

AIR MAIL

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APRIL - JUNE 2019

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AIR FORCES
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family



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joy at
tricycle
grant

Plus news, letters, features, history and more



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July - September 2019
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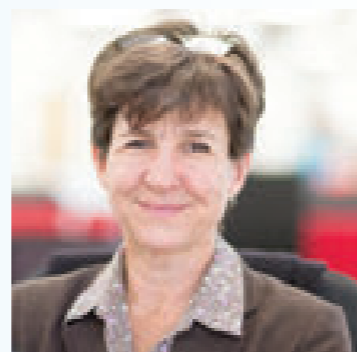
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COVER IMAGE

Mair Lewis gets to cycle in the sunshine and fresh air with her family after they approached the Association for help finding and funding a specialised tricycle.

© Phil Greig



© Phil Greig

From the editor

This issue, we've got the latest on the ongoing discussions about how our Association can run most effectively for the future, including: One Member One Vote; discussions about One Charity; and details of decisions made and proposed by Council following two 2018/19 expert welfare reviews.

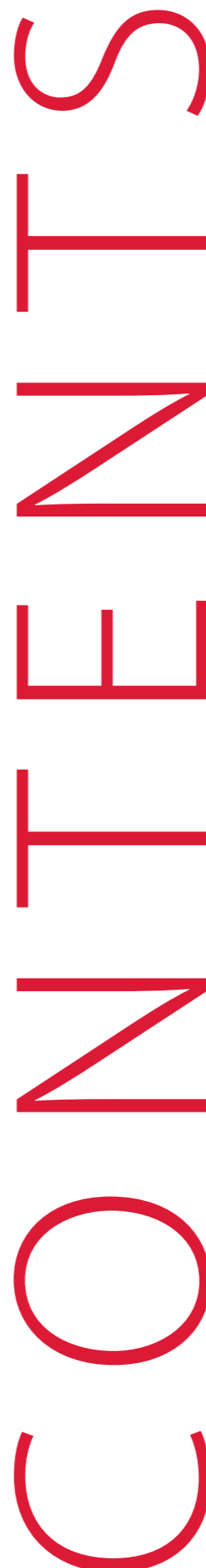
Because of these discussions, the debates at Annual Conference 2019 will be crucial. But whether you are attending for the discussions or for the reunions, you'll need to book by 19 April. Read on, also, to see who has been announced to entertain us at the Gala Awards Dinner.

In other news we look at the good that the Association does through its welfare work: meeting the bike-mad family featured on our cover, and seeing how our support has helped them get out and about together. We also meet John Pearce, the 200,000th member of the Association, and see how we welcomed him back to the bosom of the RAF family at a lunch club. Finally, we introduce our new letters page, so readers can respond to articles and more. Together with the regular history features, spotlights on our volunteers and news from the RAF, I hope the whole edition puts a spring into your step.

Annie O'Brian
editor@rafatrad.co.uk

Letters:

To comment in or contribute to Air Mail please email editor@rafatrad.co.uk or write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, RAFATRAD Ltd at the Atlas House address on this page. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION.



Pick of the contents

NEWS

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All the latest news from the Association and the RAF family, including: someone is up for a Soldiering On Award; there's a new project to help mums (and dads) get fit again after birth, officer cadets have smashed their fundraising; who's singing for us at Annual Conference; the Families Federation standing up for serving personnel in Westminster; and all the latest on One Member One Vote, One Charity, and decisions and consultations after two 2018/19 welfare reviews.

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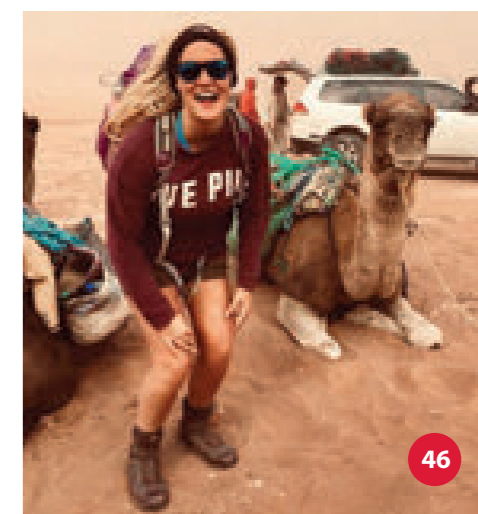
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Message from the President



Association President, Air Marshal Sir Baz North © Phil Greig

It is always a great pleasure to be present during the celebrations that mark the great longevity of our branches; last November I was present at the Barry Branch's 80th birthday dinner where I was able to share, with the Secretary of State for Wales, the warmth of friendship of branch members while being able to give my thanks for the energy and commitment shown by them over the years. Later this year I look forward to sharing the friendship of Peterborough Branch members as they mark the branch's 85th anniversary. The celebration of such milestones helps us look backwards at our successes but also forwards to our future. If we want to ensure longevity in the future, it is essential that our branches engage in the

Association's ongoing development work. Trials from two areas are now being assessed and in due course arrangements will be announced to provide ongoing support throughout each year – covering governance, health and safety, finance, fundraising, safeguarding, equality and diversity and data handling (GDPR laws). I also urge you to read the articles on One Member One Vote, One Charity and the consultation on how we future-proof our welfare provision in this edition of Air Mail.

Last year we were all able to enjoy and to commemorate the first 100 years of our Royal Air Force, while helping to raise funds for the RAF 100 Appeal. As the appeal board now starts to wind up the fundraising activities, the money that will be shared between the four RAF Charities will allow us to look forward to, and to secure, the future needs of the members of the RAF Family. However, in the uncertain and taut financial climate in which we live, there is a constant and persistent need for us to continue to focus our attention on fundraising activities so that we can robustly support the Association's diverse charitable objectives; I know that a great deal of effort is being invested in new, as well as established Association projects, in order to ensure that we are able to do so. Therefore, I trust that the spotlight on the Association's expanded Community Fundraising team on page 44 will inspire you in your own fundraising pursuits.

As I read this issue, I know that many of our members will have recently enjoyed the comradeship found at Area Reunions; I look forward to sharing in that friendship on 10 and 11 May at the Association's Annual Conference in Birmingham. The Annual Conference is an important opportunity each year to gather together and to share experiences and ideas from members and branches from around the world; it also provides us with the opportunity to collectively contribute to the future of our Association. On that note, have you booked yet?

Time is running out if you want to attend. Once again, members who cannot get to Birmingham will be able to watch the Conference's proceedings live through the online feed of the debates and presentations; see rafa.org.uk/conference for the link. Before then, I urge each of you to involve yourselves fully in major issues that will be discussed, in particular One Member One Vote and the early discussions about 'one charity'. Many of these issues have already been outlined in previous issues of Air Mail and as ever, I look forward to hearing your views throughout the year.

Air Marshal Sir Baz North
President of the RAF Association



Sharing the warmth and friendship of Barry Branch members at their 80th birthday dinner © MOD/Crown 2018

NEWS Updates and information for members and the wider RAF family

A lifetime of achievement



Awards President and head of the judging panel, General the Lord Dannatt, said: "The Soldiering On Awards finalists" [such as Chris Francis, pictured above] "recognise those who have gone above and beyond what was required, time and again".

Chris Francis, War Pensions Manager at the Royal Air Forces Association has been named as a finalist in this year's Soldiering On Awards which celebrate the best of the Armed Forces community. Chris has supported more than 12,000 people through a critical stage of their lives.

The former RAF sergeant, who has been based at the Association's South West office in Exeter since 1996, has been shortlisted in the Lifetime Achievement category.

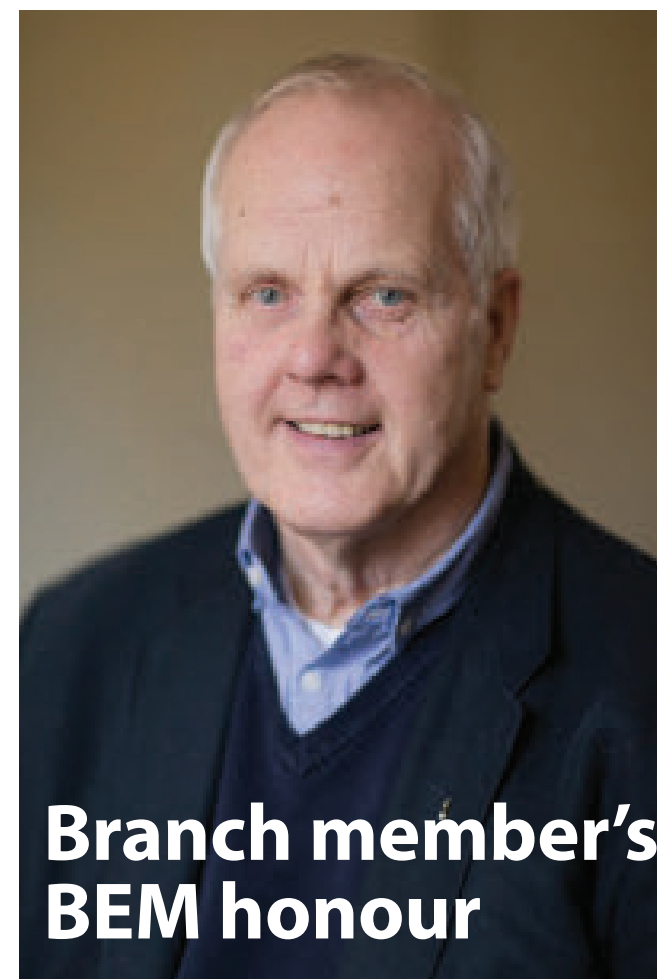
While in the RAF Chris saw at first hand the desperate need for free, high-quality war pension and benefits advice, and representation for personnel whose employment had ended because of serious illness or injury. Often overwhelmed by their own challenging circumstances, they struggled to interpret and provide complex information relating to their situation.

Chris has since built up a phenomenal amount of expertise, and is readily available to support RAF personnel. Employed full-time by the Association, Chris's ethos is that nobody, wherever they are in the world, should go without the support it provides.

Phil Caswell was injured while on duty in 1990. In 2012 he was medically discharged from the RAF, ending his 37-year RAF service. Phil said: "In enabling me to be financially secure as the result of his support and advice, Chris has given me the opportunity to view the future in a much more positive light. While I look back on my RAF career with pride, it's thanks to Chris that I'm now able to look forward again."

Chris, who is married and has five children, will learn if he is the winner of his category at the awards presentation night in London on 5 April. He attended a reception for all the awards' finalists at the House of Lords on 13 February.

If you are in need of support, find out more about the help and advice we offer. Call 0800 018 2316 for more details, or email chris.francis@rafa.org.uk



Branch member's BEM honour

George Prentice, Honorary Welfare Officer, has been awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours for his work at Edinburgh Lothians Borders Branch.

The citation explained that the award was "for service to ex-service personnel and to the community of Coldingham".

As well as Honorary Welfare Officer, George is the branch standard bearer, an Area caseworker and a branch trustee.

George served with the RAF as a young man before moving into industry. A member of the Association since 2015, he is also extremely active locally with Coldingham Parish Church, Friends of Coldingham Priory, and Coldingham Gala Committee, and is a founder member of the Coldingham Ukulele Club. He is also secretary of the Alnwick Pipers Society and the Spittal Pipers Group.

He said: "I was unaware that I was even being considered for such an honour and can only thank my friends and colleagues for their generosity in nominating me."



George visiting Ken Bowman as part of his Area welfare work © Phil Greig

She wears it well

A ladies' silk scarf has been designed by Lady Elaine Hillier, wife of Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier.

An initial run of 250 of the limited edition accessory has been commissioned and all profits will support the welfare work of the RAF Association.

The 90cm x 90cm 100% silk scarf is available in silk chiffon or silk twill and is printed with golden RAF eagles, the RAF crest and 'ribbons' around the edge. Each is delivered in a black presentation box topped with a silver foil RAF logo.

The scarves cost £60 each (including VAT), and are expected to be on sale from April. Call 0800 018 2361 or see rafatrad.co.uk for the latest on their arrival. **A**



Top: Lady Hillier at the Association's Annual Conference in 2017. © Heidi Burton

Above: Presented in a black box with a silver foil RAF logo on top.

Thank you – Wings collectors

"A huge thank you to all our 2018 Wings Appeal Collectors," says Pete Brocklehurst, Branch Fundraising Manager at the Association's Leicester HQ. "And thank you to everyone else who supported them last year. It's a really tough job organising street collections and standing in supermarkets asking the public for money - and our redoubtable fundraisers collect more than £1 million every year for the national appeal. 20% of that money goes directly back to branches to be spent on local welfare projects. If any Air Mail reader would like to join the fundraisers, then we'd love to hear from you. Please contact your local branch to find out more."

You can find your branch contact details on your newsletters or by calling 0800 018 2361. **A**

Platinum celebration of Edith's commitment



A member who joined the Association in 1946 has been recognised for more than 70 years' service.

Edith Glover joined Worcester and District Branch when she was demobbed at the end of her WWII service with the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF). She has been a

regular attendee at branch meetings ever since, and met her late husband there. Together, they served the branch for many years in many committee positions.

Since being widowed Edith continues to actively serve the branch. She rarely misses a branch meeting and she took part in the RAF100 parade last year in the City of Worcester.

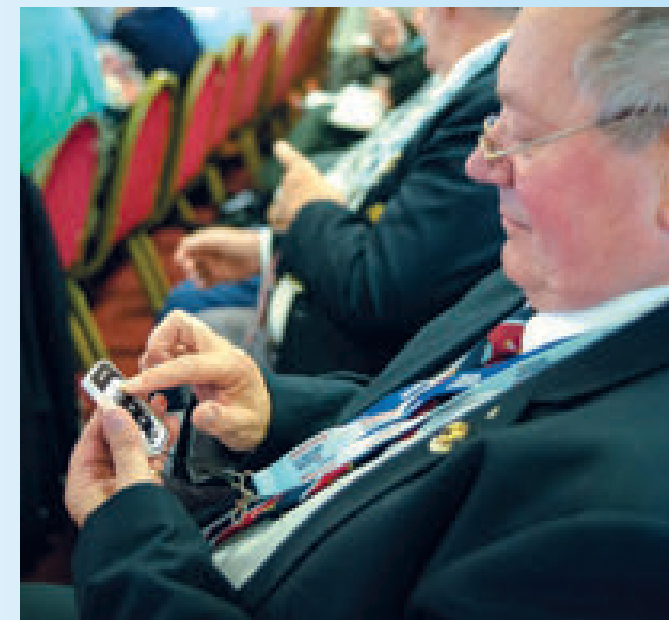
At the presentation to recognise her outstanding service Edith was given Honorary Life Membership and a personalised membership card. Its expiry date of 2119 means she will need to live to be 197 to see her membership expire.

The presentation on 11 January was made by John Tisbury MBE, Chairman of the Association's Wales, Midland and South West Area and attended by branch members and friends and the Association's Director of Membership, Del Rowlands. **A**



Collecting in Leicestershire

One Member One Vote - update



Currently, branches vote on behalf of their members at Area conferences and at Conference © Heidi Burton

The task group looking at the proposed One Member One Vote (OMOV) initiative reported to Council in February 2019. Set up as part of Council's Branch and Membership Committee, it was led by John Tisbury, Area Chairman for the Wales Midland and South Western Area. This is a digest of the group's report to Council:

A plebiscite, undertaken from 2 October to 4 November 2018 practically tested the mechanics of a 'voting' process and, advantageously, allowed members to show whether they were in favour, or not in favour, of the OMOV initiative. The question proposed that all members of the Association "have the right to vote on Association elections and resolutions through plebiscites" (having the opportunity to vote directly on any raised issue). 66,784 members were asked to respond: 10,549 took part (16%). By comparison, the number of members who attended branch AGMs in 2018 was around 5,000 (7.5% of the membership).

The results showed 23% of members were against any change to the current system, while 77% were in favour of the proposed change.

OMOV is one way to engage with the wider and growing membership to 'future proof' the Association from societal changes that are impacting upon the traditional branch network. 86 branches (net) have closed in 11 years. 2019 will see the Association in the 'three hundreds', with a corresponding reduction in the numbers of members who regularly attend branch meetings. The largest number of branches attending Conference was 196 in 2007, which has almost halved to 105 branches in 2018.

The objective behind OMOV is not to undermine Conference but to promote a wider democratic reach so that each individual member of the Association has an opportunity to engage and vote, rather than decisions made by branch delegates on behalf of the wider membership that may well not have been consulted. Conference is the Association's AGM, and so it is the means by

which the members hold Council to account, and debate and decide on matters of significant importance. It is good governance for all organisations to have an annual general meeting.

Branches and members are encouraged to note and discuss the proposed changes which can be found in the papers circulated at Area Conferences, in Annual Conference resolutions and papers being sent to branches and on the Members' Portal.

The first OMOV resolution proposed for Conference 2019 will be an 'enabling resolution'. This will allow members to confirm or deny the will of Conference 2018 to adopt the OMOV proposition. If Conference 2019 affirms the intent from Conference 2018 and the plebiscite of late 2018 to adopt the OMOV proposition, there will follow a series of resolutions, which outline the amendments required to the current Governance Handbook to facilitate OMOV. Each resolution will focus upon one section of the Handbook i.e. The Royal Charter, Rules, Byelaws, Area and Branch Regulations. **A**

The plebiscite in numbers:

405 branches were represented (4x the number of branches at Conference 2018)

84% of respondents voted online. 16% voted on the paper ballot

The top three age groups that responded were: **61 – 75 (32%); 66 – 70 (34%); 71 – 75 (34%)**

31 to 45 year olds had the highest proportion of members voting for change

50% more members engaged in the OMOV process than attended their branch AGM in 2018 (around 10,000 who responded to the plebiscite against the 5,000 members who attended all branch AGMs in 2018).

One Charity? Update

In January, Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe, Chairman of Council, outlined the work that had been started to examine whether the RAF Association should become and operate as one charity ('The shape of the future?', p4-5, Air Mail Jan-Mar 2019). Following the Council meeting of February 2019, and in advance of Conference 2019, we update you on the latest from that review.

Charity regulators in all four nations of the UK have now been consulted for their initial views. As Air Mail went to print, the Charity Commission for England and Wales and the Office of Scottish Charity Regulator had responded positively, and a response from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was awaited. An "affiliate" approach is being considered for European and Overseas branches which will enable them to deliver the Association's object within their own legal jurisdiction, without requiring them to be charities in their own right.

Between the February Council meeting and early April, briefings were given to Area Presidents and Chairmen's meetings, to Area Council meetings and to Area Conferences and via email to all branches. All members will be receiving a briefing in their April Area newsletter and/or the April e-newsletter.

Arguments in favour of operating as one charity include:

- Reductions in personal liability for branch trustees;
- Reducing the regulatory and administrative burdens on local trustees;
- Freeing up local members to concentrate on welfare and camaraderie;
- Economies of scale in areas such as group insurance or combined audit processes and efficiencies in standardising legal contracts, procurement and more;
- Protecting the reputation of the whole Association through better compliance and risk management;
- The chance to invest in the Association's properties across the UK and ensure we are maximising their potential for charitable purposes;
- Appealing to branches that are struggling to recruit trustees; and
- More opportunity to support branches with specialist guidance to maximise income, minimise costs and manage risk.

A merger could result in the strengthening of relationships and a renewed sense of unity as a group, particularly if each member is given voting rights in conjunction with these changes.

Arguments against operating as one charity include:

- The liability of each branch would not be ring-fenced so the Association's assets may need to be used to cover the liabilities incurred at branch level;
- Legal costs involved in moving to the new structure;
- The move would need significant Association staff resource and management time;
- Council would be responsible for a much larger charity with a large range of activities and volunteers;

- Effective oversight of local operation (by delegated authority) would become a formal duty; and
- Trustees would also be responsible for dealing with investigations by any charity or financial regulators.

Consideration has also been given to the process that would be needed to bring about any merger and the legal and practical issues that would need to be dealt with.

Next steps

In May Council will report to Conference 2019 and delegates will be asked to consider whether to proceed further. If Conference supports the continuation of the process it is proposed that detailed resolutions to enable the changes would be submitted to Conference 2020. Conference will therefore have an opportunity in both 2019 and 2020 to decide the future structure of the Association and this will also allow time for wider consultation with the membership. As a membership organisation, the decisions of Conference on this matter, endorsed by the charity regulators in each nation where necessary, will be the route taken by the Association. ■



Great North Run



The Association is offering a limited number of places in the Great North Run to keen runners and fundraisers. This popular event, which starts and finishes in Newcastle upon Tyne, takes place on Sunday 8 September and is always oversubscribed, so potential runners are encouraged to register early.

Previous participant Sue loved the Great North Run, saying: "Running the GNR was an amazing experience for a previous couch potato like me. The fantastic crowds cheering you on, and seeing so many people running for charities close to their hearts all added to the unique atmosphere of the day."

