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JANUARY - MARCH 2019

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AIR FORCES
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

You've helped
Naomi to
Invictus success



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Registered Charity 226686 (England & Wales). SC037673 (Scotland).

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From the editor

I am delighted we can bring you the
first results of the major study
undertaken by the Association in
2018, as well as first news of new
projects and important conversations
we are planning as a result. To top it all
off, this edition's trustee spotlight
focuses on Fiona Barber, Chair of the
Welfare Committee.
Air Mail's own survey results are
making interesting reading too. But
they are slightly skewed at the
moment — because they strongly
represent the oldest 50 per cent of our
readers. So look out for the article
inviting any 'young uns' (under 45) to
tell us what works for you too.
And we have the first of a new series
looking at the work of Association
members in 3 Mobile Catering
Squadron. As well as telling us about
their work, they will be sharing their
favourite recipes.
And finally, did you put it in the bin or
recycle it? The plastic wrapper that
brings more than 90 per cent of Air
Mails to readers is one of the mostly
widely recyclable types of polythene
available. Recycling facilities vary
across the UK, but please take care to
give it a new life if you can, while we
research alternatives that may be
more environmentally friendly.

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or write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air
Mail, RAFATRAD Ltd at the Atlas House
address on this page. Your
correspondence should be clearly
marked FOR PUBLICATION.

STENZ NEWS

Pick of the contents

NEWS

2-20

All the latest news from the Association and the
RAF family, including: how we helped Naomi train
for Invictus glory, supporting the new Defence
National Recovery Centre, and whether we should
be One Charity in the future. Read about the
European Area Conference in Brussels, Cannock
Branch's new found freedom, and how knitting
took over remembrance commemorations.

Also hear from our partners at the RAF Benevolent
Fund, RAF Museum and RAF Families Federation.

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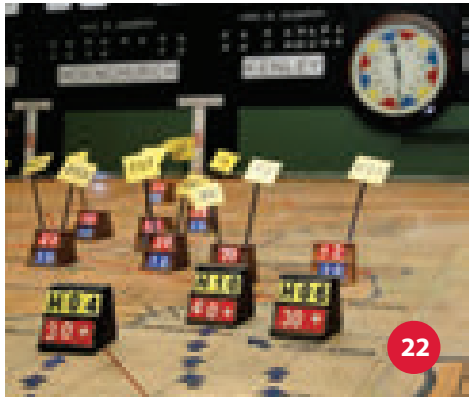
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The charity that supports the RAF family



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£2k gift for holidays

Two gifts of £1,000 each have been made to the Association's seaside holiday homes. The grants were made from the welfare fund of the Huntingdon and District Branch for the Hemsby chalets in Norfolk and the Selsey holiday home in West Sussex. 



The beach at Hemsby © Phil Greig

Scottish veterans - research

The Association is working with Scottish universities and government departments to research health and social issues facing service leavers in Scotland. The study will look at veterans who leave the service in 'early to middle age' and is due to report in July 2019. 

5 stars for café

A Trip Advisor reviewer has given The Haven in Glasgow five stars in all areas. The café, where the Glasgow Branch Wings Café is based, was described as 'a proper tea room' where 'the tea and fruit loaf were perfect'. 



National Presidential Certificates awarded

The following people have been awarded National Presidential Certificates in recognition of their ongoing support and their dedication to the RAF Association. The awards are announced to coincide with the publication of the UK New Year's Honours List.

Alan Bellamy	Harrow
Barry Kindred	Harrow
Frank Smith	Huddersfield
John Taylor	Salisbury
John Mason	Worcester and District
Dave Stanbury	Plymouth
Paul Branson	Mid-Somerset

Vellum scrolls and bayonets fixed



Left: (Foreground) Cannock Branch member John Duffill awaiting inspection by and congratulations from Councillor Paul Witton, chairman of Cannock Chase District Council. MOD/Crown 2018



Right: The RAF Regimental Band and armed flight from RAF Cosford parade during the freedom of the borough ceremony. © MOD/Crown 2018

More than 200 veterans and serving personnel from the three armed services paraded in Hednesford, Staffordshire, on 29 September for a ceremony honouring the Cannock Chase Branch.


Cannock Chase District Council has awarded the branch 'Freedom of Entry', officially recognising the 'bond' established between the townsfolk, the branch and the RAF.

It carries no other rights or responsibilities but is the most honourable distinction a local authority can bestow.

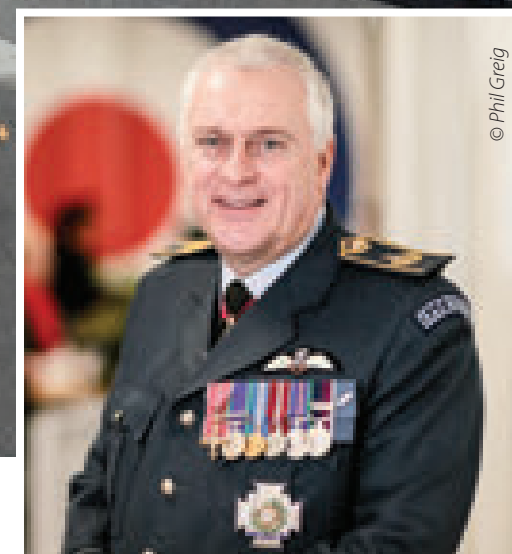
A vellum scroll giving the branch the right to march through the streets of the town "colours flying, drums beating and bayonets fixed" was presented on the main shopping street before crowds of spectators.

Branch president John Allman thanked the council for the honour, and the townsfolk for the support they had given the branch since it was formed in 1946.

Following the ceremony there was sustained applause from the crowds as the parade, headed by the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment and an armed flight from RAF Cosford, marched to Hednesford Park. There, civic leaders and dignitaries took the salute before an official reception.

The Cannock standard was paraded together with those of other Association branches, RAF National Service Association, RAF Air Cadets, Royal Engineers, Stafford Airborne, and Staffordshire Regiment. 

Message from the President



© Phil Greig

Second from the front, Sir Baz North laying the Association wreath at the Cenotaph in November © MOD/Crown.

I have just had the great honour of representing the Association at the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. What a privilege to be invited to do this during the 100th anniversary of our Royal Air Force and it was wonderful to see 150 of our members march in the parade.

We have reached the end of a year of celebrations marking the formation of the RAF; I wish to formally pass on my sincere thanks to those members of the Association who engaged with great energy in marking this milestone. The quality, variety and sheer number of events that I attended alongside you, and those that I heard reports about, has been breathtaking. Each has made me very proud to be representing every one of you as your President.

Looking ahead to 2019, the Association must address the critical importance of both welfare delivery and the developing needs of our membership. I urge you to be part of the ongoing conversations about One Member One Vote and the discussions associated with the potential routes to, and the benefits and issues from, becoming one charity. Your Council wants to reduce the pressures on branch trustees and committees so that we generate the capacity, energy and membership mass to continue to support each other; in friendship and through the inevitable hardship that will come to many of us.

I encourage every member to take up the baton of assuring the welfare of those serving and retired colleagues who need our help. The Association's developing research into the needs of our own members is gathering pace and indicates that there is significant need that we are duty bound to address. We have made our voice heard and we are helping to change the attitudes and mindsets of those who influence the multitude of national welfare delivery means for the better. We have provided support for the new Defence National Recovery Centre and submitted evidence to the Defence Parliamentary Select Committees. Your Council is taking stock of the Association's projects and established outputs to make sure that they are fit for purpose.

Outwith the Association, 2019 will see the RAF Benevolent Fund mark its centenary, and many other national commemorations to single out, such as the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of WWII.

I wish all our members a happy, healthy and successful 2019.

Air Marshal Sir Baz North
President of the RAF Association 

The shape of the future?



© Heidi Burton

What is the best structure for the RAF Association? How can we make sure we run our organisation effectively - and provide welfare support for our members without buckling under the pressure of 'red tape'? The second resolution at the 2018 Annual Conference asked Council to look into the formal side of these issues and to report back to Annual Conference 2019. At the half way point between Conferences Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe, Chairman of Council, gives Air Mail readers an update on progress so far.

"Few will disagree that there has been an increasing burden on the Association's branch committees, not least because of a growing number of regulations that must be complied with to run each of our branches (the vast majority of which are charities in their own right). Northern Area Council formally noted this and, seconded by the South East and Eastern Area Council, proposed that Council review the individual charity registration of branches. In essence, this asks us to find out the pros and cons of branches legally becoming part of the Association, under a single charity registration.

"Since the review was voted through last May, Council has asked the Secretary General to contact the regulators in each UK nation (The Charity Commission for England and Wales, OSCR - the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland). Unsurprisingly their approaches differ, but they will be pleased to help us consider the nation-specific implications of the proposal, and we will continue to liaise with them.

"A series of Association roadshows has started, allowing branches to attend seminars to check they are fully up-to-date on their governance and finance. As well as supporting branches, this has provided an ideal opportunity to get feedback on the challenges of running a branch today. By May 2019, 25 to 30 of these roadshows will have taken place, and all the feedback will help inform Council's report.

"I want to assure members that Council is investigating options that will ensure we maintain the local identity of branches, keep funds raised specifically for geographical areas in those areas, and reduce the burden of complying with data protection, finance, safeguarding and other regulations. We will seek ways to reduce the personal financial liability of local trustees/committee members should anything go awry at a branch. Of paramount importance will be to ensure branches can continue to provide much needed welfare, friendly support and comradeship.

"Council is also aware that we have much to learn from the successes and mistakes of other charities that have gone through a similar process. It is particularly useful to look at their experiences early in our own research, so we can try to avoid the same pitfalls.

"This project is not going to happen overnight — and nor should it. We need to conduct the research carefully so any process we might propose minimises the risk to all concerned. I look forward to telling you more in the future."

The timetable for the research and, if approved, the rest of the process is:

Early 2019

- continue our background research
- further meetings with the charity regulators in each nation
- detailed progress reports and discussions at Council meetings

May 2019

- Report to members at Annual Conference
- Ask for Conference's affirmation of our work so far, and for permission to continue

May 2019 – May 2020

- Work up formal resolutions and proposals, including more detail for each nation and Area. If approved, formal changes could start to be put in place from 2021 onwards, in a measured way, to an agreed timetable.

To take part in a governance and/or finance roadshow, sign up for one at your 2019 Area Conference, or contact your Area office team to find other local dates that might suit you. Phone numbers are at the front of Air Mail.

Resolution No 2, RAF Association Annual Conference, May 2018

Proposal: The Conference resolves that Council examines and reviews the continued individual charity registration of branches, vis-à-vis branches becoming legally part of the Association, under a single charity registration, consulting with regulators as appropriate. Reporting back its findings, along with any details of proposed changes (if appropriate) to the Association's governance documents and administrative structure to effect the findings, to Annual Conference 2019.

Proposed by: Northern Area Council

Seconded by: South East and Eastern Area Council

Votes for: 82.4 per cent

Votes against: 13.7 per cent

Abstentions: 3.9 per cent

100th birthdays

Many happy returns to members who have reached their 100th birthday.

Betty Clark

Betty Clark (formerly Betty Vann) celebrated her 100th birthday in December 2018, during the RAF's centenary year celebrations. Betty worked as a shorthand typist in the WAF during WWII where she met her future husband William (Bill) Clark, a flight engineer on Lancaster bombers at RAF Swinderby. On 4 July 1944 he was shot down, presumed dead, on his fourth mission over occupied France. But he had survived, and escaped with the help of the French Resistance. Bill and Betty weren't reunited until more than three months later, after he made it to liberated Paris. He went on to fly a further 25 sorties. They married in July 1949, set up home in London and raised two children. When Bill retired in the early 80s they moved to Leicestershire and were actively involved raising funds for the Association's Wings and Royal British Legion's poppy appeals. Bill died aged 90 in 2012. Betty is still spritely and living happily in their East Midlands home.



Betty Clark in uniform in the 1940s.

Wing Commander

Donald Perrens DSO OBE DFC

First conscripted to the army in 1939, Donald took up the chance to be a reconnaissance pilot in the RAF and trained on Tiger Moth biplanes. He served in 225 Squadron in Algeria and was involved in the Battle of the Kasserine Pass before being deployed with 208 Squadron in Italy. He mostly flew Spitfires and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service in North Africa. His Distinguished Service Order was given for displaying 'exceptional tactical skill, great bravery and a determination to complete his mission'. Enemy fire had forced him to 12,000 feet while attacking a German ammunition dump near Bologna. Despite being hit he continued the mission until he ran out of fuel. He then glided 12 miles back over enemy territory, eventually landing wheels up in a snowy mountain field, behind allied lines - and hitting rocks. After recovering from his considerable injuries, he continued his duties with the squadron. After the war the Wing Commander taught physics and ran the CCF at Eastbourne College before retiring in the 1980s. His 100th birthday was being celebrated on 1 January 2019, with family and friends on the south coast.



Wing Commander Perrens (left) with Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Neil Cameron at the annual inspection of Eastbourne College Combined Cadet Force in June 1981.

Phyllis Hill

Phyllis Hill celebrated her 100th birthday on 1 October 2018. A plotter based in the RAF bunkers, she was a member of the Women's Auxillary Air Force (WAAF). She never saw the air battles for real, just as markers on her maps of the UK and the English Channel. She now lives near her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren on the south coast. Read more about her RAF story in our feature on page 22.

Many happy returns also to Mr J S Hartling and all other RAF Association members who have reached or surpassed their centenary birthday or who will turn 100 soon.



Phyllis Hill with her family. The Bournemouth Echo featured Phyllis' WAAF life last summer.



Finalist for another award

The Association was a finalist for a second award in 2018, this time for its welfare training. As we wrote Air Mail, our accredited welfare volunteer training was shortlisted in the Best Public Service/Not-for-Profit Programme in the national Training Journal (TJ) Awards. These recognise 'ingenuity, creativity, passion and hard work of learning and development professionals from around the world'. In 2017/18 the training was accredited by AIM Awards, formed the basis of a partnership with Rotary International and changes to delivery saw up to 50 per cent reductions in waiting times for courses. In 2018 so far, more than 117 caseworkers and 220 befrienders have been trained, with more than 2,340 volunteer hours spent on caseworker training alone. Caseworkers provided access to more than £1.96million in welfare grants for members of the RAF family.

The winners of the awards were due to be announced on 5 December.



Finalists in the Volunteer Team of the Year category at the Third Sector Awards in September, proudly represented a range of volunteering at the Association. L-R: Station Officer, Kevin O'Neil; Fundraising Volunteer, Eileen Galling; Area Welfare Manager, Wales Midlands and South West Area, Barbara Howells; Volunteer Storybook Wings Editor, Neil Blewett; Director of HR and Volunteering, Alyson Hunter; Befriender, Anne Randall; Welfare Volunteer Training Manager Sara Lawley; Volunteer Manager Katharine Lord; and Caseworker Peter McGrath. ©ThirdSector

Less plastic please



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Meanwhile the Association is researching

alternatives to the polythene wrapper. We are monitoring the progress of the European Union directive on plastics as it becomes law, and the timing of that against Brexit. We are researching alternatives such as paper, potato starch or other wrappers and balancing this against security, impact on weight and the mailing process, and keeping costs down - so the Association can spend the right amount of its funds on welfare and its charitable objectives.

Members with comments or contributions on the debate, please contact the editor by email or letter. Details are at the front of the magazine.



Air Mail's plastic wrapper is widely recyclable where you see this symbol

Message from the Secretary General

The Government has launched a consultation into its new strategy for veterans. The UK wide strategy was produced by the Ministry of Defence under the guidance of Secretary of State for Defence, Gavin Williamson and Tobias Elwood, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence. It sets out the Government's principles and aims needed "to continue to meet the needs of older veterans as well as the wider veteran community over the next 10 years, and set the right conditions for society to empower – and support – them for the next 100 years."

They are now asking for contributions to their consultation on the content of the strategy and that can be found online at surveys.mod.uk/index.php/948951. I would encourage any RAF veterans in the UK to have a look at the strategy and if you have anything to contribute, to take part in the consultation. It is open until 23.45hrs on 21 February 2019.

Thank you to everybody who contributed to the research that our Welfare team started early in 2018. Dr Prema Nirgude and others have been working through more than 4,000 responses and will publish an academic standard report later in 2019. News of the initial findings is on page 20.

As many of you will be aware, we have also conducted a plebiscite of our membership in November 2018. We had some fantastic results from that as well. Almost 16 per cent of the membership voted and the first thing to say is that it gave us a clear indication that the plebiscite process works: we can efficiently and effectively undertake votes of the whole membership. An early indication from those who took part is that 23 per cent indicated that they do not wish the Association to move towards one member, one vote. 77 per cent of those who voted indicated that they want the opportunity to have an individual vote.

There is still much work to do completing the analysis and understanding the consequences of such a vote and this will continue to be worked on by the Branch and Membership Committee and the task group set up to do this, under the chairmanship of Beryl Dennett Stannard. Council Chairman, John Cliffe explains more about progress on page 4.



© Phil Greig

At the time of writing it looks as if we will be at a membership figure of 74,000 by the end of the year. Indications are that we have been continuing to grow our welfare outputs and our income has also grown in line with our expectations. It was another great year from everybody, so thank you all.

Again, I say thank you to everybody — members, volunteers and employees — who contributed to the great success of RAF100. We are now working with the other RAF charities and the RAF to develop what the legacy of the centenary will be. The current working title is 'RAF Inspire' and I look forward to sharing more on that as it develops.

Thank you all and I wish you all a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Nick Bunting
Secretary General

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Select contributions

For the first time, the RAF Association has contributed evidence to a parliamentary select committee. Written evidence was submitted to the armed forces and veterans mental health inquiry, which has been taking place throughout 2018. Other verbal and written contributions were made by Tobias Ellwood MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Kate Davies of NHS England, whose brief includes services for the armed forces, the surgeon general, and from other forces charities and university research teams.

