

CLEETHORPES CHRONICLE

45p

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INSIDE**



Motoring guide



Property Guide

Question Time

Details to the big debate on page three



Easter holiday voucher
- page 27

70-year puzzle finally solved

BY SARAH SPENCER
Reporter

A CLEETHORPES pensioner has discovered the identity of a New Zealand airman who helped save his life when explosives blew his thumb off 70 years ago.

Ken Barnard (82) said "you can't imagine" how pleased he is at finding out the name of the person who came to his aid after the accident on the resort's beach on May 9, 1945.

"I never thought it was even possible," he said, describing how he was "very emotional" to see the man again in a picture in the Cleethorpes Chronicle.

"I have wondered who he was for 70 years," he said. "My father tried when he was alive to find out who he was, but couldn't. So we had to let it go."

However, he continued it had "never gone away".

The discovery came about after Tony Fleming of New Zealand wrote to the Cleethorpes Chronicle about his late father, Flt Lt Edward Greer Fleming, and an incident in his wartime diaries.

It described how the airman and one of his crew had assisted a young boy who had been seriously hurt after finding a cordite cartridge that had gone off in his hand.

Mr Fleming thought the boy, or someone who remembered him, had "perhaps wondered who had

assisted him on that fateful day in wartime England".

The article was then pointed out to Mr Barnard in a chance meeting with a friend and he wrote to Mr Fleming: "Today I read an article in an old copy of the Cleethorpes Chronicle about how your late father helped save the life of a 12-year-old boy on May 9, 1945 on the beach at Cleethorpes. Well, I can tell you that I am that boy who is fit and healthy and 82 years old. But without the help of your father I doubt if I would have survived."

"I just wish I could have thanked him personally, but we were unable to find out who he was."

He continued: "It took many years for me to finish with the hospitals but in the end I finished having a good life and I have been married for 62 years, to a lovely girl called Audrey."

"We have a son and a daughter and four granddaughters and this is all down to the prompt action of your father."

"Thank you for writing about your father and also for sending his name and photograph so now I know what his name is and what he looked like."

Mr Barnard told the Chronicle: "I honestly think that without his father's help I would have died. There was no one else around to help me and the injuries were so bad I think I would have bled to death. "In my mind there is no



Ken and Audrey Barnard with the Cleethorpes Chronicle which carried the story about the incident. Right: Tony Fleming sent us this picture from New Zealand of himself with the article.

doubt that he saved my life that day. All of my family have always believed this."

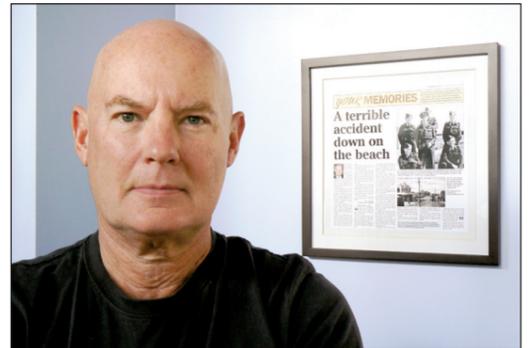
He said his family were now "over the moon" about the discovery.

Mr Barnard endured years of hospital treatment after the incident and said: "When people saw my left hand was such a mess they

said I would never make anything of my life because I was born with a deformed right hand, yet I was virtually never out of work all my life."

He enjoyed 35 years as a lumper on Grimsby Docks and then worked for Findus. He celebrated his

• Continued on page two.



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