Your registration fee will be half that of registering directly with the race organisers; we just ask that you raise funds to help us continue to support members of the RAF family when they need us. Money raised will go towards the charity's welfare projects for serving and former serving RAF personnel. Visit rafa.org.uk/great-north-run-2019 to find out more. ■

Supporting new parents with Buggyfitness



The Association has funded a Buggyfit scheme at RAF Waddington. Aimed at improving the wellbeing of new-parents or their spouses, Buggyfit promotes a sense of wellbeing and motivation for new parents. It is particularly aimed at new mothers who are invited to join any time after their six week postnatal check (eight to ten weeks for caesarean mums) and take part right up until their child starts school.

John Ferguson, Community Development Officer at RAF Waddington, explained: "Buggyfit can aid mental and physical health while giving busy mums the opportunity to focus on themselves and reap the benefits of exercise in their day-to-day lives. With a higher than average incidence of postnatal depression in military mums, Buggyfit is a valuable addition to the welfare of military and their spouses."

The classes will run for 21 weeks and aim to provide a safe environment for new mums to socialise, meet like-minded parents and keep fit, without having to find someone to look after their child. Rory O'Connor, Director of Welfare at the RAF Association, said: "We are delighted to be in a position to help new parents in the RAF overcome some of the challenges of keeping fit following childbirth. We hope to see as many new parents as possible take part." ■



The Femmes' repertoire includes 40s and modern songs © The Femmes

The Femmes

announced for Conference line up

Close harmony singers The Femmes have been announced as part of the entertainment line-up for Annual Conference 2019. The vintage performers "with the modern day twist" will be performing alongside the RAF Air Cadets at the black tie Annual Reunion Gala Awards Dinner.

Once you have registered (details right if you haven't booked your place already) you will be able to pre-order bottles of wine for the Annual Reunion Gala Awards Dinner at a 20% discount - if you pre-order before 7 May 2019 (visit bit.ly/2019wine to do this). On the night, a 15% discount will be available at the Function Bar for members and guests.

In a departure from previous years, the Presidential drinks reception for National Presidential Certificate recipients will take place on the Saturday evening before the Gala Dinner.

We look forward to seeing you there for debates and decisions on the major issues outlined in this Air Mail, and for a great reunion.



The Hilton Metropole in Birmingham © Hilton Hotels

Registration

Conference Registration – closes 19 April 2019

To register your attendance, please complete the online booking form on our website rafa.org.uk/annualconference or call **0116 268 8750** by 19 April 2019. You can register yourself and any guests who wish to attend Conference.

Conference Accommodation

All accommodation bookings must be made directly with the Hilton Birmingham Metropole. The Association has negotiated a reduced dinner, bed and breakfast rate for the whole weekend.

The price below includes your Friday dinner (informal), accommodation (Friday and Saturday night), breakfast and lunches (Saturday and Sunday), The Gala Awards Dinner on Saturday night, car parking and connection to the venue's wi-fi.

Single occupancy: £210 (£105 per person, per night full board as above)

Double occupancy: £312 (£78 per person, per night full board as above)

Please note our overseas members have the option of booking additional nights as required at £78 (single) or £102 (double occupancy) per night for bed and breakfast.

To book accommodation at Hilton Birmingham Metropole, please telephone **0121 780 6262**, select option 1 and quote reference number: **FSRAF1**. If you do have any queries regarding Conference, please contact Kelly Brotherhood on 0116 268 8770.

Magnificent flying machines

Keep an eye on the skies in April as Flight Lieutenant Giles Fowler and Paul Mockford attempt to fly over 40 current and former RAF airfields strapped to a paramotor - to fundraise for the Association.

In a test of endurance and navigation the pair will fly six legs over two days on a journey of 263 miles through some of the busiest military airspace in the UK. Starting at RAF Goxhill near Hull, the team will head south through Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Day one is planned to finish at Sywell Aerodrome near Northampton, with day two ending at RAF Halton near Wendover.

Giles is a serving officer in the RAF and a keen paramotorist. With 25 years' flying experience he's the highest flying paramotor pilot in the UK, holding the British record of 21,746 ft. He also flew the longest non-stop flight in the UK of 300 miles from coast to coast.

Paul is a new pilot still in his first year as a paramotorist. After seeing a paramotor flight on YouTube he dived in head first and never looked back. Both Paul's parents are ex-RAF and his father runs the Association's branch at RAF Halton.

Paramotoring is similar to paragliding but the pilot wears a small engine and propeller on their back. Paramotorists are also able to take off from flat fields, with the motor providing the thrust to climb and maintain level flight.

The flight is scheduled for April – but exact timing is weather dependent - and the pair will be assisted on the ground by Katie Pagett and Andy Greaves carrying fuel, spares and supplies. Both pilots and ground-support crew will be trackable live on the Livetrack24 website. They are raising funds for the Association via their JustGiving page at justgiving.com/fundraising/RAFA40.

L-R: Andy Greaves, Paul Mockford, Giles Fowler, Katie Pagett. © Shears Mockford Photography



Pulling rank

A message from Del Rowlands, Director of Membership.

"It may not have escaped the notice of members who have served (me included) and who have enjoyed use of their rank over the years that recent correspondence, and indeed membership cards, from the Association have contained traditional Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms greetings.

"A change to the way in which we manage your data led to an unintended consequence that saw ranks being replaced with civilian titles on letters and membership cards. This was not our aim. Whether serving or retired or associated in any way, we are all exceptionally proud of our RAF heritage and we are currently addressing the situation to ensure there is no repeat of this in the future."



©MOD/Crown 2017



Did the pressures of military service make you stronger?

©MOD/Crown

A surge of recent research has focused on the negative consequences of combat experience, and the resulting mental health disorders or reintegration problems in people who return from active military service. But a high number of veterans have also reported that their experiences in the armed forces have given a sense of purpose in life along with other positive outcomes after their experiences, and many go on to live even better lives.

The Association is inviting interested members to take part in a new project in partnership with the University of Nottingham, to understand more about experiences or situations that could trigger poor mental health - but don't.

Evidence shows that disruptive events might promote 'active coping' and lead to increased wisdom, recognition of personal strength and higher levels of wellbeing. For instance, some research shows that 72% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans reported positive changes in their identities, relationships and life priorities after serving.

This new research project provides an opportunity to understand what protects veterans from experiencing mental health challenges associated with their military experience. Understanding protective factors, such as successful coping strategies, might be particularly useful to support veterans looking for help in future.

Meryem Yasdiman, a PhD student at the University of Nottingham, is conducting a series of studies. She aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and coping strategies veterans have found effective for managing issues associated with their war memories. She explains what would be involved in taking part: "This series of studies will involve a one-to-one interview and/or online survey. Please note that the questions will cover some sensitive and potentially distressing topics, including any mental and/or physical health challenges you may have experienced during deployment in active military service or since leaving the military. We are interested in exploring the transition you made from active military service to civilian life and how you have coped - or continue to cope - with any

challenges you may have encountered. We want to understand the extent to which these ongoing challenges negatively and positively affect the quality of your life."

You must be a veteran from one of the UK military services to take part. Participation in these studies is voluntary and there is no obligation to take part. A request for more information does not commit you to joining the study.

Please get in touch with Meryem Yasdiman on Meryem.Yasdiman@nottingham.ac.uk to find out more.



Members of 63 Squadron (Queens Colour Squadron) RAF Regiment search the sand carefully for IEDs ahead of a patrol around Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan in 2009. © MOD/Crown



©MOD/Crown

Dear Editor ...

... your letters and emails to Air Mail and our readers



Mourning the Sea King's passing

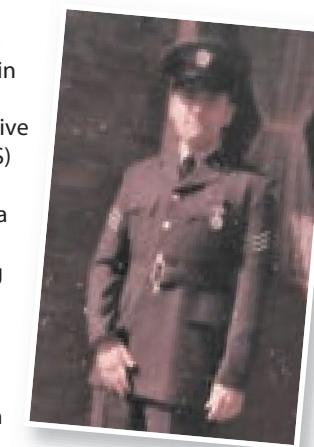
Sad to see the end of the Sea King's active life. I designed the weapon carriage equipment used on those.

Reports in the press on naval choppers are usually when they fish somebody out of the drink. Their primary purpose on frigates and destroyers was armament. They can carry torpedoes, missiles and bombs.

Ken Wells
(ex RAF air crew)

Inverted chevrons

I never recall seeing anybody with upside-down Technician's stripes in the 'Mail'? On my graduation from the 15th intake of the Administrative Apprentices Training School (AATS) at RAF St Athan in 1953 I believe I was the first Pay Clerk to become a "Junior Technician". I left the RAF after a wonderful 17 years passing through 19 RAF Stations, which included 9 formal postings with the longest stopover being four years at Upwood; and finally settled my wife and three children in Western Australia, with employment by the State Public Service until retirement in 1990. Now I live in an RSL war veterans' village, with my feet in the surf talking to dolphins on a never ending beach on the Indian Ocean. But, even before watching the 100 years celebrations I have always been proud to use an Australian saying, "I was in that Mob".



Phil Harris, with inverted chevrons proudly displayed at RAF Upwood after a two year visit to the Arabian Peninsula. © Phil Harris

Ex Sgt Phil Harris, now Rev. Dr. Phil

To comment in or contribute to Air Mail please email editor@rafatrad.co.uk or write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, RAFATRAD Ltd, Atlas House, Wembley Road, Leicester, LE1 3UT. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION. The editor's decision on inclusion is final.

Per mutua

Just a short note to let you know that I found your feature on the new Defence National Rehabilitation Centre [Jan-Mar 2019 issue] of great interest.

I am sure that I am one of the last airmen standing from Headley Court. I served there from 1951-53. It was then RAF Headley Court with our own station badge 'Per Mutua'. Our patients were from sergeant to top brass. At nearby RAF Chessington, the same service was available from airmen up to corporal.



Few remember that in the 1950s Headley Court was a rather rural isolated posting with only one bus service a day to Leatherhead and we did not have any transport - just one airman had a motorcycle.

I still have official MOD photographs of a church parade to Headley Church on the Sunday after Coronation Day, together with many more of my own photos from my time there. Happy Days!!!

Anthony (Tony) Webb
Ex AC1 2521182

Warrant Officer bath duck

I've just got the AirMail (Jan-Mar 2019 issue) and seen the new [Warrant Officer] duck. It seems fitting because it just sits there doing nothing, trying to look smart and sinks when a "wave" of work comes in. I suppose a Corporal duck would have been too expensive, very active, hardworking and worth its weight in gold.



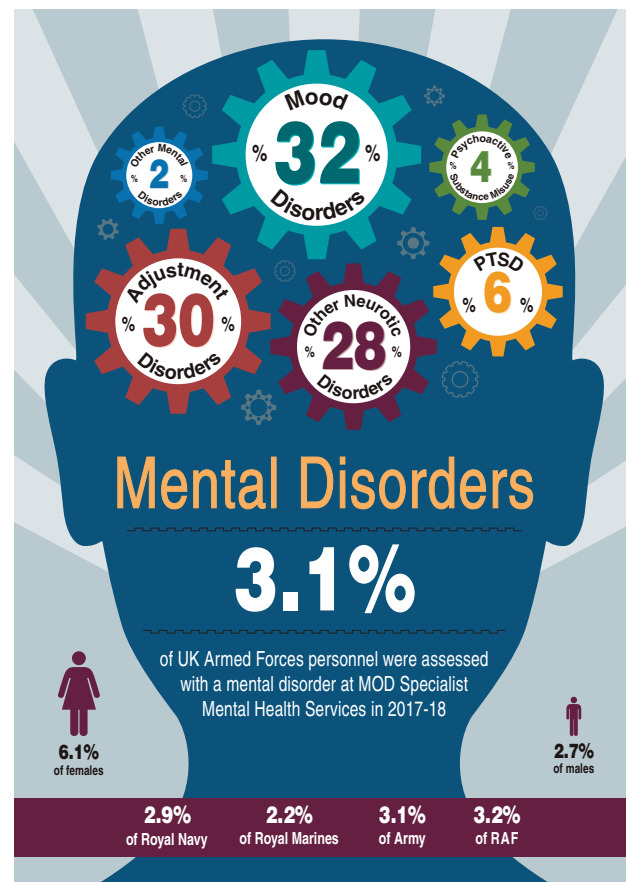
Former Corporal (name provided)

Mental Health Support

The Association is enabling families of serving RAF personnel to benefit from new training to spot mental health issues. The programme begins at RAF Coningsby, and has been launched thanks to grants from the Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's 'Mental Health Promotion Fund' and the Postcode Community Trust.

Adult Mental Health Aware Half Day is the first course to be offered to the partners and spouses of serving RAF personnel and civilian staff contracted to work on stations. The Association recognises the vital role families play in identifying and understanding mental health issues, and the course provides the understanding and supporting skills to implement practical support. Teachers of children whose parents serve in the RAF at schools local to the stations can also take advantage of the programme.

The course was successfully piloted at RAF Benson and RAF Valley in 2017, with participants saying they had a better understanding of issues affecting people and the signs to look out for. Delivery of training courses began in February at RAF Coningsby, with the Association also in the process of organising courses at RAF Benson, Brize Norton, Cranwell, Leeming, Odiham, Scampton, Shawbury, Valley and Waddington throughout 2019.



Youth in Aviation

rafaYOUTH raised the profile of the Association at a reception at the House of Lords last November.



The Palace of Westminster (the House of Lords is at the end nearest the camera)
© MOD/Crown 2009

Hosted by Baroness Garden of Frogmal, the Youth in Aviation Parliamentary Reception allowed attendees to showcase their work to MPs, peers and industry. Youth in Aviation is a collaboration of not-for-profit, charitable and educational organisations that aim to enable young people from all backgrounds to access and experience aviation and aerospace. The group provides opportunities and also more than £300,000 of scholarships and support each year.

Helen Gibson, Youth Community Manager at the Association, said: "It's a great opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of our work alongside the Air League, Air Cadets, organisations like Air Ability and sponsors like Aviation Skills Partnership and Boeing. It was also good to see the members of the Association's Lords and Commons Branch who were able to break from their parliamentary schedules to drop in and support us."

Squadron Leader Dean 'Gibbo' Gibson and Wing Commander Chris Goss, both Association Trustees, also attended. They help select the recipients of the Association's flying scholarships each year. 'Gibbo' said: "As a Queen's Scout, I was particularly pleased to chat with the Air Explorer Scouts, and encourage them to apply for our scholarships. With aviation and engineering in general having a bright future, we need to make full use of every opportunity to encourage youngsters, of 'air minded groups' to pursue careers in aviation and engineering.

Youth in Aviation was a great vehicle to do this, and the 'encouragement' has paid off. Several Air Explorer Scouts have applied."

Sports News

Amy Cokayne, centre, in the Northern Ireland match. © RFU Collection via Getty Images



Amy Cokayne England Six Nations

Congratulations to RAF Association member Pilot Officer Amy Cokayne on winning the 2019 Women's Six Nations championship with the England Roses.

England claimed a Grand Slam, which is awarded to a team who finishes undefeated, following wins against Ireland, France, Wales, Scotland and Italy.

Amy, who graduated in December, believed her squad selection to be fortunate at the time, after she missed seven months of rugby while she completed her Initial Officer Training. But as she was ever-present in the 2018 team, she had nothing to worry about.



© MOD/Crown

Channel Swimmers

The RAF Open Water Swim team swam to a second place finish in the 2019 English Channel Inter-Service relay.

The team completed the race in a time of 10 hours and 32 minutes.

Association members Flying Officer Nicola Mackay and Senior Aircraftman Lucy Roper were among a team of six swimmers and one reserve, who set off from Dover for Cap Gris Nez, in France. Generally recognised as a geographical distance of 21 miles, swimmers are often expected to swim further because of the unpredictability of tides.

The next inter-service open water team swim will take place in 2021.

Rally

RAF Rally co-driver Senior Aircraftman Phil Hall is hoping for another amazing season after joining forces once more with FIA Junior World Rally Championship driver, Tom Williams.

RAF Association member Phil previously drove with compatriot Tom in 2017, and this year they will be the only all-British crew in the five race series. The season, which finishes in Britain after travelling through Sweden, Corsica, Italy and Finland, will be hotly contested, with the winners gaining entry into the 2020 World Rally Championship.



© MOD/Crown

What's on next?

Rugby Union

- 5 April 2019 - Navy vs Royal Air Force at Twickenham Stoop. Men and women's teams. Tickets are available from navyrafmatch.uk
- 27 April 2019 - British Army v Royal Air Force at Kingsholm Stadium, Gloucester. Men and women's teams. Tickets are available from Gloucester Rugby website: gloucesterrugby.co.uk

Cricket

- 30 May 2019 - Inter Services T20 at Lords. Tickets are available from interservicest20.co.uk

RAF Mountaineering

- 26 to 28 April 2019 - Peak District expedition
 - 24 to 27 May 2019 - Scotland expedition
 - 14 - 23 June 2019 - North Wales expedition
- Visit @RAFMountaineer on Facebook or Twitter for more info

Rugby League

- 10 April 2019 - UK Armed Forces v GB Police at Leigh Minders Rangers' stadium in Leigh
 - 8 May 2019 - UK Armed Forces v GB Teachers at Siddal Sports & Community Centre in Halifax
 - 5 June 2019 - UK armed Forces v England Universities at Sheffield Hallam Sports Park in Sheffield
- For more information about the 2019 President's Cup, visit pitchero.com/clubs/ukarmedforcesrugbyleague

Going the extra mile

– how we helped the Lewis family cycle together



When Sergeant Dan Lewis and his wife Laura's first child was born ten weeks early they were told that baby Mair had a bleed on her brain. This could have cleared up leaving no long term effects, but sadly that was not the case.

Sergeant Lewis, a Non-Destructive Testing Technician stationed at RAF Brize Norton had served in the RAF for 18 years, working in the UK, as well as overseas in Afghanistan and the Falklands. By the age of two Mair still wasn't walking. Dan and Laura struggled to get a diagnosis for their daughter, but when she was three they were told she had cerebral palsy and global development delay. She was walking by then, but was not very steady. She still struggles with her balance now, at the age of five.



"She beamed when we went to collect it and has a huge smile on her face every time we go out for a ride."

"It's great that she can ride around with her younger sister at last."

Dan said: "As a family we love the great outdoors and spend as much time outside as possible. Mair has a younger sister, who is three and is reaching all her targets - one of which is riding her bike. It pained us to see how much Mair wished she could do the same, so we approached the RAF Association to see if they could support us with purchasing a tricycle for her."



Rory O'Connor, Director of Welfare and Policy for the Association, said: "We were extremely pleased to be able to support this request. We could see what a huge impact a tricycle would have, not only on Mair, but on the Lewis family as a whole. We wish them all many miles of happy cycling."

Cycling is definitely a favourite family pastime, as Dan represents the Royal Air Force as part of the RAF Cycling Team.

Dan continues: "Mair absolutely loves her tricycle. She beamed when we went to collect it and has a huge smile on her face every time we go out for a ride. It's great that she can ride around with her younger sister at last."

Main picture: The tricycle helps the Lewis family have special moments together.
Top: We love the great outdoors and spend as much time outside as possible.
Middle: "She has a huge smile on her face every time we go for a ride."
Bottom: Normal life – getting ready for a country bike ride.

All images © Phil Greig

The Royal Air Forces Association keeps members of the RAF family connected. This includes helping families enjoy time together when health issues make that difficult. To find out more about how we can help look up rafa.org.uk/what-we-do or call 0800 818 2361.

0 to 9G in one second – in a cockpit

0 – 9G in one second, with 34 revolutions a minute

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, formally opened a state-of-the-art high-G training and test facility at RAF Cranwell in February. The new facility revolutionises high-G training as pilots are not simply strapped into the device and exposed to G-force but are able to 'fly', as they would in a simulator.

The centrifuge can accelerate to top speed in one second and rotate up to 34 times a minute. As the pilot 'manoeuvres the aircraft' and applies the G-force they are able to experience up to 9G and learn how to use specialist in-cockpit flying equipment to help them cope with these stresses.

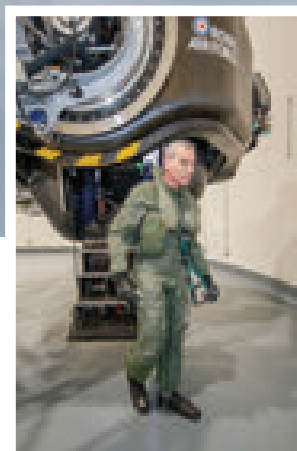
Pilots benefit from a cockpit which closely represents that of their normal aircraft allowing them to run through a plethora of training scenarios, from air-to-air combat to dealing with in-bound missile threats.

The £44m state-of-the-art project will train fast jet pilots in the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy and replicate flight in aircraft such as the Hawk, Typhoon and new F-35 Lightning.

The device will also trial and test new equipment to be used on fast jets and by the pilots, ensuring that the testing is done in a benign environment before being trialled in live flight.

The RAF Centre of Aviation Medicine is already using the facility to train aircrew to recognise the effects of G-force, develop awareness of it and learn the physical techniques needed to counter the effects on their bodies during combat missions. Up to 300 aircrew will receive training on the centrifuge each year.

