

AIR MAIL

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APRIL - JUNE 2016

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Useful Contact Numbers

Useful RAF Association Contact Addresses and Telephone Numbers

AIR MAIL CONTACTS

Editorial/Advertising:

01892 600190

colin.pullen@rafatrad.co.uk

Branch News

01892 600191

BranchNews@rafatrad.co.uk

Editorial Office Postal Address:

RAFATRAD Ltd,
Unit 3, 5 Sybron Way,
CROWBOROUGH
TN6 3DZ

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The editor regrets that it is impossible to respond personally to all letters received except where the subject specifically necessitates a personal response.

While every effort is made to ensure information is accurate at the time of going to print, no responsibility can be accepted for loss or damage caused by published information found to be inaccurate.

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The Royal Air Forces Association Leicester Office

117½ Loughborough Road
Leicester
LE4 5ND

Telephone: 0116 266 5224

website: www.rafa.org.uk

Area Office Contact Details

Northern

Area HQ and North West Office
Sterling Court
Offices 1 to 4
Leyland Business Park
Leyland, PR25 3GR

Telephone: 01772 426930

North East Office
Halifax Block
RAF Linton on Ouse
YO30 2AJ

Telephone 01347 847525/847496

South-East and Eastern

From 29 April 2016

46-50 Coombe Road
New Malden
Surrey
KT3 4QF

Telephone: 0203 823 8130/31

Area HQ and Eastern Office
117½ Loughborough Road
Leicester, LE4 5ND

Telephone: Office 0116 266 5224
Welfare: 0116 268 8781/8782

Scotland and Northern Ireland

Area HQ and Scotland Office
20 Queen Street
Edinburgh, EH2 1JX

Telephone: 0131 225 5221

Northern Ireland Office
21 Talbot Street
Belfast, BT1 2LD

Telephone: 02890 325718

Wales, Midland and South Western

Area HQ & South Western Office
RAFA House, Chancel Lane
Pinhoe, Exeter EX4 8JU

Telephone: 01392 462088

Wales Office
Celyn Collieries Institute
Memorial Hall
High Street, Newbridge
Newport. NP11 4FH

Telephone: 01495 249522

Midland Office
The Windermere Club
110 Wake Green Road
Moseley, Birmingham B13 9PZ

Telephone: 0121 449 9356

Overseas

117½ Loughborough Road
Leicester
LE4 5ND

02890 325718

The RAF Families Federation

13-15 St Georges Road
Wittering
Peterborough
PE8 6DL

Telephone: 01780 781650
website: www.raf-ff.org.uk

Flowerdown House

55 Beach Road
Weston Super Mare, BS23 1BH

Telephone: 01934 621664

Rothbury House

Rothbury
Morpeth, NE65 7TT

Telephone: 01669 620235

Richard Peck House

1 St Thomas Road
Lytham St Annes, FY8 1JL

Telephone: 01253 725519

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From the Secretary General

By now you should have received your Branch's Conference Pack regarding the review of the Royal Charter, Rules and Byelaws, with the Draft Rules and Byelaws and associated Resolutions in them.

These are also available on the Association's website (www.rafa.org.uk/rules-revision). They have been compiled by the Task Group following the circulation of the draft documents at the end of 2014 and were debated by Central Council at its last meeting. I would urge all Branches to make sure that their Conference delegate is fully briefed on the Resolutions and that you have had an opportunity to discuss these at your Area conferences before the Annual Conference in Blackpool. A list of frequently asked questions has been published on our website answering questions received to date.

We are continuing to develop the plans for the new head office in Leicester in accordance with the findings of the regular employee survey which we undertake each year. The survey responses help us to ensure that the team is fully engaged with the Association and remains productive and supportive of our members and beneficiaries.

We compare the results of our internal survey against the national picture and benchmark our results against the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, as well as comparing them to previous results.

It is pleasing to note that we see an increasing number of employees who are highly motivated by the work of the Association, and all of those who responded felt that they had a positive relationship with colleagues, members and beneficiaries.

Improvements to communication was a topic considered by the newly-elected Employee Forum representatives at their first meeting in June last year and subsequently in February. The Senior Management Team and I are working closely with our colleagues to address any of the concerns raised through this process.

As a direct result of the Trustees wanting to engage further with



employees and increase their visibility, Council has agreed to hold all future council meetings in the new head office once it has been refurbished, also showing that Trustees are listening to and responding to staff concerns.

Membership has continued to grow in 2016 and it was very pleasing to see that numbers have been rising steadily since 2014. We will give you a further update on membership growth at Conference. Alongside this, we are also seeing an increase in welfare needs and the requests for help coming to the Association, predominantly associated with feelings of isolation and loneliness among all age groups of our membership.

We are continuing to develop our Befriending service as part of our volunteering programme, to address many of these concerns and we look forward to seeing these begin to be addressed during 2016.

I would thank you for all of your help and support through the last quarter, particularly in response to the need to ensure that we are protected from a data protection perspective and I do understand the concerns that have been raised in this regard. It is important to ensure that the Association as a whole is not exposed to the costs of any potential data protection failings.

Support for the RAF Association

The Association is supported by a number of companies and other organisations, which donate many thousands of pounds each year to help us continue our vital welfare work.

Charles Wells, the brewery company, donates 10 pence to us for every bottle of Airmen's Ale sold. Justin Phillimore, Chief Executive Officer, recently presented the Association with £1,728.

ISS UK has also been supporting us by donating £1 for every ticket sold for the 'Funny Fockers' comedy tour it has organised on RAF stations around the UK. Steve Jackson, ISS Defence Divisional Director, presented a cheque for £5,065.



Above, Steve Jackson, left (ISS) and Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe, right, RAF Association non-executive trustee.

Challenge events – get involved

Are you looking for a new challenge, an incentive to get into shape or just a fundraising opportunity with a difference? The Royal Air Forces Association has plenty lined up in 2016 no matter what your fitness level. Challenges including skydiving and the Snowdon multi-activity weekend, as well as overseas challenges such as climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and trekking the Great Wall of China to name a couple.

Whether it is running in Edinburgh, Liverpool or the Great North Run or you want to test your skills in Snowdon where you will be cycling, running and canoeing through the beautiful Welsh countryside, we have got the event for you. For thrill seekers we run a range of skydiving challenges in collaboration with the RAF Falcons at various locations throughout the UK.

There will be something for everyone with our fundraising challenges and the money you raise helps us to support members of the RAF family in need.

Each challenge event comes with a minimum fundraising target, which we realistically expect you to hit within a few months after the event and our challenge events team will give you all the support they can for this. Whether you want to set yourself a personal goal or join as a group for some team building, the Association has lots of challenges to offer.

For more details contact Baz or Amanda on challenge-events@rafa.org.uk to see what your challenge will be in 2016.



Glynis overwhelmed by award response

Atidal wave of congratulations swept over Glynis Miller of the Officer and Air Crew Training Unit at RAF College Cranwell on the news that she had been awarded the Air Commodore Rex Waite Trophy.

Years of warm support for the charity work undertaken by cadets in her care and dedicated voluntary work for the Association prompted well over 100 messages enthusiastically congratulating her.

"It flabbergasted me, it really did," said Glynis, who began working at Cranwell in 2000. She has been responsible for admin support for A Squadron and Trenchard Flight at Cranwell since 2005 and is also secretary of the Lincoln Branch of the Association, where she has been an active member for 27 years.

"It was lovely to hear from my cadets and from past staff. I could not believe that so many people remembered me from over the years and how kind their memories were. My cadets ask me for advice and I try to help them in any way I can. I was amazed to get the award for something I enjoy doing."

Glynis had been equally disbelieving when opening her award letter: "My wonderful staff had put me forward. I thought at first that I must have bought a winning raffle ticket. When I realised it was about the Rex Waite Trophy I felt really honoured and privileged. He was an amazing man."

Air Commodore Waite was among the first cadets at Cranwell when it opened in 1920. He was largely engaged in anti-submarine duties during World War II, and in the aftermath he organised the Berlin Airlift during the Russian blockade of the city.



Glynis receiving her award from the Commandant of RAF College Cranwell, Air Commodore C J Luck. Photo: © Serco Media Photographic Section, RAFC Cranwell

Branches – grasp the nettle, get on the web

Branches need to use every tool at their disposal to maximise membership and to survive and thrive, but many are missing out because they don't have a website. A website helps to keep members engaged and informed while spreading the word about what Branches do and creating one is much easier than you think.

The Association has created a standardised website template, so that we can set up each site and Branches can upload and tailor content to suit local needs, using a clean, modern design in line with the Association's branding.

Having a standardised template means that Branch websites look more consistent and professional – and Association support means it's easier and cheaper for Branches to create a presence online. The Association subsidises the service, so Branches pay only a fraction of the cost of a commercially-produced website. Prices start from £120, and a Helping Hand Grant could help with this.



Setting up a new site also has advantages for Branches with an existing website, as the new sites will be optimised for and accessible to all devices, including mobile phones and tablets.

Branches which have already taken up the offer, such as the TCW and 90 SU Branch, Penrith, Aphrodite and Cheltenham, have all reported very positive responses.

Cheltenham Branch Chairman Mike Bryant said their site was proving increasingly useful for passing on news and information: "Together with our Club Facebook page, the website has given us a sound cyber presence of value to existing members and of help in raising the profile of the Branch. It shows to all that, although we cherish the traditions and values of the past, we are not afraid to embrace the future."

If you're interested in creating a new Branch website or want to move from your existing site to the Association's template, please email Dev Valand, Digital Content Manager, at dev.valand@rafa.org.uk or call him on 0116 268 8772.

New partnerships

The Association is working in partnership with the Money Advice Service in England and Wales and the Citizens Advice Bureau of Ireland and Scotland to provide our beneficiaries with advice on financial matters, such as budgeting and benefits.

Beneficiaries will have access to a range of financial advice and information, including pensions and retirement; retirement advice, types of pension and retirement income, and information on automatic enrolment. Advice can also be given on understanding your employment rights, what in-work benefits you might be entitled to and how to handle redundancy.

Welfare officers will signpost beneficiaries to the most appropriate service for them. If you have a welfare need, please contact your Area Office, contact details can be found on the inside front cover of this issue.

For more general information visit:

England and Wales www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Northern Ireland www.citizensadvice.org.uk/nireland

Scotland www.cas.org.uk

Live independently with RNIB

From health and mobility aids through to magnifiers and technology, RNIB sells over 700 practical products to help maintain your independence and keep doing the things you love.

Check out our product range online <http://shop.rnib.org.uk/> or call our Helpline for more information: **0303 123 9999**

*Offer expires 01/07/16 and can only be used once per household.

RNIB Supporting people with sight loss

Reg charity nos. 1156629, SC044876 and 1173.



Special offer* for RAF Association members: Use code RAFA10 to save 10% on purchases from the RNIB shop.

RAF Museum's RAF centenary programme gets funding boost

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has granted the RAF Museum a first-round pass towards £1,783,700 of funding for Phase 2b (Historic Hendon) of its RAF Centenary Programme.



Historic Hendon will focus on the historical significance of the museum's London site as the London Aerodrome in the early 20th century and later RAF Hendon. Thanks to National Lottery players, the landscape at the heart of the site will be transformed to create a 'sense of place' linked to that unique airfield heritage.

The project will also deliver outdoor play and picnic spaces, creating a new 'village green' for the museum's local communities and other visitors.

Phase 2b of the museum's RAF Centenary Programme complements the work of Phase 2a which received Heritage Lottery funding of £4.9m in May 2015. It will ensure that the museum's London site tells the RAF's story in an inclusive, reflective, engaging and exciting way for all visitors to mark this important national anniversary.

Maggie Appleton, RAF Museum Chief Executive Officer, said: "This was a challenging funding round. We faced a lot of stiff competition from many worthwhile organisations competing for the available funding, which makes our successful application even more fantastic. We were commended on the quality and strength of our application and the HLF have said that they are looking forward to seeing the completed project and a transformed museum."

Where there's a will...

Drafting a will can be confusing and difficult, so many people postpone the task. The Association has found a solution that gives members an adaptable, easy-to-use service – at half the usual cost.

Our new will-writing and estate-planning affiliate is the Beneficial Trust and Wills Company (BTWC), a family-run business based in Lincoln with a nationwide network.

Association Legacy and In Memoriam Manager Vinny Manak said: "Law Society figures show that 73 per cent of 16 to 54 year-olds don't have a will, but it's really something everyone should do, and many of our members may be thinking of doing.

"We wanted a will-writing service that would be a membership benefit, would help with planning potential care home fees and show the potential tax benefits of charitable legacies. Some people presume that their estate will automatically go to their next of kin, but last year £8m went to the government because people died intestate.

"The BTWC offers start with a very cost-effective online solution for internet-savvy members, priced from £20-28 for a single will, to around £43 for a 'mirror' will for couples. The prices are so low to members because they pay only half the fees and we pay the other half, so it's a very useful benefit," said Vinny.

BTWC also offers a telephone, email and postal solution in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland that costs about £80 for a single will and £90 for a mirror will, or around £90 for a face-to-face consultation. Again, members pay only half those fees.

Figures and discounts quoted apply to basic wills only. More complex examples would be costed on a case-by-case basis and are not included in the offer. For more information go to www.btwc.co.uk/royal-air-forces-association-member-offer/ or contact Vinny on 0116 268 8791.



Do you need to renew?

Thank you if you have already renewed your Association membership or are a Life Member.

If you hadn't renewed by 31 March then your membership will have lapsed.

You can renew via your Branch, by post, online or by telephone.

You could join the 10,000 plus members who have saved themselves time (and the Association money) by paying their subscription by Direct Debit.

You can sign up for Direct Debit on our website www.rafa.org.uk/renew If you would prefer to talk to someone in the membership team first, you can call them on 0116 268 8762 or 0116 268 8785.

RAF Association fundraisers go bag packing

In December RAF Leeming RAF Association fundraisers Squadron Leader Andrew Lynn, Mr Peter McGraghan, Sergeant Gareth Kane, Sergeant Daren Rosamond, Sergeant Alan Waring, Sergeant Michelle Maguire, SAC Anthony Conroy and LAC James Burnett went to Asda at York Monk's Cross, for a day of bag packing and fundraising.

They were accompanied by three RAF Yorkshire University Air Squadron pilots of nearby RAF Linton-on-Ouse, which was great for young children providing instant recognition of the RAF. They distributed stickers and badges to all ages bringing out a smile in everyone. The presence of RAF personnel sparked a wave of generosity, as the public were delighted to see them packing bags and having a chat. Many customers explained how one way or another the Armed Forces have influenced their lives through previously serving or by being related to those who have. The presence of the Association in the community is crucial, as it shows that we are here to help those currently serving or those who have previously. The total money raised on the day was nearly £950, which has exceeded everyone's expectations. This will go towards home visits, respite care breaks and financial assistance to the wider RAF family.

The employees at Asda were also fantastic, with their positive and enthusiastic welcome, encouraging donations all day on a busy Saturday. The support from Asda continued, as they provided free drinks helping the team get through the day, while remembering not to put the eggs at the bottom of the bag.



We have changed

Our Facebook page name has changed from 'RAFWingsAppeal' to 'RAF Association'. We have also changed our Twitter handle from '@RAFWingsAppeal' to '@RAFAssociation'.

The changes were made because the Association is so much more than Wings Appeal. We want people to know who we are and what we do. It will also make it much easier for fans and supporters to find us.

If you like or follow either account you don't need to do anything, you will still be 'connected' to us. If you're not connected, then why not come and find us?!

Association is great supporter of RAF football

As part of its ongoing commitment to helping members of the RAF family achieve their potential, the RAF Association is continuing its support of the RAF Football Association (RAF FA).

Flight Sergeant Neil Wilkinson, who manages support for the RAF FA, told us how important it is to them. He said: "This is a massive boost, as it is helping us build the ladies' game from the grassroots. The support from the RAF Association is being used to encourage ladies serving in the RAF to get involved with football, promoting an active lifestyle as well as the benefits of a team ethos. It is also being used to encourage more people to become referees as without them there can be no competitive games."



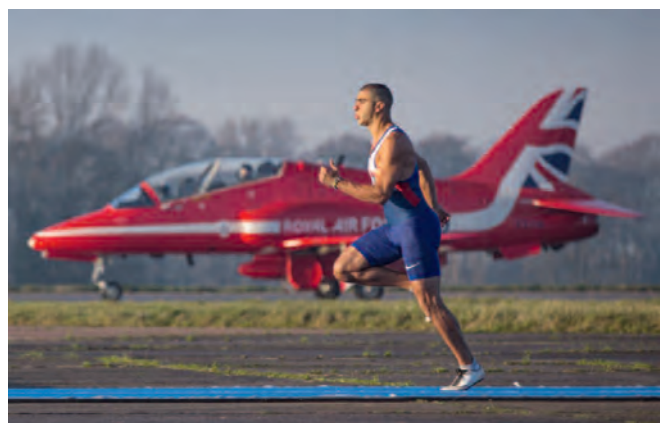
Red Arrows Hawk takes on human speed machine

Is it a plane? Is it a rocket? Is it a meteor? No, it's British Olympic sprinter Adam Gemili racing against a Red Arrows Hawk jet on a specially-constructed running 100m track at RAF Scampton.

The race was set up during a training sortie filmed for the first edition of ITV's 'It's Not Rocket Science'. The experiment was designed to demonstrate the thrust and power of the jet compared to the sprinter's explosive start and acceleration.

The Hawk was flown by 'Red 7', Flight Lieutenant Tom Bould. He said: "The Red Arrows showcase the best of science, technology, engineering and maths in a tangible and exciting way every time we display for the public".

