

Len Preston

Former wartime Tiger and retired bank manager **Len Preston** died on Tuesday 4th November 2014 aged 93. His funeral was held on 14th November at Rothbury in Northumberland. Long time friend Sandy Hunter, who retired from the RAF in 1993, spoke movingly at his funeral, saying:

"We got to know each other well with the formation of the Rothbury Branch of RAFA in about 1997 and quickly found that we had a common interest in the history of the RAF and spent many an hour over the kitchen table discussing World War 2 and exchanging books on the subject. On high days and holidays Len would wear the tie of a famous RAF fighter squadron with a Tiger emblem. Its motto was *I Fear No Man*. He joined No 74 Squadron in 1942 as a clerk and was quickly promoted to run the orderly room, the all important administrative heart of the squadron. Unusually in wartime he stayed with 74 for 4 years until he was demobbed in 1946 at the start of the jet age. Strings must have been pulled to keep him with the squadron for so long and I can understand why, for squadrons and Squadron Commanders need a Len. 74 saw service in the UK, Palestine, Persia, North Africa, Cyprus and the Aegean Island of Cos where it fought both in the air and on the ground with German invaders. Back in the UK in time for D Day, Len was with the squadron advancing through France, Belgium and Germany until VE Day. Len is remembered with affection even today by his few surviving comrades with whom I have spoken as a quiet, unassuming and very trustworthy friend. He was proud of his war service on 74 Squadron and 74 was proud of him.

Five years ago when the treasurer of the Rothbury Branch of RAFA stood down I sought Len's advice on finding a successor. I was not disappointed – or surprised - when he nominated himself for the job and the upshot was that the Rothbury Branch had the best kept books in the North East. I'm pleased to report that the HQ finance staff went in fear and dread of his ability to spot the flaws in their over-complicated regulations which he would regularly point out firmly but in his own gentle way. Len was what he was: a proper traditional banker with an eye for detail and the ability to use his judgement to allow things to happen, despite bureaucracy and silly rules. He was calm, unflappable and a model of probity in all that he did.

Len was a great friend to so many people. Above all, he was a devoted family man whose pride in the achievements of his family was never over stated but was very real indeed. He will be missed by us all but we will all share the best and fondest memories of a very kind and very gentle man and of a man who to the last set the highest standards. He had a great following - and deservedly so."