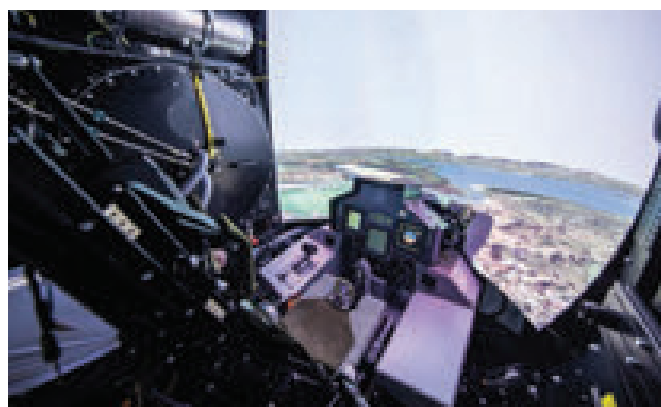
The new facility at RAF Cranwell is for fast jet pilots progressing through the UK Military Flying Training System and into their flying careers. They will refresh their training at least every five years to keep them as safe as possible and up-to-date in the techniques used to handle high-G forces in flight.



Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier climbing out of the gondola after 'flying' in the new High-G training facility at RAF College Cranwell in February

The 39-tonne centrifuge, built by Thales UK, has seen the company team up with world-leading centrifuge specialists AMST from Austria to design and build the equipment. Thales has been training RAF aircrew since the 1930s, providing more than 300 complex simulators for 60 different platforms.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said: "By exposing our Typhoon, Lightning and Hawk pilots to high-G forces in a tailor-made and completely controlled environment, we are significantly enhancing safety in the air and making a major contribution to our operational effectiveness. This is another major milestone in the RAF's impressive modernisation programme."



The new 'cockpit' allows pilots to 'fly' while they are exposed to G force. All images © MOD/Crown 2019

Tenfold increase in C Sqn fundraising

Cadets from C Squadron undergoing Initial Officer Training at Cranwell managed to raise £7,840 for the Association's Wings Appeal in 2018; more than ten times the amount raised the previous year. The cadets presented the cheque to Ailsa Gough, Director for the Association's South East and Eastern Area in December, the day before their graduation ceremony. Funds were raised via a spinathon in Lincoln City Centre, a raffle, a sleepathon, and by persuading their squadron leader to wear his respirator for an entire day. The cadets planned to continue fundraising after graduation.



C squadron presenting funds to the Association just before graduation. ©MOD/Crown

Tuning up for a successful 2019



The Royal Air Forces Association Concert Band has announced its 2019 engagements supporting service and civilian organisations around the country.

Musical Director and co-founder of the band, Peter Skellon BEM, said "Sorties planned for this year include anniversary concerts with the Military Wives Choirs, with other bands to commemorate D Day, The Great Escape and the start of World War II, as well as entertaining at dinners and Association Area reunions and services.

The Royal Air Forces Association Concert Band on tour in 2018. © Peter Skellon

The 2019 venues include The National Memorial Arboretum and theatres and halls around Wales, the midlands, the south west - and further afield. Service and civilian charities have also requested the band's support. The band is on the look out for players to join. Find out more about its programme or performing with the ensemble on rafaconcertband.org.uk.

Families Federation gives evidence in Parliament



Accommodation for serving personnel, healthcare and children's schools were all raised by the armed forces' three Families Federations when they gave evidence to The Defence Committee in Parliament on 12 February.

The discussions, based around the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report for 2018, also reviewed governance, Foreign and Commonwealth personnel and veterans, family life, through-life support and business – and the community.

RAF Families Federation Director, Maria Lyle said: "It was good to have the opportunity to flag up just a few of the challenges that our serving personnel and their families face daily to the Defence Committee. I ask all personnel to please keep making your voices heard to us – whether you are single and in single living accommodation, or have children and are juggling their care, we are here to advocate and influence on your behalf"

Challenges discussed:

- Accommodation is still a top issue – the main issue is service family accommodation but also single living accommodation and, particularly, allowing the process to be able to work under the new devolved budget control that has been given to station commanders
- School admission processes and service pupil premium – transparency around the differences in education structure to support service children in Scotland
- Families moving on transitioning – asking for access to schooling to be included as part of the transitioning process
- Dispersed families – understanding geographical reach and appropriate linking support services
- Access to healthcare on new postings – particularly continuation of healthcare when moving
- Childcare costs – this was specifically raised by the RAF Families Federation because of the huge difference in childcare fees across the UK, though their parents' wages stay the same wherever they are posted.

Full written evidence from all Families Federations can be found online:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/defence-committee/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2018/written/95844.html>

or call the RAF Families Federation's office from 10am to 3pm, Monday to Friday on 01780 781650 and they can send you a hard copy.



Screenshot of proceedings taking place at the Defence Committee. (l-r) Naval Families Federation chief executive, Anna Wright, Army Families Federation Deputy, Louise Simpson and RAF Families Federation Director, Maria Lyle. © Open Parliament Licence v3.0

The RAF Families Federation ...

... provides an independent voice for all RAF service personnel – regular and reserve, married, single or in a partnership – and their families. Its evidence is presented to RAF and Ministry of Defence (MOD) staffs, as well as ministers across government, to provide a snapshot of current issues and to help inform the delivery of future policies.

The Federation also provides a signposting service for those who need advice and guidance with a problem or query. We work closely with RAF HQ Air Community Support Staff, the MOD, organisations such as the RAF Association (the contract-holder of the Federation), RAF Benevolent Fund, SSAFA, other government departments, NHS, private companies and, especially, with local authorities in support of the Armed Forces Covenant.



Snappy invitation



For only the second time, amateur photographers are being invited to submit images for the prestigious annual RAF Photographic Competition. More than 250 entered the category in 2018, which was won by council worker Mark Thompson with his Red Arrows shot, "Smoke in the Sun".

Category J - the amateur category - is once again open to members of the general public, service dependants, families, air cadets and combined cadet forces. Judges will be looking for high quality photographs that can be used to promote the RAF across traditional and social media channels.

All photographs must have been taken between 16 July 2018 and 22 July 2019. All entries are to arrive by 31 July 2019. More than one entry can be submitted, but judges are "looking for quality over quantity". Further details can be found at www.raf.mod.uk. Submissions can be made by email to rafphotocomp@gmail.com, or by post to: SNCO Photo Ops, ACSSU (TG14), Building 110, RAF Halton, Bucks, HP22 5PG.

Far left: Highly commended in the 2018 amateur category was 'Low Level Typhoon' © Stacy Woolhouse

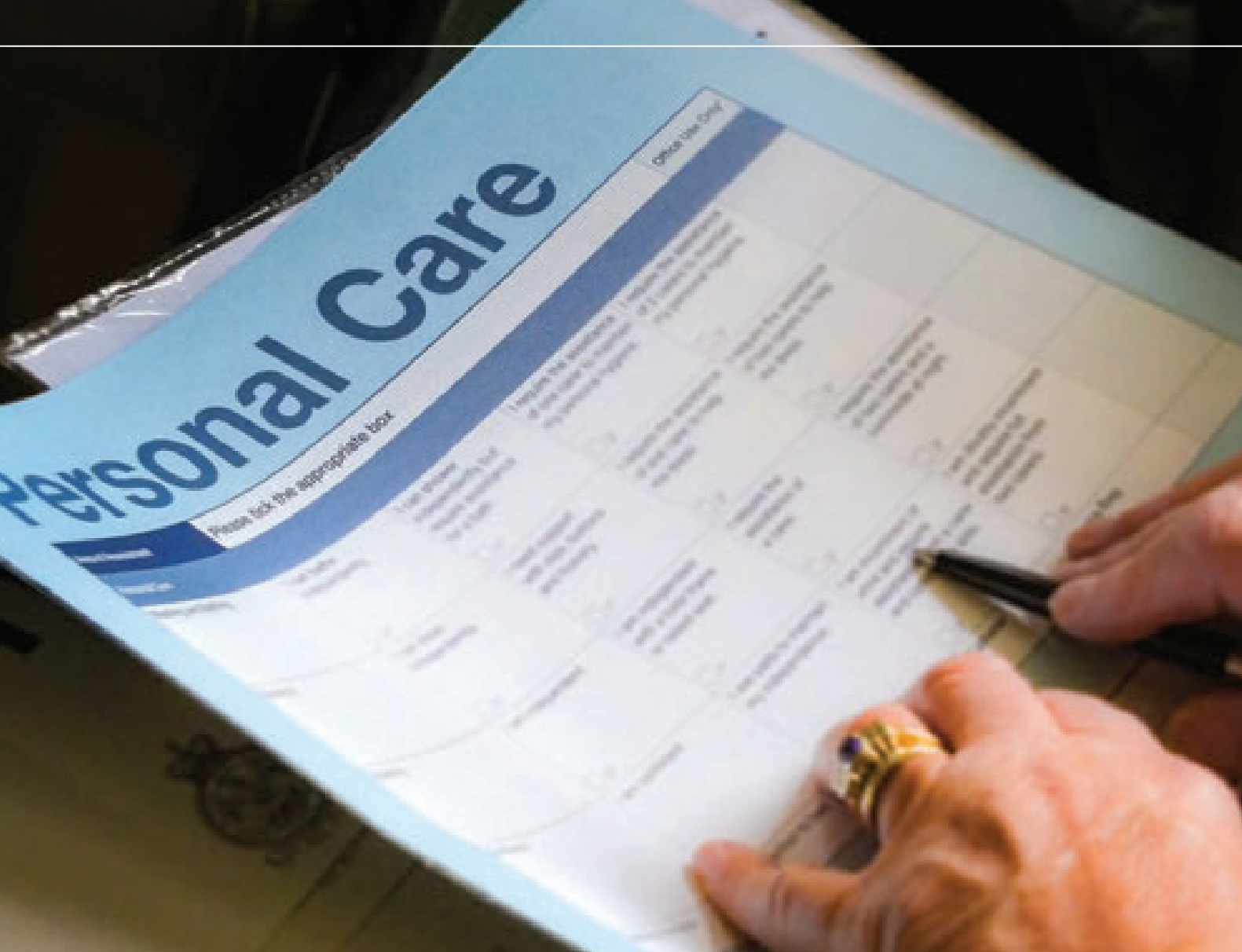
Left: Second place in the amateur category in 2018 was 'Magnificent Tonka' © Stacy Woolhouse

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Welfare review update

Recommendations and proposals from two welfare reviews were announced after decisions were made at the Association's Council meeting of 13 February 2019. Here we publish the announcement, realising that Air Mail's longer production timetable will mean that some elements of this news may have moved on by the time you read it. We encourage you to find the most up-to-date information by ensuring the Association's membership team has your email address (if you have one) and that you are subscribed to our e-newsletters. Please call 0800 018 2361 to update your details.

“Our members have asked for an ambitious organisational growth and development strategy that gives our Association a clear way forward to 2030 and beyond.

To fulfil our vision and meet our objectives, we must be fit and ready for the future. For this reason, we are exploring where our strengths lie and where we have to make improvements across the entire Association.

We already know that demand for our welfare services continues to increase exponentially. We also understand that the care needs of our aging population have changed significantly in the past few

years alone. Additionally, there are ever more regulatory and legislative changes and we must ensure we are compliant. These statutory demands and changes continue to intensify and, should we be found to be in breach of the legislation, the risks to our reputation are significant.

It is crucial that our welfare structure and delivery is fit for the future too. Through a Council-led initiative, Council and committee members, volunteers and employees have recently invested a great deal of time and expertise to review both the structure of our welfare delivery and the effectiveness and regulatory compliance of our respite hotels.

The findings were reported to Council [on 13 February] and, as a result, the trustees have proposed changes to the area welfare structure and to our provision of respite breaks, and have made decisions on changes to welfare policy to bring all branch welfare activity under the Association's welfare governance and practices.

Welfare policy changes affecting branches

It is imperative that we safeguard our beneficiaries and ensure that we are compliant with legislation and regulations. Equally important is meeting the regulatory responsibility to safeguard our dedicated

branch volunteers who undertake a great deal of welfare work. To do this, we have to make sure that they can carry on delivering their valuable service in a way that reduces their personal risk. The Council has decided that we will achieve this by bringing all branch welfare activity under the Association's welfare governance and practices, and by providing our branch welfare volunteers with more support and guidance; as we do with non-branch volunteers. Discussions with branches are taking place until July 2019 to explain more fully the changes that will be made and to seek views on how best to implement them.

The specific changes in policy are as follows:

- All volunteer Honorary Welfare officers and Area Honorary Welfare Officers will be responsible to the welfare team for their casework, with beneficiaries referred to them by the welfare team. In addition, they will be required to produce a final summary report of their casework with individual beneficiaries to the welfare team using a data protection compliant process developed by the welfare team for this purpose.
- All branch friendship visits by branch volunteers are to take place under the umbrella of the befriending programme managed by the welfare team, with those taking part being required to undertake the befriending training course and recognised as trained befrienders.
- All branches will be required to submit a brief monthly report summarising all the welfare activities and welfare spending of the branch to their branch and the welfare team using a simple template that is compliant with data protection regulations.
- All new volunteer welfare officers must undertake the volunteer recruitment process to ensure the minimum requirements of the new Honorary Welfare Officer role are met and that officers are clear about what is expected of them in their role and activities.
- Volunteer clusters with volunteer leaders will be established as the building blocks for volunteer support.

New guidelines on best practice in branch welfare activity and welfare spending will be developed by the welfare team (involving discussions with branches) and endorsed by Council, and these will be monitored by Welfare Managers. This will reduce the risks to our volunteers by ensuring overall compliance and high standards of delivery for the entire Association. In addition, a universal welfare delivery, tracking and reporting system will help to ensure we maintain the high standards we all aim for.

Area welfare structure

The Association currently maintains seven area welfare offices in England and Wales. A review has highlighted that, although we have some very hard-working employees, our current structure is struggling to cope with the increased demand for welfare services.

To ensure the most effective, efficient and needs-led welfare delivery, Council has carefully considered all available options and proposes restructuring the seven area welfare teams in England and Wales into three, larger regional hubs, each staffed by a team of five employees. It is proposed that these hubs would be based at the following locations: Leicester (HQ), Preston (Area HQ) and Weston-Super-Mare (Flowerdown House). This proposal is subject to the outcome of an employee and union consultation, and so a final decision has also yet to be made.

A separate review will be undertaken for the Association's Scotland, Northern Ireland, European and Overseas areas, by the end of 2019.

Respite breaks

The Association currently runs three registered care hotels, the primary purpose of which is to provide subsidised holidays for elderly veterans, many of whom have mobility and more advanced

care needs. The review concluded that the Wings Breaks Hotels offer a unique service, as they alleviate social isolation for guests who require care, provide a break for their carers and sustain a strong and valuable connection to the RAF. It also highlighted that we have some very dedicated employees in our hotels. The review also examined the hotels' suitability to meet the care needs of beneficiaries while being able to meet current and future legislative compliance. This showed that Rothbury House and Flowerdown House provide sufficient accessibility for our frail and elderly guests and they will meet regulatory standards into the future. Council has therefore confirmed its intent to continue investing in both.

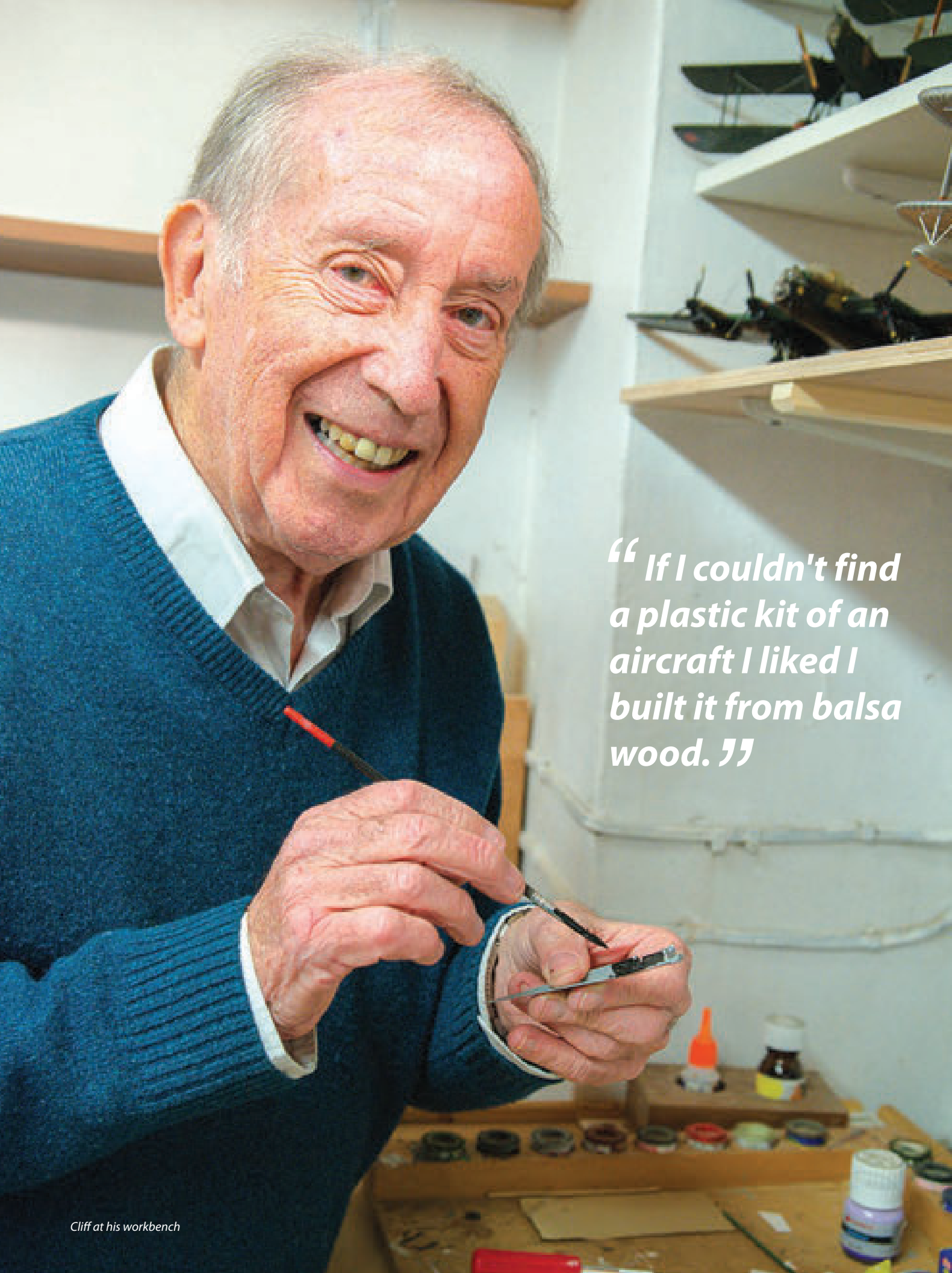
However, the review also found that the fundamental building structure of Richard Peck House is, unfortunately, reaching the limit of its ability to remain compliant and meet beneficiary needs.

After carefully reviewing all available options, Council has made the extremely difficult decision to propose closing Richard Peck House. The proposal is also subject to the outcome of an employee and union consultation, and so a final decision has yet to be made. ”

At the time of Air Mail going to print, the employee consultations regarding the future of Richard Peck House and revisions to the area welfare structure were likely to last until the end of March 2019. The resulting decisions were to be announced soon afterwards. Discussions with branches regarding the implementation of the changes to welfare policy affecting branch activity primarily took place at Area Conferences in February and March and will be continued at Annual Conference.

Writing soon after the announcement, Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe CB OBE, Chairman of Council, said: "I know I speak for the entire Association when I say that it greatly values the time and hard work of branch committees, welfare officers, employees, volunteers and others across the Association's Areas. Thank you for your commitment. As our Association continues to go from strength to strength, we are inevitably faced with some difficult decisions if we are to ensure we continue supporting the RAF family as well as we possibly can, which is, after all, the primary objective of the Association. I hope you can see the benefits that these proposals and changes could bring now and in the future."





“If I couldn't find a plastic kit of an aircraft I liked I built it from balsa wood.”

Cliff at his workbench

A model collection

For more than 60 years, Association member and former RAF carpenter Cliff White has been collecting and crafting his own model aircraft. From World War One biplanes to modern jets, he currently has 270 models ... and counting. We asked Cliff how he came to build such a unique collection and why he's now looking for a new owner to take it on.

“I was introduced to the hobby during the dark days of the Second World War by one of my brothers who made balsa wood models. After that I messed about in my father's shed making planes and boats out of scrap timber. I even got my father hooked on the train kits, some of which I still have. When I began the kits were very affordable, which encouraged youngsters like me to start collecting.

“In December 1955 I was called-up after serving a long apprenticeship as a carpenter, joiner and machinist in my home town of Cleethorpes, Grimsby. One of my brothers had served in the RAF as aircrew in a Liberator during the war, which doubtless helped in my initial interviews.

“Upon joining the RAF I took a trade training course at Cardington and passed out as a carpenter. The tests were very simple compared with the examinations to qualify for City and Guild certificates. I then moved to RAF West Kirby for basic training and was posted in March 1956 to the station workshops at RAF Hendon. This was still a flying station then, with Avro Ansons, de Havilland Devons and Chipmunks. Most of our work involved repairing or rebuilding equipment such as Air Traffic Control consoles.