The episode was shown on ITV1 on 16 February.



The race in progress. Photo: © ITV.

Leigh Bland update

We caught up with Leigh to find out how things were going for the talented archer. Here's what he had to say:

"I'm getting back into the swing of things after my leg operation last year. Training has started slowly this year as I've had to shift a chest infection and have had quite a lot of appointments at Headley Court, but I've got myself an archery trainer for home use which helps as taking just a week off can mess up my shooting.

"I have a lot of plans for this year, obtaining a national ranking from competing in World Record Status competitions including the British Wheelchair Archery National Championships 2016 in Stoke Mandeville, where I'll be defending my two gold medals from last year.

"As well as the competitive goals I like to set myself personal goals, I want to be able to compete with all archers and get my fitness and strength up to push myself as far as I can. I want to do well enough to keep both my titles from the British Wheelchair Archery Association Championships and I'd like to have done well enough competitively to be recognised by Archery GB to be included as a para-athlete.

"I feel really privileged to be supported by the Association, the support and opportunities mean that I can build up my confidence not just in archery but with the media too at competitions."



Hannah Lord update – winter and beyond

We talked to successful triathlete Hannah Lord about last year and her plans for the season ahead. Here's what she had to say:



"Looking back at 2015 overall it went well; I gained the title of English National Champion in the standard distance triathlon, placing as first lady in the Deva triathlon and the Age Group World Aquathlon Champion. My key focus over winter was to bring my running time down and spend more time in the pool. Swimming wasn't a priority before as I was already a decent swimmer, so I would get by on swimming twice a week but to be competitive at elite level I need to be quicker.

"For 2016 I have signed to race for a French Team, Libourne Triathlon Club. It would be great to really be in the races in the Grand Prix series and be a valuable member of and contributor to the team. It will be an extremely strong field and a chance to take my racing to the next level. I also plan to race in some of the UK elite races again and improve on my placings from last year.

"It is wonderful to be acknowledged by the RAF Association and have their support as part of the RAF family. As the wife of someone who is serving I spend a lot of time on my own and all the training and competing gives me something very positive to focus on. Also without the Association's support I would not be able to compete internationally and so it really is crucial to my development in the sport."

Team Legless takes on the Isle of Man

Often life doesn't go to plan, but Stu 'Robbo' Robinson, who sustained massive injuries in an IED explosion and the rest of Team Legless want to make the most of the situation they are in by undergoing their most ambitious physical challenge to date.

Cycling the world famous 37.75 mile Isle of Man TT Course in March, a challenge made even more difficult as some members of the team have no or little use of their legs. Stu, Anton and Kurt will be attempting the course using hand cycles and will be supported by other members of Team Legless who will be riding conventional bikes.



The challenge will test the physical abilities of all the riders, but especially the guys using just their arms on the hand bikes on this arduous mountain course, with ascents of 2,132 feet. Robbo says: "The Royal Air Forces Association has played a massive role in my recovery from life changing injuries, from being someone at the end of the phone to talk to, to enabling myself and my family to move forward with getting our lives back on track."

To support Robbo and the rest of Team Legless, go to <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/teamleglessTT> to donate to this amazing challenge.

RAF in Concert – Best of British entertainment

Prepare yourself for a mouth-watering evening of entertainment with a distinctly home-grown flavour as musicians from the bands of the Royal Air Force serve up the Best of British on their forthcoming RAF in Concert tour.

The packed programme, featuring an inspirational mix of show tunes, classical pieces, legendary big band numbers and stirring military marches, will conjure up some of the most memorable moments from stage and screen.

Conductors on the tour will be Principal Director of Music Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs and Squadron Leader Matthew Little. The concert tour will visit the following venues in October:

21 October: Royal Hall, Harrogate
23 October: Sage, Gateshead
26 October: The Anvil, Basingstoke
27 October: Colston Hall, Bristol
30 October: High Wycombe

Tickets for the tour are on sale from April and will be available from the venues. For more details, including other tour dates visit www.rafinconcert.com



Transformed American Air Museum now open at Imperial War Museum, Duxford



The newly-transformed American Air Museum will explore the story of Anglo-American collaboration in 20th and 21st century conflict, as seen through the eyes of the people linked with the aircraft and objects on display. From Private to President, the American Air Museum tells the personal stories of people whose lives have shaped or been shaped by their experiences of conflict. It focuses on the key role played by American air power, in conflicts from 1918 to the present day, with dramatic displays of historic and contemporary aircraft.

The American Air Museum is home to 850 objects, including equipment, uniforms, keepsakes and photographs. Many of these have never been seen by the public before.

Diane Lees, Director-General of IWM said: "The transformed American Air Museum will tell the story of the relationship between Britain and America in very human terms. Personal stories come to the fore, vividly demonstrating the consequences of war in the 20th and 21st centuries. From the pilot to the female riveter who built the aircraft; the African-American engineer who built the airfields to the courageous female journalist who reported on the action, visitors come face-to-face with people whose moving stories are inextricably linked with the formidable aircraft on display. The impact of global warfare is told from contrasting perspectives, giving visitors a rounded view of the lasting effect of contemporary warfare."

For more information on IWM Duxford visit www.iwm.org.uk

Easier answers to difficult questions

Funeral provision is a topic that many people don't readily discuss with their loved ones. The Association has linked up with Co-operative Funeralcare to make it easier for members to get the send-off they want, at a lower cost.

"The discount scheme allows a minimum £100 discount on a basic funeral plan and £150 on any of their tailored plans," said Association Legacy and In Memoriam Manager Vinny Manak, "but the benefits for members go far beyond that.

"The Co-operative brand has a 150-year history and people know and trust Co-op Funeralcare. They're on almost every high street, have 950 funeral homes and conduct more than 90,000 funerals a year, so they are accessible to all.

"We have briefed the Co-op on the standardised funerals that we have devised for those who are serving or have served, so they are fully aware of military, ex-military and member funerals."

Co-op Funeralcare staff also have the option of requesting a Branch Standard-bearer or bugler to attend, if this has been noted in the member's wishes, along with RAF Association coffin drapes, and they have supplies of Association collection envelopes if a member wants us to benefit from a charitable collection or has not nominated a specific charity.

For more information visit www.co-operativefuneralcare.co.uk or contact Vinny on 0116 268 8791.



Support from the RAF Benevolent Fund's Advice and Advocacy Service



The RAF Benevolent Fund has launched a new Advice and Advocacy Service providing the RAF family with benefits advice and acting on their behalf if they feel they are not receiving the support they are entitled to from the government or local authority. This could include support with housing and care costs.

This free service supports former and serving members of the RAF, including RAF Association members, their partners and dependant children (under 18), Reservists, those who completed National Service and widows and widowers. In its first year the new service identified an additional £780,000 for members of the RAF family who were unaware of their benefit entitlement.

If you or a family member would like further information about the advice and advocacy service you can contact:

Email: advice@rafbf.org.uk **Telephone:** 0800 169 2942 **Post:** Advice and Advocacy Service, 67 Portland Place, London W1B 1AR

Talking Air Mail goes fully digital

Members who receive the audio version of this magazine will now be able to listen to it on new mp3 players thanks to a new partnership with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).

Lisa Thipthorp, who is leading the project for the Association, said: "The RNIB uses mp3 players now as standard, so it made sense for us to do the same and encourage our members to embrace newer technology.

Volunteers will be delivering the easy to use players to everyone on the Talking Air Mail distribution list and showing them how everything works. Our members will also be able to access over 23,000 titles via the RNIB's free Talking Books service."

If you or someone you know are partially sighted and would prefer to receive Talking Air Mail please e-mail Talking.Airmail@rafa.org.uk or call Lisa on 01780 783645 with your membership number. to hand

Area Welfare Officers pass with flying colours

All RAF Association Area Welfare Officers (AWOs) are now the proud holders of a Diploma in Welfare.

Sophie Witkowski, the Association's Head of Welfare, said: "Our AWOs provide the highest quality of support to members of the RAF family and I'm really pleased that this has been recognised by the Institute of Welfare with these diplomas."

National Conference 2016 - Blackpool

Outline Conference Programme

Friday 13 May

All rooms and suites are in the Hilton Hotel, Blackpool

Time	Event/Location
2000 hrs	Informal 'Meet and Greet' evening - Royal Suite
2000 hrs to 2100 hrs	The President's National Presidential Certificate recipients drinks reception - Trafalgar Suite
2300 hrs	Close

Saturday 14 May

Time	Event/Location
0830 hrs to 0910 hrs	Registration and coffee. Complimentary tea/coffee will be provided, delegates, members and guests to be seated by 0915 hrs - Entrance Hall
0915 hrs	Parade of the Area Standards - Royal Suite
0925 hrs	Welcome - by the Chairman of the Annual Conference Committee - Royal Suite
0930 hrs	Opening Ceremony
0935 hrs	Address of Welcome - by the Mayor of Blackpool
0945 hrs	Reply - by the President
0950 hrs	2016 & the Future - presentation by the Secretary General
1015 hrs	Address by the Chief of the Air Staff
1045 hrs	Presentation of Flying Scholarships
1120 hrs	Presentation of the Annual Conference Committee's Report
1125 hrs	Annual Report for 2015 - by the Chairman of Central Council
1140 hrs	Financial & Auditors Report for 2015 - by the Hon Treasurer
1155hrs	Central Council Election Results
1200hrs	Questions for Central Council - Chairman, Hon Treasurer and Secretary General



Saturday 14 May 2016

Time	Event/Location
1230 to 1330hrs	Lunch - Please note lunch can be purchased from the restaurant at the Hilton Hotel No buses will be operating during lunch.
1330hrs	Conference Business as listed in the Agenda - Royal Suite
1700hrs	Conference closes for the day Standard Bearer Competition - location to be confirmed
1900 hrs	Bar opens for evening drinks
2000hrs	Gala Awards Evening - Royal Suite To include trophy presentations, display provided by the RAF College Band and entertainment by Lizzy Rushby Delegates, members and guests to be seated by 1945hrs
2200 hrs	Springs nightclub opens - Lower Ground Floor
2330hrs	Royal Suite closes
0200hrs	Springs closes

Sunday 15 May 2016

Time	Event/Location
0900 hrs	Assembly of the Parade - Middle Walk, north of the War Memorial, Blackpool
0930 hrs	Service of Dedication at the War Memorial, Blackpool
0940 hrs	Flypast by Spitfire
1030 hrs	Refreshments - Entrance Hall, Hilton Hotel
1100 hrs	Presentation of the Parade Trophies - Royal Suite
1115 hrs	Continuation of Conference Business as listed in the Agenda - Royal Suite
	Vote of Thanks
1230-1300 hrs	Closing Ceremony - Royal Suite



Duchess launches Air Cadets 75th anniversary

In her first official engagement as Patron of the RAF Air Cadets, HRH The Duchess of Cambridge recently launched a year of cadet activity to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Air Training Corps (ATC).

The Duchess attended a church service at the RAF Church at St Clement Danes, London, and a reception held nearby at the Royal Courts of Justice.

The Duchess took over the important role from HRH The Duke of Edinburgh just before Christmas, ending his 63-year association with the RAF Air Cadets.

In her appointment the Duchess also represents members of the 200 RAF sections of the school-based Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Many units are also celebrating their 75th anniversary in 2016.

Commandant Air Cadets, Air Commodore Dawn McCafferty, said: "It is a real honour for us to have HRH The Duchess of Cambridge as our new Honorary Air Commandant and it is wonderful that she joined us on such an auspicious occasion."

The cadets escorting the Duchess were the top ATC cadets of 2015, Cadet Warrant Officer David Timson of 1461 (Wigston and District) Squadron and Cadet Warrant Officer Lucinda Conder of 344 (Fulham) Squadron.

David said: "This is an amazing occasion in the history of the Air Cadets and something I will never forget."

Lucinda said: "I love the Air Cadets, the opportunities it offers are brilliant and today was so special for us – we marked our 75th anniversary in true royal style – thank you to the Duchess of Cambridge and to our wonderful volunteers and veterans."

Also attending the event were Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford, other members of the Air Force Board, senior members of the RAF Air Cadets and RAF Air Cadet Ambassador, Honorary Group Captain Carol Vorderman.

More than 500 cadets and volunteer staff filled the pews at St Clement Danes having first paraded through the streets of London. A handful of veterans, now in their 80s and 90s also attended and recalled the early years of the RAF Air Cadets.

The 75th anniversary coincides with a recruitment campaign to bolster the number of adult volunteers who keep the ATC's 1,000 squadrons running. Anyone interested in volunteering can find out more at www.raf.mod.uk/aircadets.

There are a number of events planned throughout 2016 to mark the anniversary of the ATC which was established in 1941 to help train young men in aviation skills before they joined the RAF to defend their country during WW2.



HRH The Duchess of Cambridge meeting cadets on parade Photo: © Mod/Crown.



RAF Air Cadet Ambassador Carol Vorderman talking with Cadets. Photo: © Mod/Crown.



HRH The Duchess of Cambridge talks to a veteran. Photo: © Mod/Crown.

Gavin and Stacey give Barry's ATC links a lift

When it comes to Branches forging strong links with their local ATC squadrons, Barry may have a few advantages – one of which is being able to style themselves “the Gavin and Stacey Branch.” Even so, Barry provides a model that could benefit Branches and squadrons alike in the ATC's 75th anniversary year.

Branch President, Welfare Officer and former Branch Chairman Geoff Horton is unabashed about exploiting the popular BBC sit-com set in Barry Island. Says Geoff: “We call ourselves ‘the Gavin and Stacey Branch’ because it adds a bit of humour – and if it works in our favour I’ll use it!”

Geoff also admits he “has a finger in every pie” in the local community and calls on his many contacts to further the cause, involving cadets at every opportunity. It also helps that his son Jason is Commanding Officer of 372 (Barry) ATC Squadron and former CO of 2300 (St Athan).

“My son joined the ATC when I was just about to leave the RAF after 22 years – I was a Sergeant/Airframes,” said Geoff. “I followed that by spending 25 years in the Civil Service as an energy manager on Buccaneers.

“And I followed my son’s career in the ATC, watching him rise to the rank of Cadet Warrant Officer and becoming the Lord Lieutenant’s Cadet. He went on to become a Civil Instructor, like myself, before accepting a commission. Now I have to call him ‘Sir’ on final parade!”

Initiatives to foster Branch links with local cadets range from recruiting them to help erect marquees at events to providing a bursary for less well-off cadets from 2300 Squadron or taking cadets to Steenburgen for the 70th anniversary of the death of dambuster Guy Gibson, whose wife was from Penarth.

“That trip was funded by Group 617 – Service veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder and who meet at Penarth Pier Pavilion.

“We are always looking for ways to keep these links strong,” said Geoff. “Each of the Branch officers has business cards and we give out leaflets to promote what the Association is about. For the April Branch meeting we’re going to St Athan to let this year’s trainees know that we’re there for them when they become veterans themselves.”

Geoff’s son Jason said that a close working relationship between ATCs and Association Branches benefits both: “It’s something we’re very keen to maintain. We’re happy to give the physical assistance of young, keen legs at events and the cadets get the opportunity to get out in the community and gain skills for life. It’s all about giving the cadets the best start in life we can.”

For more information on how to work with your local ATC, contact Helen Gibson, Youth Community Manager, on 0116 268 8789, email helen.gibson@rafa.org.uk



2015 Presentation Evening – Mr Geoff Horton presenting Flight Sergeant Rhys Thomas with the Technical Training Trophy.



Red 4 becoming adopted by 372 Squadron in memory of Flight Lieutenant Jon Egging (Red 4). Georgina Poulakis and Ellie Jones with Red 4 (a peregrine falcon) at the Welsh Hawking Centre, Barry.



Barry Rugby Club fundraising,

Laurence McGowan and Wings Appeal

In a moment of forgetfulness I failed to recall the “never volunteer” advice of the drill corporal during basic training at RAF Bridgnorth in 1960.

It was only as Branch members voted unanimously to accept my offer to take on the Wings Organiser post that no one else wanted that I began to have misgivings.

Why was I, at the age of 74, single-handedly taking on a job that I knew, after years of collecting for cancer and cystic fibrosis charities, involved hours of standing and frustration while passers-by pretended not to notice me.

The reality is that the last half of 2015 proved to be one of the most rewarding periods of my life, both practically and emotionally.

I was amazed at the goodwill expressed towards the Association and the RAF, and to me personally, by members of the public ranging from schoolchildren to pensioners.

From early teens who muttered “no problem”, a lady who pinched my cheek and commented “you deserve it” to the smiling ex-Para’s “your lot took us up and then chucked us out the back” when

thanked the responses made me feel humble.

People not only gave to Wings. I was given power drinks, hot coffees and soups, bags of sweets and cakes by shoppers. Concern for my welfare – was it the silver-grey hair that did it? – went as far as a lady buying me a pair of gloves on a cold day and another lady going home to fetch a blanket for me to wrap around myself in the freezing wind.

And I began to understand more fully why this Wings job has always been essential.

Tales like that of the lady who pushed a £10 note into the collecting bucket. “My dad was a rear gunner (tail-end Charlie) in a Lancaster,” she told me. “He had nightmares about it until the day he died.”

And the woman who, with tears in her eyes, said: “After completing his training as a navigator my 19-year-old cousin was sent on an op before he had time to



sew his badge on. Sadly his Lancaster never returned.”

I am forever grateful to ex-RAF personnel and members of the public who took time to chat, and especially to those who helped me with collections when they could – our 25-year-old ATC liaison and serving airmen from TSW at Stafford.