Rory O'Connor, Director of Research and Policy at the Association said: "The scale of our membership means we can make significant and pertinent contributions to parliamentary enquiries as part of our work to improve the lives of the RAF family. We expect to be making more submissions in the future, as our own research base and knowledge increases."

The 12th Special Report – Mental Health and the Armed Forces, Part One: the scale of mental health issues: government response to the committee's 11th report was published on 16 October 2018.

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© MOD/Crown 2018

Next Chief of Air Staff announced

Air Marshal Michael Wigston CBE, a great supporter of the Association, is to be promoted to Air Chief Marshal and appointed as Chief of the Air Staff, in succession to Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier.

In March 2017, he was appointed Assistant Chief of the Air Staff and oversaw the RAF100 centenary programme.

Wall of poppies in Weston

A poppy display so large it needed the help of the local fire brigade to hang it was unveiled by Weston-super-Mare Branch in late October.

6,000 knitted and crocheted poppies had been carefully stitched together over a four month period to form the remembrance mural which covered a whole wall of the branch building.

Preparations for the display started in January 2018 when committee member Diana Hewson put an idea into action. Commissioning support from branch members, Association members across the country and from residents of a local care home, she asked for enough small poppies to make a solid mural and 12 large poppies, more than a metre across – one for each for the windows. The remaining poppies wrote out 'Lest we forget' at street level.

The display remained for more than two weeks. Anne Kerruish, publicity officer for the branch, said: "It's caused a lot of interest in the town and really helped raise our profile. It's been a great project to work on, bringing us closer to members across the country as well as our neighbours in Weston. It was a lot of hard work but we felt it was important to do something special for Remembrance Sunday during this centenary year of the RAF."



Above: The team celebrating a job well done with helpers from the Fire and Rescue Service. © Heidi Burton

Below: Final adjustments to the 6,000 poppy display at Weston-super-Mare Branch © Heidi Burton



C'mon you young 'uns (under 45s!)

Thank you to everyone who took time to feed back in our survey on if Air Mail is hitting the spot, and how? We've had a wide variety of answers and very honest opinions about what people like and don't like in the magazine, which is very helpful. There have also been many suggestions for what subjects would really 'float your boats' in future.

But we know that we are missing out on the views of a large proportion of our readership. We are short of views from people under 45 – and we know there is a large group of you getting the magazine. If it's easier to complete online, don't forget you can log on to rafa.org.uk/air-mail-survey and let us know that way. Our aim is to provide content that appeals to as many members as possible, from the youngest 18-year old to the most mature 103-year old. So come on you young 'uns; we'd love to hear from you.

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Crucial debates and great reunions

Conference 2019, from 10 to 12 May, will include two crucial issues that affect the future of the whole Association: 'one member one vote?' and 'one charity.' It will also be a chance to catch up and swap ideas with members, friends and former colleagues through the days and at the Gala Dinner and awards ceremony. **Your places must be booked by 19 April 2019.**

The venue, Hilton Birmingham Metropole, is in a prime central location, just off the M42 and close to Birmingham International Airport and train stations – with lots of parking and disabled spaces. It has a heated indoor swimming pool and a 24 hour fitness centre and is within walking distance of great entertainment and shopping.

Book your place at Conference:

Online – at rafa.org.uk/annualconference by **19 April 2019**. You can register yourself and any guests who wish to attend. Accommodation needs to be booked separately.

By phone – contact the Association's reception team on 0116 268 8750. Accommodation needs to be booked separately.

Book your accommodation:

All bookings must be made directly with Hilton Birmingham Metropole on 0121 780 6262. Select option 1 and quote reference number: FSRAF1

The Association's special prices include accommodation, wi-fi, parking and all formal and informal meals from lunch to evening dinner.

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

Double occupancy: £312 (£156 per person, per night full board as above)

Overseas members can book additional nights per night for bed and breakfast.

No branch should be deterred from attending Conference because of financial issues. A pooled fares scheme will be in operation again and reasonable conference expenses may be paid by the branch (Byelaw 27). Any branch experiencing financial hardship should contact their Area director for assistance.



A place to play

The station's Clifton Heights Committee members join RAF Association and Benevolent Fund representatives to test the new play area at RAF Lossiemouth © MOD/Crown 2018

Families at RAF Lossiemouth have a fun and exciting new play area and garden to enjoy thanks to a £20,000 refurbishment at the station's welfare properties.

The RAF Association and RAF Benevolent Fund joined forces to help fund new play equipment, picnic seating, ground cover and fencing, and improvements to the rear gardens.

Sergeant Al Connell who oversees the running of the properties was

delighted to have the area upgraded: "Often families and parents have to use the welfare facilities in times of crisis or extreme stress. So knowing their children can enjoy the outdoor area safely will be welcomed by many residents."

RAF Lossiemouth has six apartments and one house for service personnel and their families. The properties provide a comfortable and homely environment for families and children, who may live in other parts of the UK, to visit loved ones.



Last chance – 2019 flying scholarships

Applications for the 2019 Flying Scholarships close on 31 January 2019. If you know of any 16 to 20 year-olds who would relish the chance to learn to fly, suggest they quickly log on to rafa.org.uk/flying-scholarships or rafayouth.org.uk to see films and stories of previous winners and find full terms and conditions and application forms. The scholarships are open to RAF Air Cadets and associated RAF youth organisations. Applicants go through an assessment process, including an aptitude test. Successful 2018 scholar Cadet Corporal Ben Stephens said: "I can honestly say that it's been the most exciting and rewarding experience I have ever had."

2018 scholar Ben Stephens: 'just gone solo' © South Warwickshire Flying School

See the full article about the scholarships and the impact they had on James Wilkinson's life on pages 20 and 21 of the October-December issue of Air Mail.

Genuine support for the Association



Typhoon cardholder and key ring. © ASALI Designs



Interior of Eurofighter Typhoon weekend bag in tan. © ASALI Designs

ASALI, a family run leather goods business based in Lincoln, is fundraising for the RAF Association.

Owner and entrepreneur, Mindy Arora, started trading in 2017. She says: "Our name means 'genuine' in Hindi. All our products are made from genuine leather and those in the military range hold a license from the MOD. The company donates a portion of revenue from every sale to selected charities.

"A proportion of the sales of our Typhoon range specifically support the work of the RAF Association," Mindy explains. "The Typhoon goods are embossed with the unmistakable silhouette of the aircraft and some of products are used by the Typhoon Display team themselves."

From very special 'weekend bags' for a couple of hundred pounds to laptop cases, and from wallets to accessory trays for just thirty pounds, you can find the full Typhoon range at asalidesigns.co.uk. There is also a personalisation service so you can add initials or a simple word to all but the largest products.

New director at Families Fed

The RAF Families Federation has welcomed its new director. Former RAF officer, Maria Lyle, joined the RAF Wittering-based team at the end of October.

Nick Bunting, Secretary General of the RAF Association, which manages the Federation contract welcomed her saying: "Maria's wide-ranging career provided her with a comprehensive skill-set and experience to help advise and serve the RAF family. In addition, Maria brings a deep knowledge and understanding of both serving in the RAF and of being part of the RAF family."

"Maria is joining a team which has already developed a strong franchise among the RAF family and this appointment further highlights the Association's commitment to delivering a high-quality Families Federation service."

Maria came to the Federation from her role as Operations and Relationship Director for RM Education where she led a multi-national team to deliver an outsourced IT service to schools across England. Her previous appointments have included running leadership and change management programmes for both private and public sector clients.

Her strategic relationship management experience was developed as an assistant director at the

Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Here, Maria worked directly with Cabinet ministers, providing advice to enable them to refine policy and respond to business needs – much like the core work of the Families Federation in providing evidence from personnel and their families to provide an independent voice to influence policy change.

Maria had only been in post for two weeks in post as Air Mail went to press. She had already had a meeting with the Defence Personnel and Veterans Minister and teams at both the Ministry of Defence and HQ Air to articulate the concerns raised to the Federation by RAF families and personnel.

Maria is married to John, who is currently serving in the RAF, and so brings with her experience of not only serving but of being a partner, living in Service Family Accommodation and all that life brings as being part of the RAF family.

The RAF Families Federation provides all serving RAF personnel and their families – Regular and Reserve, single or married – with timely and professional support, assistance and an independent voice regarding issues or concerns that they may have. You can flag an issue through the Families Federation – all views are welcome. Find out more at: raf-ff.org.uk/federation

Maria Lyle took up her post as director of the RAF Families Federation at the end of October. © RAF Families Federation

RAF Museum awarded Freedom of the Borough



At the formal ceremony to mark the award, (l-r) Chief Executive of Barnet Council John Hooton; the Worshipful Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Reuben Thompstone; RAF Museum Chief Executive Officer Maggie Appleton; Assistant Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Gerry Mayhew; and the Deputy Mayor of Barnet Councillor Caroline Stock. © RAF Museum

Barnet Council has awarded the Freedom of the Borough to the RAF Museum to celebrate its diligent preservation of the proud history of the RAF and mark the museum's existence in the borough for more than 100 years.

The RAF Museum opened on the site of the former Hendon Aerodrome in 1972. The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) had taken over the aerodrome in 1916 and, in April 1918, the RNAS was brought together with the Royal Flying Corps to become the Royal Air Force. The annual RAF air show at Hendon ran from 1920 to 1957, and was only interrupted by the Second World War. Between 1920 and 1925, the crowds attending grew from 40,000 to more than 200,000. Today, the RAF Museum, which is free to enter, attracts more than 450,000 visitors every year.

The Worshipful Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Reuben Thompstone, said: "This museum is a wonderful place, with fantastic exhibits. The awarding of the Freedom of the Borough to an organisation is the highest honour that we can bestow. It recognises the close and sustained relationship between our borough and the museum over many years. I am privileged and honoured to help us celebrate that."

Maggie Appleton, RAF Museum Chief Executive Officer, said: "On behalf of our trustees, staff, volunteers and visitors I am incredibly

proud. Receiving this honour is the perfect way to end a fabulous year which has seen the museum transform to celebrate and commemorate 100 years of the Royal Air Force.

"The historic grounds on which we stand have, in one form or another, attracted people to the borough for over 100 years. To the air shows when it was the London Aerodrome, to RAF Hendon in defence of the nation and finally, to the museum since we opened in 1972. Through sharing the stories of the Royal Air Force, we look forward to a future which brings even more people and opportunities to this great borough and where our role as both a community resource and a national museum grow and strengthen together."

Reminder: You can share your own RAF story with the RAF Museum. Your, your relative's or your branch members' stories can be recorded and submitted from anywhere in the world, using the RAF Stories' smart phone app. Find out more at the official website: rafstories.org. If you are based in Leicestershire, the museum has also linked up with Leicester and De Montfort Universities to record RAF stories face-to-face. The team would love to hear from you if are able to visit one of the universities to tell your story. Call 01902 376237 or email rafstories@rafmuseum.org to find out more.



Main picture: The DNRC is located in the peaceful and restorative countryside, close to centres of research and medical excellence in Loughborough, Leicester and Nottingham. © BS Stanford Ltd

Inset: Defence rehabilitation services are being given a £300 million upgrade as the world-class medical services currently delivered at Headley Court move to a new purpose-built location (shown) on the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate, near Loughborough. © BS Stanford Ltd

£50k to help the nation's wounded

The RAF Association is supporting the welfare of injured airmen and women to the tune of £50,000 – by helping create the nation's new Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC). The centre will provide world class rehabilitation facilities for forces personnel injured either on or off duty while in the service of our country and potentially for civilians too.

In November, Association President Air Marshal Sir Baz North visited the new facility to understand how our welfare support will help. He said: "When people have experienced serious injuries and trauma, they and their families have huge adjustments to make to their lives. Specialist clinical rehabilitation can significantly reduce the impact of the enormous physical and psychological changes that they have to adjust to. As the RAF's leading welfare charity, it is an essential part of our own work with serving personnel to help bring this project to fruition."

What has been created on the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation estate is a bespoke, purpose-built successor to the Defence rehabilitation establishment at Headley Court in Surrey, treating injured soldiers, sailors and airmen. The £300 million centre of excellence will make a real difference in repairing people who are seriously wounded.

The DNRC Programme was the initiative of the late 6th Duke of Westminster who led the charity fundraising drive with a personal founding gift of £70m. The 7th Duke of Westminster formally handed over the gift of the DNRC to the Prime Minister in June 2018 in the presence of the DNRC Patron, the Duke of Cambridge.

Over 95 per cent of the centre is brand new. Its designs have been informed by working closely with Headley Court, the Surgeon General and patient groups. It specifically draws on the expertise in Defence medicine developed over the last 70 years at Headley Court and elsewhere and will enable that to flourish in the bespoke and state-of-the-art new clinical facility. Previous patients said: "At Headley Court, if I wanted to make a cup of tea I'd have to go down the corridor through four sets of doors and then back again. The infrastructure wasn't conducive to people who'd lost limbs. This new centre will be much easier to get around."

As part of its aim to provide some of the best clinical rehabilitation in the world the DNRC will bring together treatment of the physical, functional, vocational, educational, cognitive, psychological and social rehabilitation needs of patients. Gyms, hydrotherapy pools, physiotherapy and advanced prosthetic workshops will be on site.

Hosting Sir Baz's visit, DNRC Programme Director, General Sir Timothy Granville-Chapman said: "This programme is about serious medicine and ensuring we have the capability to look after people who have experienced injury during their service. It is an opportunity to build something today that will not only deliver the very best in healthcare but also provide a lasting legacy — both for defence and potentially civilians too in a facility for them nearby on the same site. We are very grateful for this donation from the RAF Association and it is a very fitting reminder of the RAF's initiative in creating the specialist rehabilitation facility in Surrey at the end of the Second World War."

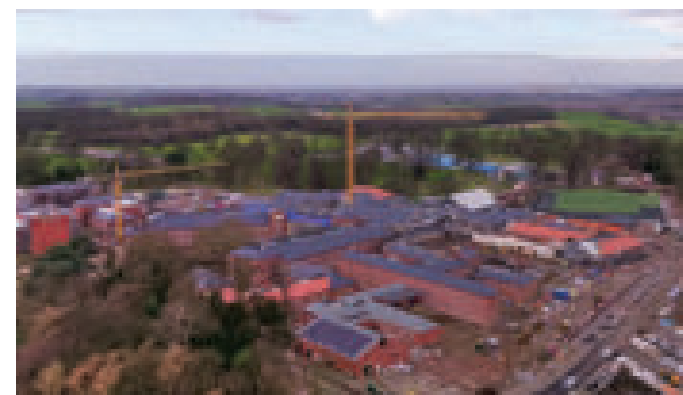
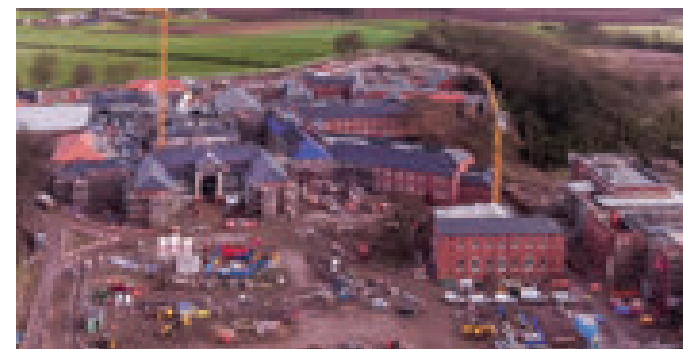
At the heart of the DNRC is the idea that by sharing expertise and facilities between a Defence and a national (civilian/NHS) facility, it will be possible to raise standards of clinical care in both. This opportunity to bring these together is unique and would be game-changing in the field of clinical rehabilitation across the country.

So far £270million has been raised from major donations by individuals, charitable foundations and companies. The major donor campaign continues with the opportunity also for the public to get involved. Anyone wishing to do so can donate – more details at www.thednrc.org.uk.

Association President Sir Baz North, said: "As well as approving the RAF Association's £50,000 welfare support, Council has written to branches to encourage all those that have the funds to consider supporting the DNRC directly as part of their own welfare provision. We have also made introductions to the other RAF charities so they can consider doing the same."

The defence facility will be operated by the Ministry of Defence. All the patients from Headley Court moved in October 2018 and a formal 'opening' of the defence facility is expected to take place in 2019.

Right and above right: Building work nears completion on the Defence facility, pictured in June 2018. © BS Stanford Ltd



Air Marshal Sir Baz North (right) visited the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate to agree the Association's support with the DNRC Programme Director, General Sir Timothy Granville-Chapman and tour the facility. © Mike Cook Imaging

Brussels, Brexit and Birmingham –

the European Area Conference report.

Bedford Hotel, Brussels. Nine of 18 branches were represented.

Organised by the Belgian Branch.



Members of the Belgian Branch, Area Councillors, Delegates and Guests outside the main doors of the Basilica in Brussels

An extremely enjoyable, productive and educational Area conference weekend in Brussels took place from 2 to 4 November 2018. Bob Hunt, Area Chairman, gives us a flavour of the weekend.

An Area council report had been circulated in advance of the conference, with questions invited on its content.

Area Service Vice President Air Marshal Sir Graham Stacey spoke of the latest developments within the RAF, emphasizing that it is now the most technically up-to-date air force in Europe with the most advanced aircraft and equipment.

Conference guest speaker General Gerard van Caelenberge spoke passionately on the history of the Belgian Air Force, from WWI to its current defence deployment in support of NATO and UN operations.

Air Commodore John Maas, Chairman of the Belgian branch, briefed on the local perception of BREXIT and its potential impact on the UK and Europe.

