

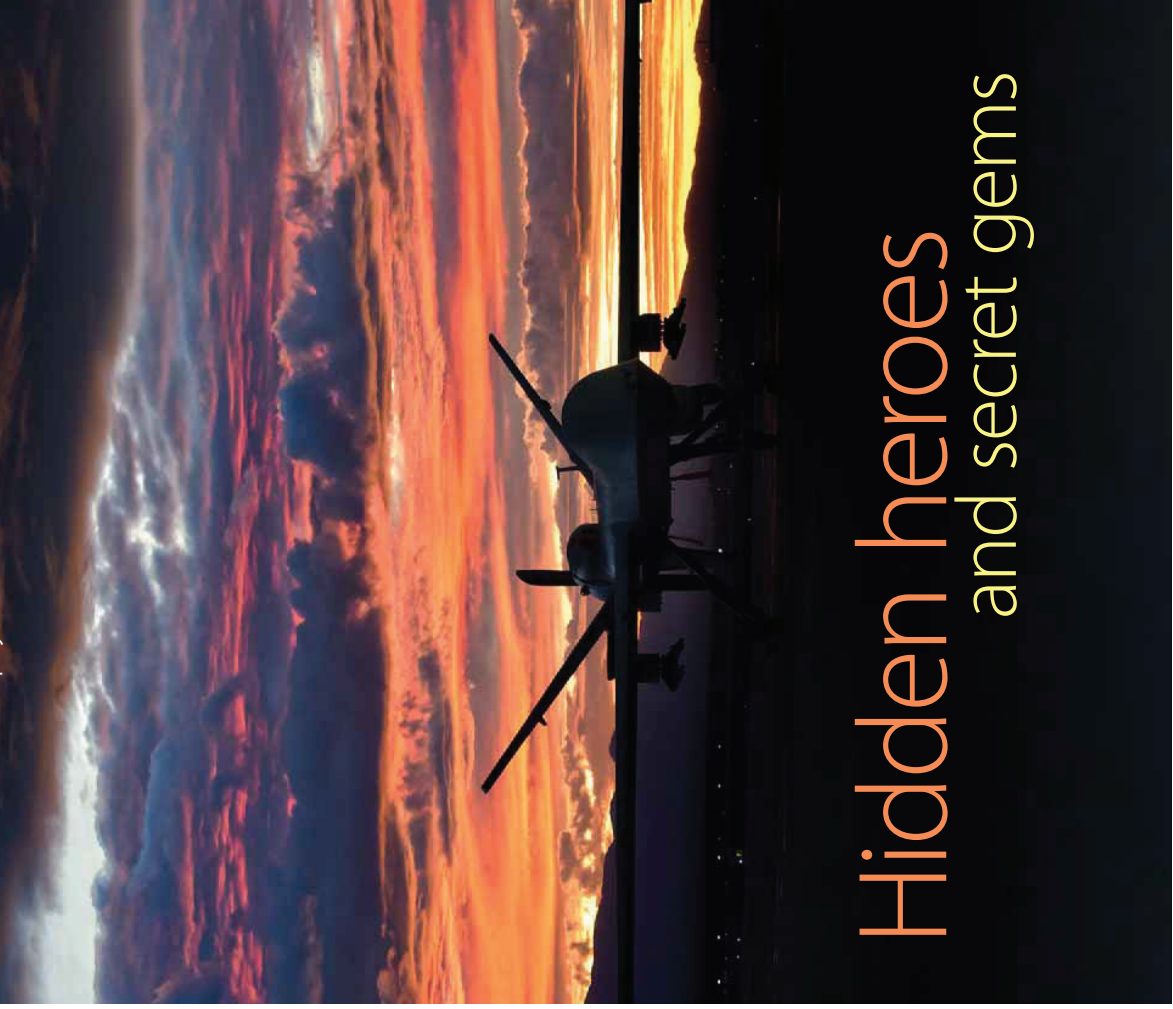
# AIRMail

We're here to keep you informed

 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCES  
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

April-June 2020



# Hidden heroes and secret gems

# Welcome

**A**s I write (in mid March), the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is on the radio and television, updating the people of the United Kingdom on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. Other world leaders are doing the same. The RAF Association is meticulously following official advice to ensure we do all we can to reduce the impact of this pandemic in every aspect of our work. By the time you read this, whatever country you are in, the very fast-moving situation will have changed - but we will be continuing to work in the best interests of beneficiaries, members, volunteers, and employees - and looking for ways to adapt our support to help members of the RAF family who will need us now more than ever.

As the world responds to Coronavirus, the hidden and unsung heroes may go un-noticed. But this issue of Air Mail takes time to look behind the scenes of normal life, at the work of the hidden heroes in our RAF community: to find the quiet places and the modest types. Among many other things, we look at the intelligence analysts of RAF Medmenham and their modern-day RAF equivalent. We hear about the Jewish people who signed up to the RAF in the 1930s and 40s and we discover the non-British pilots of the Battle of Britain who gave their all. Finally, and more obviously, you may notice we've been having a Spring sort out at Air Mail - and it has a new look. I hope you enjoy it.



Annie O'Brian  
Editor

## AIR MAIL MAGAZINE

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## YOUR ASSOCIATION

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**0800 018 2361**

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**To book a break at your Wings Break hotels:**

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## TALKING AIR MAIL

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## News 6-17

All the latest from the Association and the RAF community, including: a new veterans' railcard; more RAFA Kidz; events celebrating 100 years of RAF College Cranwell; and what's coming up at this year's airshows, for the national VE Day celebrations and at other Association events.

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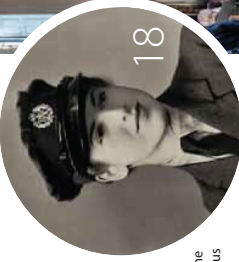
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# Dear Air Mail...

... your letters and emails

## A century of service

*[RE the Mason family's 106 years of RAF service]* I thought I may be able to up that total a bit. My grandfather joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1916, then the RAF in 1918. He retired in 1937 but rejoined between 1939 and 1943, finally retiring after serving 22 years. My uncle served from 1931 to 1967 and his wife served as a WAAF for four years. My father served from 1933 to 1972, and my other uncle also served 8 years. As I myself joined the RAF in 1963 and retired in 1996, I make the Corser family total to be 140 years in the RAF, plus two in the RNAS. WILLIAM CORSER

## S/LT Blake

In last issue's 'Tracing your RAF ancestors' article, one of the pilots pictured on page 50 was named as 'S/LT Blake'. I take it this was Sub-Lieutenant Anthony G. Blake, the highest scoring Royal Navy pilot serving with the RAF, and known in 19 Squadron as 'the Admiral'. In October 1940 Blake was killed when his aircraft crashed into a house in Chelmsford, quite near to my family's then home. We heard the sound of the crash but our view was obscured by trees. It was said that the occupant of the house removed a button from Blake's uniform and sent it to his mother on the Isle of Wight. TED CATON

*Ed. Indeed it was him – thanks for the additional information.*  
Image courtesy of TNA.



## Inverted Chevrons

The recent letters regarding inverted chevrons brought a smile to my face. In 1964 I was serving at RAF Bawdsey, and on the night the technical inverted chevrons were changed to normal chevrons, I was on duty as Orderly Corporal. I commenced my period of duty as a Corporal Technician at 1700, and was still wearing the same chevrons the next morning at 0800 when I raised the RAF ensign for the day. I therefore have reason to believe that I might have been the very last airman to have worn inverted chevrons. ROY WALKER

## Famous faces

In December 1945 I was taking my turn as Duty Officer at Kallang, Singapore. A Dakota landed, and as usual I despatched a three-tome lorry to bring the passengers and crew to reception. When they arrived, one young man went out of his way to politely thank me for collecting them so promptly. 'That's OK chum, you're welcome' I replied. I learned later that this young man was **Bhumibol Adulyadej**, the future King of Thailand, who should have received the full VIP treatment; not transported in a three-tome and addressed as 'chum'! RODNEY ELSMORE



In the late 1950s I was on temporary duty with the RAF detachment at Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu. While there, we were given tickets to the US Forces Pacific Annual Christmas Show at Pearl Harbour. The show – reached by walking past the barrack blocks which had painted-over shell craters still visible from the Japanese attack in 1941 – starred **Bob Hope** and **Jayne Mansfield** (above) at the height of her fame. When she came onto the stage the deafening roar lasted several minutes! FRANK CRAIG

In 1939/40 when my father was stationed at RAF Padgate as a Physical Training Instructor, he organised a boxing match and took me along. He introduced me to three guests: **Tommy Farr**, 1937 heavyweight champion of Britain and the Commonwealth; **Jack London**, future English heavyweight champion of Britain and the Commonwealth; and **Peter Kahn**, former flyweight world champion. Thinking this would give me bragging rights at school the next day, I was put out to discover that nobody would believe me! So much for bragging rights. PETER CARRAGHER

## RAF Boulmer

Reading in the last issue about the modern role that RAF Boulmer plays in 11 Group, I was particularly interested in the photo of the Control and Reporting Centre on page 28. I was there with Border Radar Air Traffic Control Unit in the early 1970s. In those days we had chinagraph pencils and smaller screens – I see things have moved on a bit. We had a photographic club on the station and were recruited to take PR photos for the local press. Back then some civilians also worked a couple of consoles alongside us. Again, a bit different these days I suspect. DUNCAN ELSON



## Thumbs down

*[RE Wg Cdr Fred Hoskins's statement regarding the correct way to carry a Standard].* It must be remembered we are dealing with RAF Association standard bearers' drill, not RAF Colour or Standard Drill. In the original training video where John Kirkpatrick (Association standard bearer for 27 years) demonstrates the drill it is clearly stated that the right hand thumbs should point downwards, emphasising that this is a position unique to the Royal Air Forces Association and should proudly be maintained. This is reiterated in the newly-produced video on YouTube, but with the concession that those who struggle with the thumb pointed down, pointing upwards is now acceptable. ROGER BROSCOMB, BRANCH STANDARD BEARER

Very interesting article in the readers' letters (Jan-Mar 2020) about thumbs up or down... When I was in the Boy Scouts many years ago I was told thumbs down. JAMES YOUNG

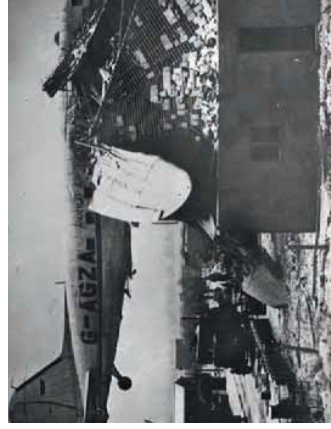
I was interested in Fred Hoskins' letter and remember, not long after becoming an Association standard bearer (being) told 'the thumb is pointed downwards when at the carry as it represents and signifies a pilot coming into land'. As one who has carried a Legion Scotland standard – not at the same time I hasten to add – I give the thumbs up to the thumbs down. PHIL CHINERY, BRANCH STANDARD BEARER

[The Standard Bearer's video on the Association website] shows that, unlike the Army and possibly the Navy, we hold the Standard at the carry, thumbs down not up. As a former Standard Bearer, I can assure the good Wg Cdr that it is neither uncomfortable or impractical, just different. JOHN GOULDE

## Up on the roof

In 1946 my mother and I lived in 'The Fairway', South Ruislip, which was situated at the eastern end of Northolt's runway. One snowy December day a heavily laden Dakota clipped its port wing on a chimney stack, slewed round and came to rest on the roof of a house near us. It was loaded with full Jerry cans and, because of its precariously balanced position, had to be unloaded with each piece of cargo being replaced weight for weight. Although we kids weren't allowed to get too close, we were enthralled by this painstaking process. PETER HARWOOD

*Ed. What's the most unusual aircraft-related incident you've seen? Let us know (contact details below left).*



## Musical memories

*[On music that reminds you of your service].* My memories are of an evening programme heard when I was stationed at 276 Signals Unit in RAF Habbaniya, 1958. It was entitled 'Light and Classical' and to me was an introduction to classical music like 'Air on the G String' and 'Winfred Atwell's Rhapsody in Blue'. My musical enjoyment at that time was Big Band sounds, but I just love music. JAMES YOUNG

There's one song I always associate with my time on RAF Gan in the Maldives during 1972-73, 'Leaving on a Jet Plane' by Peter, Paul and Mary was always played on Radio Gan when anyone was going home after their tour had expired. WILLIE DUNLOP

While stationed at RAF Stanley, I can remember BFBS being asked to play 'I Just Called to Say I Love You' by Stevie Wonder. Needless to say, this was a repetitive request from wives and girlfriends in the UK. CHRIS SHORT

*To comment in or contribute to Air Mail, please email [airmail@rafa.org.uk](mailto:airmail@rafa.org.uk). Alternatively, write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, RAF Association, Atlas House, Wembley Road, Leicester, LE1 3UT. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION. The editor's decision on inclusion is final, and longer letters may be abridged due to limited space. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication.*



## New Year Honours

Two senior representatives of the RAF Association were recognised in Her Majesty The Queen's New Year Honours list for their dedication to the RAF and to charitable work.



**Bill Emms** (left), a D-Day veteran and President of the RAF Association's County Fermanagh Branch, received the British Empire Medal for services to the RAF and for his community work in County Fermanagh.

Bill, who is originally from Enniskillen, had also been presented with France's highest honour, the Légion d'honneur, in 2016 for his service towing gliders to northern France during the D-Day Landings.

He takes part in the RAF Association's Wings Appeal collection every year, and continues to visit local schools to share his experiences of the Second World War and his distinguished career in the RAF.

**Nick Bunting** (below), who became Secretary General of the Royal Air Forces Association in March 2014, received an OBE for services to RAF personnel and veterans.



Above: Sir Baz North and Nick Bunting with the Association Standard  
Right: Sir Baz North, President

The President of the RAF Association, Air Marshal Sir Baz North, said: "Nick has overseen significant improvement in the professionalism of the administration of the Association, and has conducted a thorough examination of the governance compliance of all aspects of the charity."

"He has led the Association's staff with considerable moral courage and impressive drive and enthusiasm. He has also provided outstanding advice to the trustees. I am delighted that Nick has received national recognition for his leadership and effort."

## From the President

Even in normal times, the importance of good mental wellbeing is something which must be addressed, in a similar fashion to physical wellbeing, in difficult and unprecedented times, both become critical. I was planning to talk here about the Association's new *Finding It Tough?* training, set up to help all in the RAF community improve their mental resilience. But, as the Association follows worldwide health and safety guidance on coronavirus to protect our beneficiaries, members, volunteers and employees, this has been temporarily suspended. When the worst of this virus is over, the programme will be even more vital to our wellbeing. I urge you to find out about it now, so you can join it when the time is right.

Meanwhile, the strength of character of the Association is coming to the fore. We are acutely conscious that many of the people we support fall into high risk categories and we are looking at ways we can swiftly provide more of our vital welfare support to people in the RAF family who are in increased need. We will have to temporarily adjust the way we do this - as our established face-to-face support will not be possible for a while. But as members of the RAF community, we are perfectly placed to redeploy using the resources available to us. Perhaps you can respond to our advert on page 11 asking for volunteers to help through this time of great humanitarian need? Already we are hearing stories of communities and individuals pulling together and looking out for each other and for strangers - being thoughtful, supportive, organised, and caring. There will be many thousands of people whose contribution goes unnoticed by the wider world. They are hidden heroes - the theme of this issue of the magazine.

Those who work behind the scenes will not consider themselves heroes. But heroes you are. To the hidden heroes among us, I salute you and thank you most sincerely. To everyone, I wish you good health and please know our thoughts are with you.



© Heidi Burton  
Sir Baz North  
President

**"To the hidden heroes among us, I salute you and thank you most sincerely"**

# News

For members and the wider RAF family

## Bridging Generations – one cuppa at a time

The Association's Brew for the Few fundraiser will be relaunched in autumn 2020 with a focus on 'Bridging Generations'. A new organiser's pack - available now - is packed full of ideas.

Social isolation was a major issue even before the coronavirus outbreak. When the time is right, Brew for the Few: Bridging Generations will bring younger and older people together again, over tea and cake, to help reduce loneliness and raise money for the Association. More info: [fundraising@rafa.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@rafa.org.uk) or call **402 6453**.



## News from RAFA Kidz

Mrs Kate Wigston has officially opened RAFA Kidz Cranwell on behalf of the Chief of the Air Staff, at a formal ceremony in January.

Also in January, RAF Digby's Maple Leaf Day Care became the third RAFA Kidz nursery, joining others at RAF Cranwell and RAF Odlham.

Speaking at the RAFA Kidz Cranwell official opening, Mrs Wigston said: "Having been part of the RAF family for many years, I am aware how important a facility such as RAFA Kidz is, and will be for years to come. It has been an absolute pleasure to officially open the RAFA Kidz nursery at RAF College Cranwell and to see the impact a facility such as this has on the military community."

Below and right: local children mark the official opening of RAFA Kidz Cranwell, with Mrs Kate Wigston, Secretary General of the RAF Association Nick Bunting, Wing Commander Phil Mann, Officer Commanding Support Wing at RAF College Cranwell, and others.



## New railcard for veterans

RAF veterans will get cut-price train travel to help boost job prospects and bring them closer to family and friends, thanks to a new railcard which will be on sale from 11 November 2020.