“It was at Hendon that I returned to modelling. One of the lads was a keen model maker and we spent evenings putting rubber band-powered balsa kits together. I remember making a Hurricane and a Chipmunk. A friend had discovered plastic Airfix kits which at only

two shillings each [ten new pence] were well within our budget. He also introduced me to kit conversions, for example how to turn a Gloster Gladiator into a Gauntlet.

“The kits in those days were very basic and you had to find the materials you needed yourself. There were no small tins of paint, and we had a very limited supply of transfers. Even today I'm loathe to spend money on ready-made items for my models. Like most plastic modellers in the fifties we looked forward to each new release. Later I became more selective, and chose to model only in 1:72 scale. If I couldn't find a plastic kit of an aircraft I liked I built it from balsa wood. It was only by chance that I focussed mainly on RAF aircraft.

“Another passion of mine was sports, and I played for Hendon and Cardington station football teams. At Hendon I played alongside Chelsea winger Peter Brabrook, later of West Ham and England. On a Saturday afternoon I would watch him turn out for Chelsea then on Wednesday I'd be playing alongside him.

“When Hendon was being made ready for closure I was posted to the RAF Balloon Unit, so back I went to Cardington where my canvas-covered workshop was in an old airship shed. I was now a lofty Senior Aircraftman and worked on balloon cradles used by the Parachute Regiment for training. While in the RAF I had been encouraged to better my education, and sat various exams which were later to help in my desire to become a teacher. At that time the unit was involved with the British Nuclear Test programme and

Continued overleaf



de Havilland Tiger Moth

All photos in this feature © Heidi Burton



Supermarine Spitfire



Sopwith Camel



Hawker Siddeley Harrier



Gloster Meteor



Eurofighter Typhoon

If you're interested in taking on Cliff's collection you can contact him directly at cliffordwhite1934@sky.com or on 01903 766664

was preparing to go to Australia, though I was demobbed in December 1957 and in 1960 I took up an appointment as a woodwork teacher in Horsham, West Sussex.

"I joined the Worthing Branch of the RAF Association in the mid-1980s, though working in Horsham I knew many of the members there so transferred to the Horsham and Storrington Branch in 1990. I retired that same year, having finished my career as head of a large technical department. Over the years I've helped organise various activities at the branch, and together with another member and friend I help arrange musical evenings with Alan on piano, myself on guitar and any other members who are willing to have a go.

"As the modelling hobby became more sophisticated, various cottage industries began to produce vacuum formed kits. These kits were not for the beginner and had to be engineered, but I enjoyed the challenge. I especially liked building those wonderful 1930s biplanes, not only putting the basic kit together but painstakingly rigging them too. You try rigging a tiny Tiger Moth in 1:72 scale as I have! All the biplanes took many hours of labour, with some taking up to three months to complete. I don't really have a favourite, but if pushed I'd choose the Handley Page H.P.42 airliner. I still have some of the models I built at Hendon back in 1956.

"Due to age and dexterity my modelling time is now limited, and what little time I have for the collection is spent repairing or cleaning. Having spent many thousands of hours working on them, and one summer moving the models and shelving into my workshop (man-shed?) it is now time to move on. My wife has dementia and I also provide round-the-clock care for her. We've been married for well over 60 years and I am trying to keep her at home as long as possible.

"Regarding the future of the collection, I would not wish them to be thrown into a skip and do not want to split them up. I am open to offers from individuals or organisations on the understanding that they will be well cared for and will not subsequently appear on e-Bay! I plan to donate any funds raised by the sale of the collection towards the welfare of the RAF family."



Cliff's model aircraft collection



From the series ranks: Cliff's favourite model - the Handley Page H.P.42 airliner.

He has a spring in his step again

Back in August 1947, John Pearce became the 200,000th member of the RAF Association. Three weeks later, he found himself laying a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris and being photographed with General Henri Giraud.

John's affiliation with the charity began while he was being demobbed, when three suited men approached him about joining. Shortly after, his mum received a telegram stating John was the landmark 200,000th member and he should attend a presentation in London.

He served for 30 years on the High Wycombe Branch committee, including a spell as membership secretary and a 22 year reign as the club's bingo caller. John's involvement diminished following the passing of his beloved wife Vera, in 2010.

It wasn't until recently, when the Association's Station Officer Kevin O'Neill met John by chance, that he was welcomed back into the RAF family and invited to the Aylesbury & Halton Veteran's Lunch as a special guest.

John's time in the RAF started in 1944 when he was posted to RAF Ouston. It was there where he learnt to maintain and repair radar equipment as well as decipher Morse code. But before he knew it the war was over and everything he'd learnt, hoping to put it to use for the good of the country, was no longer required.

Right: John Pearce while serving. ©John Pearce

Below: John, left, in 1947 at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris. ©John Pearce



Front left (as we look at the image), John Pearce helping carry the wreath up the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris in 1947. ©John Pearce

The mammoth post-war clear-up operation began and John was put to task, firstly removing an arsenal of American weapons in Norfolk. John said: "The Americans left everything behind, including 250lb and 500lb bombs. About a dozen of us stacked the bombs on the runway and then, out of nowhere, we were ordered to move to Stranraer in Scotland. I thought, 'what on earth are we going to Scotland for?'"

It was in Stranraer that John and his unit would help destroy a multitude of defused weapons, including mortars, grenades, rockets, cluster bombs and anti-aircraft shells, by disposing of them in the Irish Sea. "This went on for months," explained John, "Every other day boats would ferry the bombs out to sea and drop them into the deepest part of the ocean."

Next for John was a move abroad, first to Cairo and then Iraq. He recounted: "We travelled to Egypt on a French ship and slept below deck on hammocks. I hadn't kipped on a hammock before but nobody complained, it was the best night's sleep we'd had in ages!"

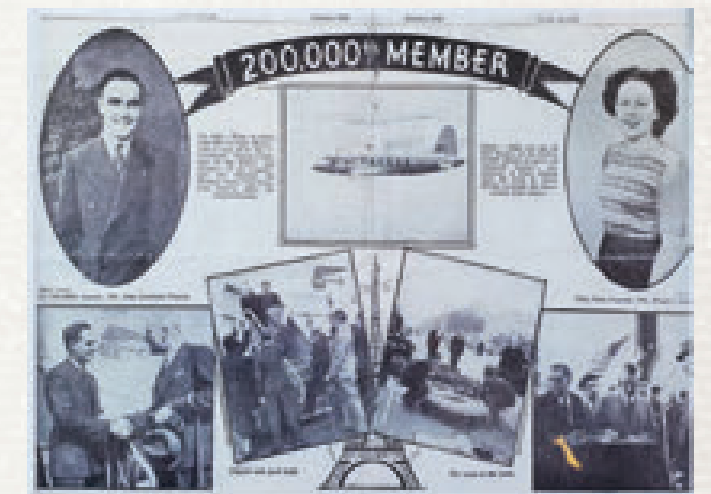
"After being in Cairo for five weeks, we were loaded onto the back of a lorry destined for Iraq. The journey lasted three days and we sat on our rucksacks. We did stop at night to sleep but there were no hammocks, just hard floors!"

On the way there they came across a sign post in the middle of the road. It read, 'London - 3,287 miles and Baghdad - 55 miles. It was a mile further along that road where John would be based for the next 15 months.

The men worked in shifts to avoid the searing desert heat. John said: "We were helping those who had served abroad to return to the UK. It was extremely hot, sometimes it would reach 120°F - in

the shade! A young Iraqi man washed our clothes and bedding and in the morning would wake us up with a cup of tea. We were very fortunate to be stationed there, the country was very different to what you see today."

John's unit returned to the UK in 1947 and he was stationed, at his request, closer to home at Sunninghill Park in Ascot, in addition to being promoted to corporal.



Official commemoration of becoming the Association's 200,000th member.

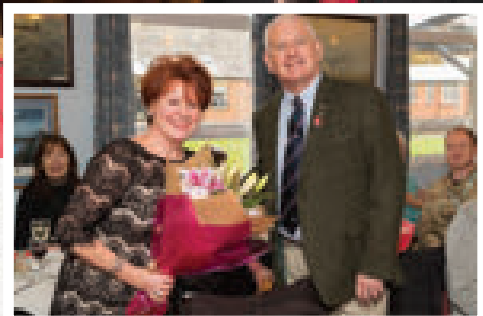
He tells the tale of when his commanding officer, "who lived in the big mansion on the grounds ordered, 'Corporal, take a group of men over there and shovel the coal', so I did and then the officer said, 'when they've done that, tell them to paint it white!'"

Continued overleaf





©MOD/Crown 2018



Top: John sharing a joke. ©MOD/Crown 2018
Below: Cutting the cake. (L-R) Group Captain Katherine Wilson OBE, John Pearce and Derf Mockford. © MOD/Crown 2018.

Flowers for Andrea Pearce, John's daughter, who had helped with events and entertainment at the High Wycombe Branch when she was young ©MOD/Crown 2018.

"Next thing I know, three smartly dressed men approached us claiming we were on Princess Elizabeth's land and we should leave immediately. I argued they were on RAF land but by the afternoon the unit was told to pack our things and leave."

The Princess, who became Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, had bought the land for herself and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh to live on. Eventually they gave the mansion to their son, the Duke of York, and Sarah Ferguson after their marriage in 1986.

John regularly clashed with the squadron leader in his next posting at RAF Records in Gloucestershire and they butted heads once more when John, in charge of a billet which housed the dining room staff, assisted his men in cleaning the dining area at a time when the unit was a number of people short because of illness.

"The squadron leader shouted 'Corporal! What do you think you're doing corporal?' John explained, "He said I was mishandling RAF property and I'd hear more about this later. Next thing I know, the station warrant officer had me in his office and told me I was on charge and must go before the commanding officer.

"Fortunately for me, the commanding officer wasn't much of a fan of the squadron leader either and threw the case out over a minor spelling error in the report!" he revealed.

John's love for his fiancée, Vera, and the prospect of working under the difficult squadron leader were enough for him to apply for demobbing. It was at the demob centre in West Kirby that the three Association representatives approached John and claimed they were on the verge of recruiting their 200,000th member. During his trip to Paris, John celebrated his 21st birthday, and just days later

was photographed alongside two-time POW escapee, General Henri Giraud under the monumental Arc de Triomphe at the top of Avenue des Champs-Élysées.

On his return to the UK, John tried his hand at selling furniture. But he realised he was better suited to the manufacturing side of the industry and at one point made and supplied a large mahogany table for King Farouk of Egypt.

John and Vera had one daughter, Andrea, who was invited with John to the Aylesbury and Halton Branch's veterans' lunch late in 2018, where they were both presented with a cake. Andrea had often helped her father with the entertainment and events at the High Wycombe Branch.

"I am extremely proud to see my dad's contribution to the Association celebrated," she said. "He lost contact with the RAF for a while but once we found out about the lunch, I couldn't keep him away. Meeting everyone again really put a spring in his step," said Andrea.

Derf Mockford, Chairman of Aylesbury & Halton Branch which hosts the Veterans' Lunch once a month. He said: "The main aim of the lunches was to support people through the cold winter months. We started the first one with a hearty stew. It has now evolved into a monthly event and is a great tool for us to overcome the isolation and loneliness some of our members may feel at times.

"We have serving personnel, from group captains to corporals, who take a step out of their RAF and personal schedules to spend time and speak with the veterans, and enjoy being able to give back." A

RAFALO Spotlight – Warrant Officer Adrian Barksby Engineering and Logistics Wing, RAF Lossiemouth

I have been in the RAF for 34 years. To help out a colleague I became the Senior RAFALO for Scotland and the Officer In Charge for the RAF Lossiemouth RAFALO Committee in mid-2017. I am ashamed to say that before taking on this role, I had no idea what the Association did. It was the 'kick up the proverbial' I needed to get a better understanding and help raise awareness of its important work.

Senior RAFALO for Scotland

I am the primary point of contact between the Association and RAF personnel in Scotland. As the only remaining RAF station in the country we cover a vast area, and I set myself a challenge to get a RAFALO to attend at least one meeting at all of the branches. Our committee has 15 volunteers of all ranks at Lossiemouth, along with teams at Remote Radar Head Buchan and Leuchars Station. Numerous deployments and the extra ceremonial duties and commitments of RAF100 made it difficult for the teams to get away from their primary roles last year, but 2019 is already looking promising.

Our RAFALO committee meets every month and is attended by the Branch Support Officer Dave Mowatt. We plan and organise activities and membership drives, and decide how best we support the Association.

Times are hard for many folks

Like many RAFALOs, I trained as a befriender and case worker for local residents. This has significantly improved my understanding of the welfare that the Association delivers to the RAF family. Times are hard for many folks and there are a lot of individuals, veterans, and families who are facing hardship - and many don't know that they can approach the Association for assistance. I have learnt about compassion, how important interaction is, and how vital it is for people to know there is always someone there who cares.

What I have learnt since taking on the role

To this day, it amazes me that the annual membership still works out at less than £2 per month, which is less than sponsoring a cat or dog. With membership fees and other essential fundraising, we provide help and essential welfare support to those that need it. Who knows - one day that could be me or you...

The personal benefits of volunteering are huge

It takes commitment and dedication to volunteer with the Association, but the rewards can be massive. It is immensely satisfying seeing first-hand the positive impact the Association's support has. A

Adrian on a more formal occasion
© Sara Reeve Photography



Adrian Barksby on a trip to the park with his grandchildren
© Adrian Barksby

BRANCH NEWS

including region, area and overseas news



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Apollo Branch 1

John Perks, Chairman of Apollo Branch in Paphos, Cyprus presented the Dennis Emes trophy to branch Treasurer and Welfare Officer Mike Gerard for his commitment and dedication. The photo shows John (left) and Mike (right).

Barry Branch 2

A busy time for Barry Branch saw both their own and MOD St Athans' 80th anniversaries and the Royal Air Force Centenary. The branch's anniversary dinner was attended by more than 80 guests who raised over £500 for the Association, with Association President Air Marshal Sir Baz North also joining in the celebrations of this important milestone. The branch also received the Association token from Penarth Branch before passing it on to Porthcawl Branch. Numerous RAF 100 events were attended by members, and standards were paraded at three local Royal Air Force MOD St Athan Freedom Parades and at the Birmingham International Tattoo.

Beccles and Southwold Branch 3

On Saturday, 12 January the branch held its annual Christmas lunch at the Three Horseshoes Inn, North Cove. In addition to branch members, invited guests included the mayor of Beccles Councillor Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw and husband David, the branch Padre Reverend Martin Gowman and supporters from the congregation of St. Benet's Minster, Beccles. They were welcomed by branch President Brian Vousden, who noted that the event also marked the tenth anniversary of the branch's reinstatement in 2009 following an earlier closure of three years.

Bletchley Milton Keynes 4

On 22 July 2018 the branch held a garden party at the home of Chairman Mr Trevor Bridges and raised £1,054.33 for the Wings Appeal. It was a beautiful warm, sunny day and the group enjoyed a fantastic buffet in Trevor's rather lovely garden.



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Bridport and Lyme Regis Registered Members Group 5

Squire Peter Morton of Uplyme Morris Dancers presented a charity cheque to retired Master Air Engineer Alan Kidson, branch Chairman. Peter Morton is a former Air Training Corps Cadet whose parents both served in the RAF in the Second World War, and whose grandfather was an air gunner in the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War.

Caduceus Branch 6 7

In late 2018 Caduceus Branch sent their first ever Christmas boxes to 35 serving personnel on operational tours. Funded by the branch, these boxes contained presents and cards which were warmly received (see photo 6). The undertaking was to reaffirm the link between the branch and those regulars and reservists currently serving. Caduceus Branch also took part in the RAF Medical Services' 100th anniversary service at the National Memorial Arboretum. Photo 7 shows (left) Air Commodore Kilby, Head of RAF Medical Services, and (right) branch Standard Bearer Paul Newton at the event.

Carrickfergus Branch 8

While celebrating the RAF's 100th birthday in 2018 the branch raised £50,000 for the Association's Wings Appeal Campaign. Their Wings Appeal organiser, Wing Commander Noel Williams, said: "The Royal Air Force's 100th birthday this year inspired our members to truly 'reach for the skies' as we set about raising welfare funds that will help ensure that no veteran should suffer or be lonely. There were many key events throughout Northern Ireland and while our members enjoyed some or all of them, in the main we concentrated on our own fundraising activities".



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City an Central London Branch 9

Ann Brown (Treasurer), Mike Saunders (Secretary), Peter Ramrayka (Chairman) and expert guide Bob Jeffries hosted a reciprocal 'flying visit' from members of the Association's Benouville Normandie-Calvados District Associates (BNCD) during Remembrance Day weekend 2018. The opportunity was taken to show the visitors many RAF and historical sites around London, including the RAF Museum Hendon, Battle of Britain Bunker, Uxbridge, and Bomber Command memorial in London, before attending the City of London Remembrance Service at St. Paul's and the Lord Mayor's reception at Mansion House. Photographed is (L-R): Mme Anne Marie Daniel, M Alain Daniel, M Alain Lepareur, President BNCD, M Gerard Ducable, Secretary, BNCD, Mme Evelyne Ducable and Peter Ramrayka, City and Central London Branch Chairman.



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Cranwell Branch 10

The branch ended 2018 with a Christmas draw and social in the RAF Cranwell Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess. Branch funds also provided an opportunity to attend a concert at the RAF College which included a successful Wings collection. A subsidised Christmas lunch gave the opportunity to formally thank the local RAF Cadets for their support throughout the year and present the branch standard bearer with a certificate of thanks. At the January branch meeting Marc Jones, Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner, gave an excellent and informative presentation on his role and that of the Lincolnshire Police Service, which was followed by lunch in the Mess.



Cheltenham Branch 11

An entente très cordiale was enjoyed by all when a delegation from Cheltenham Branch was invited to participate in commemorating the 75th anniversary of the crash of a Halifax bomber. The site, near the French town of Anney – which is twinned with Cheltenham – is close to the Swiss border. The delegation included Mike Bryant, Chairman of the Association's Cheltenham Branch and Dr Bryan Pattison, Chairman of the Switzerland Branch. Along with 100 civic dignitaries and local citizens, they also visited Meythet cemetery to lay wreaths at the graves of two aircrew buried there. The reverence and care the locals continue to show for the RAF was also very much in evidence.

And the winner of the April - June branch news photo competition is...

Congratulations to Cheltenham Branch for their winning photo.



Dover and District Branch 12

The Battle of Britain's 78th anniversary service, incorporating the RAF Centenary, was held at St Mary in Castro, Dover Castle Church, on 16 September 2018. The photograph shows Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke, members from the Association's Dover Branch, 354 (Dover) Squadron Air Cadets and members from the Dover Branch Royal British Legion. Six standards were paraded: Dover Branch; Royal Artillery Dover; 354 Squadron Air Cadets; Royal British Legion Dover and St Margaret's Women's branch; and The Mercian. The branch also enjoyed their annual lunch at the Marina Hotel on Dover sea front in November.

Fareham Branch 13

In October 2018 branch members joined The Royal British Legion and the Mayor of Fareham Councillor Mrs Susan Bayford at the dedication of a bench commemorating the life of Edward 'Ted' Burridge. Ted was born in Fareham in 1936 where he lived up until his death aged 82. Serving in the RAF during the Suez crisis in the 50s as a Wireless Operator, Ted was a dedicated member and supporter of both the Association and Royal British Legion. It is said that some local residents would go out of their way to make their donations to Ted, who over the years collected tens of thousands of pounds.



Haverfordwest Branch 14

Branch members visited the Sunderland Flying Boat cockpit, created by volunteers at the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre. The screen in front (pictured) can be activated to give the effect of flying up the Milford Haven Waterway and landing at RAF Pembroke Dock.



Huntingdon and District Branch 15

To begin the year 22 members attended a talk by retired RAF John Gibson, Operations Manager of Service by Emergency Response Volunteers (SERV) for Suffolk & Cambridgeshire. John gave a talk on the work of SERV, how it operates and the vital service its volunteers provide for NHS and emergency services - transporting blood products, breast milk and patients' samples. The volunteers are mostly all motorbike riders. The branch has plenty of talks planned for the first quarter of the year; from The Royal Naval Association and The Lord Lieutenant of Cambridge to name a few.

Huyton with Roby and Liverpool Branch

Chairman Derek Flute confirmed that the branch's 2018 Wings Appeal had totalled £10,284.10; exceeding £10,000 for the ninth consecutive year. The branch was also recently contacted by a Mr David Bebb offering three framed pictures previously owned by his uncle who served in the RAF during WWII. These pencil sketches were a framed image titled 'A Lancaster Bomber on a Night Raid' plus two mounted sketches titled 'Group of Cartoons'. All are signed 'HYLEY 1942'. If anybody can provide more information about these please contact the branch via rafa.org.uk/huyton-with-roby-liverpool.



Knighton Branch 16

The branch chairman attended a remembrance service held at Newtown High School's John Beddoes Campus, along with members of Presteigne Royal British Legion. Passages on the First and Second World Wars were read while photographs were displayed on a large screen. This was followed by a silence to commemorate the fallen.