The Swiss Branch proposed it should host the 2019 Area Autumn Conference and outlined the travel, accommodation and costing arrangements for the meeting to be in Geneva from 25 to 27 October 2019. After a few questions, the conference voted unanimously in favour.

Malta Branch used any other business to highlight its potential financial difficulties servicing welfare cases. The Chairman explained that he had already advised headquarters and had received assurances that it would be kept under close consideration by the Welfare Directorate.

The next European Area Conference will be held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel on Friday 10 May 2019, before the Annual Conference.

After conference was closed, Air Marshal Sturley announced, that because of increasing future commitments, he would be stepping down as Area President at the end of the conference weekend.

Air Marshal Sir Graham Stacey, the Area's Service Vice President, had agreed to replace him. The departure of Air Marshal Sturley was a tremendous disappointment to the Area, but the acceptance of the role by Sir Graham was greeted with considerable acclaim.

On Saturday afternoon an essential governance workshop was undertaken by Group Captain, Del Rowlands, Director of Membership and Vikki Hall, Director of Governance. This was very worthwhile and their time and effort travelling from the UK was greatly appreciated.

The evening's formal gala dinner was opened with a parade of standards, and graced by an entertaining talk on the history of the RAF from Commander John Foreman.

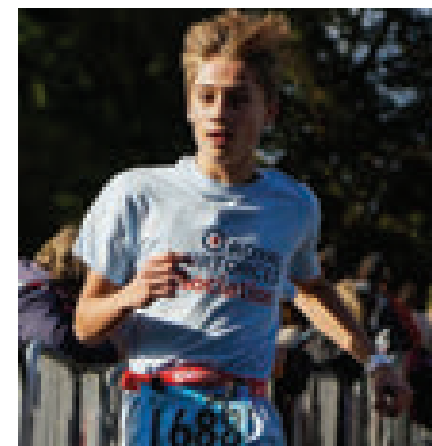
Area awards were presented:

- Mrs Sue McNae, Area President's Certificate, for her outstanding work as Wings Appeal Coordinator for the North Costa Blanca Branch
- Mr John Connolly of the Republic of Ireland Branch and Mr Brian Rosen of the Lyon Branch were to receive Area President's Certificates locally
- Michael Umbrecht of the Sud-Ouest Branch received The Wally Marriott Trophy
- Mike Gerard of the Apollo Branch was awarded The Dennis Eames Shield
- Anne Higgs of the Aphrodite Branch won The Individual Membership Trophy, which would be presented locally
- Wings Appeal Certificates were presented to Aphrodite, Guernsey, Jersey, Luxembourg, North Costa Blanca and Republic of Ireland branches
- A special award was presented by Sir Graham on behalf of the Belgian branch to Wing Commander Charles Howard-Vyse for his outstanding service to the branch

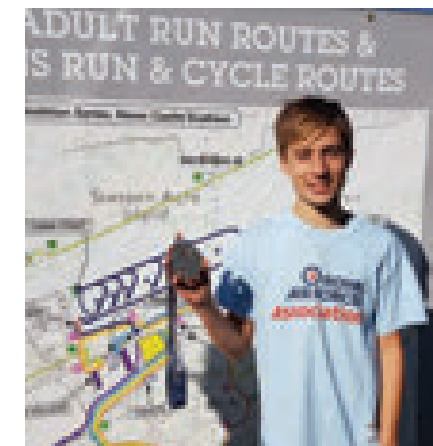
At the close of the awards presentations Air Marshall Sturley was given an extended standing ovation for his service to the Area.

The Sunday service was held at the National Basilica and included the unveiling of plaques commemorating RAF squadrons that had Belgian pilots flying with them during WWII.

SPORT NEWS



Triathlete Phillip Langham of 2427 (Biggin Hill) Squadron Air Cadets competed at Hever Castle to raise funds for the RAF Association. He raised £150 and has already signed up to do it all again in 2019.



Courtesy of RAF Sports Federation

RAF sails to victory

The RAF Sailing Association's trophy cabinet has been bolstered with a long-awaited addition following victory in the inter-service windsurfing championships in Weymouth.

Battling heavy winds, it was the RAF men's team that delivered consistency under pressure to claim a comfortable win over the Army and Navy.

Association members, senior aircraftsmen Alex Smith and Rob Griffiths performed excellently in the individual races to finish second and third to cap off a great event.



© Crown Copyright



Courtesy of RAF Sports Federation

Hat-trick for canoeists

RAF canoeists claimed a third successive inter-services sprint victory at the National Regatta in Nottingham. The team defeated the Army and Navy by a comfortable 21 point margin.

Competitors tackled gruelling courses of six and 12 miles, incorporating sections of sprints, tactical racing and portage – the act of carrying the kayak over ground. Despite individual victories by Sergeant Dave Duff and Senior Aircraftsman Lenny Clark in the men's doubles and a first place in the ladies singles, the Army claimed the team win by the narrowest of margins.

In the sprints there were wins for the women in the individual 200m and 500m events as well as the 500m doubles and K4 200m races. RAF Association members, Sergeant Dave Duff, Sergeant Jason Smith and Senior Aircraftsman Lenny Clark took home men's gold medals to cap a brilliant event for the RAF.



Corporal Foreman, Chief Technician Daniel Cobbett and Senior Aircraftman Toms

RAF Referee of the Year

An RAF Association member has been awarded the most prestigious award at the RAF's 2018 Annual Referee's Dinner.

Chief Technician Daniel Cobbett, named RAF Referee of the Year, had an outstanding year on the pitch. Impressive performances saw him rewarded with matches in the FA Cup, FA Vase and FA Youth Cup, as well as games within the FA Women's Premier League. Off the pitch, Daniel helped progress and mentor new referees, as well as providing constant support to the referees' committee as an area secretary.

Other Association winners included Senior Aircraftman Alastair Toms, who was awarded The Andy Fish Memorial Trophy for the most promising junior referee. Adam Baguley and Lee Suggett received RAF Full Colours.

Prior to the awards, the RAF Football Association referees' seminar took place at nearby RAF Halton. Among the guests was Flight Sergeant John Flynn, an official at the 2010 FA Cup Final. All the officials at the seminar wore their new 2018/19 RAF Association-sponsored tracksuits.

Rolling to Invictus glory



Naomi Adie at the Invictus Games in Sydney



An athlete supported by the Association has brought home a silver and two bronze medals from the 2018 Invictus Games.

Naomi Adie was medically discharged from the RAF in 2014 after a spinal injury and is using sport as a way to overcome her mental and physical challenges. The wheel chair racer won bronze in the 1500m, bronze in the 100m and silver in the 400m relay at the games in Sydney last October.

Naomi, who lives in Norfolk with husband Stephen and daughter Vesta, joined the RAF in 2000 as a survival equipment fitter, which included teaching pilots to ditch safely into water. An injury at work, which got progressively worse, eventually led to premature discharge.

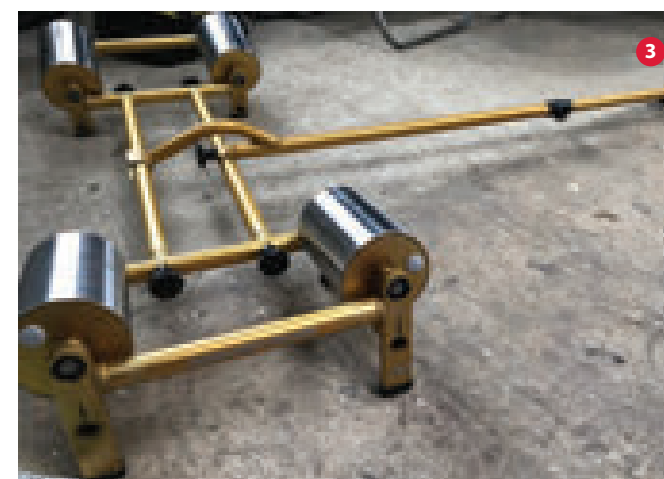
"I hurt my spine in 2001 but I still participated in two tours of Afghanistan. Unfortunately my condition worsened. It became too much to carry on and has resulted in me being reliant on a wheel chair to get about sometimes."



Naomi represented the RAF in field hockey between 2002 and 2008. She then took up para ice hockey, travelling one and a half hours to Peterborough each week to train. Her aim was to represent the United Kingdom at the 2017 Invictus Games in Toronto, Canada. Unfortunately the sport was not represented there, but she continues to play for Peterborough and GB Women.

Naomi then switched her focus to wheel chair racing. She said: "I was disappointed that para ice hockey was left out of the previous games but had it not been, I may not have discovered a love for racing and have had the chance to compete in Sydney. I felt it was important to confront some of my anxieties and insecurities and by selecting a solo sport, I have done just that."

Naomi continued: "I was asked to captain the athletics team at the games which is an immense honour for myself and my family."



The Invictus Games are for wounded, injured or sick armed services personnel and veterans. More than 500 competitors from 18 nations competed in 11 adaptive sports in Sydney, Australia in late October 2018. The RAF Association has supported Naomi's transition from active service by providing funding for static racing rollers. These allow athletes to train indoors when the weather is unsuitable, and are often used as a tool to warm up and warm down at race events.

She said: "The rollers are invaluable to me, I am unable to train outdoors when it's raining as the rubber doesn't grip the gloves and it can be very dangerous. All the top athletes have rollers so I am really thankful to be supported by the RAF Association."

Looking to the future, Naomi is aiming to become a classified athlete for wheelchair racing and para ice hockey and has ambitions to coach. "It has taken a lot of grit and determination to get where I am today. I have set myself a goal and put my all into it. It's important to show my daughter – by striving for success mummy can achieve something despite my physical limitations. I want her to see the person not the disability or injury and this journey is helping with that."



1. Naomi Adie takes the bronze medal in the 1500m © GettyImages

2. Essential wet weather gear – Naomi uses the rollers provided by the Association when it's raining and she can't train outdoors.

3. All the top athletes have rollers so I am really thankful to be supported by the RAF Association," Naomi says.

4. Naomi serving in the RAF

© All photos except 1, Naomi's own

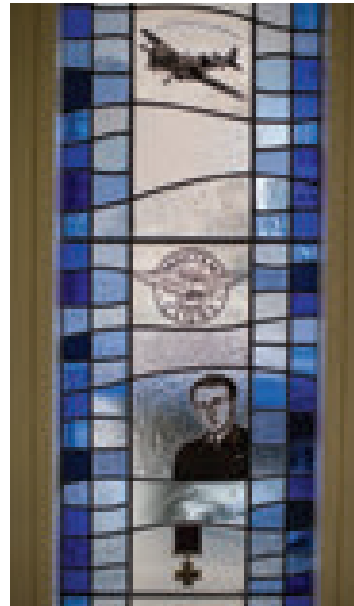
Dreams of retirement?

There are currently vacancies at Dowding House in Moffat, Scotland, Lord Tedder Court in Rothbury, Northumberland and Wexford House in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

The Association's beautiful independent-living complexes offer one bedroom apartments in some of the UK's most sought-after locations. Perhaps you promised yourself morning strolls along country lanes, or afternoon teas in cosy cafes? Maybe you'd like to be close enough to a golf course to play whenever you like? Or perhaps you'd like the chance to learn a new hobby or skill by joining a community class?

Moving to one of our thoughtfully developed sites enables you to retain your independence while living among like-minded people who all share an RAF connection. And there's a helping hand available from an on-site manager, should you need them.

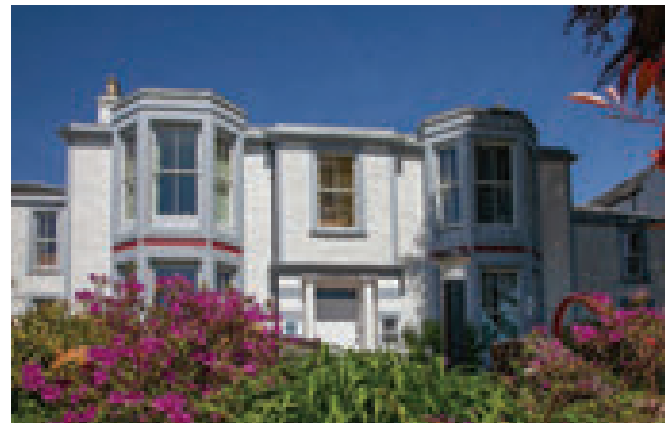
If you're 65 or over (60 or over for places at Dowding House), have served in the RAF, or are the widow or widower of an RAF veteran, and would like to find out more about our retirement accommodation, please get in touch. Call 0800 018 2361 to find out more.



Left: Lord Tedder Court

Below left: Wexford House

Below right: Dowding House



New support service aims to tackle range of emotional wellbeing issues for RAF veterans

A new listening and counselling service has been launched by the RAF Benevolent Fund.

The service is for veterans, their families and the families of serving personnel. It is tailored to support anyone experiencing a range of wellbeing issues, from anxiety and depression or bereavement to low self-esteem, loneliness, and isolation when caring for a loved one. A dedicated helpline and email address provide information on the service and access to counselling sessions. Counselling is available face-to-face, by telephone or at home for those who struggle to get out.

Alison Wyman, RAF Benevolent Fund Head of Welfare Programmes and Development, said: "The Fund has developed this new service after listening to the needs of the wider RAF family. The listening and counselling service offers something bespoke for those suffering from emotional wellbeing issues."

Sally, a reservist in the RAF, contacted the Benevolent Fund for support with depression.

Sally said: "There is still a stigma around mental illness. I knew deep down something was wrong but I did not want to start that first conversation, I had a fear of where to start. I spent a long time in denial. You have to trust your family or a loved one and talk about it. My other half was adamant that things could not be left as they were any longer but I had to be pushed to get help. I thought I was coping but I wasn't."

"Without the therapy sessions I would be in a far worse situation and I would encourage others to please seek help if they feel they are not coping and talk to someone about how they are feeling."

Find out more on 0300 222 5703 or at support@rafbf.org.uk. Non-serving dependent family members and reservists will be able to access this service directly. Serving regulars may need to go through their medical officer to get the counselling support.



*A higher than average number of Association members are looking after relatives with dementia
© Alzheimer's Society*

Study shows levels of dementia and unpaid care

Preliminary findings from the Association's first ever welfare survey of members are showing interesting results. 4,279 members responded to the questionnaire that was issued online and with the January 2018 issue of Air Mail – a number high enough to make the responses statistically significant.

An early finding evidenced that some members of all ages are unpaid carers and that higher than average numbers of members are looking after relatives with dementia. After more than 400 hours of data input the first results show:

15 per cent of responders are unpaid carers.

This is slightly higher than the nationwide figure cited by Carers UK, which is 1 in 8 or 12.5 per cent. Our figure also differs slightly across different population groups within our study:

- 9 per cent of serving personnel are unpaid carers
- 13 per cent of working-age veterans (up to 65 years old) are unpaid carers
- 21 per cent of older veterans (age 65+) are unpaid carers
- 22 per cent of relatives of serving personnel and/or veterans are unpaid carers

Dementia affects the most people in all age groups

Across the age groups, the health condition affecting the most people who are being cared for is dementia. Nationally there are 850,000 people with dementia, with numbers set to rise to more than one million by 2021. It is a key priority for NHS England and the UK government and assemblies.

Dr Prema Nirgude, Welfare Research and Insight Officer at the Association, who led the study said: "It is important to understand more about the activities and needs of people in the RAF family. Whether you are currently serving, had served, or you are the family member of a serving person, the Association wants to make sure future welfare activities will be tailored to meet your needs."

Rory O'Connor, Director of Welfare and Policy said: "This is the first research study conducted within the Association and we are delighted with the number of members who took part. Whether you volunteer, support someone as an unpaid carer or are a user of one of our many welfare services, it is important that your views are shared to help us provide appropriate services to the RAF family."

Future issues of Air Mail will highlight other findings from the 2018 survey.



The survey shows members of all ages can be unpaid carers. rafaYOUTH award recipient, Tyler White (pictured), was the registered NHS carer for his mother when she had ME (Myalgic Encephalopathy) and fibromyalgia.

Alzheimer's Society link up

In light of these preliminary welfare research findings, the Association has linked up with Alzheimer's Society to identify the specific needs of members of the RAF family who are affected by dementia. Key groups such as welfare staff within the RAF Association, RAF veterans who have been diagnosed with dementia, and their family and carers will be equal partners in the study. The Association and Alzheimer's Society want to understand in more depth the issues people face, and work with members to try and create solutions that can address and ease those challenges. It is anticipated that the Association could then develop new welfare support for members and people from the wider RAF family based on the results. The initial dementia study will run from April 2019.

If you missed out on completing the survey but are keen to be involved in the wider welfare research, the Alzheimer's research, or any future RAF Association research studies, please get in touch with: Dr Prema Nirgude, Welfare Research and Insight Officer, tel 0116 464 5029 or email prema.nirgude@rafa.org.uk.

Plotting in the hole

Adulation is often reserved for the heroics of RAF pilots in the skies above the UK during the Battle of Britain and throughout WWII. But buried 60 feet below ground, in bunkers, plotters were the eyes and ears of our pilots in the nation's greatest hour of need.



"Our table was full and plots came in fast and furious" © Hillingdon Council

The role of a plotter was intense and relentless. Their job was to digest data from radar and plot aircraft status and location on a large map in the Operations Room. Controllers, on a platform above, relayed that information to the pilots in the sky.

Fighter Command, headquartered at Bentley Priory, was formed in 1936 to allow specialised control of fighter aircraft. It was made up of several groups, No.9, 10, 11, 12 13 and 14 Group, who were responsible for monitoring the airspace throughout the UK and beyond.

Making use of Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding's innovative system of fighter control, Fighter Command received data from Chain Home radar stations and the Royal Observer Corps thanks to a dedicated telephone network. This information was used to build a single image of the entire UK airspace and direct defensive interceptor aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery against enemy targets.

