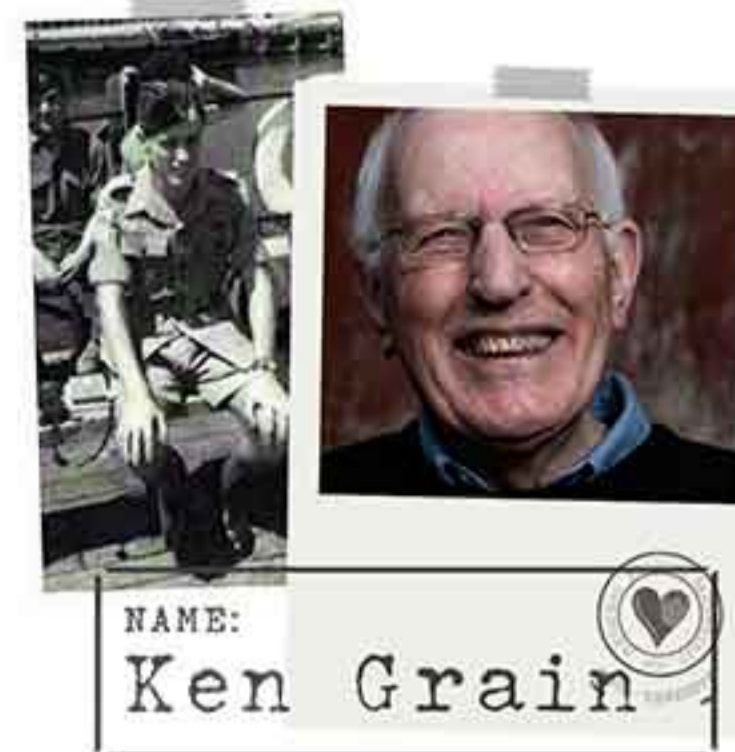




# NATIONAL SERVICE REMEMBERED

Conscription through the eyes of the men who served.

NAME: Kenneth Grain  
BASE: RAF Hednesford  
DATE OF ENTRY: Dec 1950



NAME:  
Ken Grain



I did not find the initial training too hard as I had had plenty of drill practice with the Boys' Brigade and knew all the movements. This was much better as I did not get the wrath of the DI like those who did not know their left foot. I even had ideas of becoming a Drill Instructor at the end of the training. The worst part was the "spit and polish". We were shown how to prepare our boots to a high standard and plenty of elbow grease was needed to achieve this. Everything was cleaned, our kit, the billet and particularly the floors, which had to shine. We even walked around on old pieces of blanket prior to the inspection so as to leave no marks. If we failed the inspection, we would lose some of our free time.

When the twelve weeks were up, we had chosen the jobs we would like to do during our service. I did not want to be a clerk; I was not technically minded so chose to become an RD Op (Radio Direction Operator). You could work in the control tower and talk to the Pilots. It sounded interesting and that is what I was given. You then waited for your posting. I was part of Draft 1163 and called ourselves the forgotten draft as we were the last to hear where we were to go.

**"I was lucky to travel out by air and return by sea thus enabling me to visit many different parts of the world."**

Whilst there I had arranged a holiday break in Kuala Lumpur at a resort for service personnel and their families, but found myself in hospital with a severe attack of sickness and diarrhoea and never went 'up country' to Malaya.



I was in hospital when Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, was on an official visit and came around the wards and spoke to each of us.

I remember telephoning Mum with the news when it eventually came through. "Guess where I have been posted to? It is to the Far East, Singapore.

We were issued with our KD (Khaki Drill) kit and labelled our kit bags, F.E.A.F. (Far East Air Force). We left in December so it was a shock when we arrived to the heat of Singapore. I was lucky to travel out by air and return by sea thus enabling me to visit many different parts of the world.



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The 5th Singapore Company Boys' Brigade was attached to Bethesda Church and I joined and became an Officer. I went on both battalion and company camps and thoroughly enjoyed my time with them. Another activity I enjoyed was Scottish Country Dancing with the Singapore Caledonian Society. I managed to get around the reels and strathspeys and tried to learn the correct foot work.

**“Another activity I enjoyed was Scottish Country Dancing with the Singapore Caledonian Society.”**

I was never one for writing letters or keeping up a correspondence, but I did promise my parents I would write at least once a month to let them know how I was getting on. I had been disappointed not to have been in London for the Festival Britain as I had worked in Poplar and seen all the new buildings of the Lansbury Estate go up. Also, I had followed the progress of the work on the South Bank. I was on detachment to Car Nicobar when I received a copy of the Festival Booklet from my mother and I still have that copy. She also saved copies of newspapers giving details of the opening of the Royal Festival Hall by their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

On return, I went back to the MWB at their Headquarters in Islington. It was not easy to adapt again to life in the office and the thought of doing this for the rest of my working days quite daunting.

I chatted with the family and it was my Uncle Ken who asked me if I had thought about becoming a teacher. He said I had been working with young people and enjoyed it so why not give it a try.

With nothing to lose, I applied to college and was accepted.

