



The charity that supports the RAF family

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE GLOBAL BRANCH OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES  
ASSOCIATION HELD ON THE 29<sup>th</sup> February at the St Neots RAFA Club**

**Item**

**1. The meeting was opened by the reading of the RAFA Dedication by Mr Steve Coleman**

**2. Chairman's Opening Address**

First of all I must thank the Committee & Members of the St Neots branch for the use of their facilities this evening and I am sure we will repay their generosity of having the venue free of charge by putting a few quid over the bar.

I must also thank Squadron Leader Mark 'Disco' Discombe for the joining us here in St Neots, for the branch's 5th AGM. I thank him for finding time in his own personnel schedule to join us & look forward with great interest on his talk about his life with the BBMF.

I would also like to welcome all our members, along with their friends & partners who have made the effort to join us here this evening & for the majority who have come for the weekend.

To those members currently watching the proceedings via the internet, I know some of you wanted to be here, but for a variety of reasons are unable to travel. I hope that you still feel part of the meeting & that next year you might be able to join us wherever the AGM might be held. We, as a branch continue to break new ground within the Association, a trend that hopefully will continue in the future.

Our 5th year as a branch has thrown many challenges that your committee, I am pleased to say rose to & although we cannot necessarily say we have succeeded in dealing with them all, we are in a good position that we can look forward to the next year, hopefully once again with a full working committee, something many other branches these days unfortunately are unable to boast.

I must take this opportunity of thanking two of our current committee, who are stepping down, for their sterling efforts of the past year and more. Ian Kirk, who has held the position of Social Events Coordinator, a position that brings its own unique challenges due to the demographics of being a

virtual branch. Also our Branch Secretary, Phil Boulton, who has held that position since the inception of the branch. A brave, though some may say slightly foolish man, who has helped hold the branch Committee generally and myself in particular, in line at the monthly Committee meetings. A feat in itself when one is doing it all online!!

It has been good to see that we have had people prepared to step forward to fill these positions and indeed more so. Proving that once again no matter where our members live there is very little to prevent anyone taking an active part in the running of the branch.

Indeed to ensure that our members have a greater idea on exactly what is going on within the branch, this year each & every member will have access to a report on every branch committee meeting. It will bring you a little light bedtime reading.

As the Chairman, I have been challenged to ensure that the branch Committee can look forward to the distant future sure in the fact that we will have a solid base for the continuity of the branch. To that end we are now looking to put deputies to each major position on the committee that will ensure that there is someone fully up to speed on the complexities needed to assist in running a RAFA internet branch!!!

Most branches would just get another member sat around the room at their AGM etc. The Global branch has to be different and we have members volunteering for these positions in various locations across the USA!!! We look forward to the challenges that we will face in making this work.

On the membership side we have once again continued to grow and indeed have held on to the majority of our membership. I will leave the actual figures to be presented to you in the Membership Secretaries report but I will just say that we continue to show an increase in the number of members who join us as Additional members, which means that their Primary membership is with another branch. The wife calls them spies but I just look on them as slightly jealous on wanting to see how a new & vibrant branch continues to grow.

We all know there have been various difficulties in renewing our memberships this year, hopefully Head Quarters, is now on top of these. Let me remind you that if you think that as UK based members you have problems renewing I can assure you they fade into insignificant ones when you are based in New Zealand, Australia, Thailand etc. Hopefully we on these points the branch Committee is going to be able to put into place a method that will eliminate some of these difficulties. Watch this space.

On the Wings Appeal front, the branch managed to follow on from our sterling efforts in 2018 by raising over £3,000. This was obviously not as high as in the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the RAF, but one which we are still happy with.

Our newsletter, uniquely produced in New Zealand jointly won the area prize for the best Newsletter. It was just piped at the post to win the Best Newsletter at the National Conference by the Aylesbury & Halton branch. The Chairman's Challenge, for 2020, is twofold. We have six daredevils, 3 of whom are here tonight, prepared to do a Wing Walk in aid of RAFA.

