

Ray Quant MBE (1939-). Royal Air Force Borth

West Wales Veterans' Archive

Dates: November 2020-February 2021

Description

Born in Devon in 1939, the young Ray Quant moved to Borth, Ceredigion, as a young child in 1946. Harbours an ambition to join the RAF, Ray became a boy entrant in 1954, training as a telegraphist. He was to serve in the RAF for the next four decades, holding the rank of Warrant officer for 15 years and was deployed to several countries. Throughout his service in the RAF, Ray was a keen and very active sportsman representing the RAF in boxing tournaments and also as a player and football manager, achieving significant success. Returning to Borth in 1994, Ray continued his sporting interests, becoming very involved in local community developments and local government. He has served as a county councillor for Ceredigion for the past 20 years and is Deputy Leader of the Council. He is also the Chair of the Borth branch of the Royal British Legion. Ray was honoured with an MBE in 2003.

Below, Ray relates his own story:

Early Life

Ray was born in Devon in 1939. His parents divorced after the war and he went to live with his father and stepmother in Borth, Ceredigion in 1946 at the age of 7. His stepmother died in 1953 when he was 14 years old. Ray set his mind on joining the Royal Air Force. He left Borth in October 1954 at the age of 15 and joined the boy service as a telegraphist.

Service Background: October 1954-1994

Ray served for 40 years in the field of communications, serving in Ceylon, Aden, East Africa, France, Holland, Bahrain, Cyprus (2 tours) and Berlin. During Ray's 40 years of service, he was stationed at numerous stations throughout the UK, including tours at RAF Boddington, RAF Innsworth, RAF Brize Norton and RAF Thorney Island, plus two tours at the Ministry of Defence. Ray held the rank of Warrant Officer for 15 years and was, for many years, the senior Warrant Officer in his trade group.

He served on the Tactical Communications Wing at RAF Brize Norton, leading numerous deployments on operational exercises in the UK and overseas including Denmark, Turks and Caicos and Cyprus.

Whilst serving, Ray was awarded Commander-in-Chief Commendations for the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant, Flight Sergeant and Warrant Officer.

Throughout his Service career, Ray was an active sportsperson. Whilst stationed in Ceylon, he represented the Royal Air Force at boxing and flew to Singapore for tournaments. His number one sport was soccer at all levels. He was Editor of the RAF Football Association

magazine and, as a Warrant Officer, he was Chairman of the RAF London Football League, an appointment that was normally held by a senior officer. He was manager of numerous station teams, winning the RAF Cup and the Inter-Service Station/Regiment Cup with Brize Norton and, whilst in Berlin, was Manager of the Combined Service Team, which won the first inter-service competition between the Russian, French, East German, West German and British teams a year after the wall came down. This was at a pivotal time when sporting relations were being fostered between the different National Forces serving in Berlin.

Ray left the Royal Air Force in 1994 and returned to live in Borth.

Post-Service: Community Projects

On his return to Borth, Ray promptly volunteered to join the Playing Fields Committee and became Chairman. He was Manager of the Borth football team for the 1994/96 seasons. In the past, there had been disagreements between the football club and playing fields committee and with a foot in both camps he recommended establishing a Borth Sports and Playing Fields Association (BSPFA) to include the different village sports clubs, which would help when seeking grants for sports facilities, which he promised to progress. This was agreed and he successfully registered the BSPFA as a Charity in 1997.

The Borth Memorial Hall was destroyed by fire in 1993 and unfortunately the hall was under-insured and due to the lack of sufficient funds, building a replacement hall was in limbo. Ray was invited to take on the Secretary of the Hall Committee who continued to deliberate over rebuilding a new hall. After many meetings, not all plain sailing, it was agreed as Chairman BSPFA he would lead a project to build a new multi-purpose Memorial Sports and Community Hall and he embarked on the journey of fundraising.

A new hall was opened in 1999 at a cost of £323,557.00 including £38,606 old hall insurance money and £87,000 from Borth Community Council. Ray was personally responsible for raising the balance of £197,951 through many grant applications. He was invited to become a member of the Sports Council for Wales South West Regional Sports Panel and served on the Ceredigion Community Chest Panel. He enhanced the village sporting facilities with an outdoor multiuser games area with floodlights, which opened in 2002 at a cost of £92,446; having secured the funding through grant applications.

Ray was awarded an MBE in June 2003 for services to the community of Borth.

Nevertheless, he continued to take on more projects. In 2002, as a Church Warden, he was the project leader for a full restoration of St. Matthew's Church, the only surviving religious building in Borth, which was in a state of deterioration. As project leader – and through his grant applications experience – he raised the required £129,903 funding and the project was completed in 2005. Following further negotiations with the Church in Wales, agreement was reached to build an accessible entrance. This was completed in 2009, at a cost of £30,880 where, again, Ray raised the necessary funds through grant applications.

The new Memorial Hall was so popular that it soon lacked the capacity to accommodate the numerous community activities, so he developed a plan to build two additional meeting

rooms and a small dance studio which involved constructing a first floor in part of the hall. Due to funding issues, the project was carried out in three phases over 3 years and was completed in 2007 at a cost of £150,672. He then increased the storage capacity in 2017 at a cost of £30,540. The total funding raised by Ray through grant applications for the many projects exceeds £500K.

Ray is the Chairman of the Borth Branch of the Royal British Legion. He holds quarterly branch meetings and organises the annual Remembrance Sunday Ceremony, plus bi-annual Veterans Day Parades through the village. Sara Edwards, as Lord Lieutenant of Dyfed, took the salute in 2017 and again in 2019. He is also a Trustee and Chairman of the Borth Families Centre, which is a registered charity providing valuable support for young families within Borth and the surrounding areas.

Post-Service: Local Government

Ray was invited to become Clerk to Borth Community Council in 1995 and enjoyed good co-operation with the Councillors, especially as he was leading a project for a new village hall. Due to the untimely death of the Local County Councillor in December 2000, Ray stood for election as an Independent and was elected to Ceredigion County Council in March 2001. He was promoted to the Cabinet in 2002 and has served as a Cabinet Member for 19 years, holding several portfolio appointments. As Deputy Leader, he represents the authority on the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) where he holds a few Deputy Spokesman appointments and, in 2015, he was elected as Vice President of the Independent Group.

During his time as the Highways portfolio holder which included coastal management, Ray became aware of the urgent need to replace the Borth coastal defences. He made representations to Welsh Government Coastal Officers who were supportive of his desire to include a multi-purpose offshore reef in the scheme. When both the European and Welsh Government funding was secured, Ray chaired regular meetings of a project group to drive the scheme forward. The scheme was completed in two phases. Phase 1 was opened in March 2012 and Phase 2 in September 2015. The overall cost of both schemes being £18m. Ray represents the authority on the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere and is the current Chairman.