Leicester Branch 17

The branch's AGM took place on 8 February 2019. During the meeting presentations were made to Barry and Mary Smart (photographed) for excellent service to the branch over the past ten years, enabling the branch not only to survive to also move forward. The Committee for 2019/20 is: Mr Derek Tester (President); Mr Barry Smart (Life Vice President); Mr David Marr (Vice President); Mr Neale Millett (Chairman); Mr Roy Rudham (Secretary); Mr Roy Rudham (Temporary Treasurer pending change of Bankers, then Mr Malcolm Brown); Welfare Officer (Mr Malcolm Brown); Assistant Welfare Officer (Mr Balbir Flora); Standard Bearer (Mr Roy Rudham).





Mansfield and District Branch ¹⁸

The branch standard was paraded at a memorial service at Annesley, Nottingham, conducted by the Reverend Eric Ashby. The memorial commemorated the crew of EH988 Stirling Mk III which caught fire before crashing while traveling from RAF Winthorpe to Northern Ireland in January 1945. The branch registered a record Wings Appeal in 2018, and enjoyed several events including a well-attended Battle of Britain dinner.

Mid Somerset Branch ¹⁹

Over 300 branch members and friends packed Millfield School on 12 December for an RAF 100 Concert by the Central Band of the RAF. This was jointly sponsored by the branch and local Air Cadet Squadrons and featured the world premiere of a specially commissioned arrangement by Rutland Boughton, founder of the (original) Glastonbury Festivals and first RAF bandmaster in 1918. VIPs included past President Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller and Wales, Midland and South Western Area President Air Vice-Marshal Martin Clark. Sir Dusty made a special presentation to branch Chairman Paul Branson (see photo) in recognition of his 20 years of outstanding support given to the Association and to the Air Cadets.

Morecambe and Lancaster Branch ²⁰

The branch brought 2018 to a resounding close with Christmas lunch for a record 61 people who also saw the new branch standard. The occasion was the last after five years at the Headway Hotel which is undergoing a major refurbishment. A thank you gift was given to the General Manager, Paul Mitchell. Lunchtime meetings are now at the Clarendon Hotel on Marine Road and "it's as if we were going home" as this was the RAF Morecambe Headquarters during World War II where thousands of RAF personnel were billeted. Summer evening meetings have returned to Bare Village. For details of all activities please see rafa.org.uk/morecambe-lancaster/.

North Costa Blanca Branch ²¹

In January branch members celebrated Robert Burns Night at the Inn on the Green restaurant in Javea. The 50 people who attended the supper were treated to Scottish fare including a haggis, which was addressed appropriately by the branch chairman Wing Commander Bob Hunt. Branch Vice-Chairman Colin McNae gave a recitation on the life, works and 'dalliances' of the famous Scottish poet before proposing the toast to the immortal memory. A raffle, organised by the branch Wings coordinator Sue McNae, raised €230 for the Association's Wings Appeal. The photo shows the branch chairman addressing the haggis.



North Cotswolds Branch

The end of 2018 saw the branch join in with the centenary commemorations of the armistice. Closer to home, branch Treasurer Peter Brown announced his decision to stand-down at the AGM having spent nearly 40 years in the role. He has also previously taken on the duties of collector and membership secretary. In January 2019 branch members met for lunch at The Lygon Arms in Worcestershire, and in February Ian Small, Branch Manager of the Coventry Building Society gave a talk about the 'Take Five' campaign to increase public awareness of financial crime, scams and fraud.

North Walsham Branch ²²

On Sunday 13th January branch members met with past and current tenants of Lowlands Farm in Bacton to honour the crew of a Hudson Bomber that crashed there on 16 January 1942, killing all on board. A short ceremony was conducted by Bob Barker, branch Vice-Chairman and wreaths were laid by branch Secretary David Mann and Miss H Ottley, eldest daughter of the current tenants. This was followed by a minute's silence. After the ceremony tea and cakes were provided by Mrs Ottley, for what were by then rather cold and windswept participants.

Poole Branch ²³

The branch held their Christmas lunch in early December in the Dorset Golf & Country Club. The 70 diners included branch members and guests, members of Christchurch and Shaftesbury branches, representatives from the three local Air Cadet squadrons and members of several other ex-service organisations. The guest of honour was area president of the Wales, Midland and South Western area Air Vice-Marshal Martin Clarke, who gave an interesting and humorous speech. The afternoon ended with the raffle. Left to right in the photo shows Poole Branch Chairman Mike Davis, Air-Vice Marshal Martin Clark, and Poole Branch President Doug Collett.

Salisbury Branch/Registered Members Group ²⁴

The branch met for its annual Christmas lunch in December at the Salisbury and South Wilts Golf Club, which was followed by a raffle. 2018 was also the branch's last active year, and it has now become a Registered Members Group.



Southampton and Eastleigh Branch 25

In October 2018 branch members attended the unveiling of a plaque at the Leonardo engineering company to rename one of their new buildings 'Nicolson House'. Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his exploits in a dogfight above Southampton during the Battle of Britain. Other attendees included the pilot's nephew Jim Nicolson, and representatives of the Royal British Legion, the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, the Victoria Cross and George Cross Association and 27 Squadron RAF. The ceremony was conducted in front of a full-size replica of a Hawker Hurricane, which Nicolson flew during the incident.



St. Austell Branch 26

In September 2018 the branch commemorated the Battle of Britain, the 100th anniversary of the RAF, and the centenary of World War One. A service was conducted by Pastor John Keast, who received the branch's standard. The mayor of St. Austell Councillor Gary King, was joined by branch members including Chairman Derek Warren, Group Captain Mike Trace and Flight Lieutenant Elden Robins (retired). The branch's tablecloth embroidered with signatures of past and present members was also on display, along with the branch wreath and a red, white and blue floral arrangement.



Stowmarket Branch 27

In November the branch celebrated 70 years since its formation with more than 50 members attending a dinner to mark the occasion. Every era from the 1940s to the 2000s was represented during a celebratory parade, with RAF personnel from each decade taking part.



Submissions to Branch News

We welcome all submissions for branch news, preferably by email to BranchNews@rafatrad.co.uk. Your word count should be around 100 words. Please submit just one accompanying photograph, as a separate jpeg, tiff or gif file and at a size and quality of at least 300dpi. Submissions can also be accepted by Royal Mail to the address on the inside front cover. Unfortunately photographs submitted by post cannot be returned. Due to space limitations, submission does not guarantee inclusion and where there are too many reports for an issue, the editor reserves the right to select the broadest range of news and photos to reflect the geography, people and different activities of the Association.

Swindon Branch 28 29

At Supermarine Football Club, where many Spitfires and other aircraft were made during the Second World War, Swindon Branch celebrated the final stopover of the South Western Area's RAF Association token. A pre-match parade was led by Shirley Ludford, Deputy Lieutenant of Wiltshire, with the Swindon and Air Cadet standard, the local 1244 Squadron Air Cadet band and cadets from 878 Squadron (which is soon to be adopted by the branch). The token was dedicated by the Highworth Air Cadets' Padre in the presence of local MP Justin Tomlinson, and £161 was collected towards the Wings Appeal.



Wantage and District Branch 30

Branch member Mo Merchant has been presented with the Award for Meritorious Service by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. It was awarded for her continued support and encouragement to local air cadets over the last 30 years. Most recently Mo laid a wreath at Arnhem on behalf of the branch.



York Branch 31

The branch Christmas draw took place on 22 December, where 40 members drew 120 prizes before singing Christmas songs led by John Forrester. In January, the first Turning of the Page Ceremony for 2019 took place in York Minster. The veteran page turner was Mr Ray Ashby (shown in photo), WWII Merchant Navy veteran and Association member. Service personnel from RAF Linton on Ouse attended alongside branch members. On 25 January guests also enjoyed a merry Burns Night, with the haggis piped to the dining room by Mike Pringle before President John Mawson delivered the dedication. By February the branch's Wings Appeal had reached £1,600.



Best branch photo

Congratulations to Cheltenham Branch for their colourful winning photo of the memorial at Anney. The final bottle of Spitfire Heritage Gin or Supermarine Vodka will be coming your way.

In the next issue we are offering a hamper of treats (pictured) from RAF Association supporter Wilkin and Sons of Tiptree in Essex. For your chance to win, simply submit the 'best branch news photo' in the next issue of Air Mail. It's a fun competition, but there are some terms and conditions. Only branch news photos will be eligible for the prize. If you win, your image will be identified as the best. The editor's decision will be final and no correspondence about the decision will be entered into.

What makes a great photo?

One that shows the dynamism, humanity and range of people involved in the Association. One that shows emotion or interaction between people, or them doing something fun. Or one that has a strong composition and a real sense of place and time. Often they are natural and unstructured photos. Try to take your picture from the same level as the people or items in it. And look out for great backgrounds – even sunsets, stormy skies or an amazing view. Watch out for terrible backgrounds – computer wires, pylons and a load of microphone stands can be very ugly, especially if they are sprouting out of someone's head. If there are lots of people who want to be in the photo, try to arrange yourselves in an interesting way, not just in rows all facing the camera.



Volunteer Spotlight Bob Jillins

I've been a volunteer befriender since March 2018 and have supported two elderly gentleman in Walton-on-the-Naze, both former flying crew. Previously I worked in personnel and management and ran my own training business. Now I'm semi-retired and work part-time for the NHS in Clacton-on-Sea. I am married with two grown up sons and in my spare time play table tennis and upcycle old objects to make lamps.



How did you find out about volunteering for the RAF Association?

By pure chance actually. My wife noticed a brief article in the local paper looking for befrienders to support lonely ex-RAF personnel in my local area.

Why did you choose to support the RAF Association?

I had spent four very happy years as an Air Training Corps cadet both in Salisbury (1010 Squadron) and in Southend (1312 Squadron) with every intention of joining the RAF. Despite applying as a 16 year old, I had a change of mind and my career took a different path. My heart however, has always been associated with all things RAF and in its centenary year I thought it would be good to give a little of my time to those who served and their relatives. As I'm semi-retired a few hours every couple of weeks was not an enormous commitment.

What appealed about the role and what made you want to get involved?

I've always been a 'people oriented person' and my various jobs in my working life have mainly revolved around supporting others in one form or another, much of it on a one-to-one basis. This role appealed to me because I could use some of the skills I had gained through life – particularly effective listening – and put them to good use while at the same time engaging with those who need company and have stories to tell. They have given their time in serving the country, so a little of my time is nothing by comparison.

What skills, knowledge or experiences have helped you?

I think it's helpful to have rapport-building, good listening and natural empathy skills in your armoury to enable two-way communication between you and the befriender. In my case, I also like to do some research beforehand on specific squadrons, RAF stations and aircraft information to encourage the befriender to chat about things they knew about and also aid their recall of past events and stories. I download photos as potential prompts and points for discussion.

What have you learnt during your time as a volunteer?

A number of things. I have learned that for some Second World War veterans the time was an exciting one as well as, on occasion, tragic. I've also learned that people living with dementia can have great recall of facts and details from 70 years ago, and can be full of surprises. A

Culture Vultures



Books of interest to the Association

"The Javelin" by Martyn Chorlton
Publisher: Amberley

The RAF's first and last jet-powered delta-winged fighter, the Javelin was also the very last aircraft to be built by the Gloster Aircraft Company. The twin-engine Javelin was a complex aircraft and development began as early as 1946, the intention being for the aircraft replace the Gloster Meteor. Designed to be the first specifically-built, all-weather interceptor, the Javelin entered RAF service in 1956. The Javelin remained the RAF's sole all-weather fighter until the arrival of the English Electric Lightning. Operating alongside the Lightning, the Javelin was retired from operational service in 1968 although one machine, now on display at IWM Duxford, remained in service until 1975.

Cinema releases

"Lancaster Skies"
Certificate PG
Website:
lancasterskies.com

Douglas Miller, a broken and solitary Spitfire ace who survived the Battle of Britain, transfers to Bomber Command determined to take the war to the skies over Nazi Germany. Douglas must take the place of a Lancaster Bomber crew's cherished and respected skipper who was killed in action. With the crew against him, he must gain their trust and overcome his past to become the leader they so desperately need.



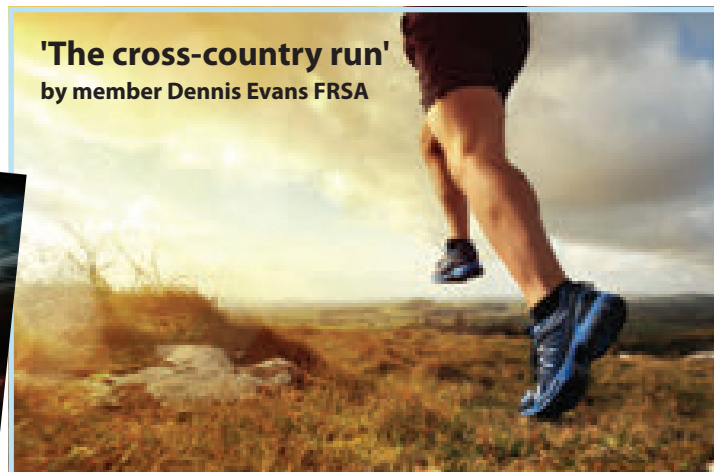
Air Mail welcomes reviews of books, computer games, films, DVDs, etc. that members have seen. Follow the quick format above and send yours in. Contacts are at the front of the magazine.

Lancaster Skies is an homage to the classic British war films of the 1940s and 50s. In keeping with the retrospective look and feel of the film, scale models were used for the majority of the visual effects. Digital effects were deliberately kept to a bare minimum. The result is a film set during the Second World War with the power to make an audience feel that they have been transported back to the art deco picture houses of the past.

Member's review

Title: Hurricane
Format: DVD

How many roundels out of five? 0
Best thing about it? The end.
Worst thing about it? Not a tribute to great fighter aircraft.
Was it historically accurate? Not a lot.
Buy it, borrow it or bin it? BIN IT.
BKG Bullock, member 172580



'The cross-country run' by member Dennis Evans FRSA

I wake every morning at six, shake myself and prepare for my cross-country run.

Winter,
Spring,
Summer,
Autumn,
I run alone;
except for the birds
and the words in my head.

In the billet
my companions lie dead to the world,
curled in their sleep.
Outside: silence.
Early-morning beautiful.

I pack a glucose tablet into my cheek
and bouncing over the grass
anticipate the sickness-barrier
to my second wind.

I used to feel
that if I ran enough
the sickness would go.
I try not to think of it,
pace my running to my breathing,
take pleasure from the feeling
of contact with the ground.

The early-morning chill wraps round me,
thoughts of last night intrude
I adjust my breathing to my running.

I'm aware of the world slowly waking.
Rabbits in the grass,
birds singing.
And I'm on my way to the windmill,
half-way point on my run.

Bounding over rutted ground
in narrow country lanes,
feeling self-conscious in shorts
(but trying not to show it).
Past early-morning workers
who smile benevolently.

Close to the windmill
panic in my stomach,
"must be mad to have
the mill as half-way point."

I plod up the hill,
feel my legs shortening.
Plod, plod,
pant; plod.
"Try not to think of the top,
or look to the top."
Plod, pant, plod.
Just me and my breathing,
me and my guts!

Some days I want to stop,
give up as I did at school.
Am I still frightened of the
ridicule?

I strain to the top, body like
lead.
Take a few breaths, run on the
spot,
and marvel again at the mill,
deserted and gutted.
Built by a man for his wife,
In Memoriam.

I plunge down the hill,
thinking with my feet.

This poem was based on my time in National Service (1953-55) at RAF Tangmere, where I worked as a Senior Aircraftman in the station workshops. The windmill, still there I think, is up on the South Downs.



Small building. Big story

Abandoned and unknown, a curious building fell into disrepair when RAF Langham closed in 1958. The concrete and steel structure on the north coast of Norfolk was one of only six surviving domes used to train anti-aircraft gunners during the Second World War and the 1950s.

But in 2014 it was saved from ruin and reopened as a unique and very hands-on museum and visitor attraction, where anyone can learn about its contribution, and the role of Coastal Command, in defending the nation's airfields.

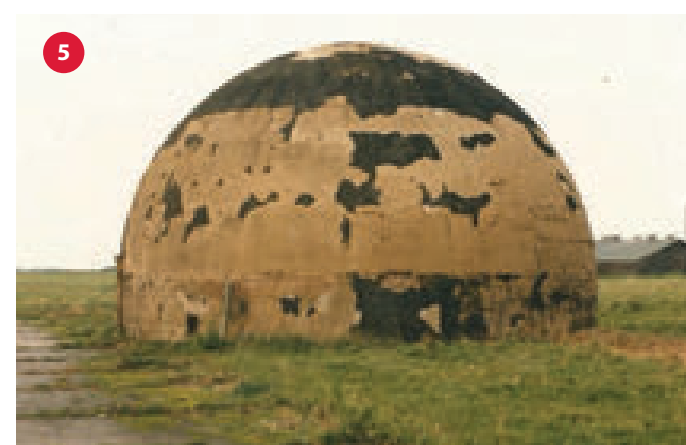
Who developed the original domes? In 1939 Henry Christian Stephens conceived the idea of projecting films of aircraft onto a curved wall to train anti-aircraft gunners. Having developed the idea for the Royal Navy, the Army soon became interested in using it to train gunners defending airfields. Overall more than 40 domes were built in the UK.

How did they work? A 35mm film projector was placed at the dome's centre, and through the use of movable mirrors and cameras a colour image of the attacking aircraft was projected onto the wall. The aircraft's noise was also played to create a more realistic experience. Trainee gunners 'manned' a replica twin Browning, Bofors or Lewis gun, and an amplifier played the weapon's deafening rattle to create the sensation of being attacked. For the instructor to assess the pupil's accuracy a yellow dot was added to each frame of film showing the aircraft's future position, and therefore where the gunner should be aiming. This

dot was obscured from the pupil's vision by a yellow filter on the gun sight. As the pupil fired, an image of the gun sight was projected down the line of fire for the instructor to see whether this matched the position of the yellow dot.

What was it like? Instruction in the dome could be both challenging and exciting for trainee gunners, as described by ATC Cadet Ronald Mells: "I can well remember obtaining 47 hits out of 600 rounds. We could have happily spent our entire camp in there it was such tremendous fun". Glider pilot Roly Millar was most taken by the realism of the experience: "There was no sensation of a dome. Just a black aircraft coming at me fast from the far horizon." Mr Ellison, a flight mechanic during the war, remembered the noise above all: "The main lights went down and quietly at first came the sound of an aircraft, but from which direction? Left, right, ahead, behind, above? When the targets appeared and one opened fire the row was unforgettable – the clatter of Brownings, plus the engines, guns and bombs." After practising in the dome, trainees graduated to live firing at Stiffkey on the Norfolk coast. Here, banners towed by aircraft replaced the dome's moving images as the target of their guns. Late in the war, the dome's ground-to-air gun was replaced by a replica of an aircraft gun turret for air-to-air gunnery simulation.

The dome reopens for the summer on 4 April 2019. A reunion and heritage day is planned for 1 June 2019. Full details of the dome's location, opening hours and history can be found at langhamdome.org or call 01328 830169.



1. Inside the dome today, with anti-aircraft gun, wall projections and information panels telling the story of RAF Langham

2. Appealing to everyone

3. Playing the aircraft games in front of the renovated dome. The restored dome is reputedly the youngest Scheduled Monument in the country

4. Exhibits and displays inside the dome

5. The condition of Langham dome before renovation

All images ©RAF Langham Dome Visitor Centre and Museum

Perfect Days

Air Mail is inviting Association members to write in about their favourite places for a day out.

Whether you are involved in running an attraction or have visited a museum, technical, or scientific event that made a big impression on you, we'd like you to share it with other readers.

With only four issues published each year, we warn you that the competition to appear in the magazine may be fierce. The editor is looking for rare or unusual places or experiences that would appeal to everyone, whether they are 18 or 103 (which is, after all, the age range of our Association). Describe how hands on it was, how much you learned from it, or what it reminded you of from your own RAF service. We are particularly interested in little gems that are often overshadowed by the major museums and festivals, but which members and your families treasure.

Call it Perfect Days (and of course play on the Lou Reed song lyrics if you wish) and email it to editor@rafatrad.co.uk or post it to the editor at the address inside the front cover of this Air Mail. If we like it, we'll be back in touch to ask you for photographs too. We look forward to sharing the best.

Trustee Spotlight: Beryl Dennet Stannard

Tell us about yourself?

I grew up as part of a military family, as my mother had seen wartime service in the Indian Army and other close relatives were also serving in the Army. However, I did not set out to have a military career. But while living and working in London I had a sudden change of heart. Hedging my bets, I fired off applications to the Royal Navy, Army and RAF. The RAF won hands down, offering me a job first and four weeks later I began a career that lasted 19 years. I worked all over the UK, Europe and the USA in various roles, as well as personal staff appointments as an Aide-de-Camp and later as a Personal Staff Officer in the Ministry of Defence in London. My highlights were tours with the Central Flying School (with plenty of opportunities to fly) and an exchange tour in Texas with the United States Air Force.