Storybook Wings – bringing dad home for bedtime

As a Community Support Clerk, Abby was aware of the Storybook Wings initiative and how it helped serving families when a parent is deployed. So in 2015 when her husband was deployed for six months to Al Udeid in Qatar they decided to use the programme to help their two young boys deal with the separation. Their family was always very close knit and they enjoyed spending quality time together, with dinner at the table and family games and movie nights a regular feature of their home life.

Abby knew that the times that the boys would miss dad the most would be at bedtime, with dad doing all of the bedtime routine and usually spending time with Declan (aged ten) and Connor (aged five) individually, it was important that this was not disrupted. Storybook Wings helped the transition as Abby took over the bedtime routine, and gave the boys a chance to listen to the stories they had chosen before they went to sleep, so dad was still there for them at bedtime.

The stories they chose were the ever popular ‘The Gruffalo’ and ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’. As a family they decided on the stories as the boys enjoyed hearing them and had copies of them both at home that dad read to them frequently. The stories helped the boys in different ways. With Connor it helped him maintain a regular bedtime routine and cheered him up when he felt sad, and Abby says that for Declan, it was more about him being able to be on his own and listen to dad’s voice reading a familiar story.

Looking back on their Storybook Wings experience, Abby reflects that as a parent at home when her other half was on deployment, “I couldn’t give them their dad back but Storybook Wings helped bring his voice to them in a story they enjoyed. I would recommend it to other families as the mixing of the story and the sound effects are amazing!”

To find out more visit www.rafa.org.uk/storybook



Supporting our volunteers



Katharine Montgomery pictured right with RAF Association Community Fundraising Manager Peter Brocklehurst.

The Royal Air Forces Association is at the forefront of providing support to the RAF family, assisting vast numbers of service personnel, their dependants and veterans. We carry out this vital work through our hundreds of volunteers, but we need more. Katharine Montgomery, Volunteer Manager, sat down with us to let us know exactly what her job of recruiting and supporting new volunteers entails.

“One of the best parts of my job is speaking to the volunteers and understanding their motivations for supporting us.”

There is no such thing as a typical week in the Association. I ensure existing volunteers are provided with support and recognition for their generous contribution to the Association and as a team, we provide information and opportunities for new volunteers, so they can find ways to get involved more easily.

At the moment I'm working with colleagues to build on our national volunteer programme and to add new initiatives to it. For 2016 this will be befriending, which has just launched, and development for a new youth volunteering scheme. I am also working with the fundraising team on development for the Fundraising Team Leader role which we have just introduced. A large part of my job is making sure all Areas are working within the same guidelines and everyone gets the same level of care and service when they take that step into volunteering with us and that it is easy for them to do so.

My partner is in the RAF, as a pilot on the Sentry. Although he is not away for very long periods of time, I have seen

first-hand what it's like to be separated from loved ones and how services such as befriending or Storybook Wings, that the Association provides, can be a support to individuals and families.

One of the best parts of my job is speaking to the volunteers and understanding their motivations for supporting us. We are so lucky to have so many enthusiastic and committed volunteers and I enjoy welcoming new people to join them. I have a great team of Area Volunteer Co-ordinators who are responsible for recruitment in their Area and we ensure that volunteers are given all the necessary information, support and help they need to apply for roles, before introducing them to other colleagues who provide them with comprehensive training to equip them for their role. The experience and training we provide for our volunteers not only helps our beneficiaries, but can provide benefits in terms of skills for our volunteers as well.

Volunteering gave me the experience to get my first job. I volunteered in a really varied role hosting a large event and developed many new skills. I also realised that I enjoyed working for a charity and quickly moved into this sector. I understand, as a volunteer manager, the value of the volunteers' experience: people give up their time or years' worth of experience and it's my job to ensure we all value and recognise that as an Association. Volunteers are such an asset to the Association and we are grateful for all the support and hard work they provide to help the RAF family.

To find out more about getting involved please visit our website at www.rafa.org.uk/volunteer or contact the team on 0116 266 5224.

Friends united

Following the successful launch of the Befriending service in Lincolnshire last December, the RAF Association has extended the reach to cover the whole of the UK.

Sophie Witkowski, Association Head of Welfare, said: "We launched the befriending service in Lincolnshire as there are a lot of current and former serving RAF personnel in the county. We were delighted with the response, as almost 200 people from the county and further afield expressed an interest in getting involved."

51% of all people aged 75 and over live alone

(Office for National Statistics, 2010)

The service was created in response to research published by the Royal British Legion showing that isolation and loneliness is particularly acute within the ex-service community, with one in six reporting some relationship/isolation difficulty. This equates to around 770,000 people. The research suggests that this is particularly prevalent in areas of transition into civilian life and for older veterans.

Speaking at an event to launch the befriending service, Association President Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller said: "Life for many of us is busy, and often noisy. I'm sure there are times when we all crave solitude and silence, just to be alone with our thoughts. Maybe we want just 10 minutes when the phone doesn't ring, when there are no emails that need our urgent attention, and no knocks at our door from a colleague with 'just a quick question'.

Lonely people have a 64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia

(Holwerda et al, 2012)

"Take a moment now to imagine that your working life is a long way behind you. You are sitting in your favourite chair at home and there is no one with you. It might be quite an appealing thought, but imagine sitting in that chair day after day, still with no one. The phone doesn't ring. There are no knocks at the door. There are no friendly faces. No smiles. No voices. No one just to ask how you are. No one to share a funny story with. No one to share your favourite biscuits with. No one today. No one tomorrow. No one for days or even weeks.

Loneliness is as detrimental to physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day

(Holt-Lunstad, 2010)

Someone who needs a befriender (a beneficiary) could be anyone from a spouse of deployed personnel to a person who is isolated through the use of social media or an older person who has increasingly become lonely and isolated over time.

Befrienders will equally be from all ages and groups, and will meet with a beneficiary to listen to what they need and help to identify ways to connect them to others, to promote friendship.

Sophie continued: "We recognise that befriending has been going on at the Association since the first day it was formed, from popping round for a cup of tea with someone who can't get out, to giving lifts to Branch meetings. This launch builds on that valuable activity and gives volunteers the appropriate training."

11% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a month

(Victor et al, 2003)

A one-day training course will provide expectations of the role, information about the different age groups that may need support, and guidance on how to establish someone's needs and how to achieve the outcome they are looking for. The course will also give additional resources and help for volunteers already acting as befrienders.

For more information on how to become a befriender visit www.rafa.org.uk/volunteering



Volunteering

As the Royal Air Forces Association prepares to officially launch the volunteering programme, formalising the initiatives we have already established to welcome on board new volunteers, it is a good time to reflect on what volunteering enables the Association to do and look at the ways in which you can get involved. Volunteers are key to everything we achieve and as Volunteers' Week, runs from 1 to 12 June, we want to take the time in this issue of Air Mail just thank our volunteers and recognise what they do and how crucial they are to the Association.

We have just over 200 employees at the Association, but we are proud to have over 8,000 volunteers throughout the UK and overseas and we are always delighted to welcome more volunteers to the team.

More details about some of the the roles volunteers undertake are below. From those in our Branches, to our Caseworkers in Areas carrying out welfare, to our fundraisers all over the UK supporting the Wings Appeal, we need our volunteers to help deliver our support to the RAF family. We depend on volunteers who don't have an RAF background as well as those who have a link to the RAF, have served or are serving. We are proud of all our volunteers and the services they give to support others.

Caseworkers

Caseworkers carry out welfare work for the Royal Air Forces Association. Casework is about listening to an individual and assessing their needs to find out how best to support them. Caseworkers need to gather complex information on beneficiaries and this can involve providing clear and precise information on finances and correspondences. This voluntary role reports in to the local Area Welfare Officer, requires the volunteer to keep electronic records and to have the confidence to deal with highly sensitive, personal information. Caseworkers are given accredited training, dealing with complex cases and when and how to signpost to other organisations.

Fundraising Team Leaders

Volunteers in this role take a lead in setting up community fundraising activities, with the support and guidance of the Association professional team. Fundraising Team Leader volunteers help to recruit, motivate and manage other fundraising volunteers in their local area.

Befrienders

The Association's Befriending service helps to alleviate isolation and loneliness in a number of ways. To ensure that members of the RAF family who need us feel part of the community, Befrienders can help to integrate people back into relevant social groups in their local area and help them to meet new people. They can also provide regular in-person visits, keeping people involved in the RAF family. Befrienders may also provide support by telephoning a beneficiary.

Getting involved

The Association wants to welcome as many volunteers as possible, so we have made it very straightforward for volunteers to get involved.

After registering your contact details on our website (address below) and applying for any of the roles you are interested in we will keep you updated by email, via the website and volunteer portal. All you need to do to get involved is to tell us what you'd like to do. Don't be put off if the role that interests you looks challenging, as we will support you at every step, including providing information and all of the relevant training.

Volunteers may also wish to support their local Branch. The benefits of joining a local Branch include having a shared interest, a sense of community, opportunity to build knowledge and fundraising to make a difference in your local area. If you are already part of a Branch with volunteering vacancies you are struggling to fill, please get in touch with the volunteering team and they will do their best to support you in your recruitment.

Finally we want to thank our wonderful team of volunteers that keeps the Association going and provides vital support to those that need it. To recognise all our hard-working volunteers and what they have achieved in the past year we encourage Branch Chairs to return the volunteer audit forms that were sent in November so we know who to thank.

Visit www.rafa.org.uk/volunteer to find out how you can volunteer in your community.

Time for Toni to look forward

Three weeks after her 28th birthday, mother-of-two Toni Dagnall suffered her second debilitating stroke in two months. Toni had previously served in the RAF (along with husband Gary) and was a communication systems project manager at MOD Corsham when she had her first stroke in March 2008.

Now with an improved medical prognosis and practical help from the RAF Association, Toni can do a great deal more to look after herself, her family and her home, thanks to a grant towards vital alterations.

The future looks brighter, but it took time to come to terms with her first stroke. "It happened one evening and my face went numb. It was all a bit of a blur after that."

Toni thought she would be back at work in days and that people understood when she spoke, though her words made no sense. Toni and Gary's daughter and son, then aged nine and seven, also struggled to understand what had happened to their mum.

Toni's speech seems fine now but the strokes left her with no feeling down her left side, poor balance, mobility issues, aphasia and dysphasia (struggling to find the right word or using the wrong word), memory problems, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and chronic pain in muscles and nerves where she otherwise has no feeling. Doctors investigating why such a young woman should suffer strokes discovered a previously undiagnosed hole in her heart. After a successful operation, the prognosis for avoiding further strokes is good.

But the family's terraced house in Bristol proved challenging, and a move to be closer to her own extended family led them to Lancashire. The house seemed more suitable, but the tiny downstairs bathroom had no room for a wheelchair, so constant falls often sent Toni back to hospital, and she suffered burns cooking in the unsuitable kitchen.

Toni and Gary's daughter had been diagnosed with Asperger's, chronic depression and psychosis, so kitchen sharps as well as Toni's powerful medication had to be put into boxes and locked in the car, because there was nowhere else secure.

A council grant application for home adaptations proved a dead end when the local council asked for a £75,500 contribution. But several friends suggested the Association and Gary, with 23 years' RAF service, was already a member.

We sent an occupational therapist, and an Association Welfare Officer applied for a grant from the RAF Benevolent Fund for Toni, to make the house safer and easier to live and work in.

Improvements included an enlarged, disabled-friendly bathroom, new kitchen with lowered oven and easy-to-open cupboards and drawers, lowered, larger light switches and widened, repositioned doors.

"It's so much easier," beams Toni. "The improvements have made a massive difference – and I haven't fallen over in the bathroom since they've been done."



New disability friendly bathroom.



New kitchen with lowered oven and easy to open cupboards and drawers and lowered and larger light switches.

Richard's way with words offers hope for the future

Staying healthy is something we take for granted when we are young, active and fit – but that easy assumption ceased to apply for Senior Aircraftsman Richard Thompson when, still in his mid-20s, he was diagnosed with a brain tumour.

"It came totally out of the blue. It was massive surprise," said Richard, now 28. "I was doing FA football coaching and had been one of the writers for the RAF football team. I was doing lots of things. The operation re-set everything."

Richard was an armourer working on Chinooks, serving at bases including Odiham and Marham as well as completing overseas tours in Afghanistan and the USA, where he chatted with David Beckham after watching him play at LA Galaxy. That phase of Richard's life and career was now over.

"I had amazing surgery in Cambridge with 3D projection showing what was happening. They expanded the surgery from six to 12 hours and the surgeon needed guidance from me, so I was answering questions as they operated."

Rebuilding his life involved long-term rehabilitation, including 14 weeks at Headley Court and two courses at the Battle Back Centre at Lilleshall in Shropshire.

The operation saved Richard's life but the initial impact was severe. "I could not communicate – I couldn't read, write, talk or listen. You can think about what you want to say but you can't say it. The speech therapist would have a 20-minute session with me and then I'd sleep for four hours. It was massively exhausting, crazy."

Other after-effects included loss of feeling on his right side – although he could still walk and move his limbs, he couldn't feel them. But Richard's difficulties communicating were particularly keenly felt. Before the operation in 2014, he had embarked on an Open University course in English.

Studies had to be suspended after surgery but Richard has now been able to resume his degree course and aspires to do more creative writing, with a little help from the RAF Association. His future income is uncertain, and after being medically discharged his RAF pension was expected to be low, because his condition was not attributable to the Service.

Richard successfully applied for an Association grant to pay for



Richard after his operation.

a laptop to aid his studies. "I was having to cope with a little tablet and my phone before, but the laptop has made it much easier for me to type and to pursue my course."

So how does he see his future? "It's a bit unknown. You aim to have a day when you forget about your head and do what you want to do. I try to improve and to test myself every day – I go to the gym and push myself to achieve as much as I can. If I just sit down and stay idle it's not going to help my recovery."

Any long-term ambitions? "One day I'll write a book. It would be nice to go and do something to make a positive impact on everybody else."

Thanks to the generosity of donors and Association members, Richard is now a little closer to achieving his aim.



Richard in uniform with his father Stephen and his cousin Leam.

New Erewash Branch drop-in centre shows the way for Wings Cafés



Erewash Branch Chairman Ray Noble invites Mayor of Erewash Councillor Val Custance to open the new drop-in centre.

A new drop-in centre has been officially opened in Long Eaton which could help provide a model for other planned Wings Cafés nationally.

The Erewash Branch Welfare Drop-in Centre will be open five days a week as a place to meet, eat, socialise and stay active. It was officially opened on 29 January by the Mayor of Erewash, Councillor Val Custance, with many local dignitaries attending.

The project was a Branch initiative and was the brainchild of Erewash Branch Welfare Officer Marian Robinson, ably assisted by Deputy Welfare Officer Steve Jones and a hard-working band of helpers.



"I'd been thinking for some time that we have got a lot of members who are on their own and are lonely," said Marian. "They don't see anyone but their carers from morning till night, and they had nowhere to go to be sociable.

"I thought it would help if they had a place where they could drop in and have a cup of tea, sit and chat or do an activity. We can also give carers a break from looking after spouses while they go on errands or shopping. The centre is on the bus route with a stop just opposite, and we have space for parking."

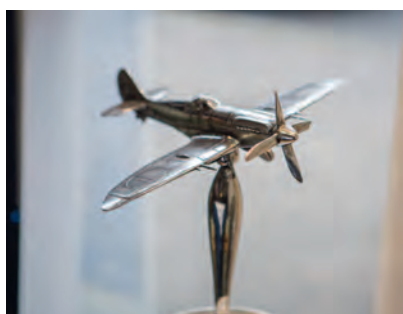
"Loneliness and isolation are increasingly common problems for older people and this local Association initiative goes a long way to answering those needs," said Association Director of Welfare Rory O'Connor.

"The new centre will encourage people to come into a safe and welcoming environment for a friendly get-together. We plan to establish similar 'Wings Cafes' around the country to help meet the demand for this kind of community support."

The Erewash centre offers hot drinks and light meals as well as activities including quizzes, crafts such as card-making and glass-painting, computer training, chair-based exercises, chess, carpet bowls, get-togethers for single members and trips out. "We've got members in their late 80s learning how to use laptops," said Marian.

After cutting the opening ribbon, Erewash mayor Councillor Val Custance said: "I think it's wonderful that the Association is looking after its members so well when their RAF careers are over. Being on your own in later life can be daunting, so having this centre is a great thing."

The centre is located at 91 Grasmere Road, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4DZ.



Members benefits



Don't forget Association members can buy household appliances from the Hotpoint Privilege Purchase Club and get up to 30 per cent off high street prices.

You can order online via the members' portal, if you are unable to access this please email membership@rafa.org.uk. For those members not online, you can order directly from Hotpoint by calling 01733 287889. Tell them you're from the RAF Association before ordering. Please only use the telephone if you don't have access to a computer, as this isn't a call centre, but a small team in Peterborough!

CS Healthcare

There are certain periods in life that may cause us to feel stress. This can be a variety of things including the demands of a busy lifestyle, worries caused by work, family or relationships. The feeling of not being able to cope with responsibilities can sometimes impact everything we say and do and the consequences for our health can be severe.

If you can learn to identify things that trigger your stress levels, you can become more likely to control the feelings of stress and prevent any health issues. Exercise is an excellent method to keep stress under control, because it gives your mind time to rest and process your feelings. Improving your time management skills can also help you to tackle stress from the source.

CS Healthcare is a mutual provider of health insurance which proudly supports the Association and its members. To find more health advice and information on their insurance plans visit cshealthcare.co.uk



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Whether you are looking to fill your greenhouse, grow your own vegetables or create a spectacular bedding plant display, Suttons Seeds has tried and tested products to ensure quality for its customers.