Announcing the discounted train travel for more than 830,000 military veterans who are not covered by existing schemes, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: "Every part of society should honour the debt we owe those who've served our country. I'm proud that the Department for Transport, together with other government colleagues and the rail industry, is doing its bit. According to Forces News, "holders will be able to save a third off most train tickets, although certain restrictions will apply. At least initially, it will only be for use in England. And the railcard will cost £21 for an introductory period, before the price is increased to £30." The railcard announcement forms part of the government's wider veterans' strategy.

This action plan, which was launched on the same day as the railcard, outlines what government is doing for veterans and sets out holistic support for those who served, in areas including community and relationships, employment and skills, health and wellbeing, finance and debt, housing and contact with the law. You can read it in full here: [bit.ly/VeteranStrategy](https://bit.ly/VeteranStrategy). The strategy will be coordinated by the recently-established Office for Veterans' Affairs.

The railcards will be available online at: [railcard.co.uk](https://railcard.co.uk) and from railway stations and travel agents across the UK from 11 November.





## Blue Mondays? Association's unique new wellbeing courses

Early sessions of a new wellbeing project to help families of serving RAF personnel and veterans proved so popular that the Association had to arrange more of them.

The initiative, named Finding It Tough?, was launched on Blue Monday 2020 (the third Monday of January, which has been recognised by some as the most depressing day of the year) — and the first courses booked up almost immediately. All sessions have now been temporarily suspended to follow public health guidance, but will be reinstated as soon as allowed, to meet the expected demand.

Finding It Tough? is a free training course which was developed in recognition of the fact that, for some, being a member of the RAF family can present challenges which are unique and which can, at times, have an impact on mental wellbeing. The course will be open to all RAF veterans and their families, to all partners, parents, siblings and adult children of anyone serving in the RAF, and to all non-serving personnel working on an RAF station, such as Ministry of Defence civil servants and defence contractors. Serving personnel are already given support through the RAF's Thriving At Work programme.

The specially-designed training will help participants learn about frequency and uncertainty of change, take back control where they can, understand themselves and those around them and learn ways to become more resilient to change. It will also help them to offer support to others and to signpost them to organisations that may be able to help.

Each course is a five-hour session which starts at 9:30am. When the public health go-ahead is given, they will be offered again, in 40 locations across the UK, from Glasgow to Plymouth.

For more information or to register your interest in signing up, ready for when the courses re-start contact us: [raf.org.uk/finding-it-tough](http://raf.org.uk/finding-it-tough) or phone 0800 018 2361.

*finding it tough?*

**MENTAL WELLBEING COURSES 2020**

Model and athlete Neil McAndrew sporting an RAF Association lapel badge while raising funds on the ICAP dealers' phones.



Below: Left, Matt Tebbutt taking a break from his BBC Saturday Kitchen TV programme to lend his support to the Association (pictured here with Cate Driscoll from the fundraising team). Above: Pink Floyd's drummer Nick Mason (centre) was welcomed by RAF Association ambassador, Air Vice-Marshal Gary Waterfall and circus strongman Peter O'Brian of ICAP's trading team, before joining the RAF's Video Gaming and eSports Association for one of their virtual reality experiences. Right: The Queen's Colour Squadron demonstrating their precision ceremonial drill to ICAP employees dressed as super heroes. All images © ICAP charity day.

## Celebs' support helps launch Finding It Tough?

Celebrities including **Nick Mason, Rory Underwood, Neil McAndrew** and **Matt Tebbutt** have helped raise funds in support of the RAF Association's new Finding It Tough? project.

They were among other well-known stars who worked behind the scenes to help raise £4.6million for charities across the globe at the ICAP Charity Day last December. ICAP is the world's largest interdealer broker and part of TP IPAC group. Each year its charity day raises money for good causes worldwide, with 100% of the revenues and commissions generated on the day donated to charities. The RAF Association was one of 26 UK beneficiaries of the 2019 event.

Highlighting the work of the Association were model Neil McAndrew, chef and TV presenter Matt Tebbutt, Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason and rugby legend Rory Underwood, joined by the Band of the RAF Regiment, the Queen's Colour Squadron, and Red Arrow team members. The RAF Video Gaming and eSports Association, supported by Novatech,

also gave a unique RAF gaming experience to ICAP's shareholders.

Rachel Huxford, Director of Marketing, Fundraising and Trading at the Association, said: "It was a privilege to have been invited to take part and we thank ICAP for choosing us as one of the beneficiaries. Thank you also to the Royal Air Force, and all our partners on the day, for supporting us with their presence."

"We are delighted to be working closely with the RAF to further strengthen the support available to veterans and the families of the serving RAF community."

In total, ICAP has raised £150 million over 27 years thanks to its Charity Day events, which take place across the world at the company's different offices, including London, New York and Singapore.

For more information visit [icapcharityday.com](http://icapcharityday.com)



# Finding Air Mail hard to read?

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Find out more:  
**enquiries@rafa.org.uk**  
or **0800 018 2361**

# Volunteers needed



## We need you more now than ever

Due to coronavirus, members of the RAF family are more vulnerable than ever before. We are recruiting now so that we have people ready to help those in need.

Caseworkers and befrienders are needed to join our team of volunteers in your area.

**No experience needed.**

**Accredited training and support will be provided.**



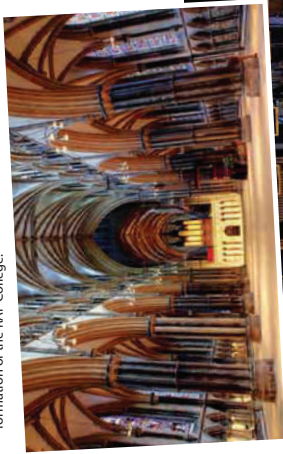
Patron Her Majesty The Queen  
Registered Charity 226886 (England & Wales)  
SC027673 (Scotland)

**Call 0800 018 2361 or email volunteers@rafa.org.uk or visit rafa.org.uk/volunteer**



## Concert to celebrate RAF College centenary

Tickets are now on sale for a unique evening of music by the Band of the Royal Air Force College, in Lincoln Cathedral on 29 October. The event, organised by the RAF Association, will be a highlight of the 100th anniversary celebrations of RAF College Cranwell — the oldest military college in the world — and will feature a brand new march, *Allium Alitrix*, specially commissioned for the college centenary. The march is a continuous piece in five short sections which portrays the personalities of five people who were fundamental in the formation of the RAF College.



The Band of the Royal Air Force College at home at RAF College Cranwell © MOD/Crown

## RAF Music Centenary Tour

Following the success of its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert tour, the Royal Air Force Music Charitable Trust is celebrating 100 years of Royal Air Force Music in 2020 with a special series of concerts. The eleven-date centenary tour runs from June to December, from Weston-super-Mare in the south to Doncaster in the north. *As Air Mail went to press, all dates were still due to go ahead.* The trust raises welfare funds through the performance of live music by Royal Air Force musicians, and has donated more than £12,000 to the Association over the past three years. For more information and to book, visit: [rafmct.org.uk/events](http://rafmct.org.uk/events)

### 2020 Tour Dates

- 5 June: Grand Ballroom, Scarborough Spa
- 9 July: Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip
- 31 July: Sheffield Cathedral
- 26 September: CAST in Doncaster
- 4 October: Corn Exchange, King's Lynn
- 9 October: Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip
- 18 October: Devonshire Theatre, Eastbourne
- 23 October: Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare
- 19 November: Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip
- 9 December: Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip
- 18 December: St Wulfram's Church, Granttham

# Airshows 2020

The Association plans to be out and about again this summer raising funds, promoting our good work, and celebrating all things RAF. The events we are hoping to attend, as long as public health guidance allows, are listed on the right and we look forward to meeting you there with your friends and families.



An Army Air Corps Apache of the Apache Attack Helicopter Display Team thrills at RAF Cosford Airshow. © MOD/Crown 2019



28 air arms from 20 different nations were at RIAT in 2019. © MOD/Crown 2019

### Disclaimer

Our attendance at the airshows and events listed on pages 10 and 11 may be subject to change due to events beyond our control. These events are managed by third parties and may be subject to cancellation or delays by the organisers. The governments and assemblies of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales may also impose public health restrictions that change, postpone or cancel any of these events.

## June

- 6-7 Jun: English Riviera Airshow – Torbay, Paignton
- 14 Jun: RAF Cosford Airshow – Cosford, Shropshire
- 27 Jun: Blackpool Armed Forces Day – Blackpool, Lancashire
- 27 Jun: Scarborough National Armed Forces Day – Scarborough, Yorkshire
- 27-28 Jun: Weston Air Festival & Armed Forces Day – Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset

## July

- 3-5 Jul: Teignmouth Airshow – Teignmouth, South Devon
- 4-5 Jul: Wales National Airshow – Swansea, Wales
- 11 Jul: Royal Navy International Air Day – Yeovilton RNAS, Somerset
- 11 Jul: Duxford Flying Legends – Duxford Imperial War Museum, Cambridgeshire
- 17-19 Jul: Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) - RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire
- 24-26 Jul: Sunderland Airshow – Seaburn, Sunderland

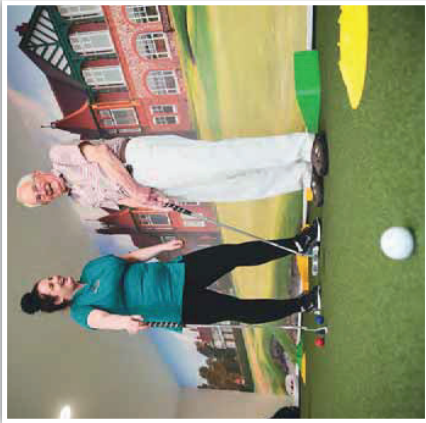
## August

- 8-9 Aug: Blackpool Airshow – Blackpool, Lancashire
- 13-16 Aug: Airbourne: Eastbourne International Airshow – Eastbourne, East Sussex
- 20-23 Aug: Bournemouth Air Festival – Bournemouth, Dorset
- 27-28 Aug: Clacton Airshow – West Greensward, Clacton
- 29 Aug: Rhyll Air Show - East Parade, Rhyll

## September

- 4-6 Sep: Chatsworth Country Fair – Bakewell, Derbyshire
- 4-6 Sep: The Scottish International Airshow – Ayr Seafront, Prestwick
- 11-13 Sep: Southport Air Show – Southport, Merseyside
- 19-20 Sep: Duxford Battle of Britain Air Show – Imperial War Museum Duxford, Cambridgeshire

## “Definitely five star” A new seaside venue for Wings Breaks in the north west of England



The RAF Association has started a new partnership with The Moorings, a luxury retirement home in Lytham St. Anne's, to offer full-board short breaks in the north west of England to former RAF personnel and their dependants.

The modern venue, specifically designed to meet the needs of the over-65s, opened in 2013 and stands proudly on the seafrost. Following a trial period which resulted in very positive feedback from RAF Association guests, bookings are now being taken for breaks of up to two weeks for later in 2020, and also in March 2021. (These will be subject to changes in government advice on coronavirus.)

Widower Russell Porter (84, pictured above) of Lancashire was among the first to try out an RAF Association holiday at The Moorings.

Having been a regular at our charity's Richard Peck House hotel, which closed in 2019, he was keen to see how the new venue matched up. Russell, who did his National Service with the RAF in Suffolk in the 1950s, said: "The Moorings' facilities are excellent. I was amazed at what's available. I used to enjoy the camaraderie of Richard Peck House, so it was nice to be on holiday with like-minded people again." Wings Breaks guests can mingle with The Moorings' other guests and residents, so there are plenty of opportunities for socialising outside of the RAF circle, too – something Russell particularly appreciated as a single person.

Peggy Furniss (95), another former Richard Peck House regular, said she loved the fact that the Moorings was just across the road from the sea. Her husband, Alastair, was an RAF pilot from 1944 to 1947, when he moved into a local government career. Peggy said: "Alastair died in 2014, so being able to holiday in a safe environment is really important to me. I used to stay at Richard Peck House twice a year, so I was thrilled to know that Wings Breaks would be continuing a stone's throw away at The Moorings."

During her Moorings stay, Peggy particularly enjoyed the feeling of space inside the venue, and felt that the staff "couldn't be more helpful". She said: "It's definitely five-star! The place buzzes with energy, yet it's easy to find a quiet corner if you want to be by yourself."

One of The Moorings' care assistants, Charlotte Clarke, said: "It's lovely to be helping people with an RAF connection to relax and enjoy themselves. I enjoy listening to their stories and learning about their experiences. I'm looking forward to seeing more RAF Association guests soon."

**Bookings and latest information from 0800 018 2361.**



All images © Phil Greig

## Talking about my generation

The RAF Association has published a new brochure to introduce readers to our beautiful independent-living complexes in four of the UK's most sought-after locations.

The houses are found in the rolling hills of Northumberland, the foothills of the mountains of Scotland, in the beauty of the South Downs National park and in England's "rural capital of food", Milton Mowbray.

If you would like to plan for your future or if you are interested in any of the current vacancies at Wexford House in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, or at Dowding House, Moffat, Scotland you can get more information at: [rafa.org.uk/retirement-accommodation](http://rafa.org.uk/retirement-accommodation) or by calling our helpful Customer Care Team on 0800 018 2361. Brochures can be posted out if you don't have access to the internet. Places are open to people aged 60 or for Dowding House, or aged over 65 for the other locations, who have served in the RAF or are the spouse, widow or widower of an RAF veteran. As Air Mail went to print, there were vacancies, which could be taken up after the coronavirus has abated.

## RAF Anniversaries

### 25 years ago (1995)

**27 June:** Two Wessex helicopters help fight the biggest fire in Cyprus for 100 years, delivering 80,000 gallons of water in 43 hours.

### 50 years ago (1970)

**20 May:** Phantom FGR2 flew non-stop from RAF Coningsby to RAF Tengah in Singapore in a record time of 14 hours 14 minutes. The next day another Phantom took five minutes off this time.



A street bonfire to celebrate VE Day 75 years ago. © Public domain

### 75 years ago (1945)

**9 Apr:** RAF Lancasters attack Kiel and sink the German heavy cruiser Admiral Scheer.

**24 Apr:** WAAF flight mechanic Margaret Horton takes an accidental flight on the tail of a Spitfire when it takes off with her still on board.

**29 Apr:** Operation Manna began, with the RAF dropping 6,685 tons of food to starving Dutch civilians in 3,150 sorties.

**2 May:** The last Bomber Command raid of the war on Germany took place, and the last Bomber Command aircraft was lost.

**7 May:** Germany signs the unconditional surrender to end the Second World War in Europe, which came into effect on 8 May, now known as Victory in Europe (VE) Day.

**11 May:** Bomber Command's repatriation of released prisoners of war – named Operation Exodus – peaks at 36,204 personnel.

**25 June:** The RAF Regiment arrives at Gatow Airfield in the British sector of Berlin to relieve Soviet forces and stake the RAF's claim to the airfield.

### 100 years ago (1920)

**5 Feb:** The first 52 flight cadets walk through the gates of the RAF Cadet College, Cranwell.

**1 Apr:** The Central Band of the Royal Air Force and the RAF (Cadet) College Bands were formed.

## “The Bognor Regis Resolution”

At Annual Conference 2019, Bognor Regis Branch proposed a resolution that Council should review the administrative structure of the Association. The resolution received 97% support.

### FOR CONSULTATION

Branches have since been asked to respond to Council's consultation and the debate will be a crucial part of Annual Conference in 2020 (currently planned for Blackpool from 26 to 28 June, but subject to change).

The resolution recognised the need to review the structure of the Association — which has been in place for more than 75 years — to ensure it meets the needs of the organisation today and in the foreseeable future. For example, the number of branches in each of the current Areas ranges from 18 to 162, but the representation and size of their Area Councils are all the same. Also, while the role and purpose of the Areas is laid down in Rule 25 of the Governance Handbook, the structure does not support the existing Area Councils to discharge this role.

Council is investigating a new structure that will help it strengthen branches' practice and management and provide branches with a recognised, local, democratic, focused role representing local members. There is also an opportunity to reduce the size of Council. The consultation documents were issued by email to branches just before Christmas 2019. Full documents were issued by post in early 2020 and were also put onto the members' portal: [bit.ly/AdminStructureReview](http://bit.ly/AdminStructureReview). Branches have been asked to provide their feedback via [response@rafa.org.uk](mailto:response@rafa.org.uk). You can contribute to the debate via your branch or Area Conference. Council has updated its consultation response and the Branch Terms of Reference following feedback from branches directly and from the recent governance workshops.

As a result of the 2020 Area Conferences and reunions being cancelled because of coronavirus, the Association will be asking branches to provide their views electronically, after Easter. Should the decision be made to go ahead with Annual Conference in June, members will be able to watch its business from anywhere in the world via the live video link: [rafa.org.uk/annual-conference](http://rafa.org.uk/annual-conference)



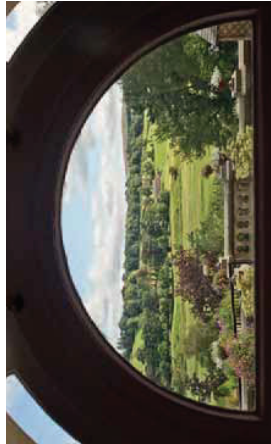
©Lorie Coffey

## Tribute to airman and friend

Association befriender Lorie Coffey has created a bronze sculpture of her late friend Kenneth Chalcraft in his WWII Bomber Command outfit. Lorie began the sculpture before Kenneth — a former Lancaster gunner — passed away, and was able to get his advice on details such as how his boots were tied to ensure they didn't come off in the event of having to bale out. Lorie was Kenneth's RAF Association befriender from November 2018 until October 2019 and now intends to sell the sculpture to help raise funds for other veterans.