The Battle of Britain bunker, at RAF Uxbridge (No.11 Group), was located 18 metres (60 feet) below ground and was completed just ten days before the start of WWII. Key decisions that would decide the fate of the nation were taken in the bunker throughout 1940 and it was thanks to the tireless work of the plotters and controllers that the RAF's fighter pilots managed to keep the Luftwaffe at bay.

Following a visit to the bunker in August 1940, British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill uttered his now famous phrase about the Battle of Britain, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."



The relief of a day off for plotters like Phyllis (above) and Helen, (pictured overleaf), must have been palpable.

Phyllis Hill now. "I cherish the relationships that were forged. I have to say I miss it." © Phyllis Hill

"We were both assigned to 'A-watch' and became known as the 'heavenly twins'. We worked side-by-side, slept side-by-side, ate side-by-side and went on leave together."

Another Association member, Helen Mills, was born in Walton-on-Thames in 1924, and joined the WAAF in 1942. As with Phyllis, Helen's chosen special duty was as a clerk, which required workers to be mentally alert, calm under pressure and to work with

accuracy - traits which would serve her well as a plotter at RAF Uxbridge in 1943.

Phyllis Hill's basic training. © Phyllis Hill

The majority of plotters happened to be female and members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAFs). One of those women was Association member Phyllis Hill, now celebrating her 100th year. Phyllis was newly wed to her husband Horace Hill, and on honeymoon when war was declared in 1939. Horace was posted to Egypt and it was four years before they would be reunited.

Phyllis decided to join the WAAF in 1941 and, after bumping into an old friend who persuaded her to apply for a plotter's job, she was posted to RAF Colerne in Wiltshire.

"I and my friend, Joan Rudd - despite me not having a clue what the job involved - went to plotter school in Leighton Buzzard. We had to swear on the Bible we would never talk of our work, or make any notes. The girls tested each other every night as we lay in our bunks. After graduating we were sent to RAF Colerne in Wiltshire.

"I cherish the relationships that were forged. I have to say I miss it."

Phyllis Hill



Helen Mills reflects on her time in the bunker: "Sometimes we'd watch the pilots taking off... Their lives depended on the accuracy and speed of our plotting." © Hillingdon Council

No.11 Group's monitoring was spread across the south-east of England, the English Channel, and the coastline of France, Belgium and Holland, meaning they bore the brunt of the Luftwaffe's aerial assault. Helen arrived after the Battle of Britain but the plotters' role within the bunker was as important as ever.

The entrance to the underground Operations Room, at all stations, was guarded by a sentry and a different code was needed each day before entering. Once access was granted, the plotter would collect her headset and plug herself in next to the WAAF she was relieving. Phyllis explains: "Once we were plotting in rhythm, she would unplug, disinfect her headset and hang it on the peg.

"After we were transferred to No.10 Group at RAF Exeter, we would plot the enemy from the coast of France over the water to our shores: anything from 50 to 500 aircraft at one time. Our table was full and plots came in fast and furious. We used three colours on the map – red, yellow and blue – to track where the aircraft were at a particular time. These were updated every five minutes and there were only ever two colours on at any one time so that, as the next five minutes came, the coloured arrows of 15 minutes previously would be removed.

"We were very aware of our responsibility. Sometimes we'd watch the pilots taking off, many only 18 or 19 years old, and wonder, silently, how many would return? Their lives depended on the accuracy and speed of our plotting."

'Watches' were shared between four plotters. The hours were long with shifts ranging from midday to 5pm, then back on at midnight to 8am, then 5pm to midnight, then 8am till midday. When combining the irregularity of times and the intensity, the relief of a day off must have been palpable.

Helen said: "During raids, the bunker could become extremely busy but we had to remain calm and concentrate. If we felt overwhelmed by the number of plots coming through, it was better to ask to be relieved and let someone else take over, rather than make a mistake.

"In bad weather, when there was no flying, I was able to enjoy a cup of tea but smoking was prohibited in the room; not even Churchill was allowed!"

With the war entering its final months, thoughts of life after the RAF were prevalent in both women's minds.

"You couldn't help but think about returning to civilian life. For so long I had lived with just a kit bag, two sets of uniform and strict rules to live by. I also had a husband, whom I hadn't seen for four years, to reconnect with" said Phyllis.

She continued: "We were demobbed in 1945 and moved from one village to another, buying and selling small stores and post offices. Eventually we began a family and settled in Salisbury."

Today, Phyllis lives in Bournemouth, close to her family, but without Horace who died a number of years ago. Remembering her time in the RAF she explained: "I cherish the relationships that were forged as a result of my time in the RAF; the fun we had with our American friends and the friendships created with women in the same position as me. I enjoyed the element of danger and responsibility involved. I have to say I miss it." Helen was posted to RAF Records in Gloucester following VE Day and demobbed in 1946, eventually becoming a teacher and raising a family with her husband Geoffrey. She was a member of her local Weybridge RAF Association branch before its closure in some years ago. "I shall always remember, with fondness, my time as a plotter and the camaraderie we shared."

Hillingdon Council acquired the historic Uxbridge site from the Ministry of Defence after the closure of RAF Uxbridge. The council built a new Battle of Britain Bunker Exhibition and Visitor Centre there, which opened in 2018. Helen was present at the opening and enjoys sharing her experiences.

She explains: "I often return to the bunker at Uxbridge, which we called 'The Hole', and give talks, show photographs and share my stories of wartime. I emphasise that without the ground crews and the work of everyone in the Operations Room, the pilots could not have flown. To stand at the table and pretend to plot for people, has a certain déjà vu feeling about it."

Battle of Britain Bunker and Visitor Centre Opened: April 2018

Traces the development of the UK's innovative air defence system – and much more. Audio-visual interactive displays include a replica of the operations room table so visitors can be hands-on at being a plotter, spotting aircraft as a member of the Observer Corps and even raising the air raid alarm. First-hand recollections from Battle of Britain pilots, plotters and controllers help visitors to understand what it was really like to plan, coordinate and fight the world's first entirely aerial battle. Historians can take advantage of the extensive library and research facilities, and the facility can be hired for events.

battleofbritainbunker.co.uk
email: bunker@hillington.gov.uk
01895 238154
@BoFBunker #BoFBunker



Helen Mills, second from right, with Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) colleagues in the 1940s. © Helen Mills

BRANCH NEWS

including region, area and overseas news



Alnwick Branch 1

Association President, Sir Baz North, attended the rededication of the Cheviot Memorial in Northumberland. During the event he met with the Leeming Mountain Rescue team and took the opportunity to recruit two new members to the Association. The picture shows the two new members with Sir Baz alongside other members of the team — all of whom were already signed up.

Angus Branch 2

Dave Brewster and his wife Marion, with the trophy won by the branch for best stand at the Scottish Vintage Tractor and Engine Club show. The branch has attended the event for the last five years and this year beat off 200 other exhibitors for the trophy.

Barnstaple & North Devon Branch Branch 3

Members of the branch visited the Helicopter Museum on the site of former RAF Locking at Weston-super-Mare. This visit was one of the events, organised to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Air Force. In November the branch organised a concert by the RAFA Concert Band, supported by the Chivenor Wives Choir in Barnstaple. Members were supported by staff and cadets of the 1146 (Barnstaple) and 722 (Chivenor) squadrons at a successful Wings Appeal collection at Tesco in Barnstaple.

Barry Branch 4

A 50 strong, four part choir from Steenberg, Holland enthralled large, appreciative audiences with songs in Welsh and English at a series of concerts in September. Despite an exhausting ten hour journey before the first concert, they were asked for encores of their rendition of the Welsh national anthem, sung in Welsh. Both concerts were free, but raffles and the generosity of the audiences meant they raised over £600 for the branch. The branch was supported by local organisations and thanked The ABS choir, soloists Llinos Haf Jones and Lucie Jane Jones, local councils, churches, and businesses, and hosts the Wyndham Club and the Old Penarthians' Club.

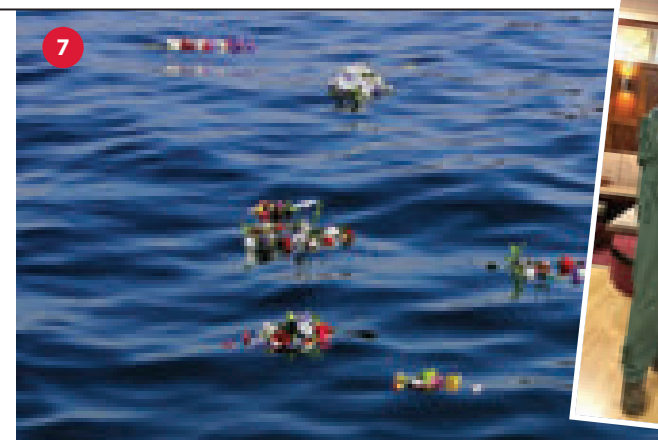


Beccles and Southwold Branch 5

More than 120 civic guests and the public attended a Battle of Britain service organised by Reverend Rich Henderson and branch President Brian Vousden at St Michael's church in Beccles. Guests included Peter Aldous MP, the mayors of Beccles and Southwold, Waveney District councillors and members of all three services. Standards were paraded by the branch, local branches of the Royal British Legion and the Royal Naval Association. Following the service, refreshments were provided and an RAF100 celebration cake. More pictures are available on the branch website at rafabecclesandsouthwold.wordpress.com

Bexleyheath Branch 6

Branch President Flight Lieutenant Kris Cottier has been awarded the badge of the League of Mercy for service to the Association and the Air Cadets. He was integral to the formation of rafayOUTH in 2013 and the Welling Cadet Forces Foundation in 2018. He was also recognised for his diligence by being named a 'community champion' and invited to the Royal Wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.



Bodmin Branch 7

For many decades the branch has held a wreath laying service at sea (pictured), to commemorate fallen airmen who crashed around our coasts with no known grave. This year, President of the Association, Air Marshal Sir Baz North and Lady North were the guests of honour at the service which was held off the coast of Padstow in September.

Bognor Regis Branch 8

In the run up to Christmas the branch organised consignments of folding solar panel chargers, tablets, power packs and banks, and lighting for the men and women of the RAF spending Christmas away from their families in Mali. The first delivery of electronic equipment was handed over in October to Sergeant Jamie Donnelly of 18B Squadron supporting French forces in Africa. Sergeant Donnelly said the donations would help them "keep in touch with loved ones at home, which would be particularly welcome." The initiative was the branch welfare officer Sue Hull's. She is pictured with Sergeant Donnelly and the equipment.

Braunstone Branch 9

From the early part of 2018 the branch has been involved with a community poppy cascade to mark the 100th anniversary of the ending of the Great War. The cascade was in place from 1 November and formed the backdrop for the dedication of a new war memorial a week later. The 14,178 poppies represent each person from Leicestershire who made the ultimate sacrifice. In conjunction with the cascade, branch members created the number 100 with 100 felt roundels to mark the formation of the Royal Air Force and held a concert of The Hathern Band.



Bridlington Branch 10

Partnership working at its best in Bridlington meant 200 poppies were used to decorate the town's war memorial garden railings. 100 represented the centenary of the RAF and 100 marked the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI. The project was brought to life by members of the town council, Bridlington branch and 252 (Bridlington) Squadron air cadets who mounted the poppies on railings (pictured). Officer Commanding Warrant Officer Rob Hill of the air cadets, said being asked to place the 200 poppies around the war memorial fence was a special honour for the cadets and the squadron personnel.

BEST PHOTO WINNER



Bridport and Lyme Regis Registered Members Group 11

Crowds lining the streets for the Bridport carnival caught a glimpse of Association's Trenchard token on a branch members' Land Rover. The token had arrived earlier in the week from Yeovil Branch, visited a retirement home for a presentation and been displayed in a local shop window. The token was officially handed over by the Mayor of Bridport, Councillor Barry and the Town Crier John Collingwood and carried by 1956 Bedford Fire Engine and autogyro, for a handover at Dunkswell airfield. Pictured with the token are branch Chairman Alan Kidson and autogyro pilot Nick Wright.



Caduceus and Swindon Branches 12

Caduceus and Swindon Branches joined forces to hold a fundraising ball to mark the centenary of the RAF. The event raised more than £2,200 and more funds are to be added from sales of photos. Pictured is organiser Jess Robins, and Ash Boyd. The branches are hoping to hold a Battle of Britain-themed ball in 2019. Separately a further £1,010 was raised by Caduceus Branch raffling a bear, 'Sergeant Douglas Beardar', that had flown in a Typhoon and a Gnat, jumped with the Falcons parachute team and TV presenter Nick Knowles, and been in the RAF100 London flypast.

Carrickfergus Branch 13

The Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, Mrs Joan Christie OBE, launched the 2018 Wings Appeal in August on behalf of the Carrickfergus Branch by urging citizens to donate, saying: "A huge swathe of ageing veterans in Southern County Antrim is looked after, from a welfare perspective, by the Carrickfergus Branch." Branch President, Maureen Irwin added: "We must remember that it's not just the veterans of the Second World War who need help. There are many who are very much younger and were engaged in operations in Korea, the Falklands, the two Gulf Wars, Iraq and Afghanistan."

Carlisle and District Branch ¹⁴

Carlisle and District Branch held a Wings street collection in Carlisle city centre in September. Members and supporters staffed a gazebo and collected in the town. The Carlisle Border Concert Band set up nearby and played tunes including the RAF March Past, 633 Squadron and the Dambusters. Cadets from 862 (City of Carlisle) Squadron Air Cadets and colleagues from the local Royal British Legion branch helped to boost the collector numbers and raised more than £1,500. The event was followed with a special RAF100 service in Carlisle Cathedral at which the branch standard was paraded.

Costa del Sol Branch ¹⁵

The British, German, American, French and Canadian Consuls gathered with local people for a Service of Remembrance in November. After a service at St George's Anglican Church in Malaga, wreaths were laid on behalf of The Queen at the military war graves. Representatives of the German Consul, Royal Australian Air Force, the Royal Navy, the English Cemetery, the Royal British Legion, the Royal Naval Association, Almuñecar and the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos also laid wreaths. Afterwards refreshments, provided by the congregation of St Georges Church, were enjoyed in front of the church in the sunshine. www.rafacostadelsol.co.uk

Cranwell Branch ¹⁶

Members celebrated the 100th anniversary of the RAF and the 20th anniversary of the branch with a glass or two and a games evening in October. Earlier in the year there were visits to Kingston upon Hull and Melton Mowbray. Assisted by the air cadets, there were Wings Appeal collections at Cranwell Families' Day, Wings Saturday in Sleaford and Ruskington. At the third annual golf competition at the South Kyme Golf Club, sponsored by the Boston BMW and Mini, 17 teams of four raised more than £1,100. And the branch attended the Remembrance service and parade at RAF College Cranwell.

Dartford Branch and Club

The branch standard was carried at St Clement Danes church in April and at Westminster Abbey in July to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the RAF, and at a stone laying ceremony to commemorate a Polish pilot who crashed in Spitfire near Sevenoaks in 1940. A five day break in the Cotswolds was enjoyed by a group of members. The branch runs four quizzes a year to raise funds for the Wings Appeal and this year also celebrated the work of member 'Frank', who collected for the appeal for many years in Greenhithe, Kent. They were also pleased to welcome visits from Branch Support Officers Mick Larkman and Andy Pegler.

Dawlish Branch ¹⁷

Dawlish Branch received the RAF 100 token from Exmouth Branch by boat and displayed it in the Dawlish club and at Dawlish Warren Green. A celebration evening was enjoyed at the club, attended by our President Mr Henry Robins, Flying Officer Charlotte Bagnall of 2401 (Dawlish) Squadron and some of her cadets. The Token made its onward journey to Torquay Branch by classic car. The branch also fundraised during Dawlish carnival week, using their appealing canine secret weapons (pictured) to help bring people to the stand and contribute to the collecting tins.

Diss Branch ¹⁸

A demonstration of the abilities of the amazing animals of the dog section was the first part of the branch tour at RAF Mildenhall in August. Members also learnt about 100th Air Refuelling Wing's work and history and saw how the present day aircraft of United States Air Force (USAF) carry a Square D badge on the tail. This links the existing Wing and the 100th Bomb Group which operated from nearby Thorpe Abbots Airfield during WWII. They are the only USAF unit to retain the war tail emblem. Afterwards, the party went on board the static KC135 Stratotanker to thoroughly explore.



Dover and District Branch

Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke, Association members, and 354 (Dover) Squadron air cadets were joined by members from the Dover branch of the British Legion for a church service to commemorate the 78th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the 100th anniversary of the RAF at St Mary in Castro church in September. Standards were paraded by the branch, Royal Artillery Dover, Royal British Legion Dover, St Margaret's Women's branch, The Mercian and 354 Squadron air cadets.

Downham Market Branch ¹⁹

The branch said a fond farewell to long serving member, John Stanton, who is moving to pastures new in Horsham, Sussex. John has served the branch since 1975, holding several posts at Area and branch level, ably supported by his wife Shirley, who made her own valuable contribution to the branch. At the meeting, they were presented with leaving gifts from the branch and RAF Marham by our President, Group Captain Cab Townsend, Station Commander RAF Marham. We wish them every happiness in their retirement from Downham Market. Photo shows John and Shirley Stanton with Group Captain Cab Townsend.

Ellesmere Branch ²⁰

The branch held a two day celebration of the 100 year anniversary of the RAF with a parade of 25 classic cars (100 wheels) and a band concert in the public gardens. An Air Force blue Daimler, owned by treasurer Dennis Severs was part of the display. The mayor officiated at the send off of the Association token, which was taken onwards in member Ron Banks's 1934 Alvis (pictured) watched by members, RAF Shawbury RAFALO Warrant Officer Anita Coyles, air cadets from Whitchurch and members of the public.