(Please stand up Damian Harriss & Nicky Crouchman) This is being held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July & they look forward to getting your support on this tonight & indeed on the day. The second challenge for 2020 comes from the sterling efforts of Ian Kirk who collected over £80 last year for the Wings Appeal by just collecting his loose change. Currently 44 members of the branch, around the world I might add, have accepted the challenge of doing the same in a Home Collection Box. If they all collected just £50 on average, that would be £2,200 for the Wings Appeal. I do have more boxes with me if anyone else wants to join in!!! Add that to the minimum of £4,200 that will be raised by the Wing Walkers I think we can say we will once again hit a great total.

The branch will also be represented again at one of the many Air Shows held around the country, when it has a stall at what was RAF Abingdon on Sunday the 17th May. Please keep up your sterling efforts on the Wings front as this is an important way that we promote both RAFA & the Global Branch.

I shall leave the reports on the branch's welfare & financial position to those more qualified than I to report on them.

I have had the honour of representing the branch at various events, as Chairman, & Conference Delegate, including once again the Sovereign's Reception at the college at RAF Cranwell. But without the hard work of, your committee, my task would have been virtually impossible. So for this Ladies, & Gentlemen, of the Committee of the Global Branch of RAFA, I offer you my heartfelt thanks.

Ladies, & Gentlemen, that, concludes the Chairman's Report for 2019.

### **3. Report from the Committee for the past year (Presented by the incoming Secretary)**

This is the 5th Annual General Meeting of Global Branch 1370.

Over the past 12 months the Committee has held monthly meetings online by way of an online video conferencing facility. This being consistent with us being a virtual branch and the only way the committee can meet given the wide geographical locations of the committee members. All committee meetings are recorded in place of detailed written minutes and the recordings are available for reference if required.

Ordinary Branch Members can table items for consideration by the Committee and this facility has been advertised via the Branch Facebook page, however, to date we have no response from the membership.

The Committee would encourage and welcome members to become more involved in the running of the Branch.

From a regulatory perspective we are governed by RAFA Branch Regulations contained in the Governance Handbook. The regulatory framework is currently under review by the Association and the Branch will continue to strive to meet our regulatory obligations.

Currently the Branch is not registered with the Charities Commission. An Application for registration was submitted in 2019 but this was rejected by the Charities Commission due to the Branch not reaching the minimum financial income requirement. This problem has been raised with Vikki Hall, Director of Governance at RAFA and she is currently looking into this problem. However, she has been unable so far to provide guidance on the way forward.

Overall, I am pleased to be able to report that the operation of the Committee during this past year had been successful. The Committee will continue to represent the best interests of the Association and our membership to the best of their abilities over the course of the next year.

On a personal note, I am stepping down as Branch Secretary having been in post since the Branch was created. I would like to thank everyone for their support and assistance during this period and wish the Branch every success in the future.

Thank you

#### **4. Matters Arising from the Committee's report.**

None

#### **5. Report by the Treasurer including consideration of the Statement of Accounts for the preceding financial year.**

Mrs Mazza Holland presented details of the Branches financial transaction for the year 2019 and provided the following report of the balances held on the Branch Bank Accounts. Mrs Holland confirmed that the Accounts had been inspected and signed off by D J Light and independent examiner.

This is my report prepared for AGM 29 February 2020

This has been another successful year for RAFA Global 1370, whilst we did not have a big Wings fundraiser this year, our members have been busy with local collections and attending various events to raise funds for The Wings Appeal.

There have been two significant changes to our accounting processes this year, in order to comply with the RAFA Guidance Finance Handbook.

Firstly, it was necessary to close our RAFA Global Wings Account no 73508145 (the balance of which was transferred to what is now known as RAFA Global 1370 General Account no 13240304). It is a requirement of RAFA that we only have 2 accounts; one of which is the General Account and one is The Welfare Account. Secondly, the accounting period is required to run from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December each year, in order to comply with this requirement our accounts period has had to be amended (Our previous accounting period was 8<sup>th</sup> Feb to 7<sup>th</sup> Feb). We are now fully compliant with the RAFA Finance Guidance.