## Beautiful views of Northumberland from Lord Tweider and Malcolm Court independent living complex.

©darenkamaia photography





## 'Departures' set to help transitioning

A new guide for families transitioning to civilian life has just been published by The RAF Families Federation.

'Departures' is based on findings from the Federation's *Lifting the Lid - Families' experiences and the support they need* report, in which families and service personnel highlighted gaps in information when they were transferring to civilian life.

Louise Briggs, co-author of the *Lifting the Lid* report says: "It's not only for use at the end of an RAF career - it can be used throughout life as a serving family to help plan for transition and hopefully kick start planning and thought around the subject, helping families find relevant support and information. We'd really welcome feedback on the guide so we can make it more useful in future editions. Please email me, [louise.briggs@raf-ff.org.uk](mailto:louise.briggs@raf-ff.org.uk)."

The guide was published shortly after the launch of the RAF's holistic transition policy for defence - JSP 100 - and recognises the RAF's ambition to cover employment, health and wellbeing, welfare, housing advice, financial information and chain of command pastoral guidance under a single policy. Over the next year the implementation of the new policy will take place and families can keep informed on progress by keeping in touch through the transition pages on the Families Federation website: [raf-ff.org.uk](http://raf-ff.org.uk) and its social media.

The RAF Families Federation has thanked supporters of the production of the *Departures* booklet including Forces in Mind Trust who funded the original research, RAF Community Support, HVE and Veterans' Welfare Service.



Above: Newly published information to help families transition successfully.  
© RAF Families Federation

© Forces in Mind Trust



## First RAF crew memorial unveiled in Spain

The seven-man crew of a Wellington bomber which crashed near Alicante in 1950 has been remembered - with what is thought to be the only memorial in Spain to an RAF aircraft.

In December 16 relatives of the crew, local people, and RAF and Association personnel gathered at the site to see the memorial plinth unveiled. Details of the accident had been pieced together by the Association's North Costa Blanca Branch working alongside a journalist.

The Wellington Mk 10 had left RAF Shawbury in December 1950 on its way to Gibraltar for a training exercise. The strained relationship with General Franco meant UK aircraft were not allowed to fly over Spanish airspace and a route over the Mediterranean was planned. But the bomber came down in a thunderstorm on the Montgó



Permissions to build the memorial were needed from the Valencian government, the town of Dénia and from the forestry authority responsible for the Montgó natural park.  
© Corinne Gairs



Read the full story on the North Costa Blanca Branch website: [rafa-n.cb.org.uk/wellington.html](http://rafa-n.cb.org.uk/wellington.html)

## Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliott to lead RAF Benevolent Fund

Air Vice-Marshal (AVM) Chris Elliott has been appointed Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund and will take up her new role in April. She joins the Fund following a 35-year career in the Royal Air Force. Her last role was Chief of Staff Personnel and Air Secretary, looking after the careers and welfare of RAF servicemen and women. She was also a member of the RAF Board. She succeeds Air Vice-Marshal David Murray who steps down this year after four years.

Chairman of the RAF Benevolent Fund's board of trustees Lawrie Haynes said: "Air Vice-Marshal Elliott's previous roles give her a vast amount of experience and invaluable knowledge about the RAF family and their welfare needs.

"Our heartfelt thanks go to David who leaves the charity in a robust and strong position, with an excellent platform to build on, following the extremely successful launch of our centenary campaign last year." Air Vice-Marshal Elliott joined the RAF in 1985 after gaining her degree in Glasgow. During her career she has worked in defence airspace, air traffic management, planning, ground training and, most recently, personnel management and welfare. She also served as Station Commander at RAF Halton in 2010.

She said: "I am thrilled to be joining the Fund at such an exciting time. The RAF Benevolent Fund has been a part of my RAF career as long as the RAF has, a constant friend should I ever need it."



Above and left: Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliott formally opening the RAF Association's RAFA Kidz nursery at RAF Odiham in July 2019. This April she will take up her post as Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund.  
© Heidi Burton

## Author shares his story

Richard Bland, author of *AB Gets His Wings*, read to the children in RAFA Kidz nurseries at RAF Cranwell, Digby and Odiham to mark World Book Day.

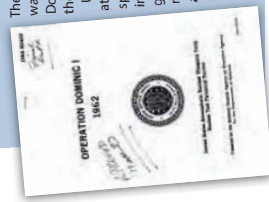
Richard has also made the book available for the Storybook Wings project, so any parent can read to their child about the adventures of this charming bear. Get your copy: [rafa.org.uk/shop](http://rafa.org.uk/shop) or 0800 018 2361. More about Richard and his family story behind the book from [wcbab.co.uk](http://wcbab.co.uk)



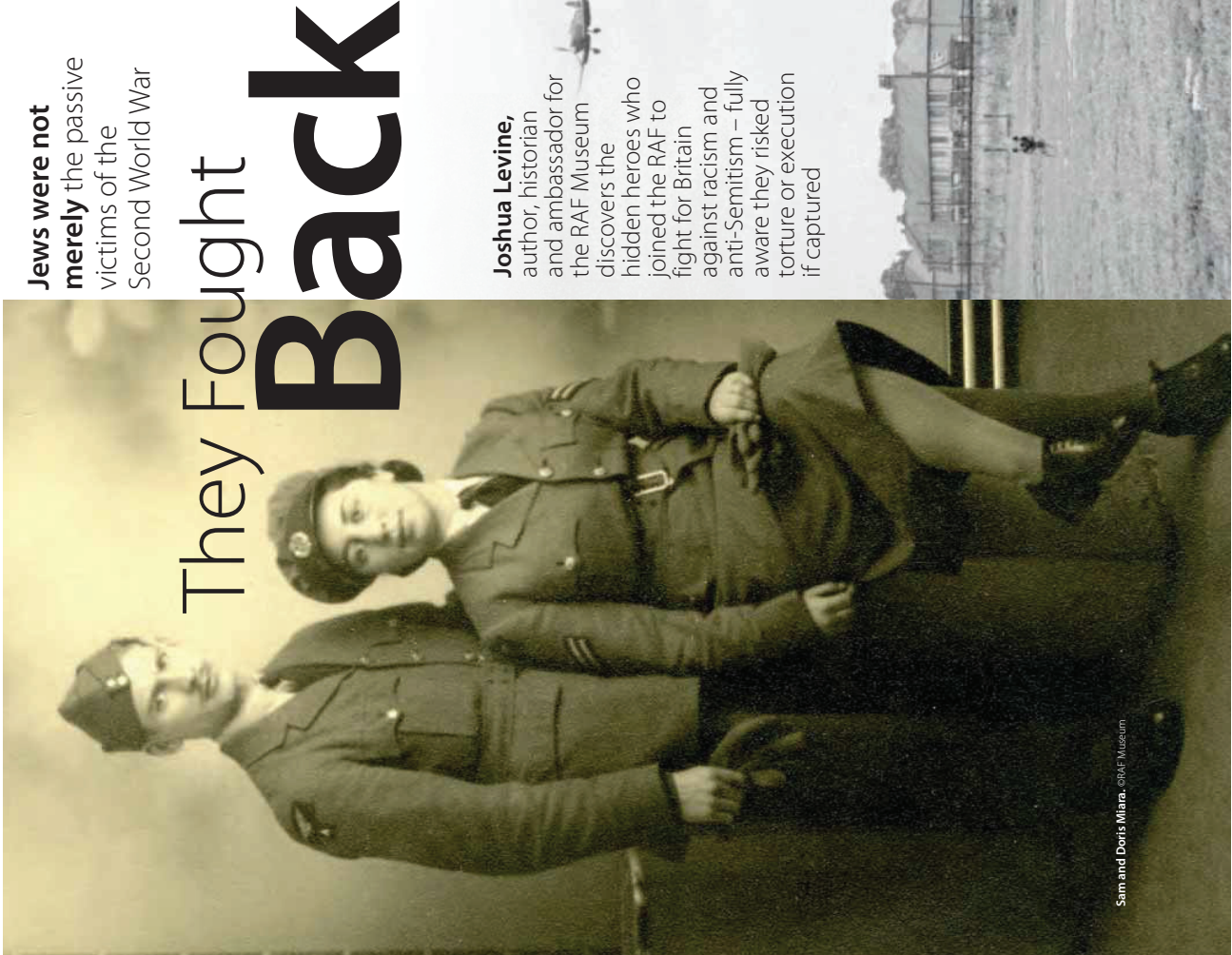
Richard's story helps children talk about their emotions.  
© MODY Crown

## Compensation after nuclear tests

The British Nuclear Test Veterans Association wants to find veterans of Operation Dominic (Christmas Island, 1961-1962) and their descendants. UK servicemen who witnessed an atmospheric test and suffered from specific cancers can claim up to £55,000 in compensation from the American government. Children and grandchildren may also claim if the veteran is no longer alive. Any eligible Association members can contact Operation Dominic representative Eric Barton for further information: [e.barton@bntvra.com](mailto:e.barton@bntvra.com) / 0208 144 3080.







Sam and Doris Miara. ©RAF Museum

**Jews were not merely the passive victims of the Second World War**

# They Fought Back

**Joshua Levine, author, historian and ambassador for the RAF Museum discovers the hidden heroes who fought for Britain against racism and anti-Semitism – fully aware they risked torture or execution if captured**

**A**n extraordinary 20,000 Jews – six percent of the entire Jewish population of Britain – joined the wartime Royal Air Force. Thousands of Jews also joined from the Commonwealth. Together, they served as pilots, navigators, gunners, ground crew and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) members.

An initiative celebrating their stories is clearly overdue – but the timing of the RAF Museum's Jewish Hidden Heroes project is important. Anti-Semitism in Britain is more visible than it has been for many years. Sinister sneers are creeping back into the mainstream, making this an important moment to take a stand. So let me begin this article with an assertion: Jews were not merely the passive victims of the Second World War. Jews fought back – and nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the actions of the Jewish men and women of the wartime Royal Air Force.

Sam and Doris Miara were a

Jewish couple from Cardiff, who ran a clothing business before the war. However, after Kristallnacht – a night of plunder, destruction and violence against Jews in Germany and Austria – the Miras gave up their home and business and joined the RAF.

Doris joined the WAAF and in 1941, Sam was serving as wireless operator and air gunner in the Middle East with 38 Squadron. That April however, Sam's Wellington bomber set out on a bombing raid and never returned. Seven months later Doris received a letter from the Air Ministry concluding that Sam was dead.

This letter is in the archive of the RAF Museum – a collection I am lucky enough to spend time in, immersed in the lives of those like Sam and Doris, who stood up to Nazism. Letters and diaries reveal how many of these individuals were eager to serve in the most perilous jobs, anxious to strike back at those who tried to deny their humanity.

Bernard Kregor, for example, was a young Londoner who

served as an ARP messenger boy during the Blitz, bidding his time until he was old enough to join the RAF. When asked by an officer why he was volunteering to become a navigator on bombers, a particularly dangerous job, he replied: "Sir, I am a Jew, and my war with the enemy began long before September 1939"

Throughout his life, one of Kregor's prize possessions was the official Jewish prayer book he received upon joining the RAF. In the 'Prayer before Battle' are the words: "Give me the strength to do my duty this day as a true and loyal Israelite in this war for Freedom and Righteousness."

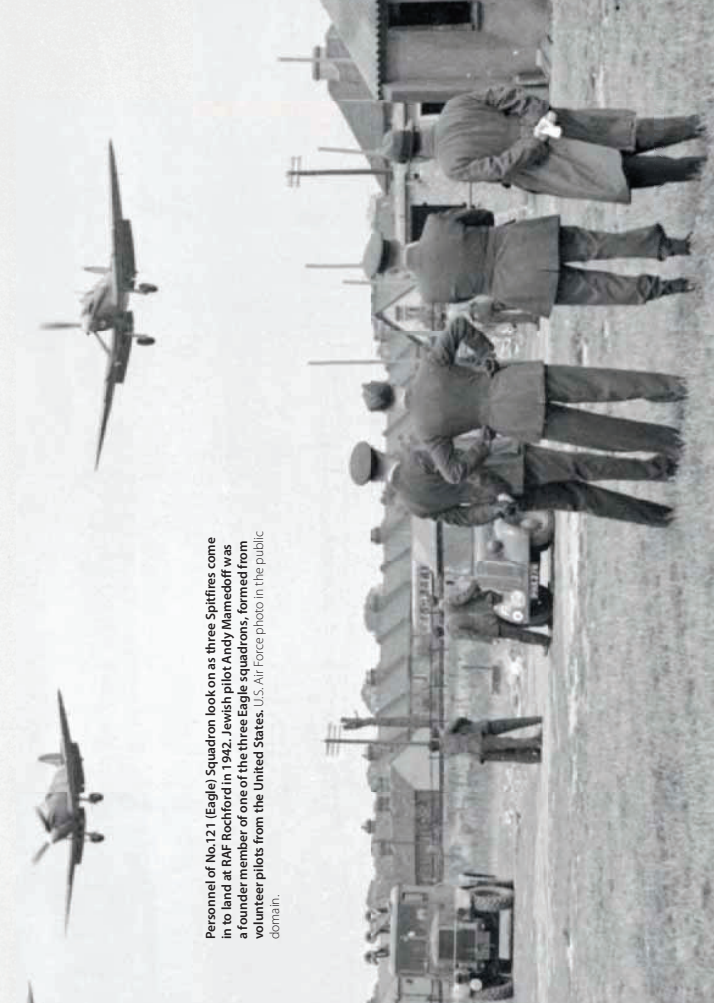
The young Jewish Canadian William Nelson – who joined the RAF two years before the war – had a similar mindset to Kregor. Having previously dropped propaganda leaflets over Germany, Nelson wrote to his parents when his aircraft was refitted with bombs: "I thank God" he said, "that I shall be able to destroy the regime that persecutes the Jews".

Nelson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in May 1940. In June, answering Fighter Command's call for pilots in anticipation of the coming battle, he requested a transfer, and began training on Spitfires. He joined 74 Squadron at Manston towards the end of July and was credited with five victories during the Battle of Britain. On 1 November – the day after the official end of the Battle – Nelson was shot down and killed. His body was never recovered.

Long before the United States entered the war, the first Jewish-American pilot to fight against the Nazis was doing so with the RAF: first with 609 Squadron, then with 71 Eagle Squadron.

Aged 28, Andy Mamedoff was old for a battle of Britain pilot. His family came from Russia, having fled to the United States twenty years earlier. His father had supposedly once arrested Stalin – making the family's flight an eminently sensible act. Mamedoff was an adventurer. He loved flying, gambling and the

→



Personnel of No.121 (Eagle) Squadron look on as three Spitfires come in to land at RAF Rochford in 1942. Jewish pilot Andy Mamedoff was a founder member of one of the three Eagle squadrons, formed from volunteer pilots from the United States. U.S. Air Force photo in the public domain.





Above: Bernard Kregor (left) with his cousin Corporal Lionel Kregor in India. In July 1946 Bernard contracted malaria – which saved his life. The aircraft he was due to fly in crashed, killing its occupants. ©RAF Museum  
 Above right: Andy Mamedoff standing with one leg through the hole in his Spitfire's horizontal stabiliser after being bounced by a German BF 109 in August 1940. ©Chris Goss  
 Above: Jewish 'Hidden Heroes' event photo: (left-right) Squadron Leader Lawrence Goodman, Jack Topper, Flight Sergeant Bernard Carton, Sergeant Alfred Huberman, and Aircraftman 1 Ralph Levy. ©RAF Museum

discussed so far are still alive – but I am lucky to be in regular contact with two Jewish men who served with Bomber Command. Alfred Huberman was a tall gunner with 576 and 83 Squadrons while Lawrence Benny Goodman was a pilot with 617 Squadron. Despite their hugely dangerous roles, both survived the war, and are extremely proud of the part played by Bomber Command.

Laurence was handpicked to join the iconic 617 Squadron, dropping the massive faliboy and Grand Slam bombs towards the end of the war. He took part in the raid which finally sank the Tirpitz in late 1944, and the raid on Hitler's retreat, Berchtesgaden, in 1945. Alfred, meanwhile, completed thirty-eight operations, and took part in Operation Manna, dropping food to the Dutch population starving under German occupation.

Named after God's gift to the Israelites in the wilderness, the operation involved 33 squadrons dropping a total of around 7,000 tons of food. It is an honour to spend time with these men. We will soon be at a point where there is nobody left who can recall these events. Living memory is fast turning to history.

This is why it's so crucial that we remember the stories of these Jewish men and women who helped to preserve freedom for those of us who come after. They did fight back – the evidence is here. We owe them so much, and the importance of remembering this cannot be overstated. To finish, I would like to relate a story that stands apart.

family moved to London when he was thirteen. Despite his German nationality, Adam was accepted into the RAF.

Adam flew Hawker Typhoons, a fighter bomber which supported ground troops. The low level ground attacks led to huge pilot losses, with 151 Typhoon pilots killed during the Normandy campaign alone.