Formby Branch ²¹

Mayor of Sefton, Councillor Dave Robinson, unveiled a memorial in Southport Botanical Gardens commissioned by the branch to commemorate the centenary of the RAF. Members of the branch, family members, members of the public and local air cadets watched. The mayor is pictured between members of the branch shortly after the event.

Grantham Branch ²²

Ladies Probus of Grantham and the branch held their third 'Brew for the Few' to raise funds for the Wings Appeal. A raffle of a donated cake and a quiz based on war time rationing helped the 30 guests raise the grand total of £233. Branch member Maggie Pritchard said, "Not many of us knew the answers. But as most of us were alive during the war including one 97 year old RAFA member who served, maybe we should have done better!" Pictured (right) is organiser Pat Owen with the raffle winner.

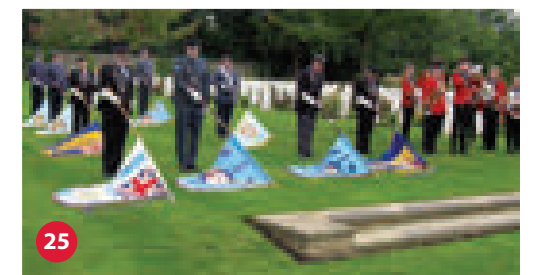
Great Yarmouth Branch ²³

Just over 100 members of the branch, councillors' friends, relatives and supporters joined the Mayor of Great Yarmouth Councillor Mary Coleman and Councillor Barry Coleman at the Battle of Britain Commemoration service in the Minster in September. The Royal Corps of Transport and 221 (Great Yarmouth) Squadron Air Cadets paraded. After the service Tom Gilbert, Branch Secretary, said: "This year the commemoration of 'The Few' is made even more poignant as we also celebrated the centenary of the RAF. It was good to see the support for this event in the Minster."



Hailsham Branch ²⁴

In August the branch held a service at the headquarters of 249 (Hailsham) Squadron Air Cadets to lay up its old standard and dedicate the new one. President, Derrick Davies presented the standard and Reverend Peter Clark conducted the ceremony. The cadets helped carry standards and are pictured with members. A total of £1,281 was collected by members of the branch with lots of help from the cadets during Wings Appeal week.



Harrogate and District Branch ²⁵

The branch's summer highlight was at Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate (pictured). The 67th annual parade and service commemorated the young airmen who died during WWII. The majority were based at airfields within Yorkshire. Of the 1,017 graves, 666 are Canadians, 224 are British and the remainder are Australians, New Zealanders, Russians and Germans. Guests included regional air cadet squadrons, local dignitaries, Menwith Hill, the police force and a large delegation from the Jewish Association. Wings Appeal street collections across the region and fundraising events raised over £1,500. A Battle of Britain Commemorative Service was held in September in Harrogate followed by wreath laying at the cenotaph.



Haverfordwest Branch 26

On August bank holiday Saturday, Branch Secretary Ann Ansell served young customers at the Camrose Vintage Show (pictured). The event was the final in a range of RAF centenary events held, including visits to Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre, Swansea, Cardiff, RAF Fairford, Brawdy open day, and Wings Over Carew.

Haywards Heath Branch 27

Haywards Heath Town Day in September saw the Wings Parachute Display team dropping in to meet branch members who were running a stall to raise funds for the Wings Appeal. Pictured with the team are (centre, from left) members Bob Cameron, Margaret Waterfield and Branch Support Officer Andy Pegler.

Huyton with Roby and Liverpool Branch 28

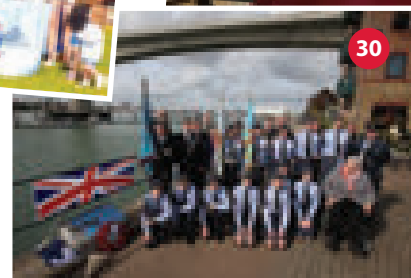
The Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Councillor Christine Banks, invited members of the branch to Liverpool Town Hall in September to launch the 2018 Wings Appeal. Wings Appeal Officer, Phil Southern, explained to the Lord Mayor that the Association's campaign serves to raise the vital funds needed to support serving former RAF personnel and their families, and that the publicity which comes with such a high profile launch will ensure that the branch once again exceeds the £10,000 total. For further details visit our website rafa.org.uk/huyton-with-roby-liverpool

Hythe and Romney Marsh 29

97 year old branch member, Bill Hewson (pictured), was presented with an MBE at Buckingham Palace in November. In September we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the RAF with a swing band at our annual concert in aid of the Wings Appeal at The Tower Theatre, Folkstone. More than £1,000 was collected by members during Battle of Britain collections in Hythe and Folkstone (assisted by air cadets from 99 (Folkstone) Squadron. The Battle of Britain service at Lympne church in September was attended by the Deputy Lieutenant of Kent and local dignitaries and Association members. Air cadets from 2513 (Romney Marsh) and 99 (Folkstone) squadrons provided the guard of honour.

Itchen and Hamble Branch 30

Civilian employees of the Supermarine factory and R J Mitchell, designer of the Spitfire, were remembered by the branch as part of their RAF100 celebrations. In September two local memorials were unveiled by the Mayor of Southampton on the banks of the River Itchen after being refurbished by the branch. Pictured are cadets from 424 (Southampton) and 2428 (Hedge End) Squadrons Air Cadets at the rededication ceremonies along with branch members, dignitaries and local people. Supermarine played a great part in aviation history and was bombed three times in 1940, with great loss of life.



Knighton Branch 31

In October Roger Bright, Chairman of the Knighton Branch went to Shobdon to meet Flight Lieutenant Andy Young who flew a token in the form of a banner from Cosford, to Shobdon. He was accompanied by a young trainee pilot, John Foster. The Knighton Branch displayed the token in the town before taking it back to Birmingham to be part of the International Tattoo. Pictured is Roger Bright receiving the banner from Flight Lieutenant Young.



Leamington Spa, Warwick & District Branch 32

The picture shows a few of our members who attended the branch summer luncheon this year which was held (for the third year running) at the Kenilworth Golf Club. As usual, a summer raffle was held with prizes donated by members which yielded a useful 'top-up' for branch funds. In the picture are Sandra and Pat Fitzgerald, seated with Steve Clarke between them. Branch members are now looking back and reflecting on the summer of 2018 and also looking forward to another (hopefully) good summer in 2019.



Leigh Branch 33

The branch's last collection of 2018 was at Morrison's Leigh store, "our favourite place". Branch president Harry Birchall (pictured with other Wings Appeal collectors) said "the staff always welcome us, enjoy our company and look after us as best they can".



Mablethorpe Branch 34

An anonymous benefactor funded the cost of a branch visit to the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln. The members enjoyed it hugely and are very grateful to the donor. They were joined by members of the Royal British Legion with whom we had shared a fundraising pie and mash night earlier in the year to raise funds for the centre. The visitors saw the exhibition, the spire and the Walls of Remembrance, and were given lunch and refreshments.



Maidstone Branch 35

More than 50 standards were organised by the branch, to attend a special ceremony at the National Memorial to The Few at Capel-le-Ferne, Kent (pictured). The service commemorated the 78th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the 25th Anniversary of the unveiling of the memorial by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and the centenary of the Formation of the Royal Air Force. The guest of honour was the patron of the trust, His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent, who with the Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier and the Memorial Trust President, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton inspected the parade.

Mansfield and District Branch

Mansfield and District Branch held its annual Battle of Britain dinner in September with 1300 (Sutton-in-Ashfield) Squadron air cadets, who helped with street collections locally. Chairman, David Ramsdale, presented an Area Presidential Certificate to Michial and Linda Hughes for the outstanding service to the Wings Appeal over several years and the guest speaker was David Drew. The dinner ended a record breaking year when more than £4,500 was raised.

Market Harborough Branch 36

Photograph shows members of Market Harborough Branch raising funds and raising awareness at the Market Harborough Indoor Market during their 2018 Wings Collection campaign.

Melton Branch 37

The branch held their annual Battle of Britain parade through the town to a service in the parish church and ended with wreath-laying at Egerton Lodge Memorial Gardens. Melton Mowbray Standard Bearer, Phil Taylor was supported by Rutland Standard Bearer, Francis Humphreys (both pictured).

Mid Somerset Branch 38

A service and wreath laying ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Britain and the Royal Air Force's contributions to subsequent conflicts, was organised by the branch at St Cuthbert's Church, Wells, in September. The standards of the three local RAF Air Cadet squadrons, together with that of the RAFA Mid-Somerset Branch were paraded. The vicar of St Cuthbert's and the chaplain of the branch officiated. Deputy Lieutenant Dr Nicholas Hooper, the Member of Parliament for Wells, the Mayors of Wells and Glastonbury, civic dignitaries from Shepton Mallet, Street and Mendip District, and many branch members and supporters also attended.

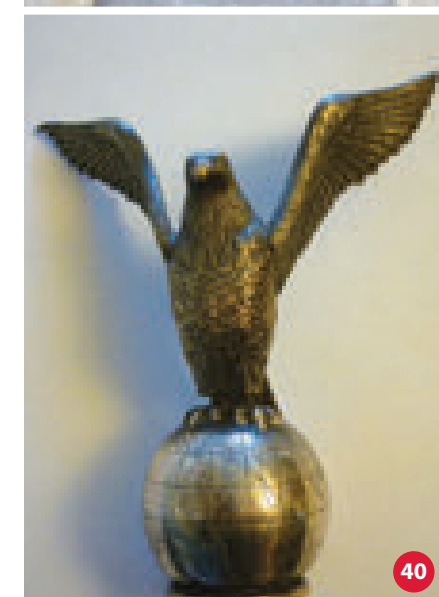
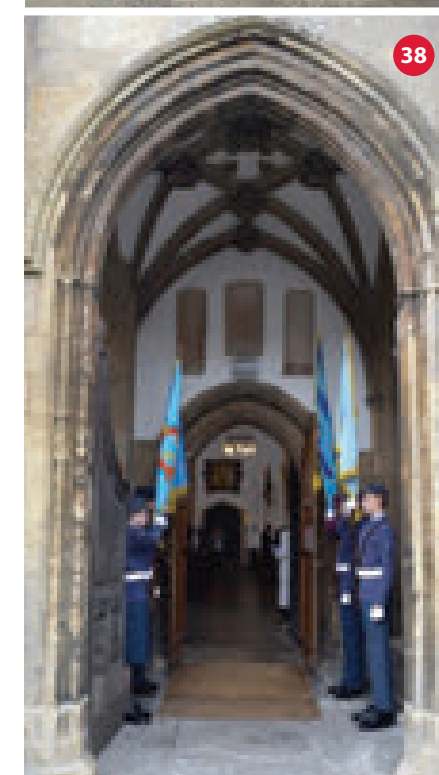
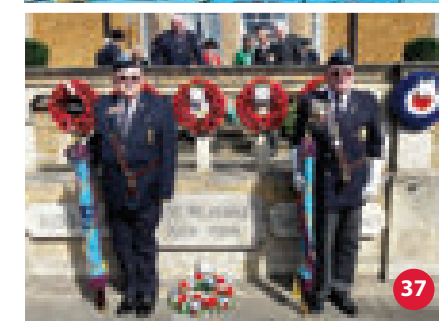
Moray Branch 39

2018 saw the small branch achieve one of its greatest ever Wings Appeal collections. The total was then boosted by a £1,000 donation from the local car club "Historic Wheels". Members (pictured at The Elgin Motor Museum, left to right) collected the cheque: Janet Payne, Eddie Pratt, David Greaterox and Rab Russell. The branch also participated in the parade and church service of the Highland division of the Air Training Corps' 75th Anniversary celebrations in Lossiemouth. At the service the branch laid up its old (Lossiemouth) standard and had the new (Moray) one dedicated by the padre of RAF Lossiemouth.



North Cotswolds Branch 40

In October the branch formally recognised the contribution of an apprentice from Aeromet Ltd of Worcester. Courtney Wicks had sand cast the eagles for the top of the three RAF Association Tokens that were toured round the Wales, Midland and South Western Area to commemorate the centenary of the RAF. At a formal event at her workplace, the branch presented her with a certificate, a book on aluminium metallurgy signed by the author, and a letter of thanks from the Association. The token carriers had been designed by branch chairman John Sermon.





Oxford and District Branch 42

12 members of the branch visited RAF Welford (pictured in the October sunshine). Now a United States Air Force base, it houses the Ridgeway Military & Aviation Research Group Museum. Formed in 1991 to collect and preserve WWII history from the area it is crammed with fascinating displays. The introduction presentation was given by branch President Alan Bovingdon-Cox followed by time to explore. £1,139 was raised for the Wings Appeal on two days in September – from street collections with 2121 (Abingdon) and 2210 (Cowley) squadrons of the Air Cadets, merchandise sales, family days and Ewelme Village show.

Pontefract Branch 43

Every business and home in a wide vicinity was invited to the branch's Family Fun Day in the summer. The event was a resounding success. Early afternoon entertainment for the younger visitors (pictured) included face painting, balloon modelling, a magician and singers of varying ages. In the evening there was a 'Britain's Got Talent' style singing contest, and the usual Saturday evening activities. As well as raising funds for the branch we also had a Wings Appeal table and Branch Support Officer Stuart Grey and his partner Emma attended, with his amply stocked official Association van.

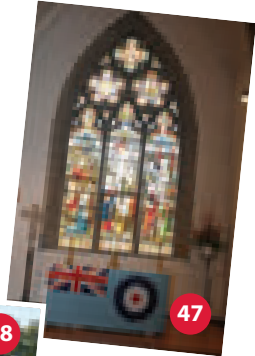
Poole Branch 44

In October retired Group Captain Mike Davis, Chairman of Poole Branch, was awarded the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset's Meritorious Service Award for his support of 2185 (Wareham) Squadron and 2185 (Swanage) Detached Flight, as the Association representative on the 2185 welfare committee. The citation recognised his long support and welfare work for the organisations, his liaison with the local community, support for and feeding of cadets at fundraising events, and his famous quizzes and barbecues.



Romsey Branch 45

The branch won the cup for 'best in carnival' after joining forces with 1391 (Romsey) Squadron Air Cadets in July to enter a float celebrating RAF100 in the Romsey Summer Carnival Procession (pictured). In September the branch worked with Braishfield Village Hall committee to continue celebrating the centenary of the RAF with an afternoon tea in Braishfield Village Hall. The 80 guests included several VIPs - WW2 pilots who had flown Spitfire, Mustang and Lancaster aircraft. The hall was filled with picture boards, RAF uniforms, memorabilia and a vast display of model military aircraft. The branch thanks all the exhibitors and those attending for a memorable day.



Sud-Ouest Branch 46

In October, branch member John Reid attended a moving ceremony in 24470 St Saud in south west France to commemorate the assistance given to the crew of a RAF Halifax Bomber of 161 Squadron by the local French Resistance. The Halifax crashed in 1944 after delivering weapons to the Resistance on 'Operation Percy'. Crew member Sergeant Blackett's son, David, and grandson, Stuart, said they had never expected such a large turnout. They thanked the French audience which included family members of those who had cared for the crashed aircrew – all seven of whom survived. More details of the operation at Allan Latter's website: resistancefrancaise.blogspot.com/search/label/Brigade%20Rac

Swiss Branch 47

The Swiss Branch held a service in Holy Trinity Church, Geneva, to commemorate RAF100. In the congregation were representatives of the British Embassy, the Swiss Air Force, and the Australian, French and New Zealand Consulates General. The RAF Ensign was displayed on the altar and the Union Flag and branch standard were paraded. The service was followed by a reception in the church crypt.

Tamworth Branch 48

The Association Token was received by members of the branch at Defence Medical Services Whittington as part of a visit to the establishment with 1211 (Swadlincote) Squadron Air Cadets and in the company of local dignitaries.

Thetford Branch 49

Since 2004 the Thetford & District Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association has held a Remembrance service to pay tribute to the Polish airmen buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Plot at the church in East Wretham. As well as local dignitaries, the branch was joined by the Deputy for the Ambassador, the Defence Attaché and the Assistant Defence Attaché of the Czech Republic. The Defence Attaché of the Slovak Republic, the Defence Military, Naval & Air Attaché from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, the Memorial Association for Free Czechoslovak Veterans and the Carpathian Lancers Association (Polish Airman's Association) also attended.

Thurrock Branch 50

During September the Thurrock Branch adopted 2243 (Basildon) Squadron Air Cadets. Chairman Jim Gooding presented Warrant Officer James Hart with the Adoption Certificate (pictured) at the branch club. Following this, the squadron warrant officer presented Wings Officer Eddy

Coull, with a cheque for £321 for the Wings Appeal. The money was raised earlier in the year, at a tri-service dinner and Eddy Coull presented Warrant Officer James Hart with a RAFA Wings Appreciation Certificate and thanked Basildon Squadron for their help during the year.



Towyn and Aberdovey Branch 51

The handover of the Area Association Token from Llanidloes Branch to Towyn and Aberdovey Branch took place in front of the memorial marking the site of RAF Morfa Towyn which operated from 1940 to 1945. Pictured (l-r): John Williams, Chairman of Towyn & Aberdovey, Vivien Williams, Secretary Llanidloes, Richard Stoner, Secretary, Luciano Jones, Vice Chairman and Alan Chetwynd, Treasurer of Towyn & Aberdovey. With support from the Magic Lantern cinema, the branch presented a charity film showing of 'Spitfire' documentary in Battle of Britain week, with live musical entertainment and Spitfire beer on sale. It raised around £650 for the Wings Appeal.

