Smits, and Deputy Defence Attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Rob Arts. They delivered a hand-written letter of congratulations from King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.

The following Sunday there was a large family lunch in the dining room at the College

In early February 2017 there was a special visit to the Dutch Ambassador's Residence in London. At the time he was one of only four living people to receive the highest honour of the Netherlands as a knight of the Military William Order and is the only person from UK ever to have been awarded the accolade after playing a pivotal role in the liberation of the Netherlands from Nazi occupation. The award is the Dutch equivalent of the Victoria Cross and the Légion d'Honneur. The Order's motto is "Voor Moed, Beleid en Trouw" (For Bravery, Leadership and Loyalty). As well as the Dutch Ambassador and several high-ranking officials from the British and Dutch military, also present was Major Marco Kroon one of the other 4 bearers of the RMWO. General Middendorp told him he was a "role model for every soldier in the Netherlands". He responded "It is something that has completely changed my life. I never looked for any fuss. But the hospitality and the friendship I have been shown by our Dutch friends has been overwhelming."



Finally on 19 February there was an OF lunch organised by Norman Porter at Woodbridge Golf Club to celebrate this very rare and distinguished OF centenary. The following is his Norman's report on that lunch.

Norfolkman Ken Mayhew celebrates his 100th birthday at Suffolk Golf Club

Ken Mayhew, veteran of the Normandy campaign, holder of the highest Dutch military award, a Knight of the Wilhelm Order, the Dutch equivalent of the VC, has had his stamina tested by a series of celebrations of his 100th birthday, which fell on January 18th.

The celebrations have included a family celebration at the College, a reception at the Dutch Embassy on February 16th, attended by the Ambassador and many other dignitaries, and then finally, a special lunch held at Woodbridge Golf Club, attended by some three dozen OFs and wives. Ken has been a fine sportsman, excelling at cricket and golf, and those present included many who had played these sports with and against him, and who had travelled considerable distances to pay their own tributes.

This gathering occurred in the week before the Ipswich/Norwich/Derby so it was a good time to remind ourselves not only of rivalries, but also of ties between our two counties. On his tactfully composed sporting cv, Ken includes youthful appearances for Suffolk at cricket, and Norfolk for hockey. Subsequently he played cricket, hockey and squash for Norfolk. He continued to play golf until well into his nineties, still carrying his own clubs. He has many Suffolk friends from his cricketing days, playing for the Old Framlinghamians against the Old Ipswichians, amongst others. Not only did the guests come from these two counties but they also came from Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Essex

Balancing things out, his "baby" brother, Jimmy, an ex-WW2 commando, and a mere 97 years old, lives in Suffolk, in Chelmondiston. Jimmy too, was present at the celebratory gathering. We celebrated Ken's birthday in Suffolk – and that perhaps excuses him from having been hugged by Delia at Carrow Road, where he is a season ticket holder. Modestly he had declined to go out on to the pitch to receive due acclaim.

OFs from across the country celebrated a true WW2 hero, and fine sportsman. He was advised, at the lunch, celebrating his innings of one hundred, not to give his wicket away cheaply, but to take fresh guard and aim for the second hundred. Not many people receive congratulatory 100th birthday greetings from two monarchs!

The following is a special grace Norman composed for the occasion :

We thank you God before we dine
For peace and friendship, food and wine
And as we eat this birthday meal
We pray our broken world you'll heal
Keep safe from tempest, fire and foe
Those now deployed, and those who'll go.
Bless those who once to war have been
While serving us, or friends and Queen.

Amen

The following is an edited summary of the tribute paid by Norman Porter, in the unavoidable absence of our President :

Thanks to you all for supporting this occasion. The turn-out speaks for itself. Most of us were still at the short trousers and pigtail stage - some not even at the uteral stage - when Ken was facing the greatest challenges of his life in 1944 onwards. We are consoled in being reminded that one of the great (if not the only!) advantages of old age is that peer pressure diminishes in inverse proportion to increasing age. If Ken's birthday were celebrated by his co-evals, (= same age, not partners in crime) there would be no-one here. It speaks volumes of the man that so many people, so much younger than himself, wish to pay tribute to the first 100 years of his life.

Apologies for absence: Chris Essex, Andrew Wright, James Ruddock-Broyd (who kindly sent photos from the Lunch at the Dutch Embassy); David Turnbull and David Mitchell.