"During the war it was amazing I didn't crack up," said Adam. "But I always managed to scrape through. Partly because I had collected a series of friends around me who I'd discuss anything with. I was not afraid to say that I was scared at times". Dying was not Adam's only fear. A Jew could never be certain how he would be treated if captured by the Nazis. But for a German Jew the prospect was bleaker still. "We were very proud to have him with us," recalled the squadron's Medical Officer, "but I was certain that he would never reach a POW camp, and that summary execution was on the cards for him."

Ken Adam survived the war however, and entered the movie business. Over the course of a distinguished career as a Hollywood set designer, he created the look for every James Bond film of the 1960s and 70s. He was knighted and won two Academy Awards, yet his sideboard always gave prominence to a model of the Hawker Typhoon. For Sir Ken Adam, the wartime RAF was a family reflecting his own values of tolerance and freedom. None of the men and women



Flight Lieutenant Peter Stevens MC - formerly Georg Hein. ©RAF Museum



Aircraftwoman 2nd Class Joan Myers in 1940. Joan – a Jewish girl from London – was a WAAF who worked as a plotter at Biggin Hill, tracking the number and location of incoming enemy aircraft so RAF fighters could intercept them. ©RAF Museum

pursuit of pleasure, and he hoped that the war would provide it. Arriving in France when it was close to being overrun, he boarded one of the last ships bound for Plymouth. In England, he headed to the Air Ministry in London intent on finally tackling the Germans. After a Member of Parliament interceded on his behalf, Mamedoff eventually joined 609 Squadron. (For more on 609 Squadron and the overseas pilots who flew in it, see p.38. Ed.)

Mamedoff was soon in the thick of the action. Due to the intensity of aerial combat some young men retreated into themselves, but Mamedoff was always ready with some devastating wisecrack. "He survived the Battle, and shortly afterwards met an aristocratic heiress whom he married in August 1941. However, less than two months later he was killed in an air accident."

Nearly 3,000 airmen were awarded the Battle of Britain clasp to the 1939-45 Star. According to research carried out by historian Martin Sugaman, thirty-four – or 1.2 per cent – were Jewish. Of the British aircrew, 1.1 per cent were Jewish, but only about 0.5 per cent of the general population of Britain was Jewish. The number of Jews who flew in the Battle of Britain was therefore significantly greater proportionally than the number of Jews in Britain.

Three years after the Battle of Britain, Ken Adam also joined 609 Squadron. However, Adam was unusual even among this multinational group, for not only was he Jewish – he was German. Born Klaus Adam in Berlin in 1921, his

Berlin before being re-arrested. He subsequently hid among a group of camp guards, and tried unsuccessfully, to sneak away with them. He even acted as the German language advisor for the famous 'Wooden Horse' escape from Stalag Luft III in 1943.

At the end of the war Stevens was liberated and returned to Britain, whereupon the authorities had to decide what to do. Rather than make an example of him however, Stevens was not only allowed to retain his assumed identity, but also promoted to Squadron Leader and awarded the Military Cross for his repeated escape attempts.

For most of those discussed above, the war was a brutal struggle to resist the breakdown of civilisation; to strike back against an unthinkable evil. This was surely true for Stevens also.

But it was also his opportunity for redemption and rebirth. The war allowed Georg Hein to become a new man. <sup>AM</sup>

**The Jewish 'Hidden Heroes' project** has been launched by the RAF Museum to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain in 2020. It is supported by Chelsea Football Club owner, Roman Abramovich, in partnership with the Chelsea Football Club Foundation. The RAF Museum and the Chelsea FC Foundation are now inviting people from all over the world to submit their own stories – as well as those of families and friends of Jewish personnel in the Second War – so they can be preserved and shared online and at the Museum's public sites.

To share a story, please download the RAF Stories app or contact their team at: [rafstories@rafmuseum.org](mailto:rafstories@rafmuseum.org) or on **01902 376 237**.



claimed the protection of the Geneva Convention.

In captivity, he mounted repeated escape attempts. In October 1941, just as the Oflag XXIB he broke out via a tunnel and caught a train to

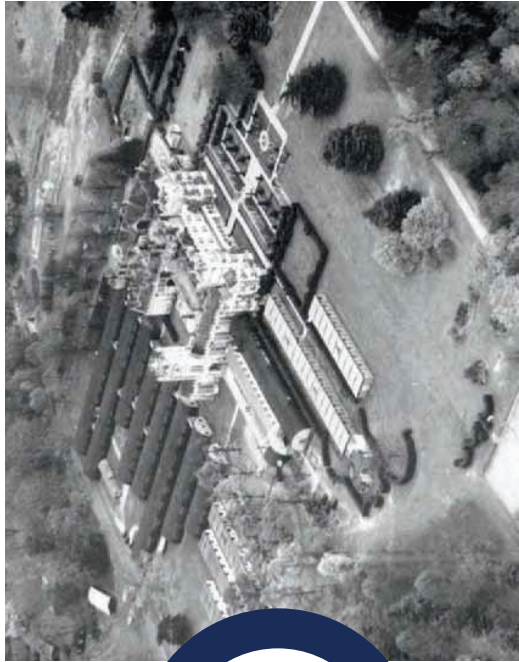
"Sir, I am a Jew, and my war with the enemy began long before September 1939!"



# The Clearest View RAF Medmenham

by Paul Stewart

1,500 reports and 600,000 prints were produced every month



Right: Danesfield House circa 1941, with the huts visible in the grounds.

Right: Mosaic of Cologne produced to accompany Medmenham Report K.1333. A typical entry in the report is the entry for location 90-1, small and 5 large buildings of the Kolnischer Gummi-fabrik ( tyre factory) completely demolished.

Far right: A Photographic Interpreter at Danesfield House studies plans and photographs of a BMW factory with the use of a stereoscope.

All images © Medmenham Association

The photographic intelligence centre that provided Britain and its allies with detailed information on enemy activities across Europe and the Mediterranean in the 1940s enabled the RAF to plan and assess missions based on the best intelligence. The vital role it played in the Allied war effort is little-known even today.

In 1941 Danesfield House near Marlow in Buckinghamshire became home to RAF Medmenham. The Central Interpretation Unit (CIU) was established there after bomb damage, and a lack of space to house the expanding unit forced their relocation from Wembley. However, even the expansive Danesfield House became too small as the workforce grew from 231 to more than 1,700. Soon, huts like those used at Bletchley Park were constructed to house many of the CIU sections.

**Industrial scale intelligence**  
In the build up to D-Day and beyond, almost 1,500 intelligence reports and 600,000 prints were being produced every month. This was photographic intelligence production on an industrial scale, and was made possible by the organisation of Medmenham into 20 photographic intelligence sections with 15 intelligence

support sections. Medmenham's Photographic Interpreters, or PIs as they were known, worked with basic stereoscopes. These presented offset images separately to the viewer's left and right eye, which the brain would unconsciously combine to give the illusion of three-dimensional depth. This allowed PIs to extract far more detail from the images than was possible with a single two-dimensional photograph.

**Adapting the aircraft**

Many of the photographs were taken by hand-picked pilots in camera-equipped Spitfires and Mosquitos. To accommodate the numerous cameras and increase their speed, Spitfires would also have their guns removed. Although lacking in weapons, it was believed by Wing Commander William Tuttle of the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit that speed would be their armour, stating: "You don't need

guns when you're flying the fastest planes in the sky" In addition to the images obtained via dedicated reconnaissance missions, cameras were also fitted to Bomber Command aircraft. This was to provide photographs for bomb damage assessment back at Medmenham. Bomber Command cameras had a delay timer which started when the bombs were released, and calibrated to take shots around the time the bombs detonated, capturing images of their impact.

The army of specialists at Medmenham were capable of analysing the thousands of photographs that arrived daily, and producing fully illustrated, detailed analytical reports as well as diagrams and models. Headed by Wing Commander Douglas Kendall, RAF Medmenham had many successes during the Second World War. In September 1940 it correctly identified the rapid

**The Medmenham Collection**  
The Medmenham Collection covers the history of military aerial photographic interpretation and imagery analysis from its beginnings, through both world wars to the present day. A museum display on RAF Medmenham can be found at the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre's Military Intelligence Museum at Chicksands, south of Bedford, and the Medmenham archive is located at Wyton, just east of Huntingdon. Both the museum and the archive owe their existence to the enthusiasm of Medmenham Association members.

German build-up of invasion forces and barges at the channel ports, then the gradual winding down of these forces from October to December.

**Unwelcome information**

Medmenham's analysis of Bomber Command missions also proved to be vital, though its findings were not always well received. In 1940 and 1941, it pointed out how often targets were missed, sometimes by many miles, as they tracked the fall of bombs on the reconnaissance photographs.







Aerial photographs of Leipzig, Messerschmitt Works before and after an attack by Bomber Command.

The section dedicated to assessing bomb damage – K Section – was also able to show that targets reported as being hit many times had in reality received no hits at all. As technological aids to navigation and bombing such as Gee and Oboe were implemented, Medmenham was able to provide photographic evidence of Bomber Command's improved accuracy.

**Operation Millennium**

In 1942 Bomber Command organised its first 1,000 bomber raid. Known as Operation Millennium, the target was the German city of Cologne. The very next day Medmenham produced a report on the raid. This was followed a few days later by a far more detailed report, complete with an annotated mosaic image of the city showing the true extent of the damage, and listing in detail exactly what had been destroyed. K Section at Medmenham produced reports for Bomber Command on almost every bombing mission

undertaken during the war; all of which survive and are held in the National Archives at Kew.

**Dam busters**

As well as reporting on post-operational damage, Medmenham also provided extensive intelligence on targets in advance of operations. Operation Chastise (known more famously as the Dambusters raid) was one of the most iconic RAF missions during the war. It involved the bombing of the Möhne and Eder dams by 617 Squadron. In the build up, intelligence reports, photographs and models of the dams to aid planning. It was essential to the success of the operation to know the water levels to within a

couple of feet and any anti-aircraft defences protecting the dams, and these reports were the only way Barnes Wallis and the planners could gain that information.

**D-Day**

Medmenham also prepared thousands of intelligence reports and millions of photographs to support D-Day. They monitored the railways around Normandy daily in the build-up to D-Day and afterwards to ensure that the Allies were keeping the region inaccessible by rail, and thereby delaying vital German reinforcements.

**Top secret**

Some of the most secret and successful work done by Medmenham was L Section's identification of the German



Wing Commander Douglas Kendall



**Medmenham also identified Germany's secret V Weapons sites**

V Weapons programme. This section studied aircraft industries and new types of aircraft, and was commanded by Flight Officer Constance Babington Smith. A journalist on The Aeroplane magazine before the war, Babington Smith's knowledge of aircraft led her to volunteer for the WAAF.

While studying photographs in 1943 she spotted scorch marks on the runway grass at Peenemünde in Germany, showing that the Germans had developed a twin-engine jet. Later that year she also noticed a rocket-like object at the same site – making her the first person to identify a V1 'Doodlebug'. This discovery resulted in a special team being created to further study the V Weapons programme. Between late 1943 and early 1944 this team, known as Crossbow, successfully identified all V1 heavy launch sites.

**Exceptional talent**

In addition to Constance Babington Smith, many

other women served at RAF Medmenham, often in roles vital to the Allied intelligence effort. Sarah Oliver, the daughter of Winston Churchill, was posted to Medmenham where she worked as a plotter of photographic reconnaissance sorties. Her hard work soon saw her commissioned and trained as a Photographic Interpreter. She was well-liked among her colleagues due to her diligence and the fact that she never pulled rank, despite her father being Prime Minister.

Another example of the exceptional talent Medmenham boasted during the war was Dorothy Garrod. Having read history at Newnham College Cambridge before training as an archaeologist, Garrod became the first female professor at either Oxford or Cambridge when she was appointed Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge in 1939 – nine years before Cambridge awarded degrees to women.



Constance Babington Smith (seated left) was awarded an MBE for her service at RAF Medmenham

**Author bio:** Paul Stewart served for 35 years in the RAF with tours in tactical and strategic photographic interpretation, where he developed a healthy respect for the Photographic Interpreters from RAF Medmenham. After retiring from the RAF, he completed a PhD on the work of Medmenham during the Second World War. He is also Chairman of The Medmenham Association – an association for former and current Photographic Interpreters and Image Analysts.

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RAF Veterans Support Centre  
RAF Medmenham



An MC-9 Reaper sits on the flight line as the sun sets at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada. Airman 1st Class William Rio Rosado, US, Air Force photo in the public domain

# 'Process, Exploit, Disseminate',

## The precision work of today's imagery intelligence

**Imagery Intelligence** is a fast-growing trade within the RAF, with advances in technology over the past twenty years resulting in a major shift in direction. Here, Sergeant Gareth Squire of No. 1 Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing and Corporal Chris Murrell of XIII Squadron provide an inside view on two vital roles – Imagery Analyst and Mission Intelligence Coordinator – at the cutting edge of aerial intelligence.

Imagery Analysts (IAs) are the closest modern equivalent to

the Photographic Interpreters of RAF Medmenham's day, with many being based at ISR Wing. The Wing was formed in April 2016, replacing Tactical Imagery-Intelligence Wing and other intelligence units in undertaking imagery analysis tasks.

**Orion Flight**  
Orion Flight analysts use intelligence gathered from the Typhoon's Listening III pod. This pod is the aircraft's primary surface-to-air sensor. As well as providing reconnaissance capability, it also enables the locating, tracking and laser-

designating of targets for attack. With full motion video (FMV), electro-optic and infra-red capability, the Listening III is able to operate at night as well as during the day. The pod can also create mosaic imagery similar to the wet-film mosaics produced by RAF Medmenham's Photographic Interpreters during the Second World War.

Today's analysts transform raw data collected via the Listening III pod into usable information. This can then either be sent for further analysis or distributed to commanders to use as combat information. This procedure is

known as 'Process, Exploit and Disseminate' (PED). Imagery Analysts must process the imagery to an exploitable format by correctly copying and cataloguing on the relevant computer system. Before digital technology, processing would have required a dark room and all its associated equipment to produce physical prints from wet film. The deployment of today's Imagery Analysts is far more flexible, and requires much less equipment. If necessary, an analyst can deploy in a secure area with nothing more than a computer and an

### Internet connection.

While the modern Imagery Analyst has it easier in that data is more accessible and can be correlated to mission highlights provided by the aircrew, the sheer quantity of data on modern systems is a huge challenge. Current pods such as the Listening III have the capacity to store thousands of still images and hours of FMV footage. This video requires viewing in full to identify target movement, which could occur for just a small period of time in a long video.

The ability to identify motion through FMV is a modern-day

improvement in capability. As well as being able to conduct surveillance on a target, the Imagery Analysts can select which frame of imagery to use to share the intelligence they derive – a far cry from the snapshot in time' offered by WW2-era photographs.

**Crossbow Flight**  
Process, Exploit and Disseminate (PED) is also provided for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) by 11 SR Squadron's Crossbow flight. Crossbow was formed in 2011 as part of tactical Imagery-Intelligence Wing. It was the first time the UK had the

capability to provide near real time imagery intelligence support to military operations from the UK.

Crossbow – which has been operating from RAF Wyrton since 2016 – is capable of supporting RPAS missions throughout the world. It also lies within the US Distributed Common Ground Station (DCGS) network, and so has a global connectivity. This means that the RPAS itself could be flying over the Middle East while being piloted from the US, and with PED taking place in the UK.

Although there are similarities

between the intelligence gathered by Crossbow's PED and the photographic reports compiled in RAF Medmenham's day, the way this intelligence is collected has altered radically in the intervening 75 years.

Today's high definition cameras offer a near real-time downlink capability, so the analyst can produce high resolution imagery intelligence to give commanders an almost immediate appreciation of the area of operations. The long loiter time of RPAS also gives Crossbow the potential to operate with a 24 hour capability, using the infra-red camera during night





**Training at MQ-9 Reaper flight simulators.** Senior Airman Holly Stevens. U.S. Air Force photo in the public domain.

hours. Online communications containing multiple sources of potential intelligence are used to keep everyone connected, and Crossbow has the capability to fuse other intelligence sources into its products on a near-real-time basis.

These long (or) times, combined with a high definition-quality video feed, allow Crossbow to conduct mission types that would have been impossible in the past. These include following high value individuals (HVI) and vehicles, immediate assessment of battle damage, monitoring of convoy or friendly (Blue) forces, and counter-improvised explosive device (IED) work.

Crossbow also allows the US Air Force and the RAF to share situational awareness at coalition, operational and tactical levels of command.

Personnel from other members of the Five Eyes community (the UK, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) have worked with and within Crossbow, as have the Royal Navy, Intelligence Corps and Reserves.

The UK's Crossbow and Reaper Forces operate 365 days a year, and have provided

continual operational support in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2014 (Op Herick) and in Syria/Iraq (Op Shader) from 2014 to the present day.

The main units that Crossbow works with to provide valuable intelligence are the RPAS squadrons of XIII and 39 squadrons – or more specifically the Mission Intelligence Coordinators (MICs) embedded in them.

**Mission Intelligence Coordinators**

MICs form part of the three-person crew along with the pilot and the sensor operator that operates the MQ-9 Reaper. The MIC position is a tri-service role for intelligence specialists with ranks ranging from Junior Non-Commissioned Officer to Squadron Leader, a role unique to RPAS. Due to their involvement in MQ-9 operations, MICs are subject to the same orders as aircrew which

includes training, assessments, maintenance of currencies and logging of flight hours.