Gardening is fun, relaxing and satisfying and they are dedicated to making sure you get the most out of your space. So whether you've been gardening for years or have dreamt of growing your own apples, Suttons Seeds has the products and the know-how to make your task easier.

Members receive 10 per cent RAF Association discount on everything in the Suttons Seeds catalogue or online.

Quote AF210 at the checkout to receive your discount or call 0844 922 0606 for a catalogue.





TALKING AIR MAIL

Did you know that there is an audio version of Air Mail?

The audio version of our popular magazine is another great way to keep up to date with Association news. If you know of a member who would appreciate 'Talking Air Mail', **find out more by calling 0800 018 2361.**



Air Mail prompts memories for WWII veteran Dennis

World War II veteran and Association member Dennis Bartlett was prompted to get in touch with Air Mail when two features in the January edition stirred memories of his RAF service and the aircraft systems he worked on in his post-war career.

Dennis, now 93 and a widower, left school at 15 and worked for pump manufacturer Pulsometer both before and after the war, but he volunteered for the RAF in 1941, aged 18. Features on the last flying Vulcan and on flight pioneer Sir Alan Cobham linked to both sides of Dennis's career.

"The Pulsometer company had been involved in making centrifugal pumps for the RAF and it was a fascinating experience," said Dennis. "There wasn't a military aircraft that we didn't make the fuel pumps for, and the Vulcan was one of the biggest contracts we ever had. But nobody has ever talked about how the fuel gets into the huge engines on the Vulcan, or how it gets down that pipeline in air-to-air refuelling.

"Sir Alan Cobham's in-flight refuelling system has never been superseded, worldwide. I used to go to his engineering base at Tarrant Rushton near Blandford Forum in Dorset. It was wonderful. They were developing the original drogue mechanisms and the winding mechanism for the hosepipe, which was five inches across when inflated. My department was responsible for making the pump and it pumped 30,000 litres of fuel per minute, driven by a hot-air turbine.

"We also supplied pumps for the Lightning and the TSR-2." The highly advanced strike and reconnaissance aircraft was controversially cancelled as it

was about to go into production in the 1960s. "It was tragic that we threw the TSR-2 away. We were 10 years ahead of the rest of the world with that aircraft."

Dennis even gave the legendary Donald Campbell the pump for his land speed attempt in Bluebird in the 1950s – "I thought it would be good publicity for the company." The car used a Bristol-Siddeley Proteus aircraft engine.

Now living in Whitchurch, Oxfordshire, Dennis also looks back fondly on his wartime service in the RAF – or most of it: "I was only a corporal but I did teach electronics and I trained a lot of recruits in places like Cosford and Melksham. I got transferred for a time to the Fleet Air Arm working on Swordfish and Sunderlands – I didn't like that so much. I was stationed up in Stranraer – it was a long way from home and damn cold!

"We used sit on top of the engine cases with spanners attached to our fingers with string, to stop the spanners from falling. It was an interesting time."

Dennis came out of the RAF in 1946. "My discharge papers said my original employer was duty-bound to allow me to go back, and I finished up in the boardroom. The firm (now known as SPP) is owned by an Indian company now."

Dennis rose to be Commercial Director: "That took me round the world. I went to Singapore, Japan and all over the Far East, including Saigon in 1975, just before the Americans left, when there was a dramatic exodus. I also went on a technical mission to China in 1976 – the year that Chairman Mao died. The whole country was very dour. Everybody wore the same uniform – quite different to how it is now."



Dennis when he joined the RAF in 1941.



Dennis Bartlett aged 93.



261 Squadron at Tanjore, India Sept 1945. Dennis Bartlett middle row 2nd from right.



Dennis Bartlett, seated front with his comrades in Tanjore, India Sept 1945.

Wings Breaks Hotels

Events and fun in the sun

Everyone needs to take a break now and then, but it's not always easy to find accommodation that perfectly suits your needs. The RAF Association offers three hotels situated in some of England's most picturesque locations. Whether it's an idyllic break by the sea or a stay in the Northumbrian countryside, each hotel has something special to offer guests in 2016.



Rothbury House

Set overlooking the beautiful Coquet Valley, Rothbury House hosts events throughout the year including, the Queens' birthday on Thursday 21 April with a celebration dinner, fireworks and a garden party.

Tea on the Terrace on 25 May will be the main event with the Rothbury Pipe Band and Rothbury Ceilidh Band, lots of stalls and a raffle. A 'Can't Cook, Won't Cook' demonstration will be staged by RAF Boulmer and Northern Area's Branch Support Officers followed by Rothbury Street Fair on 26 May.

Rothbury House also organises outings, taking in the beautiful Northumberland countryside and the historic buildings of the area.

Richard Peck House

Located just 100 yards from the Lytham St Annes seafront, Richard Peck House can be found in an elegant seaside town that offers white sandy beaches and plenty to see and do.

From Friday 13 to Sunday 15 May there will be the RAF Association Annual Conference in Blackpool. Armed Forces Day parade will be in Blackpool on Saturday 25 June, which is always a popular day. The Queen's official birthday is being celebrated with a garden party at the house on Saturday 11 June, as well as running regular trips out to local places of interest three days a week, taking advantage of their coastal location.



Flowerdown House

If your idea of a wonderful break is on the seafront at one of the West Country's most popular resorts, then Flowerdown House at Weston-super-Mare is the place for you. With trips out for guests including Cheddar Caves, Wells Cathedral and the nearby farmer's market there's something for everyone.

Other events include a St George's Day Parade on 23 April with a set by the RAF Association Concert Band, the Queens official birthday on 11 June with a garden party and the annual Mess Dinner, a black tie event with guest speaker David Prowse Director of Membership and Operations for the RAF Association on 21 July.

With warm welcomes and friendly atmospheres, staying at a Wings Breaks Hotel really is like staying with friends. For further information or to book your trip away call 0800 0182 361 or visit www.rafa.org.uk/wingsbreaks, then start packing!

Eighty years on, the Spitfire still reigns supreme



Groundcrew working to rearm and refuel a Spitfire ready for more action. Photo: © IWM.

It's 80 years since Britain began its long love affair with the Spitfire, the aircraft that became synonymous with the heroism of our pilots and the genius of our engineers in the battle for national survival that was the Battle of Britain.

On 5 March 1936, Squadron Leader Ralph Sorley took off from Eastleigh Aerodrome in Supermarine Spitfire prototype K5054, the first of many test flights to fine-tune the aircraft that was to captivate pilots and capture the public's imagination like no other.

By June, the design had been sufficiently honed for the Air Ministry to order 310 aircraft. The first public glimpse came at the RAF Hendon air display on 27 June, though production delays meant that the first aircraft entered service more than two years later, at RAF Duxford in 1938.

In August 1939, the young Geoffrey Wellum joined the RAF on a short commission. After training, he went to 92 Squadron, Northolt in May 1940. By September, still barely 19, he was piloting his Spitfire in the ferociously brutal dogfights of the Battle of Britain.

Geoffrey, now 94, vividly re-created his wartime sorties in his book *First Light*, and he recalled for *Air Mail* his first impressions on joining 92 Squadron. He had never even seen a Spitfire before, let alone flown one: "It gave food for thought when I found myself confronted by this single-seater fighter, looking elegant and relaxed.

"The start-up was rather intimidating and the aircraft became alive with feeling. Taxiing presented a few problems. Firstly I couldn't see ahead, the nose got in the way, and due to the narrow undercarriage it was not very stable on the ground. But on the ground was not the place where the Spitfire was designed to be.

"The power on take-off was awesome, but once in the air, in its natural element, it was a thing transformed. Light and responsive on the controls, especially the elevators, with no nasty habits, the Spitfire seemed to flow about the sky. The confined cockpit nevertheless had a friendly feel about it. The whole package

made the Spitfire a truly beautiful aeroplane to fly – stable, friendly and totally free from any vices, a thoroughbred."

The public was impressed and inspired too, even though the Hawker Hurricane took on more of the Battle of Britain burden, simply because there were more Hurricanes already in service.

But the Spitfire's higher performance gave it the edge in the air, with a higher victory-to-loss ratio than the Hurricane. It went on to be the only British fighter in continuous production throughout World War II, continually developing to become faster, more adaptable and more deadly than ever.

When the last Spitfire rolled off the post-war production line in 1948, some 20,351 had been produced, not only as interceptors but also in such varied roles as photo-reconnaissance, fighter-bomber and two-seat trainer – even a carrier-based version for the Fleet Air Arm.

Eighty years after that first flight, we remember the glories of the Spitfire, the sacrifices made and the debt we still owe to the pilots who did not come back, and to those who did.



41 Squadron Spitfire and Tornado GR4. Photo: © Planefocus Ltd.

Events Calendar for 2016*

May

- 1 Abingdon Air & Country Fair
- 2 Lechlade Duck Race
- 13-15 Blackpool town centre
- 28 Durham Tees Valley Air Show
- 28-29 Duxford Air Show

June

- 10-12 Torbay Air Show
- 11 Throckmorton Air Show
- 11 Biggin Hill Festival of Flight
- 19 Cosford Air Show
- 18-19 Weston-super-Mare Air Festival and Armed Forces Weekend
- 23-26 Goodwood Festival of Speed
- 25 Cleethorpes Armed Forces Day

July

- 2-3 Yorkshire Air Show
- 8-10 Royal International Air Tattoo
- 9-10 Duxford Air Show
- 16-17 Farnborough
- 16-17 Woodhall Spa 1940s Festival
- 22-24 Sunderland Air Show
- 25 East Fortune Air Show
- 28 Culdrose Air Day

August

- 7-8 Blackpool Airshow
- 8-9 Elvington Air Show
- 11-14 Eastbourne Air Show
- 13-14 Red Bull Air Race
- 13-14 Lytham St Annes 1940s
- 18-21 Bournemouth Air Show
- 27-28 Wheels & Wings, Dunsfold
- 27-28 Rhyl Air Show

September

- 3-4 Scottish Air Show
- 5-8 Jersey Air Show
- 10-11 Duxford Air Show
- 10-11 Southport Air Show



*Please note this list is not exhaustive and that these dates and venues were as known at the time of going to press. Readers are advised to check in advance that changes have not been made to venue or dates prior to considering attendance. The RAF Association cannot be held responsible for any changes made nor any subsequent loss due to any changes made by organisers of these events.

Please also note that some events may have limited access and may not all be open to the general public without invitation. Please ensure you check with the organisers before travel.

Creating a better world for disabled people

Leonard Cheshire was born in 1917. Like many young men and women, he signed up to fight for his country in the Second World War. He was assigned to Bomber Command and became one of the RAF's youngest commanding officers. His legendary war career included eight months leading No. 617 Squadron – the Dambusters – and he became the most highly decorated bomber pilot when he was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1944.

At the end of the war, Leonard realised he was one of the lucky ones and was seized with a desire to make the world a better place. He believed that the sacrifice of all the men and women in the war shouldn't be in vain. Out of all the despair and destruction, he wanted to create a better world.

Leonard began by campaigning for better treatment of ex-servicemen and women. In 1948 he received a call, asking if an RAF airman who was dying could come and live with him. This started a lifetime of humanitarian work with disabled people, fighting injustice and working towards a society in which everyone is equally valued.

**“In war Leonard Cheshire was a hero.
In peace he served his nation no less well.”**
Sir John Major

Leonard Cheshire started a radical global movement to ensure disabled people could live their lives with dignity, choice and independence. Leonard was admitted to the Order of Merit in 1981 and made a life peer in the House of Lords in 1991. He took the title Baron Cheshire of Woodhall in the County of Lincolnshire, in memory of his time serving at RAF Woodhall Spa.



Leonard Cheshire VC

Today, Leonard Cheshire Disability, with over 180 residential care homes, is the leading UK charity helping more than 6,700 disabled people every year.

For over 65 years, it has supported disabled people in many different ways. This includes providing care in people's own homes, in residential homes, in day centres and through respite services.

It makes a difference to the lives of thousands of people by supporting them to develop skills through our employment, education, enterprise, health, volunteering and digital inclusion projects.

If you would like to learn more about Leonard Cheshire Disability visit www.leonardcheshire.org

The RAF Association works with Leonard Cheshire Disability, signposting beneficiaries where appropriate.



Leonard Cheshire pictured at the opening of the 617 Squadron memorial at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, actor Richard Todd who played Guy Gibson in the Dambusters film is the background.



RAF Hullavington 1939 - Leonard Cheshire is middle row, third from right.



Leonard Cheshire front row (fourth from left) with members of 35 Squadron and one of their aircraft in 1941.

Have you got your lucky number yet?

Did you know that the odds of winning the National Lottery top prize are 14 million to one? Yes? Well did you know that odds of winning the RAF Association's Wings Lotto weekly prize of £1,000 are just 1,500 to one?!

Bernard and Brenda Russell won a rollover of £4,750 last year, which helped with modifications to their garden to allow Brenda better access.

Bernard said: "My wife is not as mobile as she was, so we are levelling out the garden, removing the steps and landscaping it. That work starts soon so it was fantastic to get a call to say we had won the rollover."

Playing Wings Lotto is a great way to help support the work of the RAF Association. Every week we guarantee that someone will win the first prize of £1,000, and with our rollover feature you could win up to £10,000.

Joining Wings Lotto couldn't be simpler, sign up online at www.rafa.org.uk/lotto where you can enter the lottery using a credit or debit card or set up a Direct Debit.

Alternatively you can request an application form by calling 0800 0182 361.



Helicopter haven for concert band



Concert band members Heather (clarinet), Phil (saxophone), Tom (trombone) and Ian (tuba) in front of an ex-Queen's flight Wessex.

The RAF Association Concert Band will perform to an audience of music lovers and helicopters on 21 May at a concert in Somerset at the world's largest helicopter museum.

It's the first time since 2009 that the Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare has hosted a concert for the band, with even more exhibits for concert-goers to look at when the music stops.

So, how do you choose a programme for such an occasion? "I find concerts that have a theme are quite easy to put together," said the band's Musical Director Peter Skellon. "The focus is on classical-style music, with a 'Last Night of the Proms' finale to instil some national pride and patriotism. We are after all playing among machines that have all seen some form of combat action over the years!

"Having an audience set among these iconic machines and the musicians playing music associated with what are now museum exhibits seems to prompt lots of emotions."

The term 'classical music' covers a wide spectrum these days, says Peter: "The concert includes everything from Mozart to Henry Wood's Fantasia on British Sea Songs and the theme tunes to Game of Thrones and Raiders of the Lost Ark."

The programme will also have a royal element with a rendition of Here's A Health Unto Her Majesty, anticipating the Queen's 90th birthday and later this year the band will play in a special birthday concert in honour of the occasion.

First up in the band's Spring calendar though is 'Music in the Air', a concert on 23 April featuring music packed with RAF connotations, at Blakehay Theatre, Wadham Street, Weston-super-Mare (01934 645493), where it is the resident band.

Helicopter Museum Concert – Tickets www.helicoptermuseum.co.uk/dance or call 01934 635227.

Other selected events

- **17 June 2016 – National Memorial Arboretum, RAF Association Dedication Service, Alrewas**
- **31 July 2016 – Concert Bandstand, Grove Park, Weston-super-Mare**
- **1 October 2016 – Movie Night Concert, Blakehay**

Update from the RAF Families Federation

The RAF Families Federation continues to help all RAF serving personnel and their families with issues and concerns. Unfortunately, accommodation and problems with Service Families Accommodation (SFA) in particular, still tops our “hit list” by some distance and we are working closely with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and with the contractor to not only resolve individual issues but also to press the contractor to prioritise better and improve the service provided. Our concerns have been raised at ministerial level and we are grateful for the personal intervention of the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans on some of the more pressing issues.

We also continue to represent the views of our “customers” on other issues as well. In recent weeks, we have reported on the impact on some of the New Pay Model and we have highlighted that a number of other changes are happening this spring (e.g. Combined Accommodation Assessment System and National Insurance contributions) that could hit many serving personnel in the pocket. Our central message remains that, collectively, these changes combined with continued pay restraint, are impacting widely on morale – personal and family. We know that the RAF and MOD are aware of this but it’s important that we keep digging them in the ribs to help them understand the level of concern and worry amongst many RAF personnel about the future. The Strategic Defence and Security Review may have been good news in terms of new kit but if the people aren’t there to operate and maintain it...

On a more positive note, we have had some real successes in overturning disadvantages caused by military service through our work in support of the Armed Forces Covenant, and we are particularly pleased to report that our formal observations on progress with Covenant implementation, included in the government’s Annual Report to Parliament, were picked up by the Home Affairs Armed Forces Covenant Committee. Following a meeting with the committee, those observations on what still needs to be done will now form the basis of an action plan that will be used across government departments – a prime example of RAF FF evidence and comment directly influencing government policy.

Our intent for 2016 is to focus on capturing more evidence, more often, from the serving community. We’ll do this by visiting as many units as we can to speak to people face-to-face, and through short, sharp surveys that take only a few moments to complete. Please look out for details on our website – www.raf-ff.org.uk – or subscribe (for free) to our weekly e-bulletin, via the website.



Bill Mahon, Director of the RAF Families Federation



Area RAFALO spotlight – Sergeant Dom Owen

Our team of RAF Association Liaison Officers (RAFALOs), serving personnel on stations and in units, provide a link between serving personnel and our wider membership. Here we talk to Sgt Owen, Area RAFALO for the Northern Area.