These requirements make it even more important to pay in any monies raised, with the correct codes (which can be given to you by Maz Holland or Steve Mullis) these codes are used to ensure that any monies raised are ring fenced to the Wings Appeal and can be paid to The Wings Appeal at the correct time during the financial year. This years' total raised and paid to the Wings Appeal was £3190.03. Congratulations and huge thanks to everyone concerned for giving your valuable time and commitment to raising these much need funds.

Our branch funds remain healthy and the welfare account remains mostly untouched throughout the year.

The balances as at 31 December 2019 were:

RAFA Global 1370 General account £3225.69

RAFA Global Welfare account £531.58

I would like to thank you all for your continued commitment and support and look forward to another busy year actively raising funds for The Wings Appeal and enjoying the various visits and branch activities.

Report prepared by

Mazza Holland

11 February 2020

## **6. Report by the Welfare Officer.**

### **RAFA Global Branch Welfare Support 2019/20**

RAFA provides friendship and welfare support to anyone who is serving or has served in the Air Forces, their spouses, widows/widowers and their dependents. Friendship and welfare support is provided to all eligible personnel irrespective of their membership of the Association.

This friendship and welfare is usually delivered via static Branches and their Honorary Welfare Officers but where a Virtual Branch has been established (as in our case with the Global Branch), the welfare assistance is provided by the existing and well-established worldwide RAFA Welfare team through the Regional Welfare teams. The re-organisation and restructuring of the Association's Welfare system in September 2019 has not changed this process but sadly the added layers of bureaucracy have inevitably led to continuing delays in the assignment of caseworkers, the progression and resolution of cases and regular payments to clients.

My role as your Welfare Officer is to refer any eligible clients from either our Branch or people that we know into the Association's Regional Welfare system. From then onwards I am unable to keep a check on the progression of 'our' cases due to Data Protection but can chase up or hasten the Association's response if I am notified of any issues by our clients.

Over the past year, I have referred a number of cases into the Welfare System but have also been able to provide advice and signposting to individuals who wished to progress their own cases. The Branch has also assisted an elderly veteran to change their Airmail subscription to Talking Airmail. Although we have offered on every occasion, the Branch has not yet been asked to contribute any of our Welfare Funds to 'our' cases that resulted in financial assistance. However, the Branch has continued to use our Welfare Fund to gift another year's RAFA Membership to a WAAF.

Should you need my help or assistance, or you know of an individual in your community who might benefit from friendship or welfare support from the Association or other Service charities (I am also a Caseworker for The Royal British Legion and SSAFA so am very used to dealing with clients from all 3 Services), please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. Remember, people do NOT need to be members of the Association or any Service charity to access welfare support - they simply need to be serving or have served or be the spouse, widow/widower or a dependent of someone who served.

Nicky Loveday

Global Branch Welfare Officer

**7. Election of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer, other committee positions, Association Annual Conference Delegate and Area Conference Representative.**

**8.**

Both branch secretary and Social Events Coordinator positions were up for election. Damian Harriss put himself forward for Branch Secretary and Julie Mullis for Social Events Coordinator. After no rejections from the floor or committee, both were elected to represent the Branch for 2020/2021 and the vote was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

**BRANCH COMMITTEE**

Chairman	Mr Steve Mullis
Vice Chairman	Mr David Routledge
Hon Secretary	Mr Damian Harriss
Treasurer	Mrs Mazza Holland
Membership Secretary	Mr Gerwyn Thomas
Welfare Officer	Grp Capt (Rtd) Nicky Loveday
Social Events Coordinator	Mrs J Mullis
Wings Appeal Organiser	Mr Graham Croft

Annual Conference Delegate	Mr Steve Mullis
Area Conference Delegate	Mr David Routledge
Newsletter Editor	Mr Bryn Holland
Website Admin	Mr Kris Mercer

**9. No resolutions had been forwarded by Members of Branch to the Secretary for consideration at this meeting.**

**10. General matters arising.**

The Chairman opened the meeting up to the members present to allow discussion and debate of any matters. There was no response from the floor.

**11. Meeting dismissed.**

**These Minutes have been approved by the 2019/2020 Branch Committee.**

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**Damian Harriss**

**Hon Secretary.**

**RAFA Global Branch 2020**