When the RPAS is assigned to provide support to another unit, the MIC is responsible for ensuring it is operated safely and aids in the successful completion of that unit's mission. To achieve this the Reaper crew must work together as a cohesive team to provide the best possible support. A close and effective relationship must exist between the pilot, the sensor operator, and the MIC to make this possible.

During a mission the MIC has several important functions. They must monitor and maintain situational awareness of the operating airspace. Where airspace issues are identified the MIC must ensure that it is effectively communicated across all the crew positions and any impacts communicated to the unit being supported.

**The UK's Crossbow and Reaper Forces operate 365 days a year**

identified and that the target area is clear of any transient or collateral concerns. The MIC will assist the crew in the identification of a shift location; a location clear of any collateral concerns where the weapon can be moved to after launch should the need arise.

As the engagement progresses, the MIC, along with the rest of the crew, will constantly monitor the target area to ensure no unintended casualties or damage. Once the engagement is complete, the MIC will conduct basic battle damage assessment to confirm the weapon performed as expected and the desired effect was achieved.

While today's technology may be unrecognisable from that used at the birth of imagery intelligence, one key element still unites the two eras: people. Modern Imagery Analysis and Mission Intelligence Coordinators maintain the camaraderie, teamwork, pride and dedication of the Photo Interpreters and reconnaissance pilots of RAF Medmenham's day. This ensures that the UK's armed forces are equipped with the most comprehensive intelligence available. [AW](#)



**Above:** Preparing the Litening III pod for a Tomahawk GBU for a reconnaissance mission in Iraq in 2014. This one was used to help deliver humanitarian aid in northern Iraq. *Senior Airman Andy Wright. ©MOD/Crown*



**Left:** A still from video. The Reaper's crew provided surveillance assistance to a successful coalition strike that eliminated an ISIL sniper team and then employed its own GBU-12 guided bomb to destroy a terrorist-held building. *©MOD/Defence Imagery 2015*



**An RAF Reaper UAV from 39 Squadron makes its approach to Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.** *©MOD/Crown*



# Seth & Geoff

How companionship and support helped a Suffolk veteran through his wife's illness and death.

**F**ormer Chief Technician Geoff Garbett left the RAF in the 1970s after 28 years' service, and settled in Ipswich with his wife, Margaret, and their sons, Nigel and Neil.

Geoff and Margaret enjoyed decades of happy retirement together, but a few years ago Margaret was diagnosed with dementia. Geoff became her carer, and soon realised he needed support.

Geoff (69) said: "I first learned of the RAF Association's befriending service after reading an article in *Alir* Mail. Because of Margaret's condition, I felt I could do with some support, so I asked them if I could meet a befriender."

Sergeant Seth Andrews, who was stationed at nearby RAF Honington, became a befriender after receiving training from the RAF Association. He was introduced to Geoff before Christmas 2017, and they connected immediately.

Seth (37) said: "The befriending scheme had always interested me, precisely because it would mean helping veterans like Geoff. We met up and went for coffee in Ipswich, and our shared interest in the RAF meant we were instantly on the same wavelength."

"The dementia awareness training I received as part of my befriender course meant I was able to be supportive when I met Margaret, and to understand what she and Geoff were going through."

Margaret died in February 2019, leaving Geoff more isolated. Seth began meeting him more often, and helped him keep active in his community.

Seth said: "I've encouraged him to join local clubs and to take up swimming again. I've even been able to help him get back into collecting tropical fish, by cleaning out his fish tank."

Geoff said: "Seth's been brilliant, especially since Margaret died. He's been helping me to keep busy, and thanks to him I now have seven freshwater fish in my front room to keep me company."

"We plan to visit Duxford airfield together soon. I was stationed there for a while nearly 40 years ago, and I look forward to seeing how much it's changed, and to telling Seth about my time there. *AM*





*finding it tough?*

## MENTAL WELLBEING COURSES 2020

# “No really, it’s ~~all good”~~ too much!

Okay,

So if you really want to know - yeah - things are a bit tough at the moment. I’m a 37 year old mum, and sometimes I look at my friends whose partners come home every night, regular as clockwork, and I do feel a bit envious.

I’m so proud of Simon but I do have moments when he’s away when it all gets on top of me a bit. Trying to juggle kids, work - I feel just a bit overwhelmed sometimes I guess. I know it’s stupid - he’s always there on the end of the phone and he’s so supportive -

I just can’t help how I feel sometimes.

He’s due back next week. I can’t wait for him to get home and everything to be normal again, we just need to get through the first few days of all living in the same house together again - he’ll be tired, the kids will be over the top excited and I’ll be in the middle....

But I’m not moaning. There’s plenty worse off than me. Si’s a great husband and a great dad. I just need to be positive. Get on top of things.

Then I’ll be fine.

Promise x

Are you or someone you care about finding it tough? We are holding mental wellbeing training courses for non-serving members of the RAF family across the UK.

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# The life of AOC No. 11 Group

**Air Vice-Marshal Ian Duguid OBE** talks about his work and what inspires him. A Harrier pilot with No IV (Army Co-operation) and No 3 (Fighter) Squadrons, and a qualified weapons instructor, he flew operational missions over Iraq (Operation Warden) and in the Balkans with NATO. He worked in media operations in Kuwait (Operation Bolton), was Head of Defence Operational Capability in the Ministry of Defence, and commanded the Typhoon Force for three “challenging but rewarding” years. He is now Air Officer Commanding No. 11 Group and Chief of Staff Operations at HQ Air Command in High Wycombe.



AVM Duguid during Operation Azotize — (left) talking to RAF personnel and (right) with Typhoons. The operation was supported by X1(F) Squadron and 121 Expeditionary Air Wing. Corporal Rob Bourne © MOD/Crown 2019.



The operation was supported by X1(F) Squadron and 121 Expeditionary Air Wing. Corporal Rob Bourne © MOD/Crown 2019.

**When you were a new recruit, what did you think an AOC did (honestly)?**

When I went through the very intensive flying training I was just focused on doing the best I could. I knew we had AOCs and knew their role in running Groups, but in terms of direct access and understanding of what they did, I and my entire cohort in the 80s and 90s didn't really know. But you're talking 30 years ago; things are slightly different now.

**Now you are an AOC, what ten words best describe what you do each day?**

Drink coffee! That's two words. No, seriously... Leadership, management, execution of plans, delivery, operations, direction and guidance to staff. I also advise the Ministry of Defence on strategy, and support the Secretary of State for Defence and their team so they can make decisions.

**What would most surprise people about your work?**

I don't think they would be surprised at the amount of work I get, as we are all working very hard. But perhaps the diverse nature of my work – I can be working on a very sensitive contingency plan for a highly-classified operation and then an hour later I can be talking about imbalance in the air force, and improving how many women we get to be pilots.

**What part of your job are you most proud of? Why?**

I am most proud of the good that we do; that we continue to deliver on operations overseas and at home. At home, 24/7, we have aircraft on very high alert to scramble, get airborne and intercept: it's not only the Quick Reaction Alert team, but all the folk working on the radars, the battlespace managers, and RAF Brize Norton at high alert to supply the Voyagers to refuel the fighter aircraft. The support on Twitter and other places from the public is visible. When they are sleeping at night they are grateful that there are people ready to go at very short notice.

Left: AVM Duguid addressing personnel from the UK and other nations at the handover ceremony at the start of Operation Azotize at Amaria Air Base, Estonia, in May 2019. Corporal Rob Bourne © MOD/Crown 2019.

**What takes you overseas?**

When we deploy forces on operations, I go and see them because I have direct command and control responsibility for those squadrons and the folk that have gone out. We also have close relationships that we need to maintain with our key allies and partners, so that means engaging with others like the United States, France, Germany and the Baltic states at conferences and discussions. And we have a community of interest with colleagues in other air forces which is crucial to maintain.

**What part of your job do you most want to improve?**

Ensuring that individuals are recognised for their efforts, because everybody across the organisation is working so hard. And enabling everyone to achieve the work-life balance they strive for.

**Do you have any free time? What do you do in it?**

I don't get much free time in the week. I do have a different, more sociable lifestyle at weekends – even though I am on call, it's a light touch on call. And I've always had a personal drive to be physically fit. I live about nine miles from the office and I cycle to and from work every day when I'm not overseas. I run or cycle at weekends too. The commute generates the 'holy grail' of about 1.25 hours of thinking time, which I don't generally get in the office. It's incredibly valuable.

**What makes a good leader?**

The RAF spends a lot of time on understanding leadership. We invest heavily in training and opportunities for everybody across the services. So, empathy, compassion, clarity of thought, decisiveness, intellect and emotional intelligence (that's huge for the RAF). And being able to find the optimum balance around task, team and individual for each circumstance. But we have to work on it. Some leaders have an innate head start but so much of it is about experience, education and learning from others.

**What inspires you to go to work every day?**

I never know what I am going to confront on any day. I know that we do the best we can and that fills me with huge optimism. Also, I work with a great bunch of people who give 100 per cent to deliver: that's inspiration in itself. AM

**"I work with a great bunch of people who give 100% to deliver"**





**O**n The Strand, in the heavy traffic of central London lies a secret gem. Cars and delivery trucks braving the city's congestion charge pass on both sides, within a few metres of the apse. In spring and summer you have to peer through the elegant trees, at the front to see the white tower and the west door. This is St Clement Danes, the beautiful Central Church of the Royal Air Force.

In early April every year, the anniversary service of the RAF takes place within the peace and stillness provided by its thick stone walls. Association member Michael Meyer is a trustee of the Friends of the church; St Clement Danes is a memorial church to all those who lost their lives while serving in the RAF, whose names are contained in the church's books of remembrance. Its floor is set with more than a thousand slate squadron and unit badges, and colours and squadron standards are laid up in the building.

**Hidden early life**

St Clement Danes Church started its life as an early wooden tabernacle for the Danes, in 878AD. It has been rebuilt three times since then and what stands now is the stone-built church designed by Sir Christopher Wren (of St Paul's Cathedral fame, among much else). It stood proudly as the parish church of St Clements in what was Southern Middlesex until the formation of Greater London and the City of Westminster. During the Second World War the German Air Force destroyed the original Wren church. But significant public subscriptions from both the RAF and Commonwealth Air Forces raised enough funds to rebuild it in its original Wren style. It became the Central Church of the RAF in 1958.

**Hidden heroes of funding**

St Clement Danes receives some Ministry of Defence funding — for the staff and supplies that are needed for any RAF service church. The responsibility for the management of the building lies with the trustees

of the St Clement Danes Fund, a registered charity. They fundraise to ensure the future of the building and are assisted by the Friends of St Clement Danes. Michael explains: "The Friends were formed as a registered charity in the 1960s. They fundraise for the soft elements in the church that are not provided from public funds. For example the upkeep of fixtures and fittings, purchase of sheet music, enhancement of CCTV and security equipment. There are about 600 of us now."

Twenty per cent of the Friends live in London, the rest across the United Kingdom and around the world. The Friends produce a magazine called Oranges & Lemons, and their annual concert is open to all and supported by RAF Music Services and the Choir of St Clement Danes.

"Not only does St Clement Danes hold routine weekly and special annual services, baptisms and weddings, but there are links with the Association too," says Michael. "Members will be aware that our standards and our national standard are paraded at our Annual Conference, at the Birmingham Tattoo and many other times and places. But do Air Mail's readers know that they are paraded at the church every year prior to the Anniversary Service of the formation of the RAF?"

To Michael, the final words about this oasis of peace, beauty and remembrance: "If you are ever in London and have an hour to spare, make your way to the east end of the Strand where you will find this architectural, historical and RAF gem. It stands for so much."

There is much more to find out, including a virtual tour of the inside of the church here: [bit.ly/5tClementD](http://bit.ly/5tClementD). **AM**

**Left: Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the RAF in the exquisite St Clement Danes church. The squadron badges can be clearly seen on the floor of the aisle. Senior Aircraftman Tom Gann © MOD/Crown**  
**Above: RAF Association standard bearers outside St Clement Danes during the RAF100 celebrations on 1 April 2018. Sergeant P George © MOD/Crown**



Tucked away on  
The Strand lies a  
**Secret Gem**



Below: Celebrating 609 Squadron's 100<sup>th</sup> victory on 21 October 1940. Left to right: Sidney Hill (British), Flight Lieutenant John Dundas (British), Pilot Officer Jan Zrakowski (Polish), Pilot Officer Keith Ogilvie (Canadian), Flight Lieutenant Frank Howell (British), Squadron Leader Michael Robinson (British) and an unidentified Polish pilot.

Far right: Canadian Keith Ogilvie (with pipe) sits with Eugene Tobin from the USA.

All images © Chris Goss unless otherwise stated.

**Chris Goss** relates the stories of some of the hidden heroes of the Battle of Britain; focussing on the little-known overseas pilots and non-commissioned officers of 609 Squadron.

# The Few of 609 Squadron



On 27 September, 1940 Pilot Officer Roger Miller was also killed after colliding with the Me-serschmitt 110 he was in the process of shooting down.

October saw 609 Squadron's first and only non-commissioned officer to be killed in the battle. This was Derby-born Sergeant Alan Fear Y, who had joined 609 Squadron in June 1940 straight from training and, until the arrival of Welshman Sergeant David Hughes-Rees on 18 September, was 609's only Non-Commissioned Officer pilot in the Battle of Britain. He was credited with his first victory on 18 July 1940 and by 25 September his total stood at five destroyed, one shared, one probable and four damaged. On 7 October, while intercepting German aircraft attacking the Westlands Factory at Yeovil, he was

surprised by a German fighter and his Spitfire badly damaged. Trying to get back to RAF Warmwell in Dorset, he was forced to bale out just before landing, and at such low altitude his parachute had no time to open.

609 Squadron had been an Auxiliary squadron before the war, with pilots and ground crew initially coming from the West Riding of Yorkshire. However, of the 38 pilots who flew with the squadron during the Battle of Britain, eight came from far beyond Britain's shores.

Pilot Officer Eugene Tobin was from Los Angeles, and had worked at the MGM Studios in Hollywood to pay for his flying lessons. Pilot Officer Andy Wamedorf was from

**595**  
non-British citizens took part in the whole of the Battle of Britain

Connecticut and performed at air shows, and likewise Pilot Officer Vernon "Shorty" Keough – from Brooklyn – had extensive flying and parachuting experience in shows that travelled across America.

The three had travelled to Europe in the hope of joining the Finnish Air Force in their war against Russia, but by the time they arrived the war was over. Instead, they decided to join the French Air Force but with France in chaos and its military in disarray, the three boarded one of the last ships to England, where they joined the RAF instead.

After training on Spitfires, they were posted to 609 Squadron on 8 August and took part in →



Sergeant David Hughes-Rees.



## 609 Squadron

the Battle of Britain. While they survived 1940, 1941 was less forgiving. Roguch was killed in an accident on 15 February 1941. Tobin was killed in action on 7 September 1941, and Mamedoff was lost in an accident just one month and one day after that.

As well as the three Americans in 609 Squadron, there were four Poles and a Canadian. Remarkably, the Poles – Flying Officer Tadeusz Nowierski, Pilot Officer Zbigniew Olenski, Pilot Officer Piotr Osazewski-Ostoja and Pilot Officer Jan Zurakowski – all survived the war.

In spite of his brave actions in combat, Zbigniew Olenski's most important contribution to the British war effort may be the technical report he submitted which highlighted the shortcomings of the Spitfire Mk I and suggested modifications. Before the war, Olenski – a qualified engineer – had been in charge of Poland's scientific research into aircraft performance at the Aeronautical Technical Institute, as well as test-flying fighters.

His suggestions were accepted and implemented, and he was soon posted to the Aerodynamics Department at RAE Farnborough where he reached the position of Senior Aerodynamicist.

The sole Canadian with 609 Squadron was Pilot Officer Keith Ogilvie, who also survived the war, albeit as a prisoner. Shot down on 4 July 1941 over Europe, his injuries saw him unable to evade capture. When released from hospital he was sent to Stalag Luft III where he took part in the Great Escape in 1944. Ogilvie was at large for two days before being recaptured, and he avoided being one of the 50 who were executed for the escape.

Of those 31 pilots from 609 Squadron who survived the Battle of Britain, 12 would be killed later in the war and two killed in flying

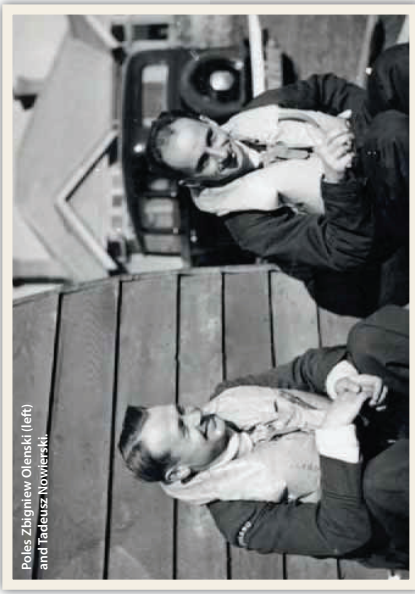


Above: Pilot Officer Andy Mamedoff (right) with Pilot Officer Eugene Tobin (left) and Pilot Officer Vernon Shorty Roguch (centre), Church Fenton, September 1940. Courtesy of the Air Historical Branch.

## The Foreign Few

595 non-British citizens took part in the whole of the Battle of Britain. It is often mistakenly written that an Israeli or Palestinian airman also flew in the battle; this actually refers to George Goodman of 1 Squadron, a British citizen born to British parents who were working in Haifa in 1920.