Tell us a bit about your RAF career

I completed 28 years of service in September 2015 and am entering my last few years. My current post is Officers Mess Head Chef at RAF Linton-on-Ouse. During my career I have served in many areas and roles including: Gütersloh, Kinloss, Aldergrove, Ramstein, VIP duties JFC Brunssum, Kuwait, Afghanistan – the list goes on.

Why did you become a RAFALO?

It was by accident really. I was helping out at a charity event at RAF Laarbruch and the Association was mentioned, so I decided to get more involved helping out at various events and memorial services around Europe. There may have been a little pressure from an old Warrant Officer too!

What sort of events have you been involved in?

There have been so many over the years: charity runs, town shows, supermarket collections, charity auctions, horse racing evenings, cycle events, charity curry nights, the Lancaster memorial service in the Netherlands – it's always helpful when you have a chef as a RAFALO.

Why did you want to become an Area RAFALO?

It was a natural progression, having seen the work they did. There was a bit of inspiration seeing how passionate Sqn Ldr Gibson (Gibbo) is as European RAFALO, (but I don't want to big him up too much!). It's great to see what other units are doing and help with their events. We usually have such passionate



Dom(right) serving Sqn Ldr Gibson (left).

service personnel working for and with the Association that they need little or no guidance.

What do you enjoy most about being a RAFALO?

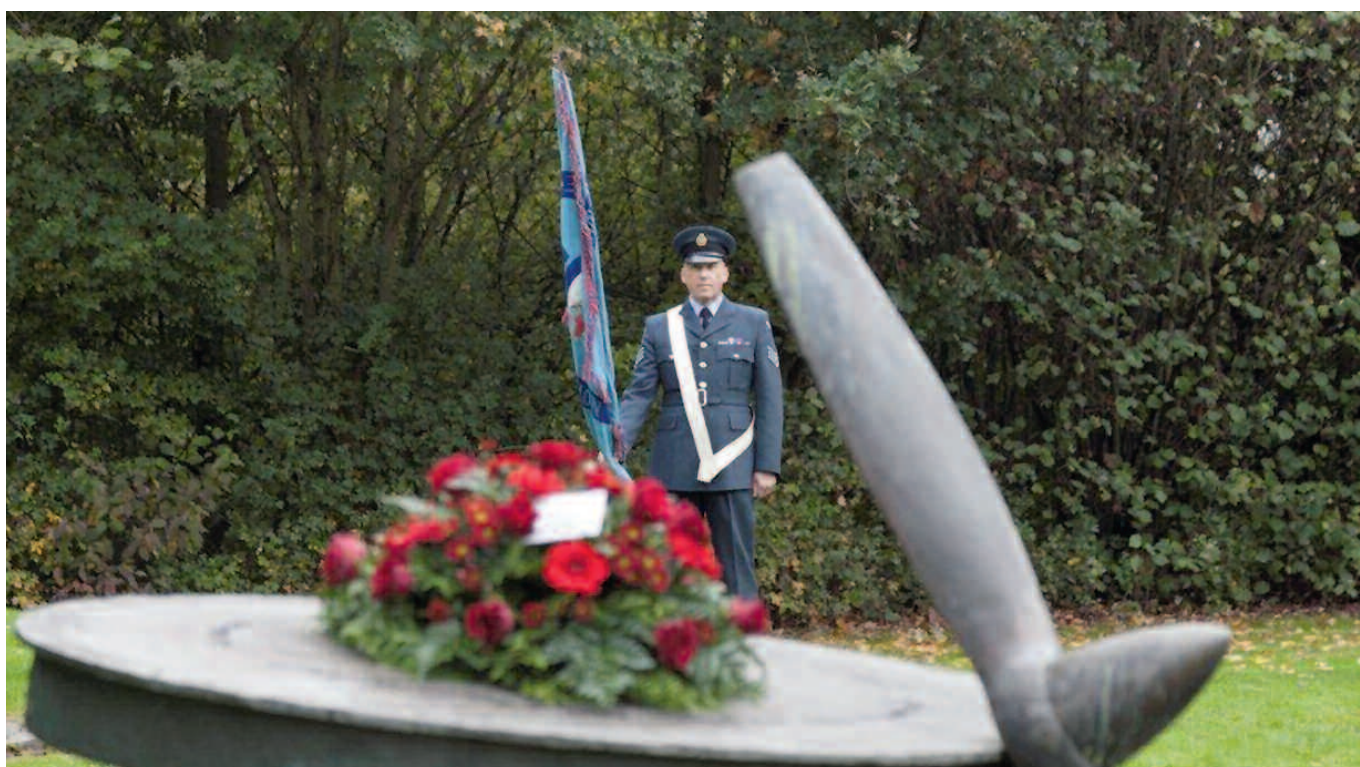
It's making a difference to people's lives and making people aware of what we do as a charity. My most memorable event was helping the family of a downed airmen from WWII attend his crew's Lancaster memorial service in the Netherlands from Australia. It was so rewarding seeing the emotions and how thankful they were.

If you were running a Brew for the Few what would you first choice of cake be?

A huge wedge of properly homemade carrot cake with plenty of vanilla butter cream in the centre, or is that too much?

Tea or coffee

Always tea, strong, white, no sugar.



To give members more of an insight into the work of Central Council, we are profiling trustees in Air Mail. This issue we spoke to Air Commodore Alan Opie.

Can you start with a short bit about your RAF career so far?

I have served in the RAF for over 35 years and have enjoyed every single minute. I have always been employed as an RAF Personnel Officer, completing a wide variety of interesting tours. In my current role I look after personnel policy at Headquarters Air Command with responsibility for all aspects of HR, this role fits neatly with my work on Central Council.

What does being Senior RAF Representative entail?

It is a tremendous privilege to be the Senior RAF Representative on Central Council. As RAF representative I provide the perspective of serving RAF personnel and their families and play an active role in promoting the merits of Association membership to our Regular and Reserve personnel, identifying where we can best provide welfare support to the RAF.

Why do you give up so much of your time for the Association?

I never feel that I am giving up my time for the Association, as it is such an essential element of RAF life and, what we describe, as the Whole Force. I identify completely with the Association's aim to actively look after the welfare of the RAF family, past and present, and their dependants in times of need.

What do you get from your volunteering?

For me, the concept of volunteering sits at the very fabric of RAF life and enables us to help those who are most in need. We all require help at some stage of life and I feel that it is incumbent on us to provide help whenever we can.

What have you achieved in your time on Central Council?

I am particularly pleased we have made great progress during the last 12 months in increasing the proportion of RAF



Air Commodore Alan Opie

personnel in the Association and recognising the excellent contribution of our RAF Association Liaison Officers. I have also been delighted with the many proactive projects that the Association has to support serving RAF, including free wi-fi in communal areas and the refurbishment of Station Contact Houses and now to support the Association's excellent and much needed Befriending service.

What do you like doing in your free time?

I love all sports, especially football (supporting Bristol City through thick and thin) and table tennis as President of the RAF Table Tennis Association. I also enjoy travel, keeping fit and spending time with family and friends.

Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News



1. Chesham & Amersham Branch. The RAFALOs from RAF Halton organised a lunch for local Branches to be held in the luxurious surroundings of Halton House Officers Mess.

Just before the meal, all were ushered on to the balcony for a fly past by a Chinook and a Puma.

Photo shows the members of the Branch in a photo call on the rather grand staircase.



2. Basingstoke Branch. In December the Branch celebrated its 70th anniversary by holding a formal dinner for 80 members and friends. The principal guests were National President AM Sir Dusty Miller, Station Commander RAF Odiham Gp Capt Philip Robinson OBE DFC** MA RAF and the Mayor of Basingstoke & Deane Cllr Anne Court.

The evening was presided over by Branch Chairman Pip Iles and the Branch President Wg Cdr Bryan Jenkins opened the speeches by welcoming the guests.

Photo (l-r): Ilene Iles, Pip Iles (Branch Chairman), Gp Capt Philip Robinson and Sharon Robinson, Patricia Jenkins, Wg Cdr Bryan Jenkins (Branch President), Mayor Cllr Anne Court, Richard Court, AM Sir Dusty Miller, Gina Crane, Wg Cdr R Shepherd (Branch Life Vice President).



3. North Costa Blanca Branch. At their meeting in December, members were delighted by an early extra-special Christmas gift when Hugh Parker and Keith Hart from the Masonic Home of Valencia visited and presented to the Branch a magnificent cheque for €1,000. This donation, to be used in support of the charitable work of the Association, represented much hard work by the men and women who give up their time in aid of the fund-raising efforts of the local Masonic organisations.

This donation came about after Hugh Parker attended last year's 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain hosted by the Branch. Hugh was impressed by the plea for financial support by Wg Cdr Bob Hunt MBE, Chairman, in his welcoming address. This led to Hugh addressing the Council of the Masonic Home of Valencia with the request for a donation to be made which resulted in the presentation at the Branch meeting.

It is forecast that the financial needs of the Association will increase by 2020 to a sum in excess of £15 million. New projects are being considered all the time, but these will cost money. Consequently, the fantastic donation made by the Masonic Home of Valencia represents much needed funds.

Photo shows (l-r) Keith Hart and Hugh Parker presenting their cheque for €1,000 to Gaby Ferenczy (President) and Bob Hunt (Chairman).



4. Cranwell Branch. About 100 members and friends enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch in the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess at the RAF College. This is not only an occasion for a seasonal meal but an opportunity to thank members of the Branch and adopted Sleaford ATC.

There is a close liaison between both organisations which is shown especially in the support that the cadets and staff give in September on Battle of Britain Saturday when they are very successful in collecting. It also gives the Branch an opportunity to show its appreciation to the Mess staff who ensure throughout the year that all are welcome for meetings and social events.

Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News

5. Poole Branch held its annual Christmas lunch in early December at the Cliffside Hotel in Bournemouth. An excellent meal was enjoyed by the 78 diners who included members from Christchurch, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton & Gillingham, Weymouth and Wimborne Branches. The three local ATC squadrons sponsored by Poole Branch were also represented.

Guests of honour were the Area President of Wales, Midland and South Western Area Air Cdre Andrew Neal and his wife Libby. In a short after-dinner speech he introduced himself and then developed on the theme of volunteering and befriending.

Pictured (l-r) are Chairman Mike Davis, Air Cdre Andrew Neal and President Doug Collett.



6. Hythe & Romney Marsh Branch. Chairman John Wild and Wings Appeal Officer Bob Spinner presented the Ken Howell Premises Shield to Mr Lathuraj Ananthanadarajah of the village shop Dymchurch for achieving the most collection tin money.

Raj was delighted to receive this award and it now stands on his shop counter for all to see. A grand total of £10,009.96 was collected by the Branch as a whole.

As of 1 January Branch meetings are held at the RBL in Hythe on second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm.

7. Solihull Branch. Closure of the Branch was imminent following the retirement of both Chairman and Vice Chairman at last year's AGM when their positions could not be filled.



After a prolonged delay, at the eleventh hour, a new Chairman, Joe Mullen, stepped forward together with a new member, David Pack, as Vice Chairman. After long and auspicious tenure as ex Chairman, Norman Page has agreed to serve as Branch President on the new committee. The Branch are therefore pleased to say that it is now up and running with Branch meetings held at The RBL, Shirley at 2pm until 4.30pm on the first Thursday of each month.

Norman Page is shown handing over his chain of office to Joe Mullen.



8. Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders Branch. Sgt Norwood was the pilot of a Beaufighter IIF which suffered an engine fire shortly after take-off and crashed at Hutton Mill Bridge in the Scottish Borders in January 1943. Sgt Irvine Jackson, Navigator, also died. Sgt Norwood's nephew, David Geddes, researched the crash and discovered its location. The family wanted a plaque acknowledging the sacrifice made by the crew and obtained the landowner's permission to have one mounted. Based in Hertfordshire, they approached the Scottish and Northern Ireland Area Office for help which resulted in Bob Bertram MBE, Branch Chairman, and HWO/Standard Bearer, George Prentice, turning up on a cold November morning with generator and tools to measure, drill and mount the plaque.

On 7 December Sgt Norwood's uncle, Bob Norwood and his nephew, David Geddes, along with local man Alex Brodie – who as a 10 year old boy actually saw the plane come down – plus Bob Bertram, George Prentice, Mrs Bobbie Prentice and Lyndon Purvis attended the unveiling of the plaque. George lowered the Branch Standard in salute as Bobbie and Lyndon played a pipers lament. A successful end to a long journey for Sgt Robert Norwood's family.





1. Waddington Branch was recently selected to be the Lincolnshire Co-operative Community Champion at its Brant Road, Lincoln Food Store and the Waddington Pharmacy for three months commencing in early September 2015.

Photo shows Oliver, the store manager, presenting a cheque for £979, to the Branch Honorary Welfare Officer Cliff Doe, for the Branch's Welfare Fund.

2. Bridport & Lyme Regis RMG members were pleased to find that one of their long serving members, Wally Shonfield, had a surprise Christmas present in the form of recognition by the French government who have awarded him the Chevalier de Légion d'Honneur for his efforts during the support for the Allied landings in Normandy.



Wally was a young member of the Royal Observer Corps (ROC) and was asked if he would carry out duties on board ship. Having adjusted his age up a little, agreed and was given the temporary rank of acting Petty Officer and posted to defensively equipped US Merchant Ship the Edwin L Drake at Avonmouth, together with his seaborne partner Peter Jay. They anchored off Omaha beach and, while there, passed information to US Navy gunners on the aircraft that were overhead to prevent the American gunners shooting at the wrong ones!

Wally said that he was surprised but honoured to receive the medal and would treasure it together with the accompanying letter.

3. New Milton & District Branch member Ted Sparrow has received his appointment to the rank of Chevalier in the order National de la Légion d'Honneur.

Ted flew many missions over France giving air cover for the troops on D-Day and was involved attacking ground targets through into Holland. He was shot down in an attack on Osnabruk aerodrome which gave him serious neck and head injuries and was rescued by an advance party of the Canadian army who rushed him to hospital. He was later air ambulated to England and treated at St. Hugh's, Oxford. On recovery he trained new pilots then back to fighter aircraft and onto NATO in France and Italy finishing as Wing Commander on his 47th birthday. Photo courtesy of New Milton Advertiser and Times.



4. Swiss Branch. Norman Thom (4 left) has received the French award of Chevalier de l'ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur at Cruseilles for his wartime service in the RAF. Jean Gilbert, a veteran of the 1st Division of the Free French and an Officer of the Order, made the presentation. Norman was the wireless operator on board Lancaster DV192, HW-Z, and the sole survivor on his ninth mission when his plane was shot down near They-sous-Montford.

Norman still tends the graves of his comrades from 'Z—Zebra' in They-sous-Montford and in this he is helped by none other than the man who shot him down, former Luftwaffe Hauptmann Heinz Rökner.



The only remaining Branch founder member, Douglas Schofield (4 right) received his medal from the French Defence Attaché in Switzerland, Colonel Jean-Michel Meyer, at the French Consulate General in Geneva.

Unlike Norman, Doug was not shot down on D-Day on which his Lancaster flew a sortie, with Douglas as navigator, to bomb railway installations near Lisieux, east of Caen prior to the landings. He went on to complete a full tour of operations (30 missions), making him one of the rare 27per cent of aircrew who survived to complete a full tour.

Sadly Doug passed away a short time after receiving his award.

Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News

5. Huyton with Roby & Liverpool Branch. Phil Southern, Wings Appeal Officer, offers his grateful thanks to Old Swan Tesco's Community Champion, Annette McCarthy, for her continued support during Wings Week and throughout the year.

The Branch has collected over £4,000 at the store during the last 12 months.

6. Addlestone & Chertsey Branch. Colin Hignett MBE, treasurer and organiser of the Association Remembrance Day Service at the RAF Memorial Runnymede presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the manager, Chris Poole and her staff at Command Media Services Design Studio for their help and support over the last 14 years.

7. Newark Branch members and guests enjoyed a 70th birthday party for the Branch held at the RAFA Club. Chairman Dennis Atkins thanked Area Director, Ken Clarke, and Central Council for their support and also expressed his appreciation to the Chair of the District Council, Cllr Ivor Walker and Vice Chair of the Town Council, Cllr Adrian Cowan together with visiting Branches, guests and members for sharing the special evening. He also acknowledged the hard work and investment given by David Chapelhow who has now taken over the running of the business side of the Branch.

Wg Cdr James Beldon MBE made a short speech and then presented Alan Crouch with a 60 Years Membership Badge and they both cut the two birthday cakes. The Toast was given by Eric Yeardley. Members enjoyed a buffet and entertainment was provided by Stevie H.

8. Thurrock Branch. The Crown Harvester laid on a charity evening consisting of a quiz night, raffle and there was a table available to sell Association goods.

The evening raised £295.22 which was donated to Wings Appeal. Thanks are passed on for their support and for the meal provided for members and friends at no cost to the Branch.

Photo courtesy of 1582 Squadron ATC, shows Eddy Coull (Wings Appeal Organiser) and Ed Todd (charity night organiser).

When submitting Branch News to Air Mail, please note that the wording should ideally be around 100 words, accompanied by a supporting photograph.

Copyright for the photograph(s) must be obtained and details submitted with the photograph(s).

Please note that due to space limitations, submission of an item does not guarantee publication.

When submitting photographs please ensure that you give as much information as possible about those shown in any photographs, names etc to help us in the compilation of the item.



Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News



1. Global Branch. With a membership that stretches from Shetland to Michigan and Queensland to Finland setting up an online global Branch was always going to be a challenge. But February in Newbury saw the inaugural AGM of the 1370 Global Branch attended by over 30 members and guests including President Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, Ian McEnnis of Central Council and the Mayor of Newbury, Howard Bairstow.