This lunch is the **third strand of Ken's 100th birthday celebrations:**

The first strand: Family – it was very special that the family should have chosen the College as the venue in January – we know in what high regard Ken is held there, and I applaud Headmaster Paul Taylor for his total engagement in this wonderful Mayhew epic. It is great that we have half a dozen Mayhews here today – not all of the same family. It is particularly good to welcome Jimmy and Janice Mayhew – Jimmy is a mere 97, an ex-WW2 commando, also former member of this club. We have a small gift here, to spur him on towards his own personal 100th celebration. **(Presentation of token).**



As we all know, and as Ken would be the first to acknowledge, Trish, his wife for the past 25 years, has been at his side and supporting him through these recent heady times. We have something for both of them –at the conclusion of these few words

Second strand: The Dutch: they discovered Ken as a Knight of the Order of Wilhelm in 2011 – they thought he was long since dead – he wasn't and isn't! There are only 4 knights left, so Ken is 25% of them. The Dutch Ambassador told us that this award is the equivalent of the VC. As a result Ken and Trish have been entertained by royalty – hence our own mini version of red carpet treatment. They have been regaled by and visited by Dutch ambassadors. The most recent occasion was on Thursday – a special 100th birthday at the Dutch Embassy, many uniforms, breasts bristling with medals – but despite that formality there shone through it all a real affection and admiration of someone who is genuinely considered to be a hero of the Dutch nation, and celebrated as such.

(A display showing the many aspects of Ken's career was available to be seen by guests)

So why are we here? That's the third strand:

We are here to celebrate Ken, the Framlinghamian and Ken, the Sportsman.

Ken started at Fram in 1929. He played for first teams in cricket, hockey and squash. Showing an early sense of inter-county tact, he represented county of Suffolk at cricket but played hockey for Norfolk.

It is something of a cliché to compare life to an innings at cricket. How often have we heard it said that "He's had a good innings." If someone hits a hundred though and is still playing on, it always merits special consideration, so I'm going to adapt the cliché.

Let me take you through the innings. With all due respect to Geoffrey Boycott, and the virtues of a carefully put together innings, that of Ken has been more in the manner of a Ted Dexter – imperious – but always gentlemanly – (Dexter was known as gentleman Ted):

The innings began on January 18th 1934. Early cricket, if there was any, was played in and around Ipswich. Ken was born near Ipswich and actually worked for Fisons before the war. The first flourishes of a burgeoning cricketer were shown at the College, where he played for the first team. Perhaps the most challenging point of his life's innings came in his late 20s - those war years, when metaphorically speaking, Ken could so easily have been run out by a Germanic non-cricketer at the other end. Mercifully he wasn't and Ken survived to put together the rest of this wonderful innings.

After the war, more conventional cricket was played. Sport has been a central part of Ken's life. He played many matches for the OFs against the OIs and formed lasting friendships. He is the spirit of cricket incarnate.

He also played and enjoyed golf. It was legendary that he was carrying his own bag until he was 98. The nervous nineties weren't really nervous at all. He took on challenges that would daunt many others younger than himself. He went to Australia for an Ashes series. He made and makes frequent visits to Lords – not to play, but to enjoy watching cricket and meeting friends – including many OFs. These were signs of still lusty engagement in life's game. Maybe he is now limited to taking short, leisurely, possibly painful singles, but he's made his hundred, and can reflect back on it with pride. A great and unfinished innings.

Conclusion:

The Dutch seem to know as much about Ken as we do, so I will pick out two qualities mentioned by the Ambassador on Thursday: the first was modesty – if only some of our pseudo-celebrities nowadays could show more of that! And the second was his being a perfect role model for younger people. As younger Framlinghamians – and that includes all of us – we, and those leaving Framingham, could not have a better example of a life well led – one that can and should inspire all those who know and admire you. You can wave your bat towards the pavilion with pride – the century celebrations must have tested your stamina. Major Kenneth Mayhew – Don't give your wicket away easily. It is time to take fresh guard and to move on to your double century. Ken - We salute you, soldier, sportsman, gentleman, gentle man - a Framlinghamian of whom we are all truly proud.

(A special token, courtesy of the OF Trustees, was presented to Ken and Trish)

The following attended the lunch:

Ken and Trish Mayhew, Chris and Liz Sneath, Mike and Sheila Spencer, Dudley and Jackie Holland Norman and Margaret Mayhew, John Edwards, Ted Edwards, John and Angela Rankin, Richard and Georgina Sayer, John and Jill Kerr, Norman and Virginia Porter, John and Peggy Thurlow, Rob and Anna Smith, Peter Howard-Dobson, Stephanie and Roger Askew, Colin Wigg, Jimmy and Janice Mayhew, Paul Wright.



John Ellerby spotted the following article in the April 2017 MCC Newsletter

Centenarian

Congratulations are due to Major K.G. Mayhew, a Member since 1973, who brought up his personal century on 18th January. Born on a Suffolk farm and educated at Framlingham College, Major Mayhew worked in the agricultural business until the outbreak of the Second World War when he was called up. In May 1940, he joined the 1st Battalion, the Suffolk Regiment on their evacuation from Dunkirk and took part in the invasion of mainland Europe, landing on Sword Beach on D Day, 6th June 1944.

A keen club cricketer, Major Mayhew also made several appearances for Norfolk in the Minor Counties Championship and, at various times, had the pleasure of playing with the late Michael Falcon, Norfolk C.C. Captain and M.C.C. cricketer, along with several members of the Edrich family and Peter Parfitt and Clive Radley. 