Great Britain	2342
Australia	32
Barbados	1
Belgium	28
Canada	112
Czechoslovakia	88
France	13
Ireland	10
Jamaica	1
Newfoundland	1
New Zealand	127
Poland	145
Rhodesia	3
South Africa	25
USA	9



Poles Zbigniew Olenski (left) and Tadeusz Nowierski.

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# Culture Cultures



**“Unknown Forces: Battling my Intrusive Thoughts”**

by Pete Roberts  
 Publisher: Trigger Publishing  
 £9.99

Born and raised in North Wales, Pete Roberts was a boy just like any other: except for the fact that he kept thinking about murdering his family. Terrified by his own thoughts, Pete joined the RAF in the hope that he could escape his urges and apply himself to something structured. While he didn't entirely avoid his intrusive thoughts, he flourished in a teaching role (despite his dyslexia) and vowed to continue helping others to learn their craft. It wasn't until much later that Pete found the answer to his torment: he suffered from obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Funny and insightful, *Unknown Forces* follows Pete through his tumultuous life, from fatherhood to the Falklands, and everything in between.

**Members can get 25% off** by contacting Trigger Publishing at enquiries@triggerpublishing.co.uk or on 01636 600 825 and using the code RAFP25.



**“Sydney Camm: Hurricane and Harrier Designer”**

by John Sweetman  
 Publisher: Pen & Sword Books  
 £25.00

This Man Saved Britain ran the headline in the News Chronicle on 18 February 1941 — in a reference to the role of Sydney Camm, designer of the Hawker Hurricane, during the Battle of Britain. Similarly, the Minister of Economic Warfare, Lord Selborne, advised Winston Churchill that England owed a great deal to Camm.

Sydney Camm's work on the Hurricane was just one achievement in his remarkable time in aircraft design and engineering — a career that stretched from the biplanes of the 1920s to the jet fighters of the Cold War.

This book is a detailed biography of the man believed by Sir Thomas Sopwith, the respected aircraft designer and Hawker aircraft company founder, to be 'the greatest designer of fighter aircraft the world has ever known'.

**Members can get 25% off** this title by visiting [bit.ly/CammHurricane](http://bit.ly/CammHurricane) or calling 01226 734222 and using the code RAFP25.



**“Pioneering Places of British Aviation”**

by Bruce Hales-Dutton  
 Publisher: Pen & Sword Books  
 £19.99

From the beginning of the nineteenth century Britain was at the forefront of powered flight. Across the country unexpected places became centres of innovation and experimentation. At Brompton Hall, Sir George Cayley put forward ideas which formed the basis of powered flight in 1799. Percy Pitcher flew gliders from the grounds of Stamford Hall in Leicestershire (now the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre) during the 1890s. In 1908 A.V. Roe made what is considered to be the first powered flight in Britain, from Brooklands in 1908.

These are just a few of the many places covered in this examination of the early days of British aviation, which include Britain's first aircraft factory — in the railway arches at Bactersea — and the British Army's first airfield at Larkhill on Salisbury Plain.

**Members can get 25% off** this title by visiting [bit.ly/PioneeringPlaces](http://bit.ly/PioneeringPlaces) or calling 01226 734222 and using the code RAFP25.



**“The Wreck Hunter: Battle of Britain & The Blitz”**

by Melody Foreman  
 Publisher: Pen & Sword Books  
 £25.00

In 1961 a young Terry Parsons began his search for lost aircraft and memories of the Battle of Britain and the Blitz. With each of the thousands of RAF and Luftwaffe artefacts he unearthed came stories linking the valiant and the brave, the living and the dead.

Among the items recovered from the many wreck sites was a Spitfire control column with its gun button still switched to firing mode, a pilot's waistcoat once used to stop the drafts and rattles in a Hurricane cockpit, and a buckled tail fin from a Me 110 bearing its unmistakable swastika.

This biography, created from Terry's original notes and photographs, shows how one man's pioneering commitment to aviation archaeology ultimately served as a unique tribute to thousands of young souls of the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.

**Members can get 25% off** this title by visiting [bit.ly/WreckHunter](http://bit.ly/WreckHunter) or calling 01226 734222 and using the code RAFP25.



**WIN A FREE COPY**

**“The Crew”**

by David Price  
 Publisher: Head of Zeus, £25

The Crew recounts the intimate personal testimonies of Wing Commander Ken Cook who served as a Bomb Almer with the Comans crew. The Crew follows Flying Officer Jim Comans and his crewmen from their enlistment as volunteers, through training and into operational service. They flew forty-five hazardous bombing missions — mostly deep into Germany at night — through the winter of 1943 to the summer of 1944.

At ninety-five Ken Cook is the crew's last survivor. Enlisting in RAF Bomber Command at nineteen, his extraordinary story brings a moving insight into the bombing campaign. His experiences, particularly during the Battle of Berlin, highlight the extreme danger each bomber crew faced. With Bomber Command's casualty rate of over 44%, the book describes how the airmen overcame immense physical and mental challenges to survive. There are now very few surviving RAF Bomber Command airmen from the Second World War and The Crew will doubtless be one of the final eyewitness testimonies to this momentous period in history.

Members can get 20% off this title, plus free p&p within the UK by calling 01256 302699 and using the code RAFP20.

**To win a free copy of The Crew by David Price, just answer the following question: which country house was RAF Medmenham stationed at during WWII? Email answers to [airmail@raf.org.uk](mailto:airmail@raf.org.uk) or call 0800 018 2361 by 17.59hrs on 30 June to be entered into the prize draw (members only).**



**“Women on the Front Line: British Servicewomen's Path to Combat”**

by Kathleen Sheritt  
 Publisher: Amberley Publishing  
 £20

How did women go from unacknowledged participation in combat in the Second World War to all combat roles by 2018? *Women on the Front Line* explores why regular service was offered after the war, the struggle to establish careers, the first crack in the non-combatant principle; why the Royal Navy was the first to open its main combat role to women in 1990; and the consequences for the RAF and the Army.

But women's careers were not only blighted by the principle that they were non-combatants; the second major obstacle was the treatment of married women and those who became pregnant. This book looks at the growth of the gulf between employment rights and armed forces' policies. Confronting employment led to recognition of wider issues such as treatment of ethnic minorities, bullying and sexuality.

**Association shop, online at [bit.ly/K-Sheritt](http://bit.ly/K-Sheritt) or by calling 0800 018 2361.**



**“Military Wives”**

Directed by Peter Cattaneo  
 Studio: Longate

There are 74 Military Wives Choirs around the UK and the world, and a BBC documentary series already broadcast. So it was only a matter of time before someone made a film imagining the stories of the singers, and the transformative impact of being in a choir.

The film looks at the sometimes thankless life of a military wife. But Kate (Kristin Scott Thomas), the perfect officer's wife, bears it all with grace and stoicism. She finds freedom in song, and persuades a disparate group of women on the station to form a Military Wives Choir. Initially sceptical and embarrassed by such an amateur bunch, newcomer Lisa (Sharon Horgan), a rebel and rocker to the core, is quickly transformed by the choir's friendship, humour and courage.

Finding their voice together, Kate, Lisa and the choir put aside their own personal differences and, by belting out pop hits and rock anthems, this extraordinary group of women sing their hearts out, bringing joy, hope and strength to the world.

**Military Wives opened in cinemas across the UK in March.**



# Around the world in

# 18 Days?

Six years of work could come to fruition in just 18 days this summer as an Association member and RAF navigator attempts a new world speed record.



Left: The pilot, when he's not building his new aircraft, Group Captain Manwaring is the RAF's Battle Director in the Combined Air Operations Centre at Al Udeid Air Base where he was responsible for directing the air war for all coalition operations from Yemen to Afghanistan.

So circumnavigation of the earth in any aircraft is difficult. The vast distances and extremes of climate and terrain are compounded by sparsely populated regions where airports and fuel are either non-existent or in short supply. Completing this in an aircraft built in a garden shed - weighing less than half a family saloon car and designed to break the British and world records - takes these challenges to a whole new level.

In summer 2020 Group Captain Mark Manwaring, a member of Halton Branch, is planning the RAF Flight of the Navigator - attempting to break a long-standing world circumnavigation speed record of 26 days. Work commenced on a highly modified Van's RV-7 aircraft in February 2014. Since then it has been "missionised" for the most challenging elements of the circumnavigation, including crossing the Pacific Ocean in just two hops. It needs to carry more than 460 litres of fuel (usually just 158 litres), have advanced Garmin navigation and communication equipment and take oxygen and other survival kit. The plan is for a test-flight from RAF Halton in May 2020 in preparation for departure from Biggin Hill in August.

Side-by-side seating in a relatively roomy cockpit allows the installation of additional fuel tanks with minimal impact to the centre of gravity, and a large instrument panel accommodates the required avionics. An altitude band of 8,000 to 14,000 feet will help avoid weather and terrain and maximise the speed of the aircraft, with a cruise target in the region of 170-175 knots (200 mph). Unlike a sailing circumnavigation, which is also measured in days, hours and minutes, a flying record involves relatively lengthy stops for refuelling, technical support and, crucially, sleeping. Minimising the number of stops is essential for setting a record. Being able to fly for 13 hours to cover the 2,200 nautical miles between Hawaii and the west coast of the United States is critical. Using extreme range and endurance capability on the other legs will enable a single

flight in 24 hours that would otherwise take up to three flights on three days. The capacity to fly longer legs enables a 'Great Circle' route, which can save thousands of miles flown and still satisfy the requirements of a formal circumnavigation as set and adjudicated by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale.

As a former boss of 55(R) Squadron, responsible for the training of the RAF's navigators until 2011, Mark plans to use traditional navigation methods as well as the latest technology. "A big part of this project is to inspire the next generation," says former air cadet Mark. "I firmly believe that the RAF Air Cadets inspires, stretches horizons and gives the skills to achieve these dreams. So this summer we will roll out an aviation-related Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics package for every squadron of the RAFAC.



After fitting the Van RV-7's propeller, a bigger shed was needed.

helped by London-based training company QK.

The aircraft's airworthiness is overseen by the Light Aircraft Association and its stringent test schedule - approximately eight hours long with a suitable test pilot. Once complete, a permit to fly is issued (the equivalent of a certificate of airworthiness). "It is then that the real work begins!" says Mark. "There is a self-imposed 90-hour test flying schedule where I will slowly explore this aircraft. It will culminate in an attempt at the current speed record for circumnavigation of the UK, and a rehearsal of the first leg of the world circumnavigation: Biggin Hill to Cyprus. Only when all of the demanding test points have been met and the team is happy, will we decide to go!"

For regular updates, photos and video logs of the build visit [raffotn.org.uk](http://raffotn.org.uk) or [www.facebook.com/raffotn](http://www.facebook.com/raffotn).



All Images © GP CMC Manwaring

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**Amsterdam Branch**

Branch members and the Edambusters team visited the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team (RAFAT) at RAF Scampton in February. They were treated to a brief on the Red Arrows that included their history and operation, plus details of the 2019 North America tour. They witnessed a training sortie and both pre- and post-mission briefs for a seven-ship practice. They also saw a Hawk aircraft up close, with detailed explanations on the aircraft systems by technicians. Thanks are due to all the RAFAT team, and the branch's RAFALO Squadron Leader Graeme Bell who facilitated the event. Photo ©MDD/Google



**Caduceus Branch**

It was with great sadness that the branch said goodbye to former RAF Medical Services and RAF Association member Colin Adams, a veteran with tours in Operations Telic, Herrick and Granby. In attendance were members of the RAF, RAF Reserve (4626 Squadron) as well as veterans, cadets and members of the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service. When the bugler played The Last Post at Beckenham Cemetery the atmosphere was palpable. The branch would like to thank all who attended.



**Cannock Chase Branch**

Modern ballroom, Latin American and sequence dancing were all on display in October last year when the branch held a Battle of Britain dance for the first time in living memory. The event was attended by Branch Support Officer Mike Logue, the local mayor and a number of local councillors, bringing the total number of attendees to over 140. The event began with a parade of the branch standard, and a raffle raised £415 for the Association. The next dance is already booked for September 2020.

**Cranwell Branch**

Last year ended with a series of highs, including the annual Christmas draw followed by the Christmas lunch in Sleaford (pictured below). This was an opportunity to thank the Officer Commanding and cadets from 2160 (Sleaford) Squadron RAFAC, present a certificate of thanks to the cadet who carried the branch standard at the remembrance parade, and thank the RAF Association Liaison Officers and Sleaford Tesco and Sainsbury's for their support. The highlight of the year was a letter received from the Association confirming that the branch had raised a Wings Appeal total of £22,622 in 2019.



**City of Bristol**

Johnny Johnson, last of the Dambusters, was a guest at the branch's veterans' lunch in February. He visited with Group 617, a South Wales organisation that he supports. More than 40 people attended. The food was cooked by branch volunteers, the bars were open and a great time was had by all. This was the eleventh of the lunches, which take place from 12 noon to 3pm on the second Wednesday of each month. Veterans of all services and widowers and widows of servicemen and women are welcome. More from: [rafa.org.uk/bristol](http://rafa.org.uk/bristol).

**Dunfermline and Stirling Branch**

In October 1998 Dunfermline Branch was revived, and for the next 15 years or so the branch was well supported by a local but aging membership. As numbers declined, the branch amalgamated with Stirling Branch to become Dunfermline and Stirling Branch. However, a further decline in membership saw the decision to close the branch taken at the 2018 AGM. The final act to commemorate the branch was held in November 2019, when the branch standard was finally laid up during a ceremony conducted by Reverend Graham Taylor, Chaplain to South East Scotland Wing of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets, and in the presence of eight former members of Dunfermline Branch.



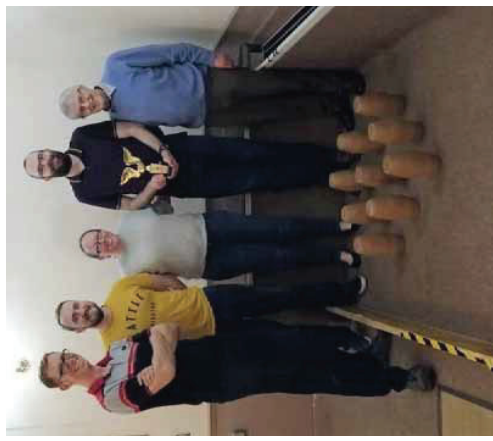
**Eastbourne Branch**

Although originally adopted by the branch in 1956, the branch has recently reaffirmed the link with 54 (Eastbourne) Squadron RAFAC. At a ceremony at the cadet squadron's HQ, Branch Chairman David Smedley handed a certificate of re-affirmation to Commanding Officer Flight Lieutenant Craig Thomson, and spoke about the work of the Association and its link with the RAF Air Cadets. There were some 60 cadets present, along with the squadron's Adult Flight Sergeant, Association Branch Support Officer Andy Pegler, Squadron Leader David Casey and the branch's Wings Appeal Officer David Brinson. Photo shows Commanding Officer Craig Thomson – holding certificate – and branch members.



**Fareham Branch**

Skittles continues to be a popular game with members of Fareham Branch, and it was with great pleasure that they were able to share this enthusiasm with RAF personnel from Swanwick and Thorney Island in February. Five teams competed for a newly commissioned trophy in memory of the branch's late chairman Barry 'Smookey' Furness at The Crofton pub in Hill Head. The winning team (pictured) were: Baz, Craig, Katie, Dave (Jacko), and Brian.



**Dudley Branch**

Branch President John Deane and Chairman Keith Bloomer were pleased to present the branch's shield to cadets of 888 (Oldbury) Squadron RAFAC. The shield demonstrates the branch's appreciation of the cadets' continuing efforts in supporting the Wings Appeal. The cadets collected over £400 in 2019, and have won the shield three times in the four years that it has been offered.



**Armourers' Branch**

Thanks to generous donations throughout the year, the branch was able to reach out to armourers worldwide over Christmas, with goody boxes posted to those on deployment. In keeping with the armourers' ethos, the contents included colouring and activity books, toys, puzzles, games, plus Christmas hats, masks and decorations, armourer zaps, an Armourers' Branch poker chip and a message from the chairman. Thank you to all of the trade managers who nominated their people to receive a box. If you are aware of an armourer who will be deployed at Christmas 2020 please send your nominations to [plumbersrest@outlook.com](mailto:plumbersrest@outlook.com).





**Ile-de-France Branch**

The branch helped facilitate a visit of a group of British Concord enthusiasts with the French Concorde Association, Olympus 593, in October 2019. Matthew Lodge, the Minister and Ambassador of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to UNESCO welcomed the group to the city, saying that events like this commemorator were very important for maintaining the relationship between the two countries. The day ended with a visit to Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport to see the Concorde on display. You can see a video of the event by visiting [bit.ly/ille-de-France-RAFA](http://bit.ly/ille-de-France-RAFA).



**Newcastle and Gateshead Branch**

The annual gala night was held in December, during which the branch's wings trophy was received by Wing Commander Rob Allen on behalf of RAF Boulmer – the RAF unit which had raised the highest total for the branch Wings Appeal.



**North Cotswolds Branch**

The Lygon Arms in Chipping Camden has been formally recognised for its links with the branch over a number of years. At the annual social evening in December, the branch presented an Association plaque to the hotel. A certificate was also presented to the Lygon team to show the appreciation of the North Cotswolds Branch. The evening was spent alongside the local RAF Air Cadets enjoying a presentation of folk music from the 12th century to the present day.