On retirement from the RAF, I volunteered as the stage manager at The Stamford Shakespeare Company in the evenings. In daylight hours I was building myself a new house and lecturing on self-build projects. Then, 17 years ago, I moved to France, where I married Terry (also retired from the RAF). I was 'volunteered' by RAF colleagues serving with French l'Armée de l'Air at Bordeaux-Mérignac to become chair of the Anglo-French Sud-Ouest Branch of the Association. I have been chair for 12 years as well as being a welfare caseworker in south-west France.

What does it mean to be an elected member of Council? What does your role on Council involve?

I was truly surprised when the members of our Association elected me, and I remain humbled by their confidence in me. In addition to my Council responsibilities helping to formulate future policy for our Association, I was excited to step up to the mark as chair of the Branch & Membership Committee. It has been really interesting working alongside our Association staff with the challenges of growing rafaYOUTH and our membership generally. There is also the project to deliver branch development workshops to branch and club officials, and considerable work on the progress of the One Member One Vote resolution from last year's Annual Conference.

"I am a great believer in transparency, openness and sharing knowledge to help our membership and their branches fulfil their potential"

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

Even after early retirement, I never really left military service behind me. I have remained an active part of the RAF family and it is really satisfying to help serving personnel, veterans and their families. Over the years, I have been honoured to meet many people all over the UK and Europe who hold the RAF in very high regard. That is certainly true here in France, when attending ceremonies of commemoration for fallen RAF WWII aircrew, I am frequently told by elderly locals, that "the RAF saved us in WWII" - what an accolade!

What do you get from your volunteering?

As chair of a branch, I realise that it is not just our members who volunteer. Our families and friends also contribute their time, effort as well as money, to help our Association. Being a trained caseworker, there is great reward in making life-changing differences for our beneficiaries. Over the years, volunteering for our Association has also taken me to faraway places where I have met some inspiring people.

What are you looking forward to as a trustee of the RAF Association?

Well, apart from the obvious one of making a difference, ensuring and shaping the future, I want to use my skills to benefit the Association. Where reasonable and allowable, I am a great believer in transparency, openness and sharing knowledge to help our membership and their branches fulfil their potential.

What do you like doing in your free time?

Being a Francophile; speaking French; I enjoy good food and wines plus foreign films and theatre. I am also an avid reader and member of the Arts Society. Furthermore, being a geek and gadget-lover, I love trains and keep up-to-date with information technology - which has come such a long way since I first worked on a computer the size of a small house! ■



© RAF Association.

Be part of the Dambusters Raid



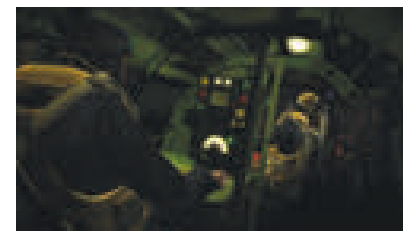
Touch and feel the Lancaster on Operation Chastise while the action unfolds all around you. © Creative XR

Left: Tracer fire over the Möhne Dam © All Seeing Eye

Visitors to the RAF Museum in London can experience a sortie in the world-famous Dambusters Raid thanks to the museum's latest exhibit. The immersive virtual reality experience, which opened in March, puts you in the place of a wireless operator or navigator, with sights, sounds and even bumps and rumbles of the real mission.

Participants in the ten minute experience step back in time to the early hours of 17 May 1943 and board Lancaster G-George, to join the Dambusters on Operation Chastise.

Audiences experience key events of the raid on the Möhne Dam from inside ED932/G AJ-G: an Avro Lancaster B Mk III Special Bomber (Type 464 Provisioning). Their virtual reality headset and haptics - a vest and a floor that rumble and judder - tell the story while the participants stand or sit in a physical 1:1 recreation of the interior of the aircraft which they can touch and explore.



Be right inside the cramped interior © All Seeing Eye

Visitors listen to the crew communications as the aircraft is piloted by Wing Commander Guy Gibson DSO and Bar, DFC and Bar. They also monitor the aircraft's altitude and route, and watch the decisive moments of the sortie unfold out of the Lancaster's windows. The Ruhr Valley will whizz past at very low altitude as tracer fire lights up the sky. The tension increases as the Lancaster endeavours to break the Möhne Dam. The airspeed and altitude of the aircraft have been simulated accurately - the sound of the engines was recorded from RCAF FM213, one of only two Lancasters still flying.

Details have been painstakingly recreated using primary accounts from crew members who flew the mission, and with the assistance of experts on Operation Chastise and the Avro Lancaster bomber.

Tickets cost £10/£8 and can be pre-booked for time-slots up to 2.30pm. After 2.30pm just turn up.

There are age restrictions and full guidance for people with queries about health and mobility. **More information from:** rafmuseum.org.uk ■

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VOUCHER CODE RAFM0419

Team Spotlight: Community Fundraising

Amy Petterson, Head of Community Fundraising tells us about her new team...

Tell us a little about you.

Amy: "I'm the Association's new Head of Community Fundraising. I started on 2 January and am loving my time here – especially the challenges and successes that we're already having. Coming from the Guide Dogs charity I'm loving getting to know my team and other colleagues and am really enjoying seeing such a direct impact already."

What does your team do?

Amy: "Following a restructure of the fundraising and marketing department we focus on community-led volunteer-fundraising, branch fundraising, and challenge events. No day is ever the same and we enjoy what we do - every day."

What does community fundraising entail?

Amy: "I'll let the team explain."

Hayley: "Community includes a lot of things, from volunteer fundraising roles to people fundraising on our behalf. We support fundraising on RAF bases, helping the RAFALOs achieve their fundraising goals, and we're also responsible for the 'Brew for the Few' and campaign to get everyone involved in fundraising."

What about branch fundraising?

Pete: "Our role supports the branch network to maximise their fundraising opportunities for the Wings Appeal. We provide equipment and resources, and offer advice and support. We're here to encourage and help."

And challenge events?

Helen: "We put together a programme of exciting events from wing walking and parachuting, to climbing a mountain or taking part in a family fun-run. We invite everyone to join in; whatever you fancy we can support you with it."

What are the best parts of your job?

Christina: "Meeting the branches and the amazing individuals involved."
Julie: "Making dreams come true. Whatever people want to do, we can support them. Some of these things have been 'bucket list' items for a long time, and as a result dreams do come true."

What's the most challenging part of your job?

Helen: "The weather. It's either for or against a challenge events programme."
Hayley: "The expanse – we cover the whole of the UK, and abroad. There's so much we would like to do, and so many amazing opportunities."
Pete: "Sometimes getting the people to hold the buckets is hard work. Volunteer recruitment can be tricky, but we know they'll have an amazing time when they're there. We always encourage new people to get involved in the branches, even if it's just an hour a month to help out."

Do you have any interesting stories about your team?

Amy: "One or two... Helen was in team Green Pepper on 'Can't Cook, Won't Cook', Hayley's great uncle has a Paralympic Gold medal in bowls, Christina once had dinner with the Prime Minister of Fiji and Pete's had dinner with the cast of 'Allo, 'Allo!'"

Community Fundraising team, L-R: Pete Brocklehurst, Helen Tempest, Amy Petterson, Julie Hester-Lucas, Hayley Wessier (top), Daksha Patel (bottom), Christina Hussey. (Karen Bell not pictured).



Are you interested in spending more time at an airshow? We're looking to employ casual crew members to deliver the RAF Association's presence at the 2019 airshows and other public events. Crew members help to sell a wide range of RAF and aviation-themed products to raise money for the Association. The role is based out of our Leicester HQ and employees will need to be available to work the whole period of the event, including leaving and returning to Leicester. Casual crew need to have a full clean driving licence as they will be required to drive a large transit van, and employment for these periods will be via zero hour contracts. To find out more please contact Chris Osborne at chris.osborne@rafatrad.co.uk or 0116 268 8763.

We're going to be out and about this summer, celebrating all things RAF and promoting the Association's good work. The events we'll provisionally be attending are listed below, and we look forward to meeting many of you there.

May

5 May Shuttleworth Season Premiere, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
5 May Abingdon Air and Country Fair, Abingdon, Oxfordshire
6 May Lechlade Duck Race, Lechlade, Gloucestershire
17 - 19 May East Midlands Air Festival, Nuneaton, Warwickshire
25 - 27 May Gloucester Tall Ships, Historic Docks, Gloucester
25 - 26 May Duxford Air Festival, Imperial War Museum Duxford, Cambridgeshire

June

1 - 2 June Torbay Airshow, Paignton, Devon
9 June Cosford Airshow Static, Cosford, Shropshire
15 - 16 June Wings & Wheels - Dunsfold, Dunsfold, Surrey
22 - 23 June Weston Air Festival and Armed Forces Day, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset
28 - 30 June National Armed Forces Day National Event, Salisbury, Wiltshire
29 June Plymouth Armed Forces Day, Plymouth, Devon
29 June Scarborough Armed Forces Day, Scarborough, Yorkshire

July

4 - 7 July Goodwood Festival of Speed, Chichester, West Sussex
6 - 7 July Wales Airshow, Swansea, Wales
13 July Yeovilton Air Display, RNAS Yeovilton, Somerset
13 - 14 July Flying Legends, Imperial War Museum Duxford, Cambridgeshire
19 - 21 July Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT), RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire
27 July Scottish National Airshow, East Fortune, Scotland
26 - 28 July Sunderland Airshow, Seaburn, Sunderland

August

10 - 11 August Blackpool Airshow, Blackpool, Lancashire
15 - 18 August Eastbourne Airshow, Eastbourne, East Sussex
17 - 18 August Biggin Hill Festival of Flight, Sevenoaks, Kent
17 - 18 August Lytham 1940s Wartime Weekend, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire
22 - 23 August Clacton Airshow, Clacton, Essex
24 - 25 August Rhyl Airshow, Rhyl, Wales
29 August - 1 September Bournemouth Airshow, Bournemouth, Dorset
30 August - 1 September Chatsworth Country Fair, Bakewell, Derbyshire

September

6 - 8 September Southport Airshow, Southport, Merseyside
13 - 15 September Goodwood Revival, Chichester, West Sussex
21 - 22 September Sywell Classics, Sywell Aerodrome, Northampton
21 - 22 September Duxford Battle of Britain Air Show, Imperial War Museum Duxford, Cambridgeshire

Our attendance at these airshows is subject to change. We may attend more than we have listed, and occasionally we are unable to attend ones currently booked in. These events are managed by third parties and may be subject to cancellation or delays beyond our control.

A busy day raising funds ©Phil Greig



Browsing the stall ©Phil Greig

Trekking across the Sahara



Corporal Lauren Woodhall spent five days trekking 128km in 40-degree heat. Walking through Morocco's forbidding peaks, gorges, dunes and oases, she raised more than £2,000 for the RAF Association. At night, she camped under Africa's star-strewn skies and enjoyed the company of her fellow charity trekkers.

Different forms of desert transport

Reflecting on her time in the desert doing the Sahara Dunes Trek, Lauren said: "I had the most incredible experience in the desert. I would recommend this once in a lifetime challenge to everyone."

"The trek was amazing but it was made 10 times better knowing that all the money raised was going to such a great cause."

Lauren delved into her trek diary to tell us more:

DAY ONE

I met 15 other charity trekkers at Heathrow Airport – all of us representing different charities. None of us knew each other but it was very exciting and we all had lots to talk about. We got on an aircraft, flew via Casablanca to Ouarzazate, in Morocco and spent the first night with our desert guides.

DAY TWO

Up bright and early for breakfast at 0600 before we set off for our starting point at 0700. Throughout the six-hour drive, we stopped in different villages to give out sweets to children and buy our traditional headscarves to wear. Arriving at our start point, we were greeted by camels and their owners, who would guide us through the desert. We trekked for four hours before sleeping under the stars.

DAY THREE

Getting ready in the desert at 0630 is difficult due to there being no light until the sun rises at around 0730. Pancakes cooked over the fire for breakfast set us up for an eight hour trek in heat reaching 40°C. Today was also Remembrance Day, we held a two minute silence after saying the remembrance prayer as a group. We had vegetables and cous cous for dinner, before we slept out under the stars again.

DAY FOUR

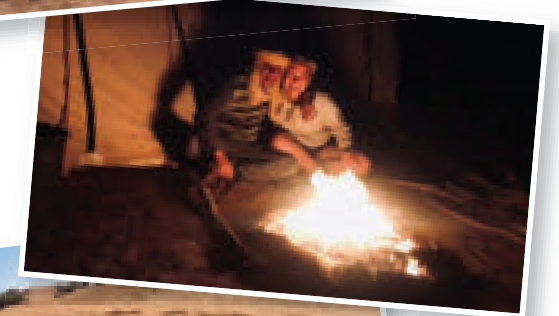
Up at 0630 again, we trekked another 6 hours on day four. We finished trekking early to watch the sunset from the highest dune in the Sahara – Dune Zaher. The view was incredible. It took around 40 minutes to climb and 10 minutes to descend as we rolled down! In the evening, we had to put up tents to sleep in due to an incoming sand storm, which hit us at about 0200.

DAY FIVE

SANDSTORM! Five hours of trekking in the storm, we were forced to wrap up to protect our skin from the sand. You could barely open your eyes, even with sunglasses on, without getting sand in them! We reached the finish line at around 1500 before driving back to stay in a hotel near the airport, as a treat, on the last night.

DAY SIX

On the final day, we were up at 0400 to catch our flight at 0700. Again going via Casablanca, we landed back at Heathrow at 1500. It was sad to say goodbye to a team we had all grown to love being a part of but we had amazing memories to take home – as well as a lot of unwanted sand in our bags!



Lauren's once in a lifetime challenge – 126km in 40 degree heat

All photos © Lauren Woodhall

News from the RAF

by Mike Curtis



Sun sets on the Tornado on the apron at RAF Mount Pleasant, on the Falklands Islands. This February, Tornado GR4s returned to RAF Marham from their final mission having completed almost 40 years serving the UK on military operations across the world.

In Afghanistan, an RAF Association member has been recognised for his outstanding efforts by General Austin Scott Miller, the American commander of the NATO mission Resolute Support. Squadron Leader Craig Pearson, of the RAF Regiment, was recognised for his contribution to the humanitarian support following the attack on Camp Anjuman in the capital Kabul last November.

After almost 40 years serving the UK on military operations across the world, the RAF's iconic Tornado jets have just been retired from service. The first variant of the Tornado entered service in 1979 and subsequent versions have been used in a wide variety of roles including air defence and ground attack. A few weeks before the retirement date at the end of March, a formation of Tornado GR4s toured the UK, overflying locations that have been associated with the aircraft over the years.

Early in February, Tornados returned home to RAF Marham for the last time after undertaking missions from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said: "My sincerest congratulations to the Tornado Force, returning home after more than four years of continuous commitment to defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria - an exceptional effort from everyone, well done and thank you. As a Tornado GR4 pilot myself, I have seen the aircraft develop over its nearly 40 years of service into an outstanding combat aircraft, flown, maintained and supported by similarly outstanding air and ground crew. The Tornado Force has been continuously deployed on operations since 1990, serving with immense distinction in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and the Balkans.

"I will personally be very sad to see the Tornado retire, but it is time now to pass the baton to our next generation combat aircraft. The F-35B Lightning is now operational and the Typhoon is now fully multi-role capable and able to take on the Tornado's missions."

The Tornado's weapons capabilities have been reassigned to the Typhoon force. Under 'Project Centurion', worth £425million over the past three years, the Typhoon can now launch the world-leading Meteor air-to-air missile, the Storm Shadow deep strike cruise missile and the precision attack missile Brimstone.

RAF Typhoons maintain a constant state of readiness to defend the sovereignty of British skies. The introduction of the Meteor missiles brings a new and innovative long-range capability and further enhances Typhoon's already potent arsenal. They have been scrambled for a variety of incidents including intercepting Russian bombers approaching UK airspace. The pilot flying the first Meteor-equipped Typhoon said: "The responsibility of flying such a capable platform, armed with this formidable weapon, is immense, but the options this gives us in responding to an emergency situation cannot be understated."

The missile system will eventually operate from the new F-35 Lightning II now flying out of RAF Marham. The aircraft recently passed another significant milestone by conducting their first exercise with UK-based American F-15s and French Air Force Rafales over the skies of East Anglia and the North Sea. The 617 Squadron crews joined over forty other aircraft from the RAF, the United States Air Force and the French Air Force on Exercise Point Blank. This exercise was a first both for the F-35s and the French Air Force and

gave an opportunity for the three air forces to work together. RAF Typhoon, Hawk and Voyager aircraft were also involved in the exercise, along with air defence systems.

The RAF has broken the record for the heaviest overall load ever dropped by a British aircraft. Flying over Salisbury Plain, an RAF A400M Atlas dropped 23 tonnes of cargo onto a test area. The drops were conducted as part of trials designed to test the RAF's ability to drop large loads of supplies, military equipment and humanitarian aid without landing. By comparison, the maximum cargo weight deliverable via the Container Delivery System from a C-130J Hercules is approximately 15 tonnes.

Atlas crews have also been practicing their skills during beach landing trials at Pembrey in South Wales. Beaches are routinely used by the RAF for training operations with other tactical airlifters. The A400M showcased its superb tactical capabilities on natural surfaces by performing take-off, landing and taxiing manoeuvres. Flight Lieutenant Cheng, a pilot with 206 Squadron (the Heavy Aircraft Test & Evaluation Squadron) said: "The advanced flight deck of the A400M and cutting-edge fly by wire controls made this task easier to fly than other platforms. We are now looking forward to the challenge of conducting this operation using night vision goggles later in the trial."

Two new special simulators have recently come on line to help with the training of RAF aircrew. The Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier opened a High-G training and test facility at RAF Cranwell (see page 16 for more detail). And a new £53m simulator for the Chinook helicopter has been installed at RAF Odiham

by Lockheed Martin. The RAF said it delivers virtual reality battlefield training to pilots and rear crew at a fraction of the cost of flying.

RAF Puma helicopters that are deployed to Afghanistan have continued to operate despite the challenges the aircrew face from the Afghan winter, snow and mountainous terrain. The Pumas from RAF Benson are deployed to Afghanistan to provide helicopter support to the deployed NATO forces stationed there, conducting the ongoing training and advisor mission with the Afghan Security Forces.

Squadron Leader Max Bond said: "Operating the aircraft is always a challenge because of Kabul's altitude and congested airspace, but this is further compounded during the winter months by degraded visibility, sub-zero temperatures and occasional heavy snow fall. Despite this we have been able to maintain our core activities and have recently conducted training with the 1st Battalion the Royal Gurkha Rifles to make sure we are ready and able to provide an airborne Quick Reaction Force for the NATO mission if required."

More details of the Red Arrows tour of North America have been released. The team will leave the UK after the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford and display at eight air shows including Ottawa, Toronto, New York and Los Angeles. During the deployment - which will be the largest to the region in a generation - the Red Arrows will help to support a range of British interests and promote trade and cooperation, as part of the United Kingdom's prosperity agenda.

Your membership of the Association gets you a discount on subscriptions to the fortnightly RAF News. Call RAF News at Sheffield Web on 01909 517 331 or email rafnews@jpress.co.uk. You will need to give your membership number to subscribe. There is no way to sign up online.



Practicing beach landings with the A400M Atlas, in Pembrey, South Wales.



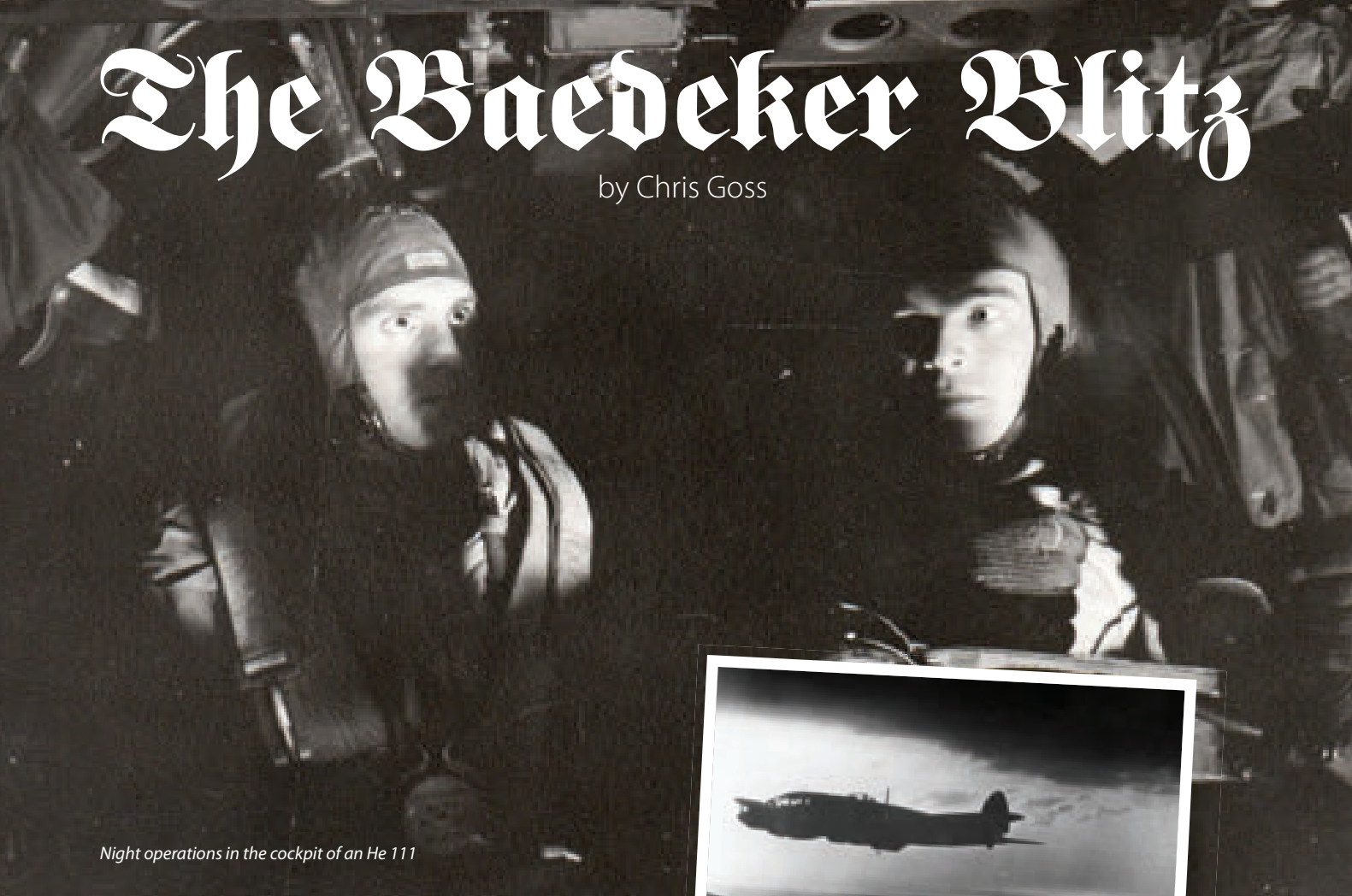
Pumas of the Operation Tora! aviation detachment continue supporting the NATO Resolute Support Mission. During the winter months there is degraded visibility, sub-zero temperatures and occasional heavy snow fall.



