

Eulogy for Peter Henry Bolton MBE 1923-2011 (Delivered by Kim Bolton)

Today we say goodbye to Peter Henry Bolton and we also celebrate his life. To many amongst you Peter epitomised a military generation largely passed. To others amongst us he was a father, husband, grandfather, great grandfather and uncle. A pillar of his family alongside Rosemary, my mother.



Peter was born in 1923, into a very British family with roots in England, Wales and Ireland. It was also a family with a long history of military service.

His very early years were spent in Wallasey, Cheshire, but when he was just 4 the Scottish link was forged. Peter's early and formative years were punctuated by a life in Orkney. He loved Orkney and always wanted to return to those windswept islands, and even pondered a prospect of living there once more. Somewhat, I should say, to my mother's horror he dogmatically clung to this dream all his life, ironic for a man who in his latter years insisted on having all the windows shut at No 14, and referred to the faintest breeze in the house as a '*howling gale*'.



Many of you will carry different memories of Peter. But I think the abiding memory for most, and certainly family will be as a storyteller, replete with fascinating memories of conflicts, and the dark comedies of war, more often than not recounted across a bar.



When war broke out in 1939 Peter, had somehow learnt German, and he was attending Grammar School back in Wallasey. He joined the Local Defence Volunteers, then badged The Cheshire Regiment. By 1941 he was back in Scotland and enlisted, underage with The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Within 5 days he was selected for Officer's training and in 1942 was at Sandhurst. He was later commissioned into the Seaforth Highlanders. Eventually he was honoured with serving under 17 badges and secondment for him became a by-word for a life abroad and a quest for adventure.

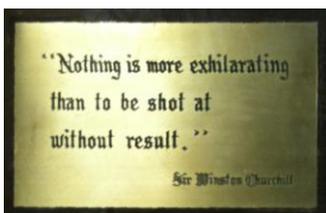


Indeed Peter's adventures became the bedrock of those bar time stories he was so often remembered for, and around his own bar were many constant mementos. Like the shield of the SS and that of the Commando. Not Hitler's SS, I should add. This was the Special Services Brigade to which he assumed a role as a liaison officer whilst encamped on an erupting Vesuvius, in 1944. He was also a Commando and as a 'D Day Dodger' fought deep into the Aurunci mountains opening the way for the assault of Monte Cassino. Following this he was landed in Yugoslavia to work with the Partisans. Whilst there he met Tito and for a few days at least officially owned an anchovy factory where amongst the warehoused boxes his Commando unit had concealed its base.

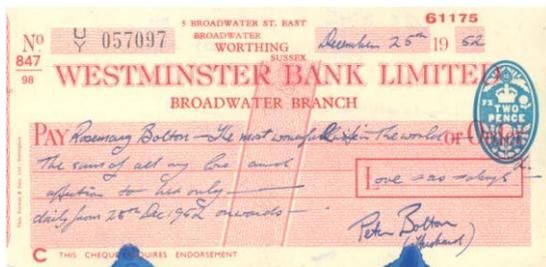


After 4 months with the Partisans he was smuggled back to his Commando unit in Italy and fought in the Battles at Argenta Gap and Lake Commachio. In the latter case fierce fighting resulted in 17 casualties from his 24 man unit, including the loss of close friends and his batman. Here Peter himself experienced a close shave, one of many to come in his life. Fighting alongside Americans he acquired their new style webbed Helmet. A bar time tale recalls that in the course of battle, he took a shot to the head which threw him violently to the ground, unconscious. He recollected later that he had then died and entered Hell, only aware of intense heat engulfing his mind. When consciousness finally returned he discovered it was his helmet, fiercely ablaze.

In a separate incident his Bergen rucksack was shot through with shrapnel, the only unfortunate casualty then, being a precious bar of Cadbury's chocolate carried for months as a birthday treat. It was no surprise and entirely appropriate that his other bar featured a Churchill quote. *"Nothing is more satisfying than to be shot at without result"*. Peter was also collectively known as 'Bah' by many of his grandchildren and this was all the poignant by his strong association with that object.



Peter's wartime exploits continued, through Greece and a subsequent Army career spanned several decades, with service in several continents and with not one posting to the UK.



Peter met Rosemary in 1945 and just last year celebrated 65 years of marriage. He was devoted to her, and I know he would want to express his deep appreciation for her support in his later years, without whom he would have been completely lost.

In 65 years the tally of children and grandchildren grew to some 30 odd. Despite being scattered around the globe the family has remained close and we have the inheritance of far too many memories to recount today.



With his main Army career ending in 1970 Peter became the Force Training Officer for the Royal Hong Kong Police, engineering impossible exercises and preparing Hong Kong for every security threat you could imagine. I had the pleasure of joining him on many such exercises, and much value memories of hilltop Helicopter drops, and assorted hostage exercises involving the SAS and Special Duties Unit. Peter's imagination served him well in co-ordinating these pursuits. I also vividly recall him role-playing as a captured Irish Terrorist whilst at Police Tactical Unit. He was certainly able to switch on the profanities, in such volumes, and with such fierceness that I am sure there are still dozens of HK Policemen today who will recall the frightening intensity of these events.

These deep seated warrior attributes remained with him to the end,... as were testified, and I am sure will remain equally memorable particularly to the staff at Wexham Park Hospital.

As a child, alongside my sisters we were all strictly warned not to surprise or 'ambush' our father, as he himself feared his own commando training and reactions. Having said that he was occasionally happy to impart some such skills, as I have been reminded of by his eldest granddaughters. I need only to say you today that should you meet any of them later it may be worth remembering that

they were tutored in the skills of a 'ninja' and know ten different ways to incapacitate someone!



Peter, unquestionably was a colourful character and will be literally remembered as such in the minds of those who will survive him longest. They will remember his crimson outfit, colourful Viking hats, his beach buggy in Hong Kong, maybe even his yellow Jaguar, ..the kaleidoscope of colours at Garter or his bright batik shirts and his sarongs. They may also remember Father Christmas arriving by helicopter at the USRC club in Hong Kong, or even here in Windsor when there was still an annual conkers match with St Georges School, ...his garish regimental mustard coloured suit!

Peter spent his final 20 years here in Windsor Castle and was proud to be a Military Knight..., he was blessed with a good innings in that service and most especially with the help, care and support of this Castle community.

Peter above all was a family man at heart, and he often said that '*family come first*'. Followed closely I suspect in latter years by his sticks!

Just as General MacArthur made his farewell to Congress in 1951 after a half century of military service so Peter finally kicked off his marching shoes after an equal 52 years. And of course in the words repeated by MacArthur "old soldiers never die; they just fade away".

Peter has now passed on and in time our memories too will fade. He may well have drunk his last '*sundowner*' , however, for now his star still shines brightly.





Buckingham Palace

Mrs Peter Bolton
14 Lower Ward
Windsor Castle
Windsor
SL4 1NJ

I was so sorry to learn of the death of your husband.
Prince Philip joins me in sending our heartfelt sympathy
to you and your family at this difficult time.

ELIZABETH R.

8th August, 2011