**Peterborough Branch**

The 85th anniversary of the branch's formation was celebrated by 80 members and guests in November 2019. Attendees included the Mayor of Peterborough, Councillor Gul Nawaz and Air Marshal Sir Baz and Lady North. A drum head ceremony celebrated the dedication of a new Branch Standard. Air Marshal Sir Baz North presented an Area Presidential Certificate to Treasurer Martin Thorn. Branch President, Group Captain Barry Wroe presented two awards to Standard Bearer Ron Arthur and Wings Appeal Coordinator Ron Pearson in recognition of their support to the branch over a number of years.



**Inverurie Branch**

Branch Chairman Gordon Ross attended a lunch at RAF Lossiemouth in November to celebrate the 100th birthday of Henry Paul Boham (pictured). Born in Bishop Auckland, Paul Boham joined the RAF as a boy entrant in 1936 – qualifying as a wireless operator – and served in WWII. He was welcomed at RAF Lossiemouth by Flying Officer Hannah Jones and Warrant Officer Mark Ratcliffe. Association members from Aberdeenshire also accompanied Paul to Moravia Air Museum at RAF Kinloss, which opened especially him.

**Taking a great photo**

Air Mail is always keen to show the best photography by its members, and to encourage others to submit their best photos, to help maintain the quality of your magazine and to best show off the activities of your branch.

So 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 actively doing something fun – such as playing skittles, dancing or animatedly chatting. Often they are natural and unstructured photos. Try to take your picture from the same eye level as the people in it. Look out for great backgrounds and watch out for terrible backgrounds: computer wires, pylons and a load of microphone stands can be very ugly. If there are lots of people in the photo, try an interesting arrangement, not just in rows all facing the camera.



Photos from Melton Mowbray and Rutland Branch, Moray Branch, and Cheltenham branch which were among the winners of the branch news photo competitions in 2018 and 2019. © Branch members and MCDL/Corvo

We welcome all submissions for Branch News, preferably by email to [BranchNews@rafa.co.uk](mailto:BranchNews@rafa.co.uk). Your word count should be no more than 100 words. You may submit accompanying photographs. If sending via email, please attach as separate image files and a size of at least 1MB (and ideally 300dpi). Submissions can also be sent by post to the address on the inside front cover. Unfortunately photographs submitted by post cannot be returned. Photos of insufficient quality may not be published. 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. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication. **The deadline for inclusion in the next Branch News is 15 May 2020.**

**Romsey Branch**

'Murder Most Macabre' and a history of the Flanders poppies were among the subjects presented by the branch's monthly guest speakers. The one hundred year history of the RAF was reflected in an illustrated presentation on the WWII airfields of the New Forest. November also saw the branch participate in the annual Royal British Legion remembrance celebrations. The final event of 2019 was a Christmas lunch. The new year opened with a talk on Basra given by a branch members who had been there in 2007.



**Sud-Ouest Branch**

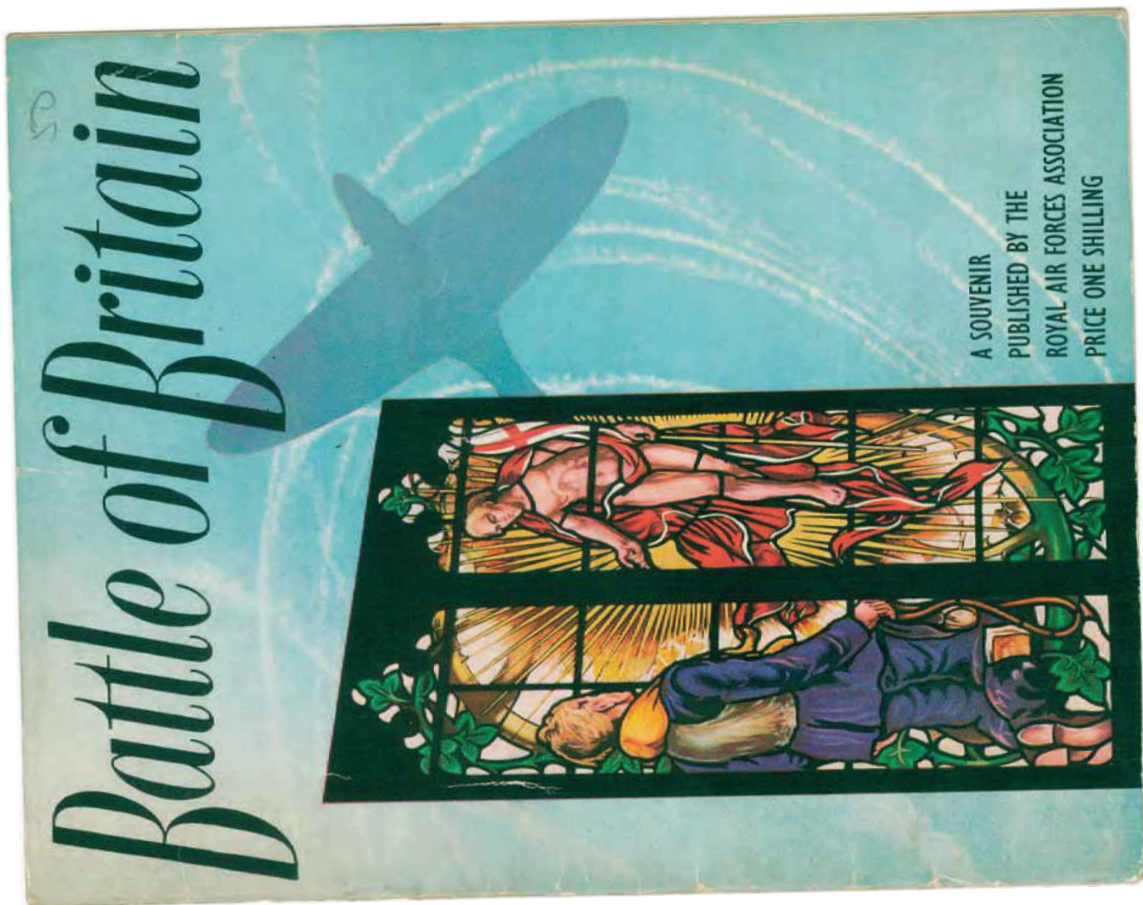
Paul Bogaert, a Sud-Ouest France Branch member and Chairman of the 'Members and Friends of the RAF French Heavy Bomber Group', was invited to unveil a monument to French aircrews killed in action. On the same night in February 1945, two Halifax bombers flown by crews from 347 Squadron RAF came down near Asten-Heusden, Netherlands in separate incidents. NA197 and NA260 had been shot down by the same German night fighter. On the 75th anniversary of the crash, the crews of two Halifax bombers were honoured by the Dutch residents in Asten-Heusden. A monument was unveiled and there was a flypast given by a French Air Force RFALE from Saint Didier in Eastern France. More than 500 people attended the event with representatives from the families of the aircrew, RAF French Air Force, Dutch Air Force, the sculptor and the local Dutch team who made it all happen.



**York Branch**

The last major event for York Branch in 2019 was the annual Christmas draw, attended by 35 branch members and guests. After the draw, Branch Chairman Brian Mennell presented a trophy to Barry Snaith for his efforts during 2019's Wings Appeal collection. The first Turning of the Page Ceremony for 2020 was organised by Association members and Branch Chairman Brian Mennell. The veteran page turner was Mr Robin Boulton. The branch celebrated Burns Night in January with a traditional Burns supper, and by the middle of February the branch's Wings Appeal total for 2020 was already more than £3,000.





Front page of the Association's 1949 Battle of Britain souvenir programme showing a detail from the newly unveiled, 48-light, Battle of Britain memorial stained glass window which had just been unveiled in the RAF Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

Thanks to readers scouring their lofts, cupboards and favourite internet selling sites for a copy of the Association's 1949 Battle of Britain souvenir programme, the Air Mail archive is now the proud custodian of the programme itself — and some bonus materials.

After our appeal in January, Pam Thomas conducted a determined search, did a bit of detective work and tracked down an original copy of the souvenir programme on eBay. The online description claimed it was from 1947, but Pam realised that it was the 1949 issue, with the seller mistaking the date. She bought it straight away, then very kindly donated it to the Air Mail archive.

Inside the 24-page programme is a foreword from Sir Hugh Dowding, Commander in Chief of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain; a message from Association President Sir Richard Peck; an illustrated overview

of the battle by Cyril Birks, air correspondent with the London Evening News; and an address given by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the unveiling of a Battle of Britain window in the new Royal Air Force Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

As well as the battle of Britain programme, members sent us several other documents, including a wartime membership leaflet and the only wartime issue of Air Mail we've seen — from September 1944. Our thanks go to them too.

We're still missing every other wartime issue of Air Mail, as well as all 1960s issues excepting '65 and '68. If you have any copies of these, you would like to donate, please get in touch with Air Mail on the contact details found on the inside front cover of the magazine.

Right: An article on aeroplane design sits beside an advert for the Rolls-Royce Griffon engine in September 1944's Air Mail.

Below, right: Air Mail from September, 1944. Inside are articles on aircraft design and 'island power', plus letters, world news and an early version of branch news.

Below: "You are probably at this moment thinking and talking about the post-war period, saying to yourself: 'What is going to happen to my friends and me?'" From the recently donated wartime membership leaflet.



Above: "Today we recall those fateful days," wrote Cyril Birks, "when almost hour by hour the Air Ministry communicantes were in prosaic and terse terms telling the story of high drama, great resolution and rare endeavour".





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Representation of typical rooms at Wexford House.

### WEXFORD HOUSE IN MELTON MOWBRAY, LEICESTERSHIRE

Well known for its pork pies, cheeses and sumptuous food fairs, Melton Mowbray is the quintessential English market town. With a bustling high street, a choice of pubs and good transport links to nearby cities, this is a wonderful location for those who like to stay well connected.

#### Facilities

- Scheme manager
  - Communal activities
  - On-site parking
  - Shared garden
  - Laundry service
  - All bills and meals included
- Wexford House is a beautiful Victorian building with a bus stop near the front gate and a small convenience shop just around the corner.



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# News from the RAF

By Mike Curtis



Bruce Dickinson, lead singer with Iron Maiden, on a visit to RAF Leeming in 2016. This year he was made Honorary Group Captain. © Sergeant Pete George MOD/Crown 2016.



To mark the opening of a temporary exhibition at The Collection Museum in Lincoln, Wing Commander Guy Gibson's VC and his pilot's wings were flown over Lincoln in a Typhoon from RAF Coningsby. © Sergeant Paul O'Connell MOD/Crown 2020.

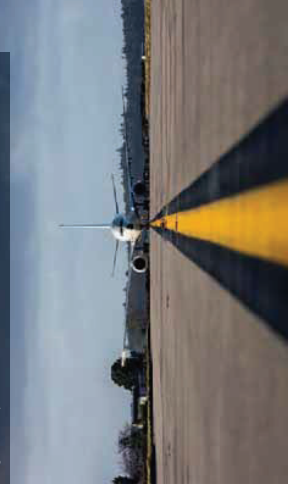


A 33 Squadron Puma HC Mk2 performing dust landings during Exercise Jabal Sahara in Morocco. © Corporal Connor Payne MOD/Crown 2015.

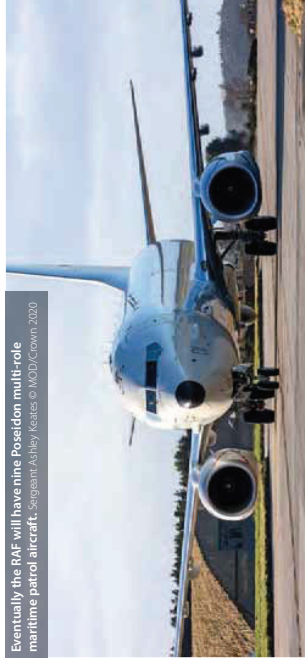
Afghanistan to take over the missions that had been flown by Chinooks. They are crewed by personnel from 33 Squadron and 230 Squadron from RAF Benson. Group Captain Adam Wardrope, Station Commander RAF Benson and Puma Force Commander Hellemont of the Belgian Air Component said: "Operating as a flight simulator instructor helps in knowing the aircraft and its procedures far better than I could have learned on a course. On top of theoretical training, crew members need real life experience, being deployed with a crew and handling situations which cannot be trained on

The first P-8A Poseidon taxis towards a parking slot at RAF Kinloss.

© MOD/Crown 2020



Eventually the RAF will have nine Poseidon multi-role maritime patrol aircraft. © MOD/Crown 2020



National Archives. The MOD closed its UFO unit in 2009 after concluding that, in more than 50 years, no report received had ever provided any evidence of a potential threat. It describes the files it holds as "comprising entirely of correspondence with members of the public". It added: "The Ministry of Defence has no opinion on the existence or otherwise of extra terrestrial life and does not investigate UFO reports." People wishing to report UFO sightings are now directed to the civilian police.

From a hot climate to a cold one, a C130 Hercules from 47 Squadron at Brize Norton has been resupplying the base of the **British Antarctic Survey** team. Flying from an air base in Chile over a ten day period, the Hercules crew dropped by parachute more than 60 tonnes of essential supplies, including petrol, rations and aircraft spares.

Meanwhile the Chief of Staff of the Japanese Air Self Defence Force, General Marumo, has visited RAF Marham with the UK's Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston. They toured the **new integrated Training Centre** where the pilots and engineers are trained on the F-35B Lightning II. They also observed a lesson taking place in the Outer World Line Laboratory where students were learning the complex task of removing, replacing and repairing the special materials that give the aircraft its stealth properties.

With an **increased demand for helicopter crews**, a £183 million contract has been signed to boost training for rotary wing pilots. It includes the order for four more Airbus H145 Jupiter helicopters, a new simulator, and support in attracting and training personnel to meet frontline demand. The new helicopters and the simulator will be located at RAF Shawbury where the rotary wing element of the UK's Military Flying Training System is based.

There are many who would say that Unidentified Flying Objects do not exist, some who suggest that they have 'stealth properties', and others who claim **of UFOs** which have been investigated by the RAF are to be published online soon, rather than continue the procedure of sending documents to the

West Anglia she completed the uniformed services course and was inspired to join by one of her teachers who happened to be ex-RAF Regiment.

The RAF's first **Boeing Poseidon P-8A** has arrived in the UK. In February it was flown from the United States to Kinloss in Scotland. Eventually nine Poseidon multi-role maritime patrol aircraft will be in RAF service, initially with 120 Squadron and later also with 201 Squadron. They will be based at RAF Lossiemouth but the Kinloss runway has been reactivated while the runway at Lossiemouth is resurfaced. The airfield at Lossiemouth

is undergoing a wider revamp to strengthen the runways and taxiways, as well as a runway extension to ensure it can accommodate the P-8A, which is larger and heavier than the Typhoon aircraft it currently hosts. While the work continues this summer, **Typhoons on 24-hour Quick Reaction Alert** duty will return to RAF Leuchars in Fife.

The RAF crews flying the **Puma HC2 helicopter** have clocked up 30,000 hours in the last five years, with an unprecedented one third of those amassed during operations in Afghanistan. The RAF received the first of 24 upgraded Pumas in 2015 and some were deployed to

Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), the international rugby player Rory Underwood and Sir Douglas Bader.

The RAF continues to look ahead, not least in developing the skills and diversity of those who operate in the modern service. In 2017, the RAF announced that it was opening up all combat roles to women. Now the **first female RAF Regiment gunner** has successfully completed the 20 week course and has graduated at RAF Honington. 19-year old Leading Aircraftman Georgia Sandover of Kings Lynn (pictured far right) said she always wanted to join one of the services. While attending the College of

The **Royal Air Force College** at Cranwell in Lincolnshire is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In February it opened the celebrations with an Ensign-raising ceremony and church service in front of the College Hall Officers' Mess. It is the oldest military air academy in the world and, from its inception in 1920, the College has sought to deliver training that meets the needs of a rapidly evolving Air Force, underpinned by the core principles of respect, integrity, service and ethos. Notable students over the years have included HRH Prince Charles, Sir Frank Whittle, Colonel T. E.

Association members receive a discount on subscriptions to the RAF's fortnightly publication RAF News. Call RAF News/Johnson Press on 01909 517 331 or email rafnews@press.co.uk. You will need to give your Association membership number to subscribe.



Leading Aircraftman Georgia Sandover, the first female RAF Regiment Gunner to graduate. © Corporal Dave Blackburn MOD/Crown 2020.



# Scrumptious Spring Scones

The warmer months are coming, so we've asked Flowerdown House Hotels' talented chef, **Amanda Gilmore**, for a recipe to get us in the mood for summer.

"I chose this one as it's a guest favourite" said Amanda, "and it's also a traditional sweet for our local area." Her tips for ensuring a perfect batch of scones include not over-kneading the dough, "if you do your scones will have a tough, heavy texture," Amanda said, "and avoid rolling out the dough mix too thinly as well – this can lead to flat scones!"

Amanda's passion for cooking began when she was a child, watching her mum who always seemed to have a recipe for everything. Carrying on this tradition of versatility, Amanda frequently pulls out all the stops at Flowerdown House for special occasions. "A guest might make a special request for an important celebration like a birthday or an anniversary," says Amanda, "and I love working with them to get it just right. It makes me feel proud that something I've created and shared has been enjoyed."