More details of the Red Arrows' 2019 tour of North America have been released. © all images MOD/Crown

The Baedeker Blitz

by Chris Goss



Night operations in the cockpit of an He 111

The German attacks on the Soviet Union in June 1941 meant its bomber offensive against mainland Britain had decreased dramatically. But, in February 1942, Air Marshal Arthur Harris took over Bomber Command and said:

"The Nazis entered this war under the rather childish delusion that they were going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb them. At Rotterdam, London, Warsaw and half a hundred other places, they put their rather naive theory into operation. They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind."

On the night of 29 March 1942, the RAF launched 234 aircraft against the city of Lübeck. Crews claimed a successful attack and German records state that 1,425 buildings were destroyed, 1,976 seriously damaged and 8,411 lightly damaged. It was a port city and part of the Hanseatic League, a commercial and defensive confederation established in 1358. The bombing of its mainly old and historic buildings infuriated Adolf Hitler. On 14 April 1942 he sent the following signal to the *Luftwaffe*:

"The Führer has ordered that the air war against England is to be given a more aggressive stamp. Accordingly when targets are being selected, preference is to be given to those where attacks are likely to have the greatest possible effect on civilian life. Besides raids on ports and industry, terror attacks of a retaliatory nature are to be carried out against towns other than London..."

Rostock, another historic Hanseatic port, was attacked by the RAF on the night of 23 April 1942. The next night, Baron Gustav Braun von Sturm, a spokesman for the German Foreign Office, said:

"We shall go out and bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide."



An He 111 over the British coast

That same night 57 aircraft were sent to Exeter, attacking in two waves. 6,000 houses were damaged, the gas and water mains were hit and pressure reduced, and four factories were affected. 73 civilians were killed and 54 injured. No claims were made by the RAF and not a single German aircraft was shot down or damaged.

On the night of 25 April 1942, a major attack in two waves was mounted against Bath. Around 80 combat and training aircraft took part and the damage was heavy. 250 houses were destroyed and another 5,000 damaged, and seven factories were hit, five of them badly. They included an electricity power station and a gas works. Communications were badly affected by a direct hit on the city control room. Damage to telephone cables hampered communication with Bristol, which had also had 700 houses damaged in the attack.

The *Luftwaffe* did not get away scot-free. Flight Lieutenant Marceli Neyder of 307 Squadron claimed to have destroyed a Ju 88 off Start Point. Sergeant Wladyslaw Illaszewicz of the same squadron claimed to have damaged another. Flying Officer Hugh Wyrill of 255 Squadron shot down a Ju 88 which crashed near Builth Wells, killing the pilot and one other crew member; the remaining two crew were captured. The final loss was an aged Do 17 which had the misfortune of being intercepted 40 miles south of Worthing on the way to the target by ace Squadron Leader Johnny Topham of 219 Squadron. He said:

"...Due to the dark misty clouds, visual was again lost occasionally but due to the radio observer's instructions, the enemy aircraft was quickly seen again. Pilot closed in slowly to 200yds and opened fire with

The Baedeker Guide

The Baedeker Guide was the first popular travel guide book, produced by the Karl Baedeker company in Germany in the 1850s.

The volumes were the equivalent of today's Lonely Planet and Rough Guide books and websites, helping thousands of well-to-do travellers find their way round the churches and art galleries of Europe and even as far afield as Morocco and Palestine.

The famous red leather guides were published in German, French and English and had detailed descriptions of towns and cities and state of the art maps. Its starring system rated the sights. The originals were produced from 1827 to 1948, and modern versions were launched in 2007.

Film lovers of a certain age and book lovers will remember the references to them in E M Forster's *Room with a View*, which was made into a film in 1985.

You can read 146 of the original guides online:
[https://openlibrary.org/authors/OL18155A/Karl_Baedeker_\(Firm\)](https://openlibrary.org/authors/OL18155A/Karl_Baedeker_(Firm))



cannon and machine guns. Immediately there was a large yellow flash as though the fuel tank had exploded which dazzled the pilot ... Pilot then saw enemy aircraft below, turning slowly to port. Our pilot dropped the nose of the Beaufighter and opened fire again. Pilot saw clouds of black smoke and a large number of pieces fly off the port engine followed by a fire which was spreading from the front of the starboard engine and burning fiercely under and behind the starboard mainplane. The enemy aircraft was then turning and losing height rapidly..."

The *Luftwaffe* visited Bath again the following night but with less intensity. The attack saw further damage to residential property, the main railway station and the Newbridge Works of Horstman Gear Co Ltd which had already been damaged the night before. A total of 413 civilians were killed and another 357 injured in the two raids. RAF claims that night were a He 111 and a Ju 88, probably destroyed. Three Do 217s, a Ju 88 and a He 111 were damaged. A Do 17 was lost and two He 111s were damaged.

If the RAF was expecting another attack in the west country they were wrong, as that afternoon Do 217s moved from Evreux to Soesterberg and from Caen to Schiphol. These new airfields in Holland allowed an attack on Norwich. 71 aircraft assisted by He 111 pathfinders appear to have caught the RAF napping as no interceptions were made and no German aircraft lost. Damage was mainly restricted to the poorer residential area of Norwich and utility services were only slightly affected. However, the main railway station was burnt out and one factory and the BBC buildings at Chapel Field were damaged. 162 civilians were killed and another 600 wounded.

Keeping the British defences guessing, the following night the target was York, with 74 aircraft taking part. The attack caused considerable damage to this ancient city with a large fire at the railway station and severe damage to the telephone network. 79 civilians were killed and a further 205 suffered varying degrees of injury.

But the RAF night fighters were prepared this time and claimed two Do 217s and two Ju 88s destroyed, two He 111s probably destroyed and two Do 217s damaged. Sergeant Yves Mahe of 253 Squadron shot down a Ju 88 just outside York and Pilot Officer Arthur Lawrence of 406 Squadron shot down a Ju 88 east of Whitby. It is probable that Sergeant Wallace Jenkinson of 68 Squadron got a notable success when he shot down the He 111 flown by Knights Cross winner Hauptmann Eberhard Hennings off Harwich. The last matched claim was a Do 217 flown by Leutnant Karl-Heinz Mühlen, shot down by Flying Officer Dennis Furse of 406 Squadron; the German pilot relates what happened:

"... suddenly all hell is let loose. Our brave bird trembles under the cannon and machine gun fire of a fighter. The cabin is full of acrid smoke. My composure vanishes immediately. While the bullets strike us, I bank hard right-the fumes disappear. I dive the machine - my engineer dangles his left hand in front on me - it is attached to his arm only by shattered skin and bone. I motion to my observer to look out for a second attack but he does not understand and our poor bird receives its death blow. I press back against the armour plating. The machine is shuddering and holes appear in the fuselage and the canopy besides me looks like a sieve. The port engine has stopped, propeller windmilling in the slipstream.

"Hoping that no vital structural damage has occurred, I bank hard to port and dive steeply to avoid my attacker. Behind me I see the coast in the moonlight and I start to pull out of my dive at 600 metres. I appear to have some elevator control but as I pull back the control column it comes back into my stomach and we are still diving. I put on full right aileron but the plane still banks to port. 'Bale out!' I scream. The altimeter reads 150 metres - 'stay in!' We are still turning left in a narrow, treeless valley. The cockpit hits the ground, then bounces high, it slides then digs into the earth. The cockpit is partially crushed and I am hanging on my harness. Suddenly there is a terrific explosion from the main fuel tank. The flash lights up everything like daylight, the frightening second is over and finished..."



Top: A Do 217 E. Three were destroyed attacking Canterbury



Above: Ju 88 A-4 of 1./Kampfgruppe 506 which operated from Leeuwarden in Holland and Dinant in France during the Baedeker Blitz



Above: Do 217 crews briefing for an attack

The following night it was back to Norwich with 70 aircraft. Wing Commander Peter Prosser Hanks, the Duxford Wing Leader, got airborne in a Spitfire claiming two Do 217s probably destroyed and one damaged. Squadron Leader Geoff Howden, flying a Beaufighter of 68 Squadron, claimed a He 111 damaged. Just one Do 217 was damaged which returned with two dead crew. On the ground, Norwich was badly hit with considerable damage to commercial buildings and residential property. The railway goods station was damaged, the lines to Cambridge broken, the gas works were damaged and one gas holder was destroyed. The waterworks control room was destroyed and the water supply to the city centre failed. As a result of this and the previous raid, 14,000 homes were damaged of which 1,200 were wrecked.

The night of 30 April 1942 saw a change from Baedeker attacks when 75 aircraft attacked Sunderland and Tyneside. The *Luftwaffe* then took a break of three days before many of its units moved to northern France to target Exeter again. 90 aircraft took part in what would be the most devastating of the attacks. Fires started in the city centre and developed into a conflagration. Even the Civil Defence Control Room caught fire and was evacuated. Railway lines were cratered, gas mains fractured, and electricity lines destroyed. 400 shops, 150 offices, more than 50 warehouses and 36 pubs and clubs were destroyed. 1,500 houses were lost completely, 2,700 seriously damaged and another 16,000 damaged. 164 civilians were killed and 563 injured, many of them seriously. Brian Beal was fourteen and an Air Raid Precaution (ARP) runner that night. His son, Nick, told his father's story:

"On the night of the Exeter Blitz, [dad] was woken by the intense light and crackling sound of magnesium parachute flares. He realised what they meant and reported for duty. All through the bombing he carried messages between the Heavy Rescue Squad's depot by Polsloe Bridge and the ARP's HQ, a lean-to against the City Library in Castle Street. It was him who told the HQ personnel the Library itself was on fire — they hadn't realised. The two grown men on duty resorted to strong language, got out in haste, and left him there. So he cycled back down Castle Street with flames from the burning buildings making an arch above his head in the narrow mediaeval street. The road surfaces were so hot that his bike tyres melted — and afterwards the ARP wouldn't pay for new ones."

Again, the RAF managed to exact some retribution, claiming four Ju 88s destroyed by 307 Squadron and a Do 217 destroyed and one damaged by 604 Squadron. Two more Ju 88s were lost on the return to France, being shot down over Dinard by an intruder Hurricane flown by one-armed pilot Squadron Leader James MacLachlan of 1 Squadron with the deaths of six crew members.

There would be one more sortie during this core period of the Baedeker attacks. On the night of 4 May 1942, 107 aircraft attacked Cowes on the Isle of Wight. In the two waves, widespread damage was caused to property in the town, gas, electricity and water supplies were all affected and eight factories and the gas works were all hit. Apparently damage could have been much worse if it was not for the Polish destroyer *Blyskawica*, undergoing emergency repairs at the



Left: Aircrew of 219 Squadron: Flying Ace Johnny Topham is front row, second from left

Below: The de Havilland Mosquito which was soon to enter service in greater numbers

Below left: Dennis Furse (pointing; when a Squadron Leader with 604 Squadron in 1944) shot down a Do 217 during the Baedeker Blitz whilst with 406 Squadron. His Navigator/Radar operator, Johnny Downes, is sitting far left

Bottom: An He 111 pathfinder

All article images © Chris Goss



shipyard where she had been built. Her anti-aircraft guns were in constant action during the attack and extra ammunition had to be sent across from Portsmouth. She also laid a smoke screen, making it difficult for the German bombers to pinpoint targets in the town. But 65 people still lost their lives that night or died of their injuries afterwards. 604 Squadron claimed to have damaged one Do 217 and Flight Lieutenant Edward Crew shot down another off the Isle of Wight. A Ju 88 also failed to return.

After this initial 12 day phase, many of the German training units were withdrawn from front line operations. A few aircraft from these units did participate in the five months that followed as attacks against similar Baedeker targets continued. But they didn't have the same intensity or impact. For the remainder of May 1942, targets were Norwich, Poole and Canterbury and in June 1942 Ipswich,

Canterbury (twice), Poole, Weston-super-Mare and Bedford. However, these attacks were generally overshadowed by the more traditional strikes against industrial and military targets. The last Baedeker attack is acknowledged as being against Canterbury on the night of 31 October 1942 which cost five Do 217s and the lives of 20 German aircrew. The RAF's 29 Squadron claimed three Do 217s destroyed.

The attacks of from 23 April 1942 onwards had cost the *Luftwaffe* heavily and it was unable to fully replace the losses, especially when bomber operations in Russia and the Mediterranean were brought into the equation. However, for those in such cities as Bath, Exeter, York and Norwich, the Baedeker Raids were a very blunt and in many cases tragic reminder of what the *Luftwaffe* could still do even if the target had no clear military or industrial importance.

World air forces news

by J.M. Henderson



RAAF F-35A Lightning IIs on delivery © Commonwealth of Australia



Bahrain C-130K © Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group



R Neth AF Apache at RIAT 2007 © J M Henderson



Royal Navy Wildcat at RIAT 2017 © J M Henderson

Australia



The Royal Australian Air Force has received the first F-35A Lightning IIs to be based in Australia after a trans-Pacific ferry flight; previous deliveries have remained in the USA for training. The new arrivals have been taken on charge by 3 Squadron at RAAF Williamtown in New South Wales, near Sydney. Seventy-two F-35As are being procured to replace Australia's fleet of legacy FA-18 Hornets and will eventually be based at both Williamtown and Tindal in the Northern Territory.

Bahrain



The Bahrain Defence Force received the first of two ex-Royal Air Force C-130J Hercules in November 2018. The aircraft was prepared for its new owner by Marshall Aerospace at Cambridge. Bahrain has also ordered twelve Bell AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters from the USA to augment their current fleet of older Cobra models. The first should be received in 2022.

Belgium



Belgium has become the thirteenth nation to select the F-35 Lightning II to meet its future needs. Thirty-four F-35As will be ordered to replace the current fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons. The other aircraft in the final competition were the Dassault Rafale and the Eurofighter Typhoon. Belgium has decided to transfer the training of its pilots to the USA. As a consequence, its fleet of Alpha Jets will be sold.

Canada



The Royal Canadian Navy is retiring its long-serving fleet of Sikorsky Sea King anti-submarine helicopters, having replaced them with Sikorsky Cyclones, a version of the civilian H-92. Fifteen Sea Kings will be sold with the other ten retained for display around Canada or technical training.

Egypt



Egypt is likely to order about ten Boeing AH-64Es, the latest version of the Apache attack helicopter. These would join the country's current fleet of some forty older models.

France



The French Air Force has received its first Airbus A.330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport, which they call the Phénix. A total of 15 aircraft are on order and all will be based at Istres Air Base in Southern France where their current tanker, the Boeing KC-135, is operated

Germany



Airbus Helicopters is to produce seven H145 twin-engined helicopters for Germany to replace their fleet of elderly Bell UH-1Ds, used for search and rescue and disaster relief. They will be delivered next year and stationed at three locations around the country. The German Air Force already operates 15 of these helicopters to support its special forces.

India



The Indian Air Force is purchasing two retired Mirage 2000s from the French Air Force. They will enter service in India after upgrade to their latest standard to augment their current fleet.

Japan



Japan is considering ordering the short take-off and vertical landing version of the F-35B Lightning II to be operated from converted helicopter destroyers. This is the same version that is currently being delivered to the UK. Japan is already receiving the F-35A version which is operated from standard airfields.

Korea



Airbus has delivered the first of four A330 Multi-Role Tanker Transports to the Republic of Korea Air Force. The delivery flight used a westabout route from Spain through Vancouver in Western Canada. The aircraft subsequently underwent acceptance tests, including refuelling Korean fighters.

Nigeria



The Nigerian Air Force is to receive twelve Sierra Nevada A-29 Super Tucano turboprop light attack aircraft by 2024. They will come from the USA to aid in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist organisations. They would also be used to counter drug trafficking. The A-29 is based on the original Embraer Tucano and is built in Jacksonville, Florida.

Philippines



The first of two Leonardo Wildcat anti-submarine helicopters on order for the Philippine Navy made its first flight from the factory at Yeovil airfield in early November 2018 and is now under test. The helicopters are due for delivery by spring 2019.

Spain



The Spanish Army has contracted with Boeing to upgrade its current fleet of Chinook heavy-lift helicopters to the latest standard. Some seventeen machines are involved and will receive new avionics among other improvements.

USA



The United States Air Force has announced its ambition to increase its number of operational squadrons by 24% from 312 to 386 by the second half of the next decade as it is now considered to be too small to discharge all its assigned missions. These additional squadrons would include fighter, bomber, air tanker and reconnaissance aircraft.

Boeing has won the US Air Force's recent competition to find a replacement for its long-serving Northrop T-38 Talon advanced jet trainer. It will produce some 475 examples of the new aircraft, designated T-X at present, at its St Louis, Missouri plant.

The Blue Angels, the US Navy's flight demonstration team, is to replace its present mount by about 2021. Eleven modified Super Hornets – both single and twin seaters – will take over from the original FA-18 Hornet. The original aircraft have been used for thirty years and have carried out displays all over the world including the United Kingdom.

The United States Marine Corps is planning to replace its two long-serving McDonnell Douglas C-9 Skytrain transport aircraft by mid 2020 with Boeing 737s, designated C-40 by the US military. The C-9 is the military version of the DC-9 which ceased production many years ago. The US Navy and US Air Force already operate the C-40 in a similar role.

Following the destruction of Tyndall AFB in Florida by Hurricane Michael last November, some of the evacuated F-22 Raptors have returned to the state. Two squadrons have moved into Eglin AFB, to the West of Tyndall, to continue their operations. However, the remaining aircraft remain dispersed around the other operational Raptor bases in Alaska, Hawaii and Virginia while decisions are taken about the future of Tyndall.

The US Air Force has at last accepted its first Boeing KC-46 Pegasus air-refuelling tanker aircraft, based on the Boeing 767, and it will shortly be delivered to the first operational unit, the 22nd Air Refuelling Wing at McConnell AFB, Kansas.



Blue Angels Hornet at NAS Oceana, Virginia, Sep 2012 © J M Henderson

Focaccia from scratch



This spring, 3 Mobile Catering Squadron (3MCS) has given Air Mail a recipe with some great tips for making Focaccia (bread). The recipe comes from their team deployed in Germany supporting Joint Force Command. While feeding large numbers of personnel, it also demonstrates just how much basic home cooking is carried out by 3MCS compared to buying in ready made products.

The Head Chef is Association member Sergeant Chris Beavis, currently a senior manager in the squadron's Ops Team delivering deployed catering at scale worldwide. He is also a member of the Combined Services Culinary Arts Team (CSCAT). It is rare but not unheard of for a primary role to be combined with such a specialist secondary role servicing the wider defence community - and offers a fantastic opportunity for everyone to sample world class cuisine every day. A member of the RAF and CSCAT for many years, Chris has won a huge array of accolades and, in November 2018, returned from the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg where the team won Gold in the regional table and came third overall in the world rankings.



Top: Training the next set of chefs to live and work in the field in January 2019. © MOD/Crown 2019

Above: Sergeant Beavis of 3 Mobile Catering Squadron, where he is head chef, and of the Combined Services Culinary Arts team. © MOD/Crown.

Focaccia made with operational ration pack ingredients

Feeds 105 hungry personnel. Please reduce proportionally as suits your family BBQ, wedding celebration or dinner party.