With a full and enthusiastic committee, the future looks rosy for the Branch which, after just four months of being, boasts over 150 members.

Chairman, Steve Mullis, accepts that there are challenging times ahead but, by incorporating all methods of new technology with the enthusiasm of its members, the Branch and Association can only continue to increase membership with new and younger members.

A good night was had by all with many staying locally, all meeting up the next morning for breakfast before departing to all points of the compass.

2. Dudley Branch is pleased to receive help from six local ATC squadrons in collecting for Wings Appeal.

To show appreciation for their commitment, they are awarded framed certificates.

Photo shows President John Deane and Chairman Keith Bloomer presenting a new trophy to Oldbury Squadron in recognition of its outstanding efforts in raising £1,195.



3. Birmingham Sheldon Branch. Cadets from 2030 (Birmingham Airport) Squadron ATC with Mrs S Huddleday and Mr W Broadfield collected at the Tesco Store, Coventry Road, Sheldon, Birmingham in February.

A total of £750 was raised for Wings Appeal. A letter of appreciation has been sent to the manager and staff at the store, for all their help and support.

4. Lyon Branch. Once again a garden party was held at Sean Brady's (Chairman) lovely old well restored house in Le bois d'Oingt and was very well attended by members and a number of friends from the local community which resulted in a very festive Anglo-French occasion.



The weather was warm and sunny and, as usual, all present preferred to sit and chat with friends, drink tea and sing with the usual difficulty for some, the songs being sung mainly in French. The words and barrel organ accompaniment was provided by Henri de St Jean, a friend of the Brady family.

All were then treated to an excellent buffet supper which was enjoyed by all, especially the local Beaujolais from the village!

Thanks are passed on to the Brady family, particularly Emma and Kate, for all their hard work.

It was a very successful occasion and raised over €800 for Wings Appeal. The party this year will be held on Sunday 19 June.



Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News

5. Republic of Ireland Branch. To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the Branch visited RAF Brize Norton and a parade at the Mayo Park in Castlebar, County Mayo. The visit to RAF Brize Norton allowed veterans to be among the men and women of today's RAF and experience the unique bond that exists. Accompanying the Branch were members of the RBL, Royal Naval Association and the Irish Defence Forces Veterans Organisation with whom the Branch has a close relationship. A tour of the station included the A330 Voyager passenger/tanker, Hercules C130J, the base hangar, Operations, No 1 Parachute Training School, Police Dog Section, air traffic control and the fire section. All were treated to a delicious lunch in the Sgts' Mess. Sincere thanks to Gp Capt Edwards and all personnel. Special thanks to Flt Lt James Eyles, Sgt Mark Evans, Sgt Becky Hall and Cpl Vicky Stewart whose kind efforts ensured that the visit greatly exceeded all expectations.

The Branch held a commemorative parade at the Mayo Peace Park in Castlebar in County Mayo. The Branch was honoured to have members of the Irish United Nations Veterans Association on parade. The Branch Standard paraded, wreaths were laid, and Last Post and Reveille were played.

6. Worcester & District Branch. A Celebration Party on 13 January marked the centenary of 46421 Alwyne James (dob 26/12/1915) and was a great success. In addition to receiving "the card" from HM The Queen, the Branch presented a body warmer complete with Association emblem. The RAF Regiment sent two books – Alwyne was transferred into the Regiment in 1942. There were over 40 people in attendance.

7. Sudbury Branch. Last November the Branch held a concert in the parish church at which the performers were the Bury St Edmunds Male Voice Choir and the Suffolk Constabulary Male Voice Choir. The church was packed and the proceeds of £2,100 were to be donated to the RAF Benevolent Fund. In February the Regional Director of the Fund for Southern England, Paul Hewson, visited and the cheque was presented.

Photo shows Branch members and Lady Valerie Kemball with Branch President AM Sir John Kemball (left) presenting the cheque to Paul Hewson (r).

8. Sturminster Newton & Gillingham Branch commemorated the life given by a 19 year old Spitfire pilot in 1940 – Plt Off Woodward Allen of 152 Squadron. Exactly 75 years to the day, WO Jon Tomlin, Dorset RAFALO, laid a wreath on the memorial marking the spot where the pilot crashed near Blandford Forum. In 1960 the ashes of Plt Off Allen's father and in 1993 the ashes of his mother were interred at the site.

Jon Tomlin, together with the local Cub/Scout Leader and the Branch planned the event. Members Ron Jeans and son Brian have maintained the site since the demise of the Blandford Branch. Along with Phil Baker and Tony Edmunds they prepared the site and made access to it for the occasion.

A Remembrance Service took place nearby at Durweston Parish Church. Relatives had been traced and were in attendance as well as the Lord Lt of Dorset and Mayor of Blandford. Various ATC squadrons from Dorset and local Branches attended the ceremony.

Ron and Brian were able to meet and receive the genuine thanks of the nephews and niece of the crashed pilot. The size, emotion and respect in the woodland glade was a testament to their dedication.





TRANSPORT COMMAND

The RAF's Cinderella Command

by Chris Goss

Douglas Dakota. Photo via author.

Compared to its sister commands, namely Fighter, Bomber and Coastal Commands, Transport Command, formed on 25 March 1943, never appeared as glamorous. However, the part it played during its 24 year existence was crucial as Chris Goss shows.

Transport Command was formed from Ferry Command, which itself was formed on 18 July 1941 with the responsibilities of transporting American aircraft to the UK, the delivery of aircraft to the Far East as well as carrying supplies to bases in Greenland and Newfoundland. Transport duties were originally carried out in conjunction with BOAC but as the war progressed and the theatres increased, it was clear that it had to be rationalised. So it was that on 11 April 1943, Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Bowhill, formerly AOC of Ferry Command, assumed command of Transport Command and was based at Harrow on the outskirts of London.

Within Transport Command were 44 Gp (UK), 45 Gp (Canada), 216 Gp (Middle East) and 179 Wg (India). It was 44 Gp's task to fly mail and passengers to the Middle East and Gibraltar as well as scheduled services to India and Ceylon. Transport Command used a mix of aircraft which included Liberators, Halifaxes, Dakotas, Albermarles, Stirlings and Yorks, some of which were also used to drop paratroops and gliders during the Normandy Invasion in June 1944 and Arnhem in September 1944 and then carried out casualty evacuation. Some 77,365 casualties were evacuated from the Continent, the highest in any one day being 934. The transport task increased as the end of the war approached with the creation of 46 and 47 Gps in the UK and 229 Gp in India and by early 1945, Transport Command stations had risen to 36 with around 100 staging posts from Goose Bay in Canada to Bahrain in the Middle East. Transport Command now flew many VIPs which included Winston Churchill and senior politicians but not without incident.

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Avro York. Photo via author.



Consolidated Liberator. Photo via author.



A pair of Handley Page Hastings. Photo via author.



Blackburn Beverley with English Electric Canberra overhead. Photo via author.



Avro Anson, although in Support Command livery, it is representative of the type in Transport Command. Photo via author.



Vickers Valetta. Photo via author.



Bristol Britannia, although in Support Command livery, it is representative of the type in Transport Command. Photo via author.



De Havilland Comet, although in Air Support Command livery, it is representative of the type in Transport Command. Photo via author.



Armstrong Whitworth Argosy. Photo via author.

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On 16 August 1944 Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, former AOC 10 and 11 Gp and CINC Fighter Command, was appointed Air Commander-in-Chief of South East Asia Command but he and his wife were killed en route to Burma when their Avro York of 511 Sqn crashed in the French Alps on 14 November 1944; another eight passengers and crew were killed. A Court of Inquiry found that the accident was a consequence of bad weather and might have been avoided if Leigh-Mallory had not insisted that the flight proceed in such poor conditions against the advice of his very experienced pilot, Sqn Ldr Charles Lancaster DFC and Bar.

In March 1945, Transport Command's HQ moved to Bushey Park closer to the centre of London by which time the AOC was now Air Marshal The Hon Sir Ralph Cochrane. The war in Europe over, albeit the command was heavily committed to repatriating formed Allied POWs, Transport Command switched its emphasis to the Far East with a number of Bomber and Coastal Command squadrons



De Havilland Devon. Photo via author.

being re-rolled in the transport role. With the war in the Far East over, Transport Command then repatriated British military personnel to the UK as well as maintaining trunk routes throughout the world and operating scheduled services to the Middle East, Singapore, India and Ceylon. It was clear by now that dedicated transport aircraft as opposed to converted bomber aircraft were needed and this resulted in the introduction to service of the Hastings and Valetta in 1948.

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Vickers VC10. Photo via author.



Short Belfast. Photo via author.

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They could not have come quickly enough as on 25 June 1948, the Berlin Airlift, or Operation Plainfare as it was known, began, lasting until 6 October 1949. During this period, 65,857 sorties were flown by RAF aircraft which covered in the region of 24,692,603 miles.

During the 16 months of the Airlift, 394,509 short tons of supplies were flown by RAF aircraft, the peak month being July 1949 when 26 Hastings, 35 Yorks and 40 Dakotas carried 34,709 tons between them.



Hawker Siddeley Andover with a Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer in the background. Photo via author.

1948 also saw Transport Command flying troops out in support of the Malayan Emergency and then in April 1950, its HQ was moved to its spiritual home at RAF Upavon in Wiltshire by which time its AOC was Air Marshal Sir Aubrey Ellwood (who had taken over from Air Marshal Sir Brian Baker). Summer 1951 saw Transport Command crews being detached to Fayid as a result of the Persian threat to nationalise Anglo-Iranian oil refineries and then in November 1951, it carried out an evacuation from the Canal Zone as well as deploying troops to other bases in the Middle East.

In 1952, regular tasks were diverted to Kenya due to the Mau Mau threat and in 1953, Transport Command was responsible for flying sandbags from Europe in response to the East Coast flood disaster as well as flying relief supplies as a result of an earthquake in Greece. While this, together with scheduled tasks, was going on, from 1950-1953, Transport Command supported the Korean War deploying troops and supplies as well as repatriating the wounded and former POWs.

It was now clear that even newer aircraft were needed – in 1956 came the Beverley followed by the first jet transport aircraft, the Comet C2, just in time for the Suez Crisis and then the year after, in support of operations in the Oman. In 1957, Transport Command deployed troops to Cyprus and the year after that, similar flights were made to Jordan and Lebanon.

In 1959, Transport Command, now commanded by Air Marshal Sir Denis Barnett, received the turbo-prop Bristol Britannia which was joined by the Argosy and Comet C4 in early 1962. However, changes were afoot. It was clear that air transportation needed to be both tactical (intra-theatre) and strategic (inter-theatre) so in April 1961, 38 Gp was formed at RAF Odiham combining both tactical transport and ground attack support. This was put to the test in December 1965 when following the declaration of independence by Rhodesia, Britain agreed to provide air defence for Zambia. Ten Britannias and eight Argosys then deployed a Javelin fighter squadron from Cyprus, a Fighter Control unit together with its radar and an RAF Regiment Squadron after which Britannias started a daily fuel lift. However, this would turn out to be Transport Command's swan song as by now, it was even more evident that:

"...all military operations depend largely on air transport... providing essential mobility and for the strategic reserve of the Army..."

As result, a major equipment programme started which saw over the next two years 100 new transport aircraft entering service. The strategic Comets and Britannia would be augmented by VC10s and the Belfast while the tactical element, which currently flew Argosys, Beverleys and Hastings, would be augmented and eventually replaced by the Hercules and Andover. The HQs would remain where they were but with transport aircraft of all types flying an aggregate 32,000,000 miles over the 12 months to September 1966 carrying 203,000 passengers, the strategic hub would remain RAF Lyneham but the new terminal station for the VC10 and Belfast would be RAF Brize Norton. Transport Command would remain the lead for parachute training at RAF Abingdon which was also the home for the Mobile Air Movements Sqn which provided teams who were experts in all aspects of transport aircraft loading and unloading. The Command would also be responsible for aeromedical evacuation.

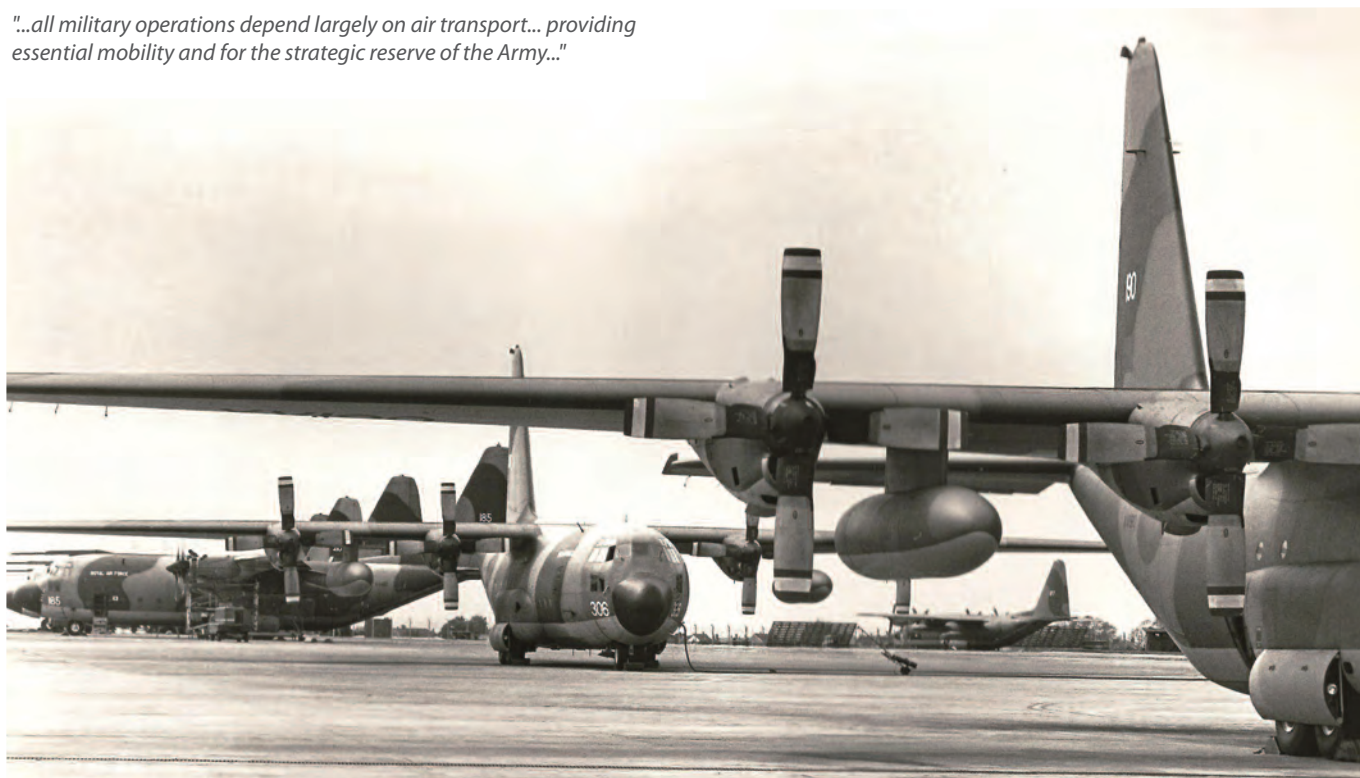
All of this prompted a review of the command structure. It was agreed that UK-based strategic and tactical transport aircraft supporting all three Services had to remain within one command and that offensive support working with tactical transport aircraft and the Army should be under the same AOC. So it was that on 1 August 1967, AOC Transport Command, Air Chief Marshal Sir Thomas Prickett became AOC-in-C Air Support Command, the title :

"...was chosen to describe more accurately than transport those varied but closely linked activities and to emphasise their importance in the National strategy..."

So it was that Transport Command was consigned to the history books. Its successor command would follow when in 1972:

"...changing policies and contraction of our overseas commitment have forced further reconsideration of the RAF structure and regrettably, the Command loses Command status on assuming the title of one of its original Group HQ – No 46"

Despite this, while from the outside, the part played by Transport Command was never considered as vital its fellow commands, it is clear that the part it played both in World War 2 and the 22 years after that was just as crucial.



A line up of Lockheed C130 Hercules aircraft post Transport Command but representative of the type. Photo: © MoD/Crown.



RAF Search and Rescue disbands

THE Duke and Duchess of Cambridge attended a parade to mark the disbandment of the RAF Search and Rescue (SAR) Force.

Thousands of people owe their lives to this unique unit whose iconic, but ageing, yellow Sea King helicopters have plucked injured fishermen from raging seas, winched climbers from treacherous cliffs and airlifted flood victims from the rooftops of their homes.

Among those paying tribute to the Force's achievements, at RAF Valley in Anglesey, were the Royal couple who were based in Wales for three years while The Duke of Cambridge served as a SAR pilot and aircraft Captain, completing 156 missions that assisted 149 people.

Since official records began on 1 January 1983, RAF SAR helicopters in the UK have responded to a total of 34,122 call-outs and have given life-saving assistance to 26,916 people.

But the service itself dates back to 1941 when it was formed and equipped with high speed launches and fixed wing aircraft to rescue wartime pilots whose aircraft ditched in the English Channel and North Sea.

Over 75 years of continuous operations – one of the longest peacetime operations conducted by any British military unit – SAR Force personnel have earned the highest number of non combat gallantry awards given to any RAF unit. This includes six George Medals and more than 50 Air Force Crosses.

RAF SAR Force Commander Group Captain Steve Bentley said: "The parade provides a chance for us to reflect on the achievements of the RAF Search and Rescue Force in the UK.