Trowbridge and West Wiltshire Branch 52

17 members of the branch visited RAF Hendon Museum in October. The museum has undergone extensive improvements this year that include the 'RAF 100' display which tells the story from when the RAF was formed by the amalgamation of The Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service in 1918. "We all had a most enjoyable and memorable day with the added bonus of excellent weather" said Phil Lobb who organised the trip. New branch members are always welcome to go along to the branch meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at Lovemead House Trowbridge.

WRAF Branch 53

A week on a 40 foot yacht, complete with skipper, was offered to the branch in July. A group of six members joined their captain — and Life Vice President of the Association — Sir Dusty Miller to learn to sail (or sail better) off Falmouth. The day of the 32 knot wind and 10 foot waves focused the mind, but the rest of the week was calm, learning the drills for putting up, taking down and flaking of sails, 'man' overboard and helming the boat. The last two days were spent on tall ship Spirit of Falmouth. More information on what Turn to Starboard offers to serving and retired RAF personnel can be found at: turntostarboard.co.uk



Yeovil and District Branch 54

The branch received the Association Token from Sherborne Branch in August at the headquarters of 1032 (Yeovil) Squadron Air Cadets. The branch thanked the squadron for their involvement in the presentation, during which both the Yeovil, Sherborne and cadet's standards were displayed. The branch also thanked the squadron for their hospitality and support during the Wings Appeal collection in the town. The Token was passed on to the Bridport and Lyme Regis Registered Members Group and received at Bridport Town Hall in the presence of the mayor, town crier and members of the Association.

York Branch 55

20 members attended the September Allied Air Forces Memorial Day at the Yorkshire Air Museum to commemorate the centenary of the RAF and the sacrifices of more recent conflicts. The Royal Air Force, and the United States, French, Czech Republic, Royal Australian and Royal New Zealand Air Forces were represented. A parade for the Freedom of the City for RAF Linton-on-Ouse was followed by a service at York Minster, including the Turning of the Page Ceremony. The page turners were: centenarian and branch member Mr John Hartley DFC and personnel from the air cadets and RAF Linton-on-Ouse. A concerted effort in September meant the branch exceeded its £10,000 target for the Wings Appeal.

And the winner of the January - March branch news photo competition is...

Congratulations to Bridlington Branch for their winning photo this month. There were many strong contenders who they pipped to the post.



For your last chance to win your choice of a bottle of either Spitfire Heritage Gin or Supermarine Vodka, simply submit the 'best branch news photo' in the next issue of Air Mail. It's a fun competition, but there are some terms and conditions. Only branch news photos will be eligible for the prize. If you win, your image will be identified as the best and your choice of a bottle of gin or a bottle of vodka will be posted to you by our friends and supporters at Spitfire Heritage Gin. The editor's decision will be final and no correspondence about the decision will be entered into.

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

Trading places

A technical revolution is helping the team at RAFATRAD Ltd work with the RAF Association to increase income. In 2018, from its new base at Atlas House in Leicester, more than £400,000 worth of external public sales have been made and nearly 1.5million items sent out to help branches continue their vital work.

RAFATRAD is the Association's independent trading company. It looks after two kinds of customer: branches and retail customers. It supplies RAF Association branches with fundraising merchandise such as wrist bands, pin badges, pens and ducks, administrative items to help run the branch, and promotional materials such as welfare and information leaflets. For retail customers, RAFATRAD runs 'the RAF Association shop'. Anyone who wants to buy RAF Association merchandise can order it online, by phone or post, or buy in person at around 45 air shows and other major events a year. And RAFATRAD is behind every aspect of that service – from developing and ordering the products to marketing them, taking orders and posting them out. For all but the largest requests, orders placed by 2pm on a working day, either by a branch or an individual, are expected to be sent out that same day.

Branches

Branches placed 1,777 orders in 2018

In 2018 RAFATRAD sent out around 150,000 packs of items to branches, containing around 1.5million individual items. The company stocks 68 products for the Wings Appeal and works closely with the Wings Appeal team, developing new items to keep fundraising items appealing and up to date. A new Wings ordering system has been developed to be rolled out in 2019. It will give branches and other Wings Appeal fundraisers their own account so stock can be ordered online or on the phone, and orders tracked.

Retail customers

Individuals spent 52% more online in 2018 than 2017

More than 10,000 online customers and over 5,000 telephone customers helped boost sales in 2018. The sales were helped by a new presence on eBay and Amazon and an updated shop website with entirely new order processing software. The 'intelligent' new website system not only allows customers to choose and buy their pin badges or puzzles, it also constantly monitors several couriers and picks the best on the day — saving money for customers and giving a high quality service. An online order tracking system means customers can now follow their order electronically, by email or on screen, and know when their bear, mug or watch will be arriving. It's backed up by telephone support given by RAFATRAD's contact centre, so members and customers can speak to a real person if they prefer. For the Association's significant number of customers who prefer to do their business offline, phone and postal orders are also regularly taken through the friendly contact centre, and full stock lists are included in Air Mail.

45 air shows and major events were attended and sales were up 17%.

Record sales for a single event were logged at Horse Guards Parade/The Mall during the RAF100 flypast in July 2018 — where staff and volunteers were selling RAF100 and Association merchandise. At any busy air show £12,000 can be taken in a day by RAFATRAD's teams of staff and volunteers. In 2019, hours if not days of effort will be saved for Association staff and volunteer crews who sell merchandise at events like RIAT, Swansea, Bournemouth or the Scottish Air Show — and everywhere in between. Electronic tills, which were trialled in 2018, will be used to register sales and monitor stock levels. So when crews return to base after a weekend of 12 to 16 hour days setting up, selling, putting away and travelling, they will no longer have to hand count the remaining stock. When they arrive to get ready for the next air show, they will be able to 'e-pick' the items they need to top up their stock, and can load up and get on the road. HQ and warehouse teams will be able to monitor stock more efficiently throughout the air show season and get replacement orders in as early as possible if there is a particular item flying off the shelves.

The future:

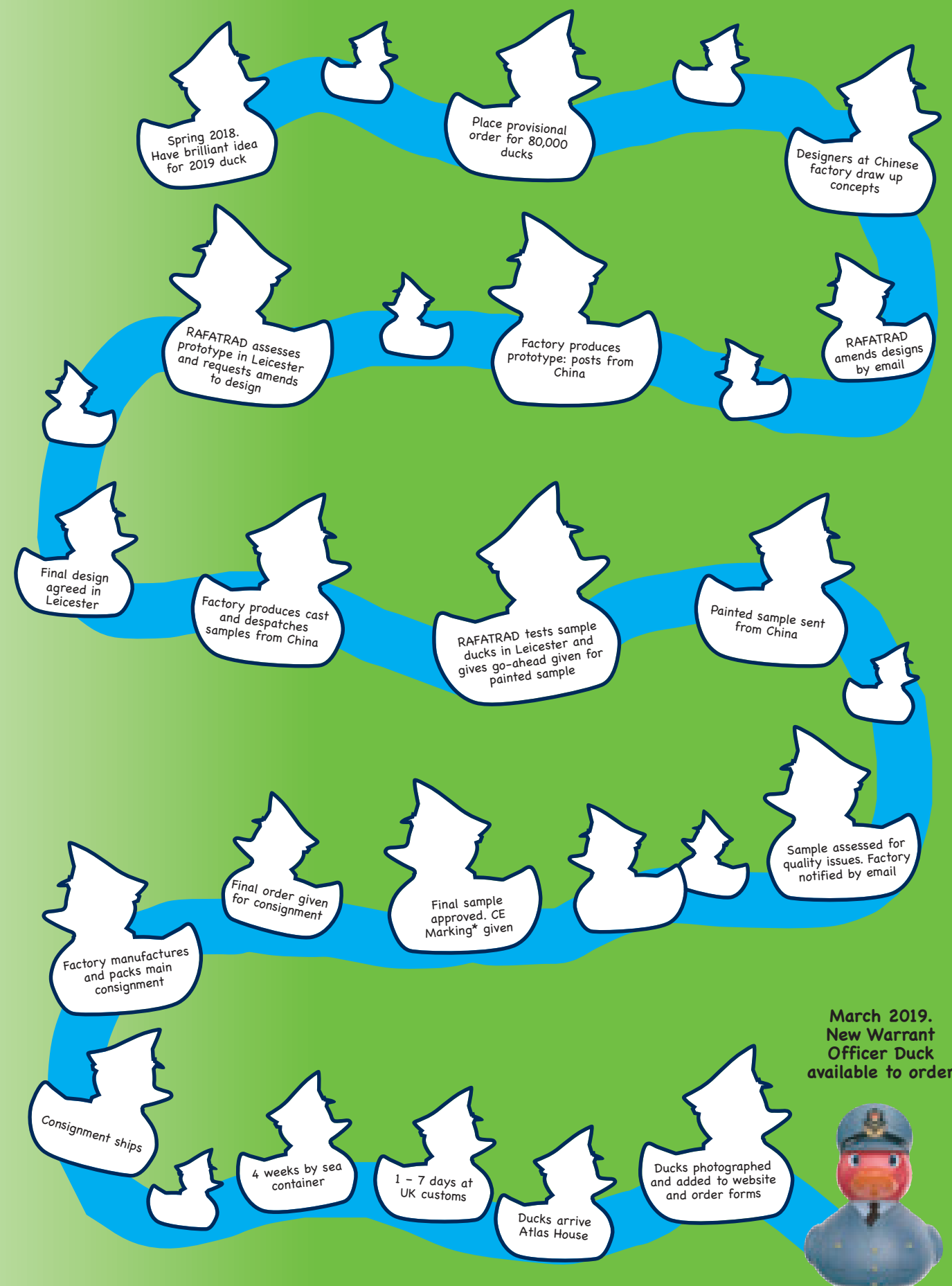
Innovation and fashions are closely monitored by RAFATRAD and the fundraising teams at the Association, so that new ranges can be developed. The Association's new crest has led to an appetite for new watches, lapel badges, ties, blazer badges and scarfs. Some items are already on sale such as blazer badges, ties and brooches. There is much more to come in 2019.

The charity's increasing number of corporate partnerships also give RAFATRAD the chance to develop new or limited edition products like the Tiptree jam canisters and trio boxes – produced during the RAF's centenary year — and to sell special items such as Spitfire Heritage Gin.

Behind the scenes

Co-ordinating production and supply of new products is one of the most complex and time consuming activities of RAFATRAD. Top of the list for long term planning is the production of the bespoke RAF Association ducks. Eagerly awaited by branches, these beloved collectors' items take almost a year to conceive and produce. They have to be produced in China because of the volume ordered (nearly 80,000 every year), and samples need to be sent from the other side of the world so RAFATRAD can ensure quality is kept high. To accommodate shipping times, avoid the annual six week factory closure for Chinese New Year and make sure the products are top notch, thinking for the 2019 Warrant Officer Duck started in spring 2018. See the flow chart on the next page which explains the individual stages of its production. And if branches want to order more ducks before early March 2019, there are still supplies of Sopwith Camel, Spitfire and F35-B Lightning ducks available.

Figures were calculated from November 2017 to November 2018, and do not include RAF100 merchandise sales unless indicated.



*CE Marking on a product is a manufacturer's declaration that the product complies with the essential requirements of the relevant European health, safety and environmental protection legislation.

Volunteer Spotlight James Baillie



James, right, with RAF veteran Norman Enders at RAF Museum Hendon ©James Baillie

I volunteer in central and north east London as a befriender. Before 2014, I worked for a UK aerospace company and more recently in the trade section of the South African High Commission, London. I recently completed an MA Theology and a social care qualification in dementia awareness. I have acted as a family carer for several years.

How did you find out about volunteering for the Association?

Initially through a general volunteer hub website. I then visited the Association website to research further.

Why did you choose to support the RAF Association?

My late father served in the RAF as a radio operator on Avro Ansons at the end of WWII and into peacetime. My late uncle was a Fairey Swordfish pilot who flew against the Bismarck, so from an early age, I developed an enthusiasm for the armed forces and for aircraft.

What appealed about the role?

For me there is a real excitement listening to veterans as they recount their service histories. It makes history immediate and tangible. I also know that if my father had lived beyond his sixties he might now also have appreciated some support.

What have you learnt during your time as a volunteer?

Awareness, observation and active listening is key. You may want to continue a conversation but if you recognise the signs of fatigue setting in, you have to respect the person's need for rest and diplomatically end the visit. The veteran's needs are, at all times,

paramount. While visiting one day I could not help overhearing as my befriender answered the phone and was being asked for his credit card details. I believe that the purpose of the call was fraud, so I stepped in.

If you were to recommend volunteering for the Association, what would you say?

You will be given full, accredited training for your role so you can have confidence in yourself. You are also given support from Association welfare staff, so you are not acting in isolation. You will grow in the role and learn.

What skills, knowledge or experiences have helped you?

As part of my recent theology course, I studied health care chaplaincy and military chaplaincy. I also happen to have personal family involvement with the elderly with medical conditions, particularly memory loss.

Because I am reasonably well read in RAF history and modern political and military history, I can place the conversations in context and understand the slang such as "kites" and "prang", etc.

What is the best thing about your volunteering role?

My befriender lives alone and rarely ventures out, so I listen and work out how I can assist. I approached the RAF Museum Hendon recently and they created a tour of the exhibits. I found out that a member of the local RAF Association branch lived only a few streets away and the branch also became involved in the visit. My befriender now has a standing invitation to go to the local branch and it makes them feel more connected.

A

Seeing it my way

Winners of the 2018 RAF Photographic Competition were announced in September, beating 1,000 photos and 25 videos in 13 categories. The RAF Association has sponsored the competition for the last three years. We spoke to the members whose work had been recognised in 2018: about their life in the RAF, capturing their favourite images and their links to the Association.



Flaring up

"Flaring up" won the RAF Operations and Exercise category and was highly commended for the Judges' Image of the Year. The image shows a Puma HC2, flying over the city of Kabul in Afghanistan as part of a sortie during Operation Toral.



Corporal Lee 'Matty' Matthews, who was detached to 38 Expeditionary Air Group when this photo was taken and is currently stationed in Northern Ireland.

"I never tire of it"

"This is my favourite photograph ever. It was a very risky shot. Pumas are not smooth. Normally it is part luck and part skill and I had only one thousandth of a second. I missed the first shot, but I knew I had got the second image and had a little scream. The pilot asked what the matter was, but it was just me getting excited."

Corporal Matthews is 11 years into a 20 year service contract. "It's been a good year. I did my corporal training at Halton, where I joined the RAF Association and I am now a full time photographer with no secondary duties. My wife and I have been looking into the Association's befriending, but we've been moved a lot recently. I don't want to forget the legacy of the 'old boys' who saw so much. We see a lot, but they have a different story."



Before you swim you must fly

"Before you swim you must fly" came third in the Sports Photography category. The image shows Corporal Ellis, a physical training Instructor and RAF swimmer, based at Mount Pleasant Complex, showing off her butterfly stroke skills.



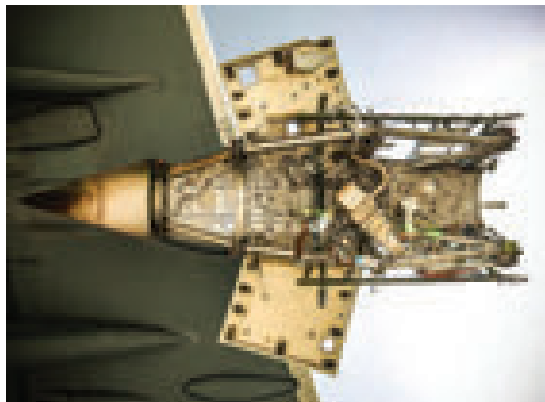
Corporal Rob Travis, based at RAF Odiham.

"It's good to try and give back"

Corporal Travis, originally from Stafford, has been in the RAF for 14 years and has been a photographer for the entire duration of his service. His time as an air cadet cemented his passion for the RAF and he tried to join up after school but was asked to gain some life experience first.

"I wanted to be a pilot but didn't get the required grades, so I took private flying lessons. I have been an Association member for 18 months and I am signed up as a befriender but yet to befriend anybody. The veterans have done their bit and it's good to try and give back. All they want is some human contact and for someone to listen to their stories. Often they have no family and we can become their friends."

Corporal Travis also won the RAF Photographer of the Year Category for his portfolio of work when detached to British Forces South Atlantic Islands and came second in the Technical/Engineering Category with 'Pilot's Eye View'.



Where to start

Left: A rare insight into an empty engine bay of an Airbus A400M Atlas.

Tunnel vision

Right: RAF Engineer, Sergeant Danny Wass, pictured inspecting an engine on a 9 Squadron Tornado GR4.

Both images were taken by Senior Aircraftman Phil Dye from RAF Akrotiri and won first and third places in the Technical/Engineering Category.



Flour Power

"Flour Power" was placed second in the Personnel Category and shows Senior Aircraftman Rick Bowers, a chef based at RAF Marham throwing flour. The image came second in the Personnel Category.

Senior Aircraftman Kitty Barratt, based at RAF Marham.

"My favourite element is working with people"

Since she completed her phase one and two training a year ago, Senior Aircraftman Kitty Barratt has had the opportunity to photograph HM The Queen, HRH Prince William and HRH Prince Charles as well as passing over Buckingham Palace in the RAF 100 flypast last July. "I am a bit shocked about my photo doing well. My favourite element is working with people; I think I do it a bit better than the other subjects. This picture is one of four portraits looking at trades in the RAF. It was a studio shot, top lit. The chef likes it and he asked me to do his child's christening afterwards. [Photography] is a job you enjoy and you get so many opportunities in the RAF. I would love to go overseas while I am young and single and have no family."

The Association member signed up to be an RAF photographer direct from studying the subject at Lincoln College and is due to serve for 12 years.