Method

Mix flour and yeast

Form a well in the centre and slowly add water to form a dough

Add salt

Lightly dust the side of a bowl and place the dough in, covering with a clean tea towel

Leave to prove slowly, until doubled in size. This could take up to two hours but should not be rushed

Lightly remove the dough from the bowl and place on a clean, lightly floured work surface. Do not knead

Using your fingers, slowly push the dough out to form a rectangle shape to the size of your cooking tray. Do not use a rolling pin as this deflates the dough and undoes the proving effort

Place the dough on the baking tray

At this stage you can add a light topping of your choice such as finely sliced tomato, onions, olives, grated cheese. Do not overload with toppings as this can prevent the heat getting through and the dough from cooking properly

Cook at 190°C until golden brown, approximately 30 minutes

Once cooked, remove carefully from the tray and leave to rest on a cooling rack for at least 40 minutes

Slice and serve as required.

This is a perfect accompaniment to pasta, stews and hot salads

Ingredients

7lb bread making flour

3.5oz. dried yeast

1oz. salt

50ml oil

Sufficient water to form a sticky dough

5 x 21-portion cooking trays, lightly oiled

To allow chefs to make a consistently good level of bread in differing environments and to remove the effect of adverse heat or cold, the following calculations from Sergeant Beavis are top tips for getting the best rise out of your dough.

1. Probe the air temperature and multiply by two.
2. Probe the flour and add that temperature to the sum of 1.
3. Deduct the total from 89. The number remaining is the temperature the water should be when forming the dough.



Focaccia – don't knead it or roll it and it will rise beautifully © Shutterstock

Notices

Reunions

RAF Administrators Apprentices Association. 2019 AGM and reunion. Weekend of 14, 15 and 16 June 2019. Northampton Marriot Hotel. For full details please see rafadappassn.org

A reunion will be held on Wednesday 12 June 2019 at the Greetham Valley Hotel, Oakham, LE15 7SN for all **RAF Halton 101st Entry Apprentices** and wives/partners. Further details please contact Mike Willmott mikewillmottltd@gmail.com or Bob Beaver bobbeaver@btinternet.com

The **609 (West Riding) Squadron** Association's dinner evening will take place on Friday 7 June, 2019 at the Parsonage Hotel in Emsay, York, YO19 6LF with the AGM Lunch and Reunion commencing on Saturday 8 June 2019 1030-1600 at Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, York YO14 4AU. For further details, contact Secretary Sarah McGhin 07506110659.

The **Heligoland39 Project** aims to find as many relatives of those RAF airmen who participated in the 1939 aerial battle of Heligoland Bight as possible. In 2018 over 80 relatives attended a commemoration event at Ely Cathedral, and on December 18 2019 we aim to increase this number to mark the 80th anniversary of the battle at the RAF Memorial Runnymede followed by a family gathering at Brooklands Museum. You can find out more about the project at heligoland39.org

RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association. The annual reunion lunch will be held on Saturday 1 June 2019 in Bawdsey Manor. Anyone who has served at RAF Bawdsey is invited to join our Association and attend the reunion. For details please contact doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com or 0751 3301 723.

93rd Entry RAF Apprentices Locking. Assembling a member's database and also planning 60th anniversary reunion. Contact Ted Stickleby 01271377159 or 07889680041.

RAF Halton 220 Entry Craft Apprentices. Looking to organise a reunion at Halton in January 2021, on the 50th anniversary of our enlistment. Entry included Airframes, Air Electrical, Propulsion, Weapons and Ground Electrical. Contact John Ford on 07584 087098 or john.ford50@btinternet.com

Missing: Air Commodore Richard Kellett medal presented by the Emperor of Japan, "Member of the Fifth Class of the Imperial order of the Sacred Treasure Jun 1937". Stolen June 1985 from Binden Rd, London W12 9RJ. **Lost:** A folder containing Richard Kellett original documentation memorabilia given on loan to an ex-airman in Metfield, Suffolk but never returned. Contact Rachel Kellett, 07920055888 or rachelkellett@gmail.com

From 1400hrs on Sunday 2 June, 2019, a **D-Day Commemoration** will take place at the airfield memorial in Tarrant Rushton, Dorset, near Blandford DT11 8SB. Glider Pilots, 644 & 298 Squadron, Ox & Bucks, Parachute Regiment, RBL, Flight Refuelling veterans, families, friends and everyone with an affinity welcome. For information contact 01202 882895 or rafa.wimborne@gmail.com

Old Colleagues

RAF Administrators Apprentices Association. Did you train as an apprentice supplier or clerk at either RAF Ruislip, St Athan, Bircham Newton, Halton or Hereford? Please contact rafadappassn.org for details of your association.

Seeking information on **Ann (Nan) Cartwright**, ex WAAF Accounts, RAF Hereford 1948. Please contact Reg Wheeler (Cheltenham) on 01242 513740. No commitment sought.

Are there any **2nd Entry Instrument Mechanics**, 1947 - 49 still around? William 'Bill' Littler would welcome catch up. Get in touch by emailing littlerbill@gmail.com

Attention! J/T Bolton would like to hear from colleagues who also served with **101 Sqn B Flt at RAF Finningley** during August 1959 to November 1960. Contact me by email at junisgb@yahoo.co.uk or 01299 401374.

As an **ex-7 squadron member** who was due to go to the Far East, flying low level (not Tiger Force), I can't find anyone, squadrons, etc., who was due to join us. Any information welcome. Please contact godfreydann05@gmail.com

Welcome extended to anyone who served at **RAF Changi, including HQ FEAF between 1946 and 1971.** See rafchangi.co.uk for joining information or apply to Malcolm Flack, Membership Secretary, 01494 728562 - memsecchangi@telco4u.net for free enquiry pack.

Cec Applegate SACW Stanmore Park/High Wycombe 1970-74. Happy Birthdays 30. Oct! Are you somewhere? Do contact: Ex-Sgt Allan Hudd, now 11 Aspro Vouini St Ayia Napa 5330 Cyprus. Tel: 00357-99937190.

No 1BTU RAF Cardington 1942-43 any information on ACW2 2065837 **Amelia (Milly) Eslick.** Please respond to Jeff at annandjeff2@gmail.com



Other

John Blakeley would like to invite you to the **RAF Langham Reunion and Dome Heritage Day** on Saturday 1 June 2019. The Dome's exhibits and films tell the story of both RAF Langham itself and the technology behind what was a war winning invention, the Dome Trainer. langhamdome.org

Are you an ex or current **RAF linguist, Spec Op V, ROV, CSA(V)** or Int An (V)? If so, have you thought about joining the RAF Linguists' Association? If not, why not? For more details on the Association and how you can become a member, please contact Mike Hancock on mike.hancock619@googlemail.com. I look forward to hearing from you.



Royal Air Force Catering Warrant Officers and Seniors Association. Membership is open to those who are serving or have served as a Warrant Officer (WO) or Flight Sergeant (FS) in Trade Group 19 and former RAF Catering Officers. For more information and an application form please contact Mr Eddie Jones at janedjones6tiscali.co.uk or 01487 823480.

RAF Photographers Association - Social weekend in October 2019. Membership open to all ex photogs, for details please contact Gerry Linstead secretary@rafpa.org.uk or 01366 380143.

Malcolm Mayes and his wife **Rita Mayes** are celebrating their 65th Blue Sapphire wedding anniversary, having married in Brighton in 1953. Malcolm served with 220 Squadron at RAF St. Mawgan and 1 and 29 Squadrons at RAF Tangmere.

Notices – free for all members

Notices in Air Mail are now free for all members.

The service is provided as a member benefit to help members keep connected with people and places from their time in the RAF or in the RAF Association, or to announce news of births, marriages, christenings, engagements, and more.

The terms and conditions are:

- A service for members only
- First come first served until a maximum of two pages of the magazine is filled
- Text/copy to a maximum of 60 words or 500 characters with spaces, whichever is the greater
- One photograph can be published with each notice (space permitting)
- For personal notices only
- Not to be used to promote profit-making ventures (such as renting out private houses, sales of books, etc.). Those must be advertised as boxed classifieds or as lineage on our classified advertising pages
- May be used to promote giveaways or sales of items where the money raised will be donated to the RAF Association
- No other charities or profit-making organisations can be advertised
- Must follow normal guidelines of being legal, decent, honest and true
- Editor's decision is final

Send your text to notices@rafatrad.co.uk or call 0800 018 2361.

Deadline: Notices for the July - September 2019 issue of Air Mail must reach the magazine's offices by: **15 May 2019. Acceptance of submissions may close earlier if the pages are full.**

We hope this new service helps you keep in touch, find lost friends, family and colleagues and members for many years to come.

Classified advertising

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Conference 2019

Book your place now, see page 8 for details

Solution: Easter Crossword 2019

26 Gating	21 Vulcan
25 Emotional	19 Gabriel
24 Imtancy	18 Main mast
23 Needle	17 Lighting
22 Rent-a-mob	15 Rataplan
20 Aggrive	14 Blenheim
16 Alumnae	12 Difference
13 Faberge	8 Everywhere
12 Dynamite	7 Inaction
11 Rocketry	6 Thank you
10 Parade	5 Shearer
9 Breakage	4 Reacting
5 Spitfire	3 Teammate
1 Easter	2 Airway
Across:	Down:

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

Wing Commander C Abbott

Basingstoke
Mr D Alexander Ely
Mr K S Allen South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr R T Alston Bury St Edmunds
Mrs M Anderson Tywyn and Aberdovey
Mr R Andrews Oxford and District
Mr G P Anthony Doncaster
Mr G Armstrong Bangor
Mr F J E Aylott Stevenage
Mr H Bailey Nottingham
Mr J Baker Barry
Mr G Barnes Erewash
Mrs E Bascombe Lyon
Mrs P Bates North Walsham
Mr F R Bennett Hong Kong
Squadron Leader H Blissett Market Harborough
Mr K Boddington Oxford and District
Mr P Brady Jersey
Mr K Bretherton Leyland and District
Mr G Breward Sheringham and District
Mrs M Brice Salisbury
Mr W J Brierley Wrexham
Mr D J Briggs Chingford
Squadron Leader J Brittain Lyon
Mr J Brookes South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr V Bryceson 1066
Mr M Buckley Northampton and District
Mr R Burton Cape Town
Squadron Leader J Butler Norwich
Mr A Caldwell Northern Area HQ
Mr G R Cardy Dartford
Mr E Carfrae Amsterdam
Mr R Carnduff Wrekin and Wellington
Mr L Casey Basingstoke
Mr T Casey Mansfield and District
Mr R Chong Stamford RMG
Mr J P Church Sheringham and District
Mr G R Clark Worcester and District
Wing Commander M Clulow Erewash
Mr B Collins Sale
Mr J Cook Truro
Mr G Cook MBE Walton and Weybridge District
Mr J E Cox Melton Mowbray
Mr F Dixon Newark
Mr B C Doggett Lincoln

Mr M Doherty East Kilbride
Mr J Douglass Morecambe and Lancaster
Mr K Downs Jersey
Mr K Drawbridge 1066
Mr E Duffin Leek
Mr E J Dunford Halifax
Mr D Dutton Whitley Bay
Mr J Edwards Chelmsford
Mr R Eitel Exmouth
Mr M A Elder Johannesburg
Mr D Evans Woking
Mr R Facer Dunstable
Mr J Fairs Oxted and Limpsfield
Mr B P Feltham Basildon
Group Captain P J S Finlayson AFC Huntingdon and District
Mr A Fisher Northern Area HQ
Mr A Flake Fareham
Mrs P Follett Weston-super-Mare
Squadron Leader J G Forsyth Huntingdon and District
Mr A L Fox Skipton
Mr R Francis Hertford and District
Mr D B Franklin Plymouth
Mr R French Eastbourne
Mr J Friess North Weald and Ongar
Mr J Frost Headquarters Branch
Mr J Gabbidon Torquay
Mr D L Gatzias Eastbourne
Mr J George Ramsgate and Broadstairs
Mr S Gibson Ayr and Prestwick
Mr G J Giddings Downham Market
Mr B Goulding Keyworth
Mr J Green Solihull
Mr J Greenhalgh Woodbridge
Mr J Griffiths City of Bristol
Mr D Gurton Moray
Mr M Hall Dursley and South Gloucestershire Branch
Mr G L Hall Sud-Ouest
Mrs S Hamlin St Neots
Mr S Hammon Wye
Mr F T Harding Witham and Rivenhall
Mr B C Hardwick Bletchley (Milton Keynes)
Mrs J Harries Amsterdam
Mr P Hartley Hayling Island
Mr J B Hartley Redcar and District
Mr S Hartwell Woking
Mr D M Haughton Llanidloes
Mr D G Haylock Reading
Mr G A E Hayward Mid-Somerset
Mrs M Heptinstall Sydney Metropolitan Branch

Squadron Leader E Hill Dereham and Swaffham
Mr W Hill Ellesmere
Mr F Hillhouse Ayr and Prestwick
Mr G A Hoare Basildon
Mr S Hodgetts Kings Lynn and District
Mr V Hopes Norwich
Mr L C Hopwood Swiss
Mr N F Horobin Wolverhampton and District
Mr C D Horton Bodmin
Mr B Houlden Tokyo
Mr P Howell BEM Worcester and District
Mr R S Hubbard Chislehurst and Sidcup
Mrs S Hughes Brighton and Hove
Mr H Irons DFC Thurrock
Mr R Jeeves Kenley and Caterham
Mr A Jenkins Wales, Midland and SW Area HQ
Mr T Johnson Hartlepool
Mr V Johnson Woodbridge
Mr W A Jones Anglesey
Mrs R Jones Clacton-On-Sea
Mr J Jones Glasgow
Mr T Kiddle Kings Lynn and District
Mr D King Mablethorpe and Sutton
Mr N E King Trowbridge and West Wiltshire
Mr K Kitchener Bury St Edmunds
Mr J Koster Amsterdam
Mr R A Lacey Oxford and District
Wing Commander P Lamb RAF St Mawgan
Mr S Lamburn Jersey
Wing Commander J N Landeryou Belgian
Mr R Latham Barnsley
Mr R J Latten Tywyn and Aberdovey
Mr P Leach Oxford and District
Mr H Lee Hartlepool
Mr F Lee Tadcaster RMG
Group Captain J Legh-Smith Sturminster and Gill
Mr J Lewarne Clacton-on-Sea
Mr J Limb Cranwell
Mr J Longmuir Lincoln
Mr G D Lush South East and Eastern Area HQ
Reverend G Macintosh Stornoway
Mr A MacKay Northampton and District
Air Vice Marshal W K MacTaggart Nairn RMG

Mr J Mansfield Scarborough
Squadron Leader J Marsden Downham Market
Mrs G Martin Lyon
Mr R J Martin Sturminster and Gill
Mr M P Marvin Jersey
Mrs R M Mather Morecambe and Lancaster
Mr M Mathias Hythe and Romney Marsh
Mr A G Matthews Cranwell
Mr H McCabe Penrith
Mr H McCallum Shoreham-by-Sea
Mr J McGillivray Thurrock
Mr H McNabb East Belfast
Mr A H McNeice Jersey
Mr J A Mear Stone and District
Mr T Midson Tunbridge Wells
Mr J G Moffatt-Bailey Southampton and East
Mrs D M Morland Harare
Mr C Morris Rushden
Mr K M Mottram Peterborough
Mr D Neal Headquarters Branch
Mr J Neary Moray
Doctor F Newby OBE Horsham and Storrington
Mr W Nicholson Shoreham-by-Sea
Mr J J Noble Swiss
Mr D Nunn Stamford RMG
Mrs J Olliver 1066
Mr L Parker Horsham and Storrington
Mr R Parker Morecambe and Lancaster
Mr J Parsons Kenley and Caterham
Mr D Payne Sandwich and Deal
Mr W Pearce Kidderminster
Mrs M Penniket Eastbourne
Doctor C E Perrin Hayling Island
Mr G Pevrett Johannesburg
Mrs J Philip Rotherham and District
Mr R Pinch Dawlish
Mr L Pither Chesham and Amersham
Mr J Plenderleith Swindon
Mr R G Powell Horsham and Storrington
Mr D Powell South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr A D Pratt Dunstable
Mr W Preshaw Armagh
Mr D Prest Reading
Mr H Randall Skipton
Mrs P Randle City and Central London
Mr R J Rees Brecon
Mr F A Regan Dunkeswell and Honiton RMG
Squadron Leader A Reid Wales, Midland and SW Area HQ
Mr G Rhys-Jones Swansea
Mr J M Robson Mansfield and District

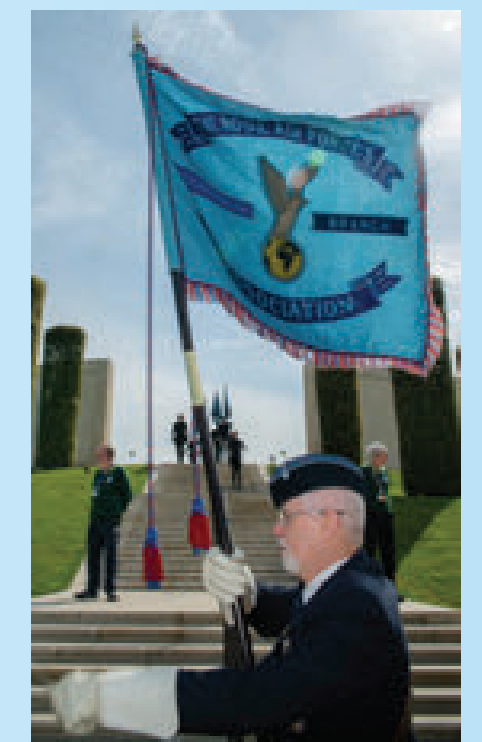
Mr B C Roche Bargoed and Blackwood
Mr R Roe Hartlepool
Mr A Ross Faversham
Mr H Shackleton Hythe and Romney Marsh
Mr P Sheppard Calne and District
Mr A Sheppeck Orpington
Mrs E Short Horsham and Storrington
Mr B K Sibley Leamington and Warwick
Mr D Simonds Diss
Air Chief Marshal A Skingsley GBE Luxembourg
Mr J Skinner Wisbech
Mr R Smith Ayr and Prestwick
Mr G C H Smith Burnham-On-Sea
Mr A Smith Rothbury
Mrs M Smith York
Mr R Smith South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr V Smith Walton and Weybridge District
Group Captain F Spencer OBE MCIPS South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr L Stafford Lewes
Miss J Stagg Isle of Wight
Mr A A J Standley Birmingham and Sheldon
Mr R Stanley Angus
Mr W Starkey Dartford
Mr N Stirk Penzance
Mr H E Sudbury Chelmsford
Mr P R Swettenham Sheringham and District
Mr J Talton Cranwell
Mr P B Tarring Norwich
Mr A Taylor Christchurch
Mr J F Taylor Itchen and Hamble
Squadron Leader C H Taylor Wales, Midland and SW Area HQ
Mr J H ten Have Amsterdam
Mrs M N Terry Worthing
Mr R Thame Romford
Mrs E Thorpe Downham Market
Mr P Thorpe Huddersfield
Mr P Traynor East Kilbride
Mr R Tribe Headcorn
Mr E Turner Leamington and Warwick
Mr A Turvey Basingstoke
Mr K H Vernon Tunbridge Wells
Major General G J G Verschueren Amsterdam
Mr L T J M A Versteeg Amsterdam
Mrs G Walker Southampton and East
Mr J Walter Stevenage
Mr A Walton Leamington and Warwick
Mr D F Ward Basildon
Mr M Ward Horsham and Storrington

Mr G Watkins Tunbridge Wells
Mr K Way Swansea
Wing Commander K Wells DFC Swindon
Mr P K West Leigh
Mr R Westcott Horsham and Storrington
Mr J Westlake Cheltenham
Mr H J Whatley Southampton and East
Mr W White Bognor Regis
Mr R A White Woking
Mr P Wierikx Amsterdam
Mr A J Willmore Worcester and District
Mr J Wilson Coventry
Mr R Winchester Tamworth
Mrs Z Winn Wrexham
Mr W D B Wishart Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders
Mr V Wood South Fylde
Mr D Wood Swindon
Mr D Woods Kenley and Caterham
Mr L Wylie Sheffield

We specially remember those who had reached or passed their 100th birthday:

Mr J Clifton Bedford
Mr D Edwards Littlehampton
Squadron Leader W E Lucas Haywards Heath
Mr P McDonald South East & Eastern Area HQ

Please note: Air Mail cannot accept any obituary notifications direct. They must be notified to the member's branch or area office. Alternatively, call our contact team on 0800 018 2361.



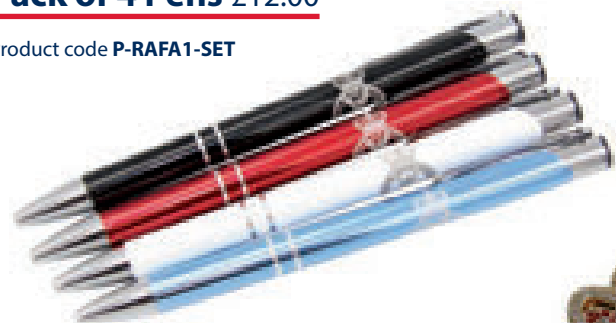
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