"Not only has the Force contributed to saving many lives, but the pioneering work of the RAF SAR Force, and its predecessor, The Directorate of Air/Sea Rescue, developed many of the helicopter life-saving techniques which are in use today by others around the world.

"The hallmark of Search and Rescue personnel, both past and present, has been their commitment, sense of teamwork and trust in each other, and selfless dedication to the task of saving lives. They can take immense pride in their achievements."

Following the disbandment parade the Royal couple had the opportunity to meet current and former SAR personnel – some of whom served with the Duke during his career as an SAR pilot.

Search and rescue duties in the UK have transferred to Bristow Helicopters Ltd which operates the service on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency under a contract awarded by the Department of Transport.



Report and photos: © MoD/Crown

RAF Tornado flies in 'desert pink' to mark 25 years on operations

Twenty five years since the Royal Air Force helped liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's forces, an RAF Tornado GR4 has been painted in the iconic Gulf War 'desert pink' paint scheme to honour the aircraft type's almost continuous operational service since then. On 28 February – the 25th anniversary of Saddam's forces' withdrawal from Kuwait – the aircraft took part in a flypast at the National Arboretum at an event honouring the British forces involved in the Gulf War.

The desert pink Tornado, number ZG750, is based at RAF Lossiemouth with XV(R) Squadron, which saw active service during Operation Granby, the UK's codename for the Gulf War. The aircraft carries 11 'battle honours' on its tail, recalling the Tornado's almost continuous service on operations worldwide since 1991.



Air Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, Chief of the Air Staff (Designate) said: "Having flown the Tornado on operations, it is wonderful to see this aircraft in a paint scheme marking 25 years of almost constant deployed operations for the Tornado Force. It has consistently been at the forefront of the RAF's attack capability and continues to make an enormous contribution today on operations in the Middle East against Daesh, operating alongside Typhoon, and will continue to do so until its planned exit from Service. I look forward to my time as the next Chief of the Air Staff, when I will oversee the introduction into operational service of the Tornado's replacement, the F-35B Lightning II."

Tornado F3 fighters and GR1 bombers – from which today's Tornado GR4 descends – were among the earliest allied aircraft to launch operations against Saddam's forces in Kuwait from January 1991. Tornado GR aircraft have seen active service on operations worldwide every year since then, including in humanitarian, reconnaissance and strike roles. Recent deployments include Libya, Nigeria and Afghanistan, and Tornado GR4s are currently flying in Iraq and Syria as part of a global coalition to help defeat the Daesh terrorist group.

Air Vice-Marshal Gary Waterfall, who is responsible for RAF strike aircraft as Air Officer Commanding 1 Group RAF, said: "The Royal

Air Force can look back at Tornado's service on Operation Granby with great pride. In the 25 years since the Gulf War, Tornado has proven itself again and again to be a formidable strike aircraft with an enviable operational record; today it continues to serve the nation in the fight against Daesh. I'm humbled by the courage and hard work of every man and woman involved in maintaining and flying this incredible machine."

The Tornado was introduced into RAF service in 1979, and has been updated throughout its life to keep up with the changing requirements of the modern battlefield. Today's Tornado GR4s carry improved precision guided weapons including the Paveway IV laser- or GPS-guided bomb and Brimstone missiles, as well as cutting-edge RAPTOR and Litening III surveillance and targeting pods.

Tornado ZG750's tail, pictured left, carries battle honours from the following operations:

Op Granby (1990-91) – Operations during the Gulf War.

Op Jural (1992-98) – Maintaining the southern no-fly zone in Iraq.

Op Warden (1998-95) – Maintaining the northern no-fly zone in Iraq.

Op Bolton (1997-2001) – Action to force Iraq to comply with UNSCOM weapons inspections.

Op Engadine (1999) – NATO operations in Kosovo.

Op Resinate (2001-03) – Maintaining no-fly zones in Iraq.

Op Telic (2003-09) – Coalition operations in Iraq.

Op Herrick (2009-14) – ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Op Ellamy (2011) – Coalition operations in Libya.

Op Turus (2014) – UK search operations for civilians kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Op Shader (2014-16) – Coalition operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.



Report and photos: © MoD/Crown

Op Granby Memorial unveiled

A memorial dedicated to those who gave their lives, and who fought in the operation to liberate Kuwait has been unveiled at the National Arboretum.

The Gulf War Memorial Trust Appeal raised funds to build the memorial which was unveiled at a ceremony on 28 February 2016.

A large donation was made by Kuwait, whose Ambassador Mr Khaked Al-Duwaisan spoke at the dedication: "We will never forget that you are the people who stood with us in those dark days. You are still with us and we are always with you."

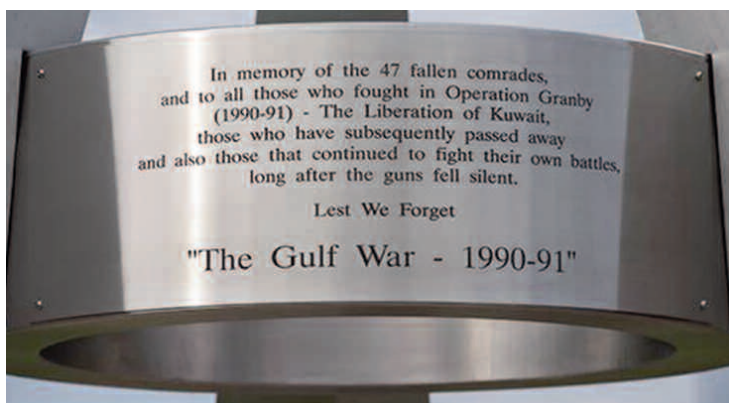
The memorial was designed by retired Senior Aircraftman Ian Beedles who said: "I was asked by the organisers who knew I was pro everything to do with the Gulf War and I was delighted to design it. I looked at a lot of ancient and modern memorials and decided I wanted to do something to combine the two."

"When you look at the pillars from the side you see the 'V' identification sign (used to mark coalition forces). The pillars themselves represent the three armed services and the distance from the peak to the base of the memorial is 47 inches in honour of the 47 who died. There are also 47 stones each bearing the name of one of the fallen in the three concentric rings at the base."

The RAF was represented at the ceremony by Air Commodore David Cooper who as a young Tornado GR1 pilot on his first tour at RAF Marham deployed with 617 Sqn to the Gulf. He said: "For the families it must be very gratifying to see so many of their loved ones' former colleagues here to pay their respects and to ensure they're not forgotten."



The Memorial unveiled on 28 February 2016. Photo: © MoD/Crown



The inscription. Photo: © MoD/Crown



RAF Gulf War veterans (Op Granby) at the National Arboretum for the unveiling of the Op Granby Memorial, (left to right): SAC Brian Daly, SAC Andy McLellan, SAC Chris Taylor. © MoD/Crown

RAF veterans who had travelled from far and wide to attend the ceremony included Sergeant Paul Acres who was serving with 16 Sqn RAF Regiment at Wildenrath when the crisis broke. "It was hectic. We went to four hours standby at Wildenrath and painted up all the kit in sand colour. Then five RAF C130 Hercules came and took us down to Ali Al Salem in Kuwait. There was a real sense of trepidation and my family were concerned about my safety."

During the ceremony a flypast was conducted by a Tornado GR4 from XV(R) Sqn painted in 'desert pink' colours (see page 47) to mark almost 25 years on continuous operations which commenced with Operation Granby.

Report and photos: © MoD/Crown

Deliveries continue to AirTanker



AirTanker has taken delivery of its penultimate A330-200 FSTA-13 at RAF Brize Norton following its arrival from the Airbus Defence and Space facility in Getafe, Spain. FSTA 13 will now undergo its military to civil conversion before being placed on the civilian register as G-VYGM later this spring.

Minor cabin reconfiguration will also take place to increase the number of seats to 303 from the standard AirTanker configuration (291 passengers) and be available for commercial leasing from August 2016 to operate in the ad-hoc aircraft, complete crew, maintenance and insurance (ACMI) sub-charter market, providing short notice availability to other airlines.

"We are pleased to have taken delivery of our latest aircraft and excited about our plans to enter the ACMI sub-charter market" explains Neil Huston, AirTanker Services Aircraft Leasing Manager. "We are confident there is a gap in the market for a good quality, short notice provider of wide-bodied aircraft availability and that we can succeed in this market offering ad-hoc and short term lease capability with our A330-200 aircraft."



Report and photos: © MoD/Crown

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Dorniers over Wales

by Chris Goss

The combats of the Battle of Britain are generally associated with Kent, Sussex and southern England. However, as the battle progressed, more German bombers started to operate by night and against targets other than London.

Küstenfliegergruppe 606 (606) was essentially a Dornier 17 equipped unit used to operating over the sea or against coastal targets. Leutnant zur See Werner Techand, a Naval officer, explains why most of the Observers on these Do 17s were Navy personnel:

"I was based with 606 from 3 October to 18 December 1940. I then had to return to the Navy where we were needed for U-boats (he would serve on U-135 and later command U-731, surviving the war). Our job was that of Observers and without exception we were commanders of



Leutnant zur See Jurgen von Krause. Photo: © Author.

the bombers because of our knowledge of navigation over the sea. Most of my time with 606, we were acting as Pathfinders for attacks on such cities as Liverpool, Bristol and London. This meant we took off at dusk across the Channel to mark the target with incendiaries.

"Our navigational equipment in the Do 17Z was very primitive and added to the inexperience of the crew and the defences over England, this resulted in a heavy loss of life and aircraft..."



Oberleutnant Friedrich-Wilhelm Richter.
Photo: © Author.

Based in Brest in Northern France, it was logical that targets tended to be to the west of Britain. For example, at dawn on 3 October 1940, Major Joachim Hahn, the Gruppen Kommandeur of 606, took off together with aircraft flown by Hauptmann Werner Lassmann of 2/606 and Hauptmann Heinrich Golcher of 3/606. Their target was the Coastal Command airfield of St Eval in Cornwall. Hahn was a great exponent of low-level formation attacks and did so at

0805 hrs from 30 metres altitude with good results. The following day, a similar attack was carried out against the Welsh airfield at Penrhos. Again, the attack was deemed to be successful and included attacking a freighter in Caernarvon Bay on the way home. However, despite noting light Flak and machine gun fire, one of the Do 17s was damaged and crashed into the sea just off the Normandy coast, killing Oberleutnant zur See Paul Vollbrecht and his crew.

The days that followed saw more normal targets being attacked. For example on the night of 10 October 1940, 13 Do 17s attacked Speke in Liverpool (targeting the Rootes factory) and Crewe (targeting Rolls-Royce) while three Do 17s again attacked Penrhos, another Do 17 attacked Pembroke Docks and a final bomber Plymouth. This time they returned almost unscathed. However, this would not be the case the following evening.

The attack by 1 and 2/606 was described as a Dämmerungsangriff - a twilight attack. Six Do 17s, three each from 1 and 2/606 lifted off between 1910 and 2000 hrs German time, five of the bombers laden with six 50 kg and 300 incendiaries each, the sixth with 10 50 kg and 60 incendiary bombs. The target for this last aircraft would be Birkenhead and the target for the five others aircraft factories at Crewe and Speke.

The three aircraft from 1/606 were flown by the Staffel Kapitän, Hauptmann Wolfgang Lenschow, Feldwebel Heinrich Arpert and Oberfeldwebel Willi Hagen; only one pilot is known from 2/606 namely Oberleutnant Friedrich-Wilhelm Richter.

However, contrary to the previous night's attacks, as the six German aircraft approached the isle of Anglesey, the RAF was waiting as Plt Off Tommy Williams of 611 Sqn records:

"The Germans started night bombing Merseyside and they used to send in a few aircraft just before dark to lay incendiaries and markers at last light. Our function was to intercept these aircraft by making a sweep out to Anglesey and back and then landing just after last light anywhere we could..."

At 1800 hrs, 611 Sqn was warned that three aircraft were near the Scilly Isles and if they kept on their same track, they would be over Holyhead at 1830 hrs at 14,000 feet. Nine Spitfires of 611 Sqn got airborne from RAF Ternhill between 1735 and 1745 hrs and at 1820 hrs, the RAF pilots spotted three aircraft 12 miles away approaching from the south-west with the Spitfires 3,000 feet above them; it was a perfect position to attack them. The first to enter the fray was Yellow Section – Fg Off Douglas 'Dirty' Watkins and Plt Off Tommy Williams (the Spitfire flown by Fg Off Ian Hay having had to return with engine trouble). They were then followed by Red Section – Flt Lt Jack Leather, Plt Off Phil Pollard and Plt Off Jim Sutton. Blue Section – Fg Off Barrie Heath, Sgt Bob Angus and Sgt Ken Pattison were patrolling further north.

What happened next is related by the Observer in Heinrich Arpert's bomber, Leutnant zur See Jürgen von Krause:

"...The Spitfires attacked just before and after the target. My Do 17 had dropped back a little behind the formation and logically it was our aircraft that was attacked first. I remember that a number of hits caused problems with one of our engines. Consequently, we lost contact with our formation, turned out to sea and descended in a dive but two Spitfires stayed close..."

Who attacked whom is hard to ascertain with some certainty as some of the 611 Sqn claims were a little optimistic.

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Above two pictures of Oberfeldwebel Hagen's Do 17 at Brest after being damaged by 611 Sqn; the damage to the tailplane was caused by the crew member that baled out and hit the tailplane. Photo: © Author.



Above, A 611 Sqn Spitfire at readiness waiting for its next duty. Photo: © A Ferguson.



The remains of the last 606 Do 17 to crash on UK soil before they converted to JU88s.
Photo: © Author.



Flt Lt Leather (seated) and Fg Off Pollard. Photo: © A Ferguson.
continued from page 51

Barrie Heath and Tommy Williams stated that their Do 17 came down in the sea 50 miles out from Holyhead while Jack Leather



Flt Lt Jack Leather and Fg Off Watkins pictured at Digby in 1940. Photo: © A Ferguson.



Pilot Off Sutton, Plt Off Williams and Plt Off Barrell. Photo: © A Ferguson.

stated they had destroyed two aircraft, one crashing 10 miles south of Caernarvon, the other crashing near Capel Curig, two engines were seen to be on fire and two crew baled out. This last aircraft was the Do 17 flown by Willi Hagen. Badly damaged and apparently on fire, Feldwebel Willi Staas, the radio operator, and Unteroffizier Heinz Johannsen, the engineer, baled out. Sadly, the latter must have hit the tail as he was found dead at Deiniolen, seven miles east of Caernarvon with an unopened parachute, Hans Staas landed at Marthaly (believed to be Mart of Llyn) and was quickly captured. However, it was believed that their Do 17 had crashed "somewhere in the wilds of North Wales" and the remaining two crew members, Willi Hagen and Oberleutnant zur See Karl-Franz Heine, were missing. What in fact happened was that they managed to get their crippled Do 17 back to land at Brest. The bomber showed many signs of the combat with 611 Sqn and, sadly, where Heinz Johannsen had hit the tail.

Meanwhile, back out to sea, 'Dirty' Watkins and Tommy Williams watched their Do 17 ditch at 1835 hrs and watched at least two of the crew get into a dinghy. However, shortly afterwards, Tommy Williams had to turn for home:

"...As I was breaking away from the second attack, there was an explosion in the cockpit and it subsequently appeared that I had been hit by an explosive bullet on the underside of the rudder bar. I started

to bale out but then realised that the engine was still working and so I got back in and opened up the engine to maximum to obtain the maximum height before it failed on the assumption that I had been hit either in the oil cooler or in the radiator. However, the aircraft continued to function..."

Jürgen Von Krause said that of the two Spitfires attacking them, they had hit one but then their remaining engine seized up so they had to ditch:

"...The aircraft sank immediately and we were lucky to get out just in time. After some time I found our dinghy which I was able to inflate and a few hours later we were picked up by a Dutch patrol boat which took us to Holyhead..."

Three of the crew were in fact picked up by the patrol boat Amsterdam; the pilot, Heinrich Arpert probably went down with the aircraft. RAF reports state that the German crew had ditched 16 miles off Bardsey Island at 1915 hrs, the location almost but not quite matching where Watkins' and Williams' victim crashed but this would have been 20 minutes after the two RAF pilots had landed. However, Jack Leather and Red Section's kill apparently crashed 10 miles south of Caernarvon but Red Section made no mention of seeing anyone in a dinghy. The only other possibility is the 2/606 Do 17 flown by Oberleutnant Friedrich Wilhelm Richter; his body was washed ashore on Anglesey on 7 November 1940 while the bodies of two of his crew, Leutnant Horst Felber and Gefreiter Walter Hoppmann, had washed ashore in Ireland on 26 October 1940; the body of Unteroffizier Jürgen Weber was never found.

Meanwhile further north, it was Blue Section's time to get involved. They spotted two Do 17s approaching from the south-west and by the time they were in a position to attack, both were in a shallow dive headed for Speke, getting into position over Hoylake. The bombers then broke left and right; one of them then apparently unloaded its bombs on Hoylake, the other south-east of Flint where a single Hurricane joined in.



Digby 1939 Spitfire Mk 1 L1033 running up. Photo: © A Ferguson.

Two sections of 312 Sqn had been ordered to patrol Chester to Point of Ayr. However, two Czech pilots from Yellow Section lost their leader, Flt Lt Harry Comerford, who then attacked a lone Do 17 over Mold at 1831 hrs, chasing it all the way to Llangollen where he lost it in cloud. Meanwhile, the remainder of Yellow Section had joined with Red Section and attacked another lone Do 17 between Prestatyn and Chester and a chaotic if not inconclusive combat then ensued with the Do 17 pilot taking violent but effective evasive action. Two Hurricanes suffered stoppages to their machine guns and the Hurricane flown by Plt Off Josef Jaske suffered bullet damage to fabric, main and tail spars and elevator and ailerons. All returned out of ammunition and with very little to show for their efforts.