Smoke In The Sun

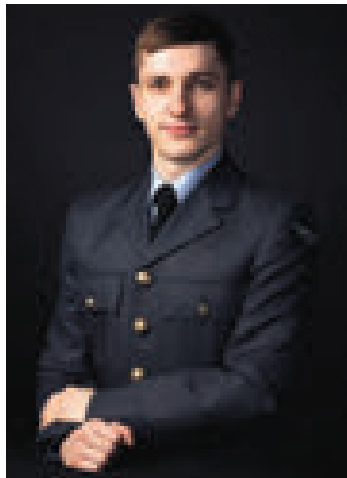
The Amateur Military Category was won by Mark Thompson, with "Smoke in the Sun". Taken at Weston Air Day, Weston-super-Mare, it shows seven of the nine Red Arrows Hawk T1 aircraft as they come over the top of a loop in formation.

Mark Thompson



Hands On My Time

'Hands On My Time' was one of four photographs in a portfolio by Leading Aircraftman James Ledger that won third place in the Mallett Student Category.



Leading Aircraftman
James Ledger from
RAF Honington.

"I hope to use my media skills to help members in the future"

25-year old Leading Aircraftman James Ledger was doing his 28 week photographic training when we caught up with him at the awards ceremony.

"I studied 3D animation at college in Newcastle and then did graphic design for a start-up company in Gateshead. I did some photography on the side in my spare time. Then I joined the RAF and completed my 10-week basic training before moving on to the photography trade.

"I have been an Association member for one year and hope to be able to use my media skills to help the charity in future."



Perfection

In 'Perfection', a pair of 29 Squadron Typhoon FGR4 aircraft, from the RAF Typhoon Display Team at RAF Coningsby perform a dynamic crossover, as they arrive at the RAF Cosford Air Show.



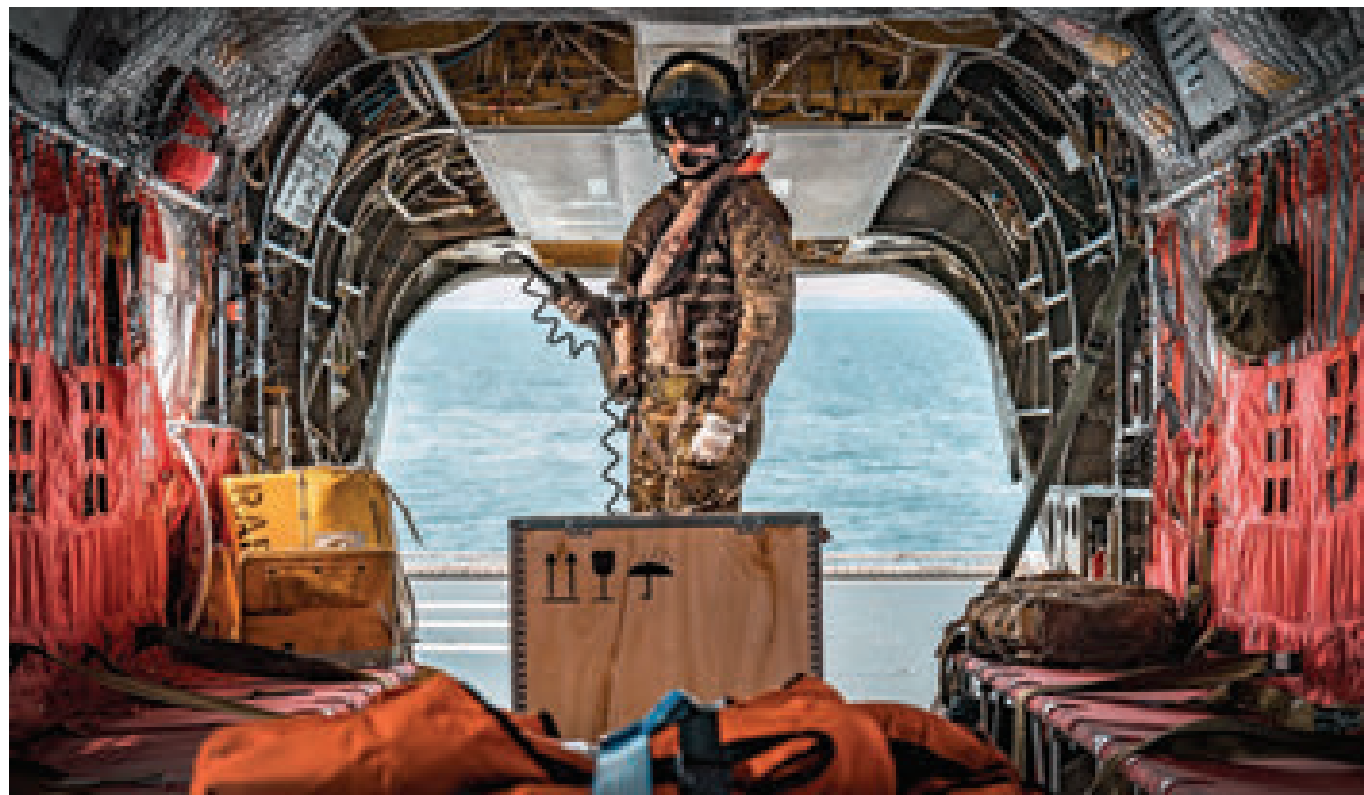
Sergeant Paul Oldfield, based at RAF Cosford.

"Every day is different"

Sergeant Paul Oldfield has been in the RAF for 16 years and has been a photographer for the entire duration of his service. He likes that he gets to travel around a lot more than if he had a normal job.

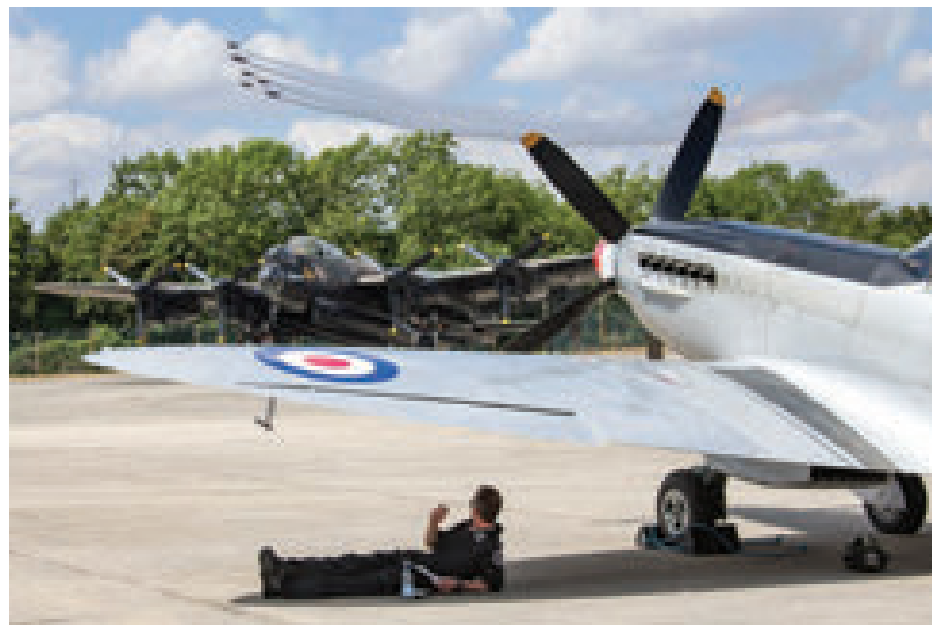
His image of the Typhoons won third place in the Judges' RAF Image of the Year Category.

Sergeant Oldfield manages the Cosford Men's football team and also takes part in field gun competitions at tattoos. He's been a member of the Association for two years, signing up at RAF Leeming. "I have the best job in the RAF. Every day is different. One day I could be in the cockpit of a Tornado, the next I could be photographing The Queen."



This Way Up

This Way Up was one of the group of images that won the Photographic Section Portfolio Category for Trade Group 14 (Photographer) Air Combat Service Support Unit, RAF Halton.



Wings Overhead

'Wings Overhead' was one of four images in Corporal Taylor's third-placed portfolio for RAF Photographer of the Year. It captures the heat of the summer of RAF100 year and the blend of historic and modern aircraft.

"I fancied doing something completely different"

Corporal Graham Taylor collected three awards. He was first called up to receive the award for Section Portfolio of the year on behalf of ACSSU (Air Combat Service Support Unit) at RAF Halton. The high readiness unit is capable of reacting rapidly to provide still photography and video support for the RAF's emerging news stories anywhere in the world.

The Lincoln Branch member who is based at RAF Halton, has been in the RAF for 18 years. "I used to be an engineer but fancied doing something completely different. I gained a City & Guilds qualification in photography and have only ever been a photographer in the RAF."

Corporal Taylor got individual recognition twice this year when his video taken over eight days on Horse Guards Parade came 3rd in the video category. He also won third place in the RAF Photographer of the Year category.

Corporal Taylor (right) receiving one of his three awards from Air Commodore Nigel Bradshaw.



raf 100

Editor's favourite: "RAF 100", selected for its unusual composition and its reflection of the RAF's centenary celebrations.



All images ©MOD/Crown

See every picture and watch the video entries at: raf.mod.uk/photo-of-the-year-2018



Round on Round

Above: This highly technical image was part of a suite of four that won second place in The Mallett Student Category. It was taken by Leading Aircraftman Samantha Holden, from RAF Lossiemouth. The award is open to anyone who has attended the Defence School of Photography in the last year.

Fire

Left: Sergeant Rachel Malthouse from RAF Benson was highly commended in the Personnel category for this photo of Corporal Emma Pook, one of two female Fire Fighters at RAF Benson Fire Section. The photo was taken during section fire training.

Challenge events

Preparations are well under way for heart-in-the-mouth, fun-packed and skilful challenge events to inspire people to raise funds for the Association in 2019. If you resolved to do something new or to step out of your comfort zone this new year let us help you achieve your goal.

Whatever your passion, the Association could have something that appeals to you, your family or your friends. "Wing walking really 'took off' in 2018," said Helen Tempest, from the Association's challenge events team. "And we were delighted to see more Colour Chaos and Santa runs than ever before. We will be signing up more RAF stations and individual fundraisers for even more of them in 2019."

"This year people should also look out for indoor skydiving, night photography, and maybe a 'Bike Fest' on the menu in our new listings," she continued, "and get signed up before your resolve wears out."

© Your Digital Memories



'Remembrance'. RAF Photographer Corporal Tim Laurence's competition-winning photo was taken at a night shoot with Lancaster 'Just Jane' and a group of re-enactors at East Kirkby Aviation Museum. It won the People's Choice vote in the 2018 RAF Photographic Competition. © MOD/Crown 2019

Night photography

Join a company of enthusiastic volunteers who combine their RAF experience with their passion for photography and raise money for charity. The RAF Association is the charity of their choice for 2019 and they are offering unrivalled access to photograph a selection of aircraft at night, with no barriers, occasionally some enactors, and lot of opportunity to play with light. For inspiration see the winner of this year's People's Choice from RAF Photographer of the Year competition showing the 'Just Jane' Lancaster Bomber, which shows exactly what this challenge this is all about.



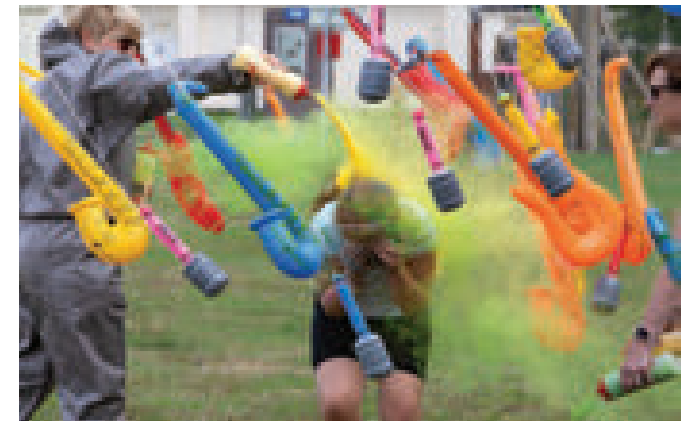
Come rain or shine in 2018 personnel, and their families at RAF Henlow, Wittering, and Cosford joined the colourful fun. © Your Digital Memories

Indoor skydiving

Just what it says on the tin. But be sponsored for it. No need to set foot in an aircraft, and your friends and family can either join in or watch from the same level as you.

Bike Fest

A bit like Car Fest's little sister, but no petrol required. Live music, events, food, beer and family fun. Oh! And a small matter of a 50 or 100 mile sponsored bike ride for the more energetic. Confirmation and more details to follow.



At RAF Henlow's Colour Chaos event, children were told they could do as many laps as they wanted. They kept going for more than an hour. © Your Digital Memories.

Colour Chaos Runs

On station, and available to service personnel and their families, air cadets and members of the public, these crazy fun runs are the messiest, most colourful, loveliest way to raise funds – come rain or shine. They are also open to air cadet squadrons (a wonderful 23 squadron teams of more than 100 cadets took part in 2018) brining all their energy, enthusiasm – and competitiveness.

In 2019, we would love air cadets to not only sign up for the Colour Chaos run, but to also help out on the day.

Marathons

For those who love to run, we will be registering participants for the iconic Great North Run and also registering interest for the 2020 London Marathon – go that extra mile to support the RAF Association.

Individuals and groups

The Association can help you on your journey to find an exciting challenge that suits you down to the ground – from walks along the Great Wall of China or cycle rides to Paris to inflatable runs and dog jogs, and from 10ks and full marathons to Wolf Runs and Tough Mudder events. Clean or dirty, near or far, whatever your passion for adventure – we can help you along.

The 2019 challenge event booklet will be available early in the New Year:

- download from rafa.org.uk/challenge
- contact your branch support officers or RAF Association Liaison Officers (RAFALOs)
- have one posted to you by calling 0800 018 2361

Sign up to take part in an event: www.rafa.org.uk/challenge
Find out more about hosting a Colour Chaos or Santa Run: email.jules@rafa.org.uk

News from the RAF

by Mike Curtis



A Weapon Systems Operator from 27 Squadron, RAF Odiham, looking out of the front crewman's door of his CH-47 Chinook as the setting sun disappears at MCAS Yuma, Arizona, at the beginning of a night time training sortie. © MOD/Crown 2018

The RAF Chinook squadrons have been busy with overseas detachments, highlighting the skill of the crews and the versatility of the aircraft. Exercise Saif Sareea 3 (Swift Sword) in Oman, demonstrated UK and Omani intent and ability to work together for regional security.

Throughout the exercise, British and Omani Forces combined in many forms; from air to air refuelling of Omani and RAF jets to soldiers from both nations working closely on the ground. Typhoons from RAF Lossiemouth's II (Army Cooperation) Squadron were based at Thumrait air base as part of 140 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW).

Saif Sareea 3 culminated in a big fire power demonstration with a series of simulated attacks on targets. Streamed live to a VIP area in an inland location, there was an amphibious assault by Royal Marines and Omani troops onto a beach location in Eastern Oman with fast-roping from Chinook helicopters of 27 Squadron.

RAF Chinooks have also deployed to Mali in support of the French military. They are now contributing a heavy lift helicopter capability for the counter insurgency mission there. The three Chinooks are being used to transport French troops and supplies around the country, providing vital logistical support in the ongoing campaign against the insurgents. (See Bognor Regis Branch news on p27 for details of Association welfare support in Mali).

In support of the Chinooks, an RAF C-17 transport aircraft flew into Gao airfield in Mali for the first time. Previously, supplies were flown to neighbouring Niger and then transhipped. Monthly direct flights by the C-17 are now possible following a visit by RAF personnel from 99 Squadron to ensure the runway and airfield facilities would allow the aircraft to be operated safely.

Chinook crews have also graduated from a US Marine Corps training course. They were the first overseas students to have fully participated in the gruelling Weapons Tactics Instructor Course. Crews from RAF Odiham spent seven weeks working around the clock at Marine Air Corps Station Yuma in southern Arizona. They trained alongside more than 200 US Marine students in some of the most realistic training available. With temperatures occasionally reaching 50 degrees centigrade, the conditions faced by students mirrored those experienced in the Middle East and Africa where RAF Chinooks operate today.

There has been airfield action after dark at RAF Wittering in recent months. Crews flying some of the RAF's biggest aircraft have been using the former V-bomber and Harrier base for night flying, including the use of night vision goggles (NVG). NVG training was originally envisioned as a twice-yearly event. However the usefulness of the runway at RAF Wittering became apparent following the NVG training last year.

During operations, it is safer to land and take-off at night. Modern equipment allows the RAF to exploit the cover of darkness in ways that are sometimes denied to hostile forces. Across 2018, C-130 Hercules, C-17 Globemaster and Atlas A400M aircraft have all landed at Wittering as part of the night flying training. The aircraft are based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, but repetitive training using their main operating base only has limited value. To maintain full operational flexibility, the techniques are practised at different airfields.

There have been more 'firsts' in the programme to introduce the new F-35B Lightning II aircraft into RAF service. In October, a Voyager air to air refuelling tanker successfully completed the first UK refuel of one of the jets at 19,000 feet over the North Sea. The Voyager KC. Mk 2 is equipped with two underwing pods for refuelling fast jets, and the Voyager KC. Mk 3 has an additional centreline hose for use by larger aircraft.

One of the aircraft captains on 101 Squadron at Brize Norton said: "Supporting the new F-35B, as it enters service, is a hugely important task for the Voyager Force. We look forward to enhancing our support for the F-35B during this important period for the development programme."

The first Lightning II aircraft have landed on the deck of the UK's new aircraft carrier, making history and marking the beginning of more than half-a-century of 'Carrier Strike' operations. HMS Queen Elizabeth sailed from Portsmouth to the east coast of the United States to conduct flight tests. A week after the first landing, F-35B pilots successfully completed their first night flying trials off the deck.