Of course, our final question for Amanda was: "What should be spread first, jam or cream?" "I'll let the readers argue about that!" was her diplomatic reply. (But our scrumptious pictures of her scones seem to show jam first, Ed.)



Fresh from the oven, Amanda Gilmore at Flowerdown House Hotel.

## Ingredients

- 2oz (56g) butter
- 8oz (229g) self-raising flour
- 1oz (28g) caster sugar
- 1 level-tsp baking powder
- 2 egg
- 1/4 pint (150ml) milk

For fruit scones, add 4oz (113g) of dried fruit, e.g. raisins, cherries.

## Method

- Mix together flour, sugar, baking powder and butter and rub mixture in a bowl until it looks like breadcrumbs
- Beat the egg and milk together then add to the breadcrumb mix until a soft dough is formed
- Add fruit or cherries, if desired
- Roll out on a lightly floured surface – approximately 1/2 inch thick
- Cut into 6 good sized rounds
- Bake in oven at 220C, 425F or gas mark 7 for approximately 10 minutes
- When risen and a nice golden colour, remove from oven and allow to cool
- Once cool, cut in half and layer with jam and cream and enjoy



Make sure to serve your scones with a hot cuppa for maximum enjoyment. All images ©RAF Association

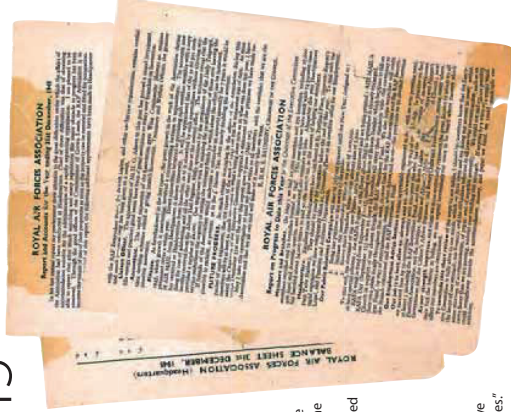
# An account of 1945

A copy of the Association's Annual Report and Accounts for 1945 has recently arrived on the desk of Air Mail, and makes for some interesting reading.

The report was written in 1946 and covers the final year of WW2. With such a large number of RAF personnel looking to their post-war futures, it's unsurprising that the Association was working at full capacity to keep up with their needs.

The report ended by noting the difficulties in meeting the members' needs while under the constraints of post-war reconstruction, and the shortage of supplies this entailed. The final sentence shows just how high the demand for the Association's services were at a time when the RAF numbered almost 1,000,000 serving personnel:

"We could not and can not possibly move faster than we are moving without over-reaching our strength, if anyone by a wave of a magic wand, could straightaway provide the accommodation, money and paper we need, we could quadruple our activities."



department had handled 822 cases throughout the year, with 1,000 more still ongoing.

The balance sheet shows that income from donations had totalled just short of £7,500 for the year, with various RAF units giving over £3,000, branches just over £1,600, and the RAF Rugby committee donating a generous £1,000 to the cause.

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The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1021076) and Scotland (SC031919)

# Notices

## REUNIONS (may be subject to change)

**304 Craft Apprentices 55th anniversary reunion.** Held at Stanbrook Abbey Hotel in Worcestershire on 9 and 10 September. For details email Nigel (Bouncy) Wright at [nwright48@btinternet.com](mailto:nwright48@btinternet.com) or 07513 301 723.

**RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association.** The annual reunion lunch will be held on Saturday 6 June 2020 in Bawdsey Manor. Anyone who has served at RAF Bawdsey is invited to join our Association and attend the lunch. For details please contact [doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com](mailto:doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com) or 07513 301 723.

**RAF Boy Entrants 45th Ground Wireless.** A reunion will be held in York on 26 September 2020. Please contact: [suddes@aol.com](mailto:suddes@aol.com) or 07840 725396

**RAF Halton 219 Craft Apprentice Entry, 50th anniversary reunion.** For those who signed on the dotted line October 1970. Reunion to be held at RAF Halton on 24 October 2020. To book a place or find out more contact [aldy.lawrence@btinternet.com](mailto:aldy.lawrence@btinternet.com)

**RAF Boy Entrants 41st Entry.** All trades will get together to celebrate 60 years at a midlands venue on 15-17 May. Contact: [peterjohnson645@btinternet.com](mailto:peterjohnson645@btinternet.com) for details.

## OTHER

**Do you remember the Royal Canadian Air Force Streamliners,** a popular WWII dance band that played hundreds of gigs throughout the UK and Europe in 1944-46? My dad, Phil Sparling, was a member and I'm writing a book about the band. Please contact [andy.sparling89@gmail.com](mailto:andy.sparling89@gmail.com) with any memories you may have.

Each August, Bognor Regis Branch runs the Jim Lorimer **Open Bowls Competition** - with teams of ripples. It's a well-supported event and raises funds for the Wings Appeal. If you or your branch are interested in a game against Bognor Regis Branch, or wish to put a team forward for the Open Competition, contact Hilary Ayton on [hillyayton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hillyayton@hotmail.co.uk) or visit [rafa381.co.uk/bowls](http://rafa381.co.uk/bowls) to download the invitation form.

**608959 Martin Davies.** Your old RAF identity disc has been found in a garden. If you would like to reclaim it please contact: [packmanpacky@aol.com](mailto:packmanpacky@aol.com) or 01684-572392.

Do you have any memories, stories or photographs of the **Majunga Tours**, 1968-1972? I'm publishing a book on this subject with all proceeds going to the Association. Contact: Joe Kearns, 12 Mossbank Drive, Glasgow, G33 1LS.

## SOLUTION EASTER CROSSWORD

Across: 1 Easter; 5 Spitfire; 9 Royal Air; 10 Beirut; 12 Nosebleed; 13 Missing; 16 Ace; 20 Clerical;

22 Agnostic; 23 Traps; 24 Snowdrop; 25 Nightjar; 26 Forces;

Down: 2 Apollo; 3 Trainers; 4 Reaction; 5 Saracen; 6 Terrific;

7 Imbated; 8 Endangered; 12 Nomenclature; 14 Spinning;

15 Ill-spent; 17 Clear off; 18 Excluder; 19 Accuser; 21 Encore.

Photos are sought of the **Pan Am Boeing 707** which landed at RAF Northolt in 1960 after mistaking it for London Heathrow. Please contact Pat Lelliott at [lelliottp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lelliottp@yahoo.co.uk) if you have any to share.

Were you a cadet at the founding of the **Air Training Corps** in 1941, or a member of its predecessor the **Air Defence Cadet Corps**? If so, we'd love to hear from you and perhaps arrange a visit to record your memories. Contact Squadron Leader Al Munns RAFAC at [almunns@btinternet.com](mailto:almunns@btinternet.com) or via Headquarters Air Cadets, RAF Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 8HB (for the attention of the MCO).

Membership of the **Medmenham Association** is open to serving and retired personnel of all branches of the Armed Services, Voluntary Reserve and Civil Service, who gained a recognised qualification as an Imagery Analyst or Photographic Interpreter, and are/were employed in an MOD, Service or similar Allied establishment. Associate membership is also available to applicants who have worked in a supporting role or have close working association with the PII/A profession. Email [memsec@medmenham.org](mailto:memsec@medmenham.org)



©Andy Sparling

**Hoping to contact descendants of 11 scientists and airmen** who died when an adapted Halifax was testing top secret RADAR developments crashed in the Wye Valley on 7 June 1942. RAF crew: Pilot Officer DJ Berrington; Flight Sergeant G Miller; Aircraftman, 2nd Class B C F Bicknell; Leading Airman B D G Dear; Flying Officer A M Phillips; Squadron Leader R J Sansom; Pilot Officer C E Vincent. Scientists: Mr Geoffrey S Hensby; Mr Cecil O Browne; Mr Frank Blythen. Contact: [simon.blumlein@btinternet.com](mailto:simon.blumlein@btinternet.com)

## Submit your notices – free for all members

Notices is a free member benefit to help you keep connected with people and places from your time in the RAF or the RAF Association, or to announce news of births, marriages, christenings, engagements, and more. A service for members only.

**For the July – September 2020 Notices, email your text to notices@rafa.org.uk, post it to the address on the inside front cover or call 0800 0182361. Deadline: 15 May 2020.**

# AD ASTRA

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



*"In friendship and in service one to another, we are pledged to keep alive the memory of those of all Nations who died in the Royal Air Force and in the Air Forces of the Commonwealth. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause. Proudly and thankfully we will remember them."*

<b>Mr G Allcock</b>	Newark	<b>Mr G Evans</b>	Enfield	<b>Mr G Lowery</b>	Waddington	<b>Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Stear</b>	Amsterdam
<b>Mr L G Angus</b>	Letchworth and Hitchin	<b>Mr L R Eynon</b>	Wrekin and Wellington	<b>Mrs P Mandeix</b>	Sud-Ouest	<b>Mr W Steer</b>	Eastbourne
<b>Mr F Auton</b>	Newark	<b>Mr G Ferguson</b>	New Milton and District Branch	<b>Mrs J Mangleot</b>	Aldeburgh and District RMG	<b>Mr D Stephens</b>	Sydney/Metropolitan Branch
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<b>Mrs V Barrett</b>	Melton Mowbray	<b>Mr G Fordyce</b>	Perth	<b>Mr D Marchant</b>	Melksham	<b>Mr R Tailby</b>	Rugby and District
<b>Mr P W Bartle</b>	Chingford	<b>Mr R S Franklin</b>	Witham and Rivenhall	<b>Mr C I Mason</b>	Caine and District	<b>Mr J Teasdale</b>	Dereham and Swaffham
<b>Mr H Bartlett</b>	Bromsgrove and Redditch	<b>Mrs S Frost</b>	Amsterdam	<b>Mr S McCartan</b>	Skipton	<b>Mr M A Tiltman</b>	Truro
<b>Mr M K Batt MBE</b>	Northern Area HQ	<b>Mrs R Gallet</b>	Abbots and Kings Langley	<b>Mr P D McCarthy</b>	Wales, Midland and South Western Area HQ	<b>Mr P Toogood</b>	Isle of Wight
<b>Mr D Beadle</b>	Lincoln	<b>Mr B Gamble</b>	Cannock Chase	<b>Mr J McGuigan</b>	Whitley Bay	<b>Mr B Town</b>	Leigh
<b>Squadron Leader R C Blakemore</b>	Gloucester	<b>Mr H D Gamble</b>	Norwich	<b>Mr J W McNair</b>	Huntingdon and District	<b>Wing Commander</b>	Wales, Midland and South Western Area HQ
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<b>Mr H Collins</b>	North Walsham	<b>Mr K Holwell</b>	Amsterdam	<b>Mr R Pritchard</b>	Leicester	<b>Mr P Wilson</b>	Ayr and Prestwick
<b>Mr G Cooper</b>	North Walsham	<b>Mr W Hooper</b>	City and Central London	<b>Mr D Price</b>	South East and Eastern Area HQ	<b>Mr D Wood</b>	Windsor and Eton
<b>Mrs M Cooper</b>	Doncaster	<b>Mr V Hughes</b>	Nottingham	<b>Mr R Pritchard</b>	Gloucester	<b>Reverend G A Wood</b>	Kings Lynn and District
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<b>Mr L Darling</b>	Itchen and Hamble	<b>Air Vice-Marshal J T Lawrence AFC CB CBE</b>	Harrow District	<b>Mr W Saunoi</b>	Amsterdam		Addlestone and Chertsey
<b>Mr P C Davis</b>	Hull		Guernsey	<b>Mr J Sayers</b>	Apollo (Cyprus)		
	Wales, Midland and South Western Area HQ		Neath	<b>Mr D Sherwood</b>	Ile-de-France		
	Area HQ		Uxbridge	<b>Mr M Skinner</b>	Hinckley and District		
	Lyons		Exbourne	<b>Mr W Slow</b>	Wokingham and Woodley		
	South East and Eastern Area HQ		Norwich	<b>Mr C Smith</b>	Bedford		
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	Costa del Sol		Stafford	<b>Mr J R T Smith</b>	Warminster RMG		
	Torquay		Melbourne	<b>Mr D M Stares</b>	Doncaster		
	Wittering and District		Gosport		Salisbury RMG		
	Haverfordwest		Huyton with Roby and Liverpool		Wokingham and Woodley		
	Huddersfield		Wales, Midland and South Western Area HQ				
	South East and Eastern Area HQ						
	Uxbridge						

We specially remember those members who had reached or passed their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

**100**

Mr H Bell  
Mr JA Cook  
Mr T Henderson  
Miss AV Storky

Carlisle and District  
Uxbridge  
Bangor  
Littlehampton



# Remembering

## Former Association President

### Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Stear

**Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Stear**, President of the RAF Association from 1998 until 2002, died in January at the age of 81. Sir Michael served as a fast jet pilot on Hunters and Harriers during the Cold War, in tours of the Middle East and Germany. During the 1990s he held senior RAF and NATO appointments, and served as Air Officer Commanding No 18 (Maritime) Group. In 1993 he was promoted to Air Chief Marshal and became Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Central Europe. He retired from the RAF in 1996.

Sir Michael was also the RAF Commissioner on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, President of the 208 Squadron Association, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society in 1997.

When asked in 1999 to reflect on the Association, he said: "Overall it is the breadth and depth of RAAF's care and welfare activities which have struck me most. In parallel I have been very impressed with the energy of all those actively involved".



©RAF Association

## A true friend of Poland



Left: Jim Auton MBE image from Jim Auton's estate. Above: The Queen's Colour Squadron of the RAF bore Jim Auton's coffin into the church for his funeral. ©RAF Association

**Jim Auton MBE** died in January aged 95. A former bomb aimer, he was understood to be the last surviving British member of the 1944 Warsaw Air Bridge. Jim had been wounded during his 37<sup>th</sup> mission with 178 Squadron and lost the sight in his right eye. After the war, he was awarded 20 medals by six different countries, including the Polish Presidential Gold Order of Merit and the Soviet Union War Veterans' Medal.

Later Jim became an entrepreneur and helped to raise substantial amounts of money for military charities, for which he received an MBE in 2000. As a dedicated member of the Association, Jim regularly attended branch coffee mornings and enjoyed the companionship of other veterans.

While seriously ill last year, Jim received a letter from the Polish Ambassador calling him "a true friend of Poland, and thousands of social media messages from Polish nationals.

Having no known family, the Association stepped in to help arrange Jim's funeral. An appeal was also made for attendees, which saw hundreds arrive on the day to pay their respects. Jim was buried in Newark Cemetery beside Peggy, his wife of 70 years who died in 2016.

Their burial plot is close to the Warsaw Air Bridge Memorial, which Jim campaigned for and helped to plan in 1989.

## The Few

Two Battle of Britain pilots died, in December 2019 and January 2020: **Flight Lieutenant Maurice Mounsdon** and **Wing Commander Paul Caswell Farnes**.



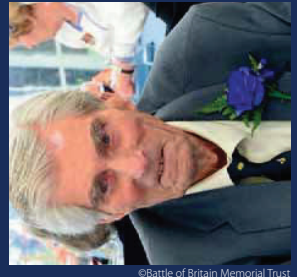
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**Paul Caswell Farnes** died in January at the age of 101. Paul joined 501 Squadron at Filton in September 1939 and fought with them over Britain and France.

He was the last surviving fighter ace among the Few, having brought it down more than five enemy aircraft. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1940 and commissioned as an officer. Paul was later stationed in Malta, Egypt and Iraq. After the war, he became a flying instructor with the RAF where he remained until his retirement in 1958 having attained the rank of Wing Commander.



©Battle of Britain Memorial Trust

**Maurice Mounsdon** (above) joined 56 Squadron, based at RAF Digby in Lincolnshire, in June 1940. Just a few weeks later, the Hurricane he was flying was shot down over Essex.

Despite suffering severe burns, 22-year old Maurice managed to parachute from the aircraft and was rushed to hospital by locals. After a long recovery, Maurice returned to service and was posted to various locations. In the final months of the war, he served with the 8303 Air Disarmament Wing in Germany.

Originally from Staffordshire, Maurice died at the age of 101 on 6 December in Menorca, where he had lived since the 1970s. His wife, Mary, died in the early 1990s.

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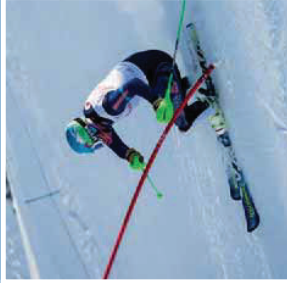


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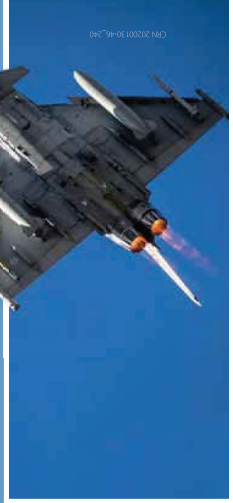
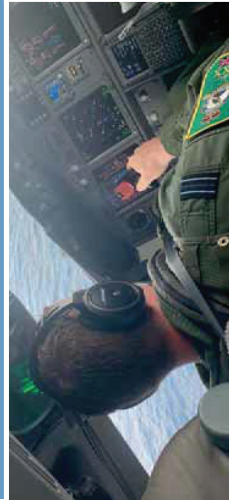
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