The end result of this attack was two Do 17s shot down and one returning very badly damaged; six German aircrew were killed or missing and for taken prisoner. On the RAF side, losses did occur but after the combat. Sgt Bob Angus became lost and was fatally injured crash-landing just outside Kidderminster while Tommy Williams was luckier:

"I must have been hit by more than two bullets. The explosive one had broken the main undercarriage and shattered the emergency system and a number of electrical connections. The other one had shot away the pitot head and I was therefore without an airspeed indicator. The third went through the rear spar, obviously an armour piercing bullet, which struck the rear spar, splaying it out and jamming the left aileron. Fortunately it also severed the control cable between the ailerons otherwise they would have both jammed..."

The Do 17s of Küstenfliegergruppe 606 (soon to be renamed Kampfgruppe 606 as they switched to more land as opposed to coastal targets) would appear in the skies of Wales for a few more weeks before it was withdrawn to Germany to convert to the Junkers 88. It would then return to France to carry on where it had left off, carrying out a mix of bombing attacks again shipping and land targets but at the end of 1941, it would move to the

Mediterranean and never again be seen over Wales, being re-designated I Gruppe/Kampfgeschwader 77 later in 1942.

Postscript: The two crew who managed to return with their badly damaged Do 17 were destined not to survive the war. Willi Hagen, by now decorated with the German Cross in Gold and recipient of the Honour Goblet, was killed over Malta on 19 April 1942; he would be promoted to Oberleutnant posthumously.

Oberleutnant zur See Karl-Franz Heine returned to serve on U-boats and would be killed on 18 August 1943 commanding U-403 which was sunk south-west of Dakar by a Lockheed Hudson of 200 Sqn and a Wellington of 697 Sqn.

IMAGES OF WAR



Photos: © Author.

On 9 March 1916, FE2B serial 6356 of 20 Sqn based at Clairmarais took off on an armed reconnaissance mission. At the controls was 2/Lt Leo Roy Heywood (formerly of the Royal Engineers and who had been commissioned 1 October 1914) with 2/Lt Douglas Byron Gayford, formerly of 3 Battalion The Queens (Royal West Surrey) Regt, as his Observer. According to census records, Douglas Gayford was only 17 and would celebrate his 18th birthday the following month.

Shortly into the mission, the British aircraft intercepted and then shot down an Albatross C1 serial 1833/15 of Feld Flieger Abteilung (FFA) 18 which had taken off from Tourmignies on a similar mission, killing 24 year old pilot Lt Gerhard Freiherr von Gayl (formerly of 2 Garde Regiment zu Fuss (Berlin) and 22 year old Observer Lt Erwin Freidel. However, with the Lewis gun jammed, the FE2B was then intercepted near Annapes by two Fokker fighters of FFA 5 which had taken off from St Avold, one of which fired 200 rounds, wounding Leo Heywood in the foot and Douglas

Gayford four times. The FE2B then force-landed between Marquillies and Sainghin-en-Weppes, south-west of Lille where both were captured.

These photographs show German officers inspecting the British aircraft while German soldiers look on. The second photograph below shows Leo Heywood and Douglas Gayford in the back of a staff car being taken away to have their wounds treated. Leo Heywood passed away in Auckland on 24 October 1984 while Douglas Gayford passed away in Sydney 25 December 1983.



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WORLD MILITARY NEWS

AFGHANISTAN



The first four Embraer A-29 Super Tucanos have been delivered to the Afghan Air Force which will use them for close air support, replacing elderly Russian gunship helicopters. The US Air Force has been training the Afghan pilots in Georgia using some of the Afghan aircraft over the past year or so. The Super Tucano is a development of the Tucano training aircraft used by the Royal Air Force.

ARGENTINA



The Argentine Air Force has commenced a programme to re-engine and modernise some 20 of their Pucara aircraft, over 30 years after they were used in the Falklands conflict. The new engine will be from Pratt & Whitney of Canada and the work is being carried out by the Argentine Aircraft Factory at Cordoba. The first prototype made its maiden flight in November 2015.

AUSTRALIA



The Australian Government has announced that it is buying two large Gulfstream G550 bizjets for use as intelligence gathering and electronic warfare aircraft after conversion by L3 Communications in the USA.

FRANCE



The French Air Force is to receive four C-130J transport aircraft including two that will be able to refuel helicopters in flight. The two in-flight refuellers are particularly important to France as the new A400M aircraft are unable to refuel helicopters.

GERMANY



The German Air Force has deployed some reconnaissance Tornados and an A310 multi-role tanker aircraft to Incirlik in Turkey to support the fight against ISIL. Some 250 personnel are also deployed. The first refuelling mission took place in mid-December 2015 and involved coalition aircraft. The first reconnaissance sortie was carried out in early January 2016.

HONG KONG



The Hong Kong Government Flying Service is in the process of receiving two Bombardier Challenger multi-role aircraft to replace the Jetstream aircraft currently in use. These aircraft are used for search and rescue and medical evacuation among other tasks. The first aircraft was handed over in December 2015.



HONG KONG - CL605 of the Hong Kong Government Flying Service. Photo: © Bombardier.

INDIA



The Indian Navy's No 312 Naval Air Squadron has now received all eight of the initial order for Boeing P-8 maritime patrol aircraft which is called Neptune by India. They have now decided to order another four of the type. This is the same basic aircraft that will be operated by the Royal Air Force within a few years.

The Indian Air Force has received the last of their initial 75 Pilatus PC-7 trainer aircraft from the Swiss company. It was delivered to the Air Force Academy at Dundigal in late 2015. Another 38 are likely to be ordered.



INDIA - The last Pilatus PC-7 for the Indian Air Force. Photo: © Pilatus.

ITALY



The Italian Air Force became the first service to fly one of the new single-engined F-35A Lightning II fighters across the Atlantic. This occurred on 5 February 2016 when the aircraft, which was built in Italy, was flown to the US Naval Air Station at Patuxent River, Maryland, for electromagnetic testing before joining the multinational training unit in Arizona. It was refuelled in flight by one of the Italian Air Force's KC-767 tankers. The flight was also supported by an Italian Air Force C-130 Hercules carrying air-sea rescue equipment.

MEXICO



Two of the last RAF C-130K Hercules, which have been stored at MOD St Athan for over two years, are thought likely to enter service with the Mexican Air Force where they will join four others that are already in service there. These additional two have been flown to Canada for refurbishment.

UK



RAF Typhoons from No 11 Sqn at RAF Coningsby, together with USAF Raptors and French Air Force Rafales, have recently taken part in a tri-lateral exercise at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, USA. This was the first of what is likely to be a series of exercises designed to improve air combat interoperability between the three air forces.

A Royal Air Force A400M Atlas visited No 22 Sqn, Royal Malaysian Air Force, at Subang in October 2015. As both the UK and Malaysian Air Forces operate the A400M transport aircraft, this trip provided an opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge of the airframe and its systems. This was the first time



UK RAF A400m Atlas with RAF and Malaysian Air Force Personnel. Photo: © MoD/Crown.



UK 208 Sqn Hawks at Solenzara, Corsica. Photo: © MoD/Crown.

the UK A400M has operated in the Far East. After Malaysia, the RAF Atlas moved on to Miho in Japan, which is home to the Japanese Air Self Defence Force's 3rd Tactical Airlift Wing. This was another first – the first time an RAF aircraft has landed at a JASDF base.

Five Hawks from No 208(R) Squadron took part in Exercise Napoleon Sphinx at the French Air Force Base at Solenzara in the latter half of 2015. The squadron deployed to the base – on the island of Corsica – to experience operating from a foreign location under simulated "austere" conditions and to further the training of the students on their tactical weapons course. The detachment also provided the opportunity to experience foreign air traffic control, flying in different

airspace to Anglesey and North Wales and to continue to foster close links with the French Air Force.

The RAF has taken delivery of the last of the new batch of 14 Chinooks. It arrived at RAF Odiham in mid-December, having crossed the Atlantic as sea freight. Chinooks have been in operation with the RAF for 35 years and there are some 60 in the fleet.

UK/USA

Two US Marine Corps Osprey tiltrotor aircraft operated off HMS Ocean, an amphibious assault ship, in the Mediterranean for several weeks in late 2015 as part of Exercise Trident Juncture. The exercise culminated in a beach assault in Corsica by Royal and US Marines.

Senior Royal Navy and US Marine Corps officers have agreed that Marine Corps' F-35B Lightning IIs will operate regularly from the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, once they are in service.

USA



The US Coast Guard delivered the last of 99 upgraded MH-65D Dolphin short-range recovery helicopters to their air station at Kodiak, Alaska in mid-December. The Dolphin first entered Coast Guard service in 1979 and has been subject to regular upgrades since then. This latest variant has received an upgraded flight navigation system.



USA An MH-65 Dolphin of the US Coast Guard. Photo: © USCG.

We record with sadness the passing of the following members of the RAF Association

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Seeking good friends **WO Ralph and Mrs Brenda Merritt** moved to East Anglia from Northern Region. Please contact Mrs Rita Evans (nee Grundy) at ritaevans436@gmail.com phone 01323 896877 or write to 21 East Street, Seaford BN25 1AA.

Seeking contact and information on Wg Cdr Anthony Frazer, CO of **Victor Tanker Training Course RAF Marham** and other members of the course 1965-66. e-mail erroltully@optusnet.com.au or tel: (0061) 295587112

I am attempting to trace any personnel who served in the **Sector Operations Room of RAF Kirton in Lindsey, North Lincolnshire** when it was based in the area known as Scawby Woods. The room was underground and accessed through a Guardroom. If anyone has any information please contact me on 07940205147 or s_m_oliver@hotmail.com

Old Colleagues

Association of RAF Women Officers. Female officers of WAAF/WRAF/RAF and equivalent reserve positions or nursing services. Do join your Association. e-mail Hon Secretary, Mrs Daphne Short: mo.da@sky.com

A warm welcome extended to anyone who served at **RAF Changi, including HQ FFAF between 1946 and 1971**. See www.rafchangi.co.uk for joining information or apply to Malcolm Flack, Membership Secretary 01494 728562, memsecchangi@teleco4u.net for free enquiry pack.

WAAF/WRAF/RAF(W) Association warmly welcomes all as full members. £10 pa. Twice yearly magazines. AGM/Reunion, annual service St Clement Danes. Membership details contact: Linda Hamill 01472 232986. All other enquiries: Sandy Faloon 01753 582170.

102 Sqn Association Remembrance Day Service Sunday 13 November 2016. All welcome. Meeting at St Catherine's Church, Barnby Moor 10 am for 10.15 service and wreath laying followed by service at Pocklington Airfield Memorial for further service and wreath laying. Contact Hon Sec, email skularatne@aol.com or call 01253 885253.

RAF Administrative Apprentices Association. Welcomes all who trained as clerks or suppliers at Bircham Newton, St. Athan, Halton or Hereford. For details of your association contact Jim Wilcox 01452 863935 or www.rafadappassn.org

Seeking information regarding Cpl Bev Tressider & Ali Lambourne and/or colleagues RAF Innsworth early 80s. Contact Shirley and Pete Holmes on 07572031011 with view to reunion.

All 150 Squadron personnel who served at **RAF Snaith 1941-42** contact Renee Ounsley BEM, Secretary Pollington Airfield Memorial Garden, tel 01405 860573 or renoun@btinternet.com. Reunions. All Welcome.

Reunions

WAAF/WRAF/RAF(W) Association AGM/Reunion 2016. 15-18 April 2016 Stafford. Members/new members welcome. For further information contact Linda Hamill (membership) on 01472 232986 or Sandie Faloon (general enquiries) 01753 582170.

500 County of Kent Squadron annual Reunion at Manston 8 Oct 2016. For details call Henry 01276 65945.

313 Supply Entry RAF Hereford 1968-1969. 2018 will be 50 years. Anybody interested in a reunion, contact David Johnson, davidcj440@btinternet.com Please include in subject field: 313 entry and service number.

102 Squadron Association. Annual reunion for ex-squadron members, families and friends. All welcome. Saturday/Sunday 8/9 May 2016. Contact Hon Sec email skularatne@aol.com or call 01253 885253.

No 4 Squadron. 309 Entry 10th Reunion at the Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford April 22 - 24 2016. 308, 310 and 311 entry members are invited to join us for a fantastic family weekend. Contact robert.willis@wanadoo.fr

83rd Entry RAF Apprentices Reunion 24 September 2016 at The Peacock Hotel, Henton, OX39 4AH. Contact Ivor John on 01895 675813.

36 Squadron Association Reunion 5 and 6 May 2016 at the Wroxton House Hotel, Wroxton near Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 6QB. Bookings for dinner (on 6th) and/or accommodation via hotel on 01295 730777.

XV Squadron Association Reunion Dinner at RAF Wittering on 3 June 2016. Further details from secretary@xvsqnassociation.co.uk and website xvsqnassociation.co.uk

RAF Administrative Apprentices Association 2016 annual Reunion 10-12 June, Northampton. Members are reminded to book through Bryan Hoare, Social Secretary at rafadappassn.org or tel: 01403 581324.

Mildenhall Register AGM/Reunion 13-15 May 2016. Open to all associated with, and interested in RAF Mildenhall or its wartime satellite bases. Further info phone Chairman 01638 507211 or e-mail chairman@mildenhallregister.stirlingpilot.org.uk

RAF Seletar Association including RAF Tengah. Annual Reunion 21 - 24 October 2016 at the Novotel Hotel, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4EP. Also many local reunions held throughout the year. Contact our Membership Secretary David Taylor on 01904 593259 or e-mail dt@deltatango.net or website: www.rafseletar.co.uk

All ranks who served in **Air Traffic Control/Operations at RAF Gutersloh** (especially those who served during the 50s and 60s). Reunion in Birmingham 21-23 October 2016. Contact Phil Bailey 01903 774240 or e-mail phil.bailey@hotmail.co.uk

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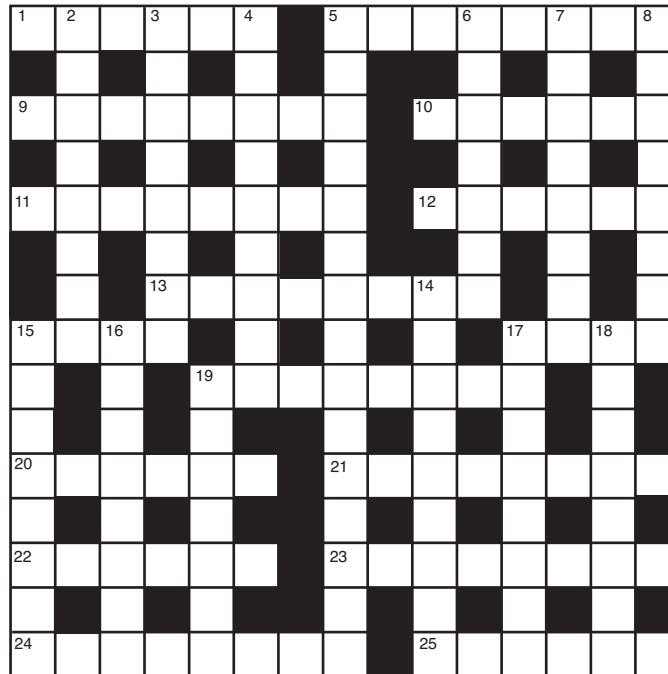
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Easter 2016 FUN CROSSWORD

by Enigma



Across

- 1 Period 25-28 March 2016 (6)
- 5 Flying machine(s) (8)
- 9 ? gear/hook - used to halt a 5 ac (8)
- 10 Victoria Cross awarded 'For ?' (6)
- 11 Brash man mixes a dish of grain husks (4-4)
- 12 Gift lacking name to adjust initially (6)
- 13 Gloved (8)
- 15 Fed over unknown challenge (4)
- 17 Throw behind it in darts (4)
- 19 Percussion rhythm (8)
- 20 Clumsily hoaxed a stupid person (6)
- 21 Affirm again (8)
- 22 Air drawn in and then expelled (6)
- 23 Bewitched; brought bad luck (8)
- 24 Disarrange however she lived (8)
- 25 Female rugged animal smaller than a horse (3-3)

Down

- 2 Fuselage (8)
- 3 Foe (3,5)
- 4 Surgical instrument concerning farm vehicle (9)
- 5 RAF 4-star (3,5,7)
- 6 Scorched (7)
- 7 Relating to the theory of sound (8)
- 8 Check the flow of engine valve (8)
- 14 Control surfaces at the tail of 5 ac (9)
- 15 Discharged from the Services (8)
- 16 Hurricanes and Spitfires are not bombers (8)
- 17 Instrument for examining the ear (8)
- 18 STOL/VTOL 5 ac (8)
- 19 Conscript (7)

Notes

Solution to this crossword
can be found on page 63

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Easter Crossword Solution

Across: 1 Easter; 5 Aircraft; 9 Arrested; 10 Valour; 11 Bran-mash; 12 Preset; 13 Mittened; 15 Defy; 17 Oche; 19 Drumbeat; 20 Oxhead; 21 Reassess; 22 Breath; 23 Hoodooed; 24 Dishevel; 25 She-ass.
Down: 2 Airframe; 3 The enemy; 4 Retractor; 5 Air Chief Marshal; 6 Charred; 7 Acoustic; 8 Throttle; 14 Elevators; 15 Demobbed; 16 Fighters; 17 Oscope; 18 Harriers; 19 Drafter

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