RAF Squadron Leader Andy Edgell and Royal Navy Commander Nathan Gray were the first pilots to make history by landing their aircraft on the flight deck of the carrier in September.

Commanding Officer, Captain Jerry Kyd, said: "I am quite emotional to be here on HMS Queen Elizabeth seeing the return of fixed wing aviation, having been the captain of the aircraft carrier which launched the last Harrier at sea nearly eight years ago. The regeneration of big deck carriers which are able to operate globally is a major step forward for the United Kingdom's defence and our ability to match the increasing pace of our adversaries."

RAF Typhoons will deploy to Estonia and Iceland in 2019 as part of NATO Air Policing, the Defence Secretary has announced. It will be the first time the RAF have deployed to Iceland for the NATO role. The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, said: "The reason for this, as we live in a more uncertain world, is to make sure that we demonstrate a clear deterrent and the fact that Britain is willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies as they stand with us."

The Red Arrows are to carry out their largest ever tour of North America to help boost UK investment. The nine-week visit, which will cover the USA and Canada, is expected to generate £2.5 billion for Britain. It is the team's first major tour there in more than 25 years. The deployment will be the first display the team has put on in the US in a decade, following a short visit by the Red Arrows to the east coast of the US in 2008.

The women of the Royal Air Force received the Women of Achievement Award at the annual Women of the Year Awards in October. The award recognises outstanding women for their work in their communities. Air Vice Marshal Tamara Jennings said: "I am proud to be part of a service where people, regardless of their gender, can fulfil their talent and potential and are paid based solely on their skill and expertise." Last year, the RAF Regiment was opened to women, making the RAF the first of the UK Armed Forces in which every role was opened to all, regardless of gender.

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



1. A Merlin Mk4 From 845 Naval Air Squadron takes off in the SAR role as UK test pilot Peter Wilson, prepares to take off to conduct the world's first SRVL onboard the UK's new carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth. © MOD/Crown 2018

2. HMS Queen Elizabeth arrives in New York during a trip to the east coast of the United States to conduct flight tests with the Lightning II. © MOD/Crown 2018

3. Personnel from the Royal Air Force hearing they had received the Women of Achievement Award at the annual Women of the Year Luncheon and Awards in Birmingham. © MOD/Crown 2018

4. 4 Regiment Squadron were posted to Royal Air Force Akrotiri to assume the force protection role. The RAF Leeming-based regiment squadron took over from 2nd Battalion the Mercians Regiment. They are performing duties such as manning vehicle check points, controlling access to and from the airfield, and also protecting the air assets within RAF Akrotiri. © MOD/Crown 2018

Wish you were here

Special low rates are being offered to new and returning guests at the Association's three Wings Breaks hotels over the coming months.



An evening coach ride along the seafront at nearby Blackpool means guests at Richard Peck House can experience the famous illuminations. © visitlancashire.com

Bernard (right) was thrilled to be able to see the contrasts and shapes in the coloured lights of the illuminations: "I love being at home at Wexford House, but it was great to get away on holiday and have a change of scenery." © Phil Greig

A small group of residents at the Association's Wexford House retirement complex in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, recently spent a week on holiday at the Richard Peck House hotel in Lytham St Annes.

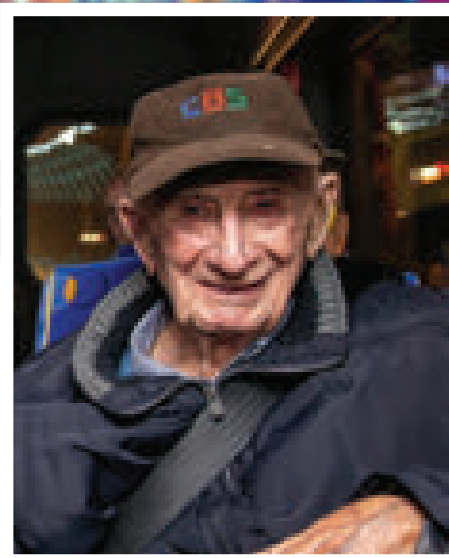
Among them was retired RAF radar operator Bernard Goulding (90), who loved the warm welcome and supportive environment provided by the hotel's staff.

Bernard, who is partially sighted, enjoys regular short walks alone and found that the hotel gave him the right balance of independence and support.

He said: "The staff were absolutely marvellous and were on hand if I needed anything. At the same time, I was able to go out for a walk each morning and do my own thing."

The guests took advantage of a few outings during their week away, giving them tasters of Fleetwood and Preston. An evening coach ride along the seafront at nearby Blackpool took them to the famous illuminations.

With macular degeneration affecting his sight, Bernard was thrilled to be able to see the contrasts and shapes in the coloured lights. He said: "I love being at home at Wexford House, but it was great to get away on holiday and have a change of scenery for a while."



Bernard added: "It's a super place, especially for people who may need a helping hand while they're on holiday. I enjoyed being able to chat with the other like-minded guests who all had an RAF connection. You can't beat a bit of reminiscing about the old days."

Located in some of England's most sought-after holiday spots, the hotels offer welfare breaks to serving and former members of the RAF family, including those who need additional care and support. Veterans and their spouses, widows, widowers and accompanying carers are all welcome.

The seasonal discounts are available at all three of our sites, which are in Lytham St Annes in Lancashire, Weston-super-Mare in Somerset, and Rothbury near Morpeth in Northumberland.

Seasonal discounts apply to seven-night full-board bookings for stays taken between now and April 2019. The special rates start at £325 for a single-occupancy room and £500 for a double or twin room. All meals, light entertainment and local excursions in a specially-adapted minibus are included.

The rural beauty of Northumberland's Corby Crag near Rothbury House ©Shutterstock



Weston super mare beach ©Shutterstock



“Arrived at Rothbury from Huntingdon to be greeted by a member of staff with a hug and in time for tea. She had remembered me from my visit in August last year. That is the kind of reception you can expect from this wonderful home/hotel.”

Around 2,500 people take an RAF Association Wings Break each year.

Most of the guests are active and independent.

Richard Peck House in Lytham St Annes and Flowerdown House in Weston-super-Mare are just a stone's throw from the seafront, and are a short taxi ride from nearby railway stations connecting into the UK's rail network.

Rothbury House in Northumberland overlooks the stunning Coquet Valley, close to the National Trust-owned Cragside Victorian country estate. Guests travelling there on public transport can be transferred by hotel staff from local bus and railway stations.

Each hotel has a cosy home from home environment, its own garden with patio, a TV lounge, bar and a garden room. All bedrooms are en-suite.

Some guests choose the hotels because the charity's specially-trained staff are on hand to provide round-the-clock assistance. Each location offers some bedrooms adapted for people with reduced mobility, and all areas of the hotels are fitted with care call systems – making Wings Breaks suitable for older people who may live alone, and for couples where one of them is usually the care-giver. For less mobile guests, mobility scooters and wheelchairs are available for use free of charge.

RAF veterans and their spouses, widows and widowers struggling to afford a holiday are encouraged to contact the Association, which offers means-tested support towards the cost of its Wings Breaks.

For more information about our Wings Breaks, please telephone 0800 018 2361 or visit the charity's website: rafa.org.uk

Fieseler's Storch

by Chris Goss

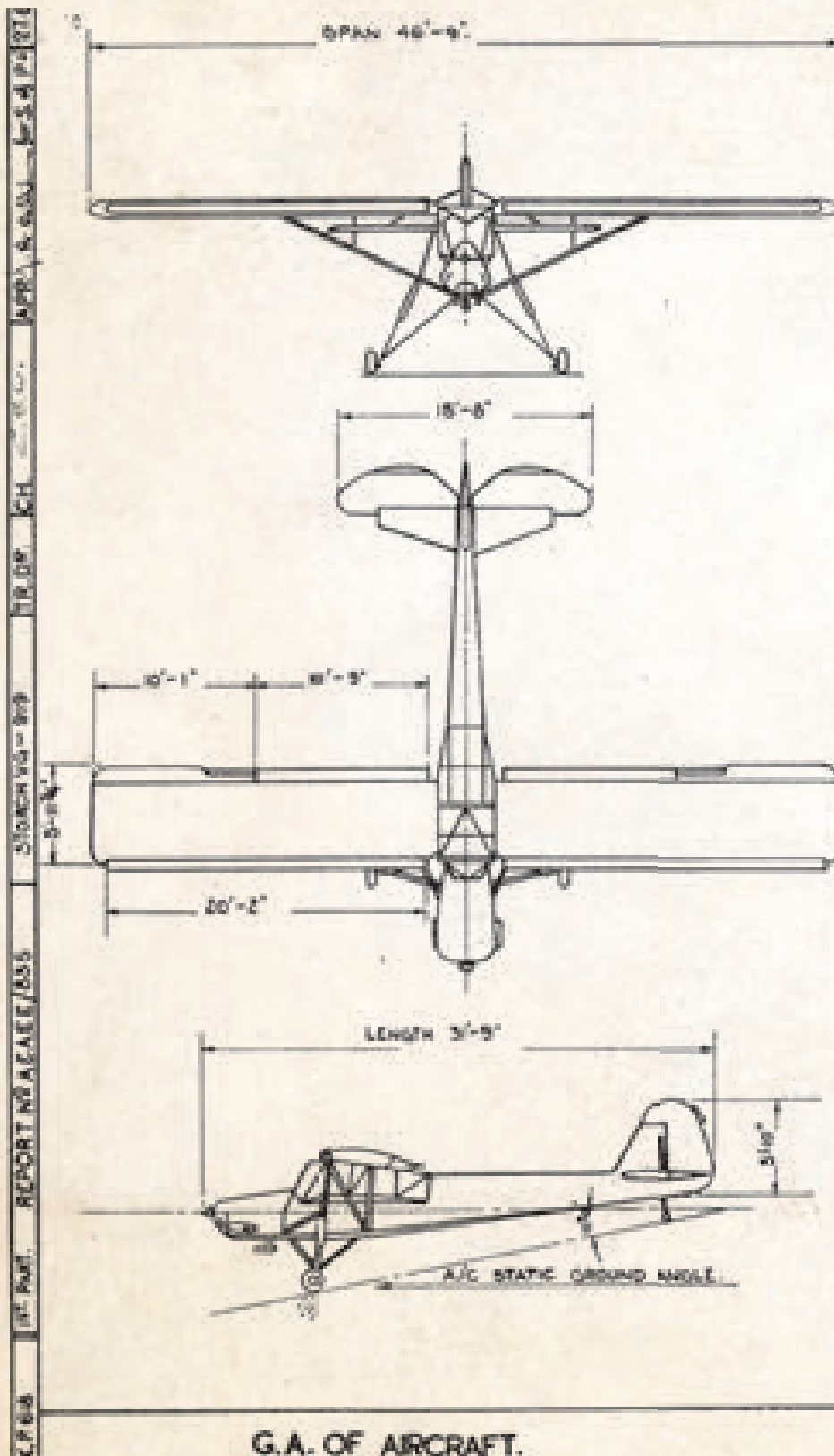
One of the most elegant and distinctive aircraft of the Second World War was the Fieseler Fi 156 Storch. It was so successful as a short take off and landing (STOL) communications aircraft, that it was still being manufactured in France 20 years later. Chris Goss tells the story of this remarkable and robust aircraft.

As with many German aircraft of the Second World War, its origins came in the mid-1930s when the German Air Ministry invited German aircraft manufacturers to submit proposals for an aircraft capable of liaison, army cooperation, artillery spotting, communications, limited reconnaissance and aeromedical evacuation.

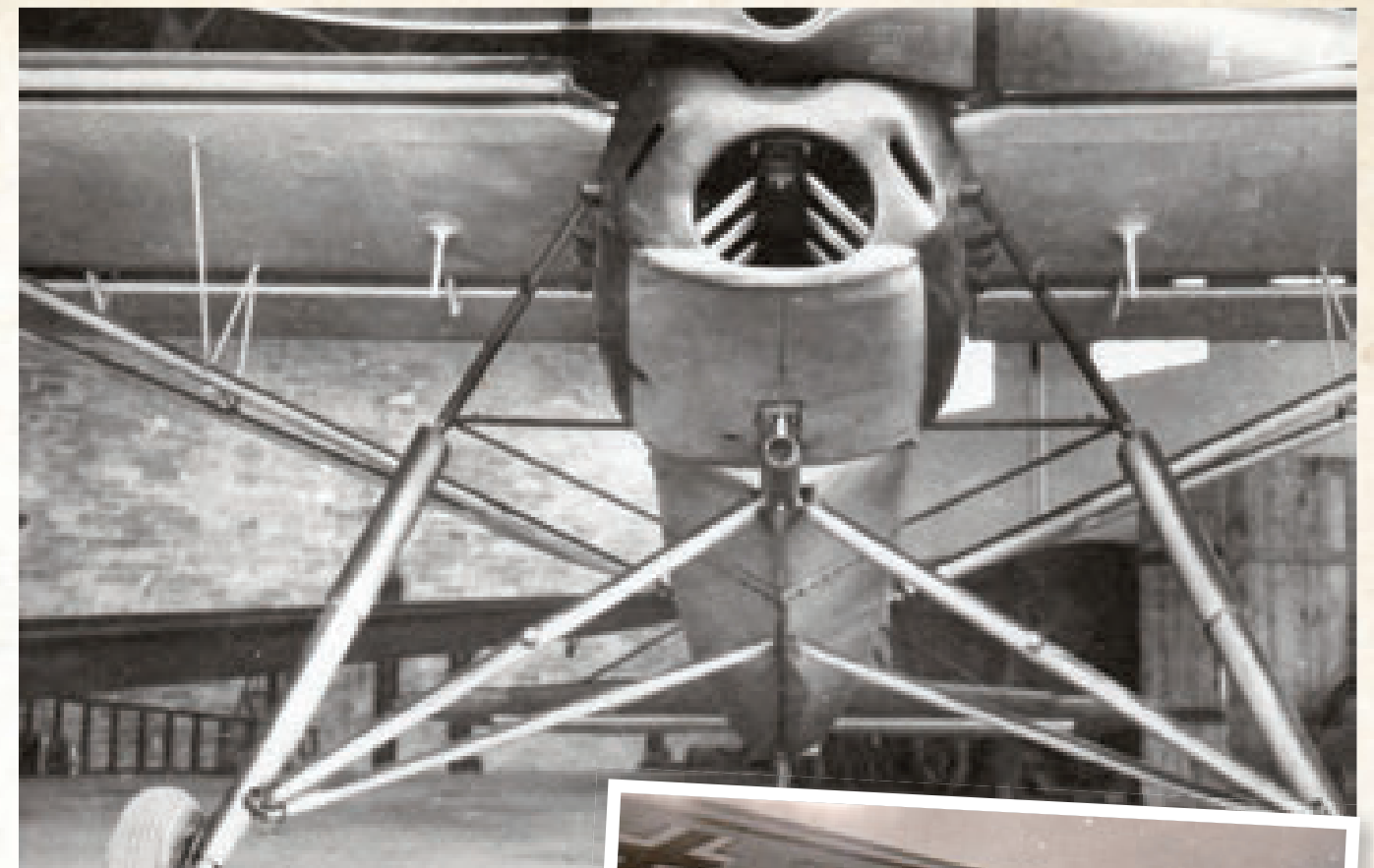
One of the bidders was the Fieseler aircraft manufacturer. Gerhard Fieseler was a former WWI fighter pilot with 19 confirmed and three unconfirmed aerial victories on the Eastern Front. A printer by trade, he sold the business in 1926 and became a flying instructor. In 1930 he bought a sailplane manufacturer in Kassel. As a Nazi party member, contracts followed quickly for the company.



D-IGLI was the second prototype serial number 602. This photograph was taken in Berlin at the 1939 Armed Forces Day.



Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) line drawing showing the dimensions of a Fi 156 Storch. The elongated undercarriage gives it its distinctive look.



Close up showing the distinctive engine intake and the struts supporting the undercarriage. This photograph was taken in Spain.

Design and development

The Storch was the brainchild of Fieseler's chief designer, Reinhold Mewes (formerly of manufacturers Heinkel and Blohm und Voss) and technical director Erich Bachem. They designed a high-wing, single engine lightweight aircraft whose STOL capability was enhanced by fixed slats on the wing's leading edge and flaps and ailerons which took the entire trailing edge. A 1945 British/French evaluation of a captured Storch explained in more detail:

'The slats were fixed and of 11.25 inch chord reaching from the [wing] root to within 12.25 inches of the wingtips. The total slat area was 37.8 square feet. The slotted flaps were interconnected with slotted ailerons so that the ailerons were automatically set down to 12.5 degrees from neutral when the flaps were fully down (40 degrees).'

These features gave the Storch a remarkably short take-off and landing ability. The optimal take-off run was 150 yards and the landing run a mere 42 yards (the length of two cricket squares). Its unique cockpit area gave the aircraft near perfect all round visibility and its wings could also be folded back, making it easier for ground transportation or towing. The distinctive fixed undercarriage gave it the look of a long-legged stork – and the name stuck.

Production

The Air Ministry contract was awarded to Fieseler in 1935. The first prototype, coded D-IBXY, flew on 10 May 1936. V-1 as it was known, had a bigger tail and bulkier fuselage behind the cockpit and slightly different wings than later aircraft. From V-2 onwards, it changed to look like all subsequent Storchs, with a thinner fuselage and smaller tail. The flight trials were satisfactory and, with its Argus AS 10 engine, the Storch was one of the few new German aircraft not plagued by development and engine problems. As a result, the first



A colder climate for the Fi 156 on the Russian Front. Note it has skis, a yellow fuselage band for the Russian Front and all markings have been overpainted.

production aircