



John Howard D.S.O. ... the Man!

by Roger Tucker



A group of Oxford City police officers, date unknown but clearly post "D-Day". Also in the picture are a number of U.S. Army Military Police. Major John Howard is seated second from left in the front row. The walking stick would indicate the photograph was taken after his accident.

I am sure that all students of 1939 to 1945 history will be aware of the exploits of Major John Howard D.S.O. at 'Pegasus Bridge' in the early hours of D-day which has become the subject of a variety of films and T.V. programmes.

But what about John the person? I am proud and privileged to say that I knew and met him on a number of occasions. Born Reginald John Howard, at Oswaldtwistle, Lancs in June 1916, and educated in that area. In 1932 aged 16, he enlisted in the Scot's Guards. After six years with the colours, he left the army and donned a less colourful uniform: the dark

serge of the police force, as Constable 109 in the Oxford City Police (warrant card No. 470). That was on 1st June 1938 and after 13 weeks training at the Police School, organised by the Birmingham City Police, he patrolled the streets of Oxford.

After some 15 months as a probationary constable and on the outbreak of war, he was recalled to the army, as were so many others. He rapidly rose through the ranks and as a major was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, one of our highest and most prestigious awards.

Sadly towards the end of hostilities, while on leave



in the U.K. he was involved in a traffic accident and severely injured a knee.

While recovering from this injury he applied for the post of Chief Constable in the Buckinghamshire Constabulary (in those days Police Authorities favoured ex-military men). No doubt his rank and the letters D.S.O influenced them. Despite only 15 months, as a probationary constable he was shortlisted for the post.

After the final shuffle, a Brigadier was appointed. I am sure that John would have gone on to have become as good a Chief Constable as he had been as a major.

The rules after the war meant that Chief Constables had to re-employ ex servicemen who had been wounded in the service of their Country, but Chief Constables had the final word. (In my early days in the Force I recall a one handed Constable, who was a telephonist.)

Despite his failure to get the Buckinghamshire post

John was determined to resume his police career, but it is rumoured that the then Chief Constable C. R. Fox K.P.M did not favor the re-appointment of a constable who was entitled to be called "major" and who would sign his report with, " P.C.109 D.S.O."

So John moved onto a third career in the Civil Service, the National Savings Movement, he later married and in later years lived at Burcote, near Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. On retirement he went to live with his daughter in Surrey, until his death some years ago.

I first met "Mr Howard" as a 5-year-old when he visited my father, also an Oxford police officer, but got to know him better many years later, in my capacity as Chairman of the Oxford City Police Association.

You can see John the person in the attached photograph, I do not know who took it, but it was clearly in the yard of Oxford's Central Police Station, in St Aldates.



50 YEARS OF AMMO

Base Group to focus purely on RAF Fairford and Welford. As a result of these changes the resident unit at RAF Welford changed to the 420th Munitions Squadron "Silent Strength" under the command of Major Jeffrey Pruss.

We salute RAF Welford that has served the United



Major Jeffrey A. PRUSS, 420 MUNS/CC taking the salute.

States Air Force in Europe as a munitions storage facility for over 50 years.

RAF Welford was authorised in October 1941 as an Operational Training Unit and building commenced. The airfield had three runways and two T2 type hangars. The airfield was opened by an RAF party on 10th June 1943 and was handed over in July to the USAAF. It became

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US station number 474 on 6th September 1943.

The base was used by a number of US Troop Carrier Groups until the 435th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) arrived in February/March 1944. During its tenure at Welford, the 435th carried out intensive training and operations in its role of transporting paratroopers, towing gliders and carrying out resupply of troops by air. The aircraft used in these operations included US C-47 and C-53 transports and US CG4A and British Airspeed Horsa gliders.

After the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, aircraft from Welford delivered medical supplies, fuel, ammunition and food and returned with wounded troops for hospitals in the Newbury area. Aircraft from the 435th from Welford took part in Operation Dragoon the invasion of the south of France in August 1944 and the airborne invasion of Holland, Operation "Market Garden" in September 1944. In late December 1944, RAF Welford aircraft dropped supplies of food, ammunition and fuel to the 101st Airborne when the Division was encircled at Bastogne, Belgium during its epic stand against formidable German forces.

As the war moved to its close, the 435th TCG left Welford in February 1945 and the base became quiet although some US personnel remained until June 1945. RAF Welford had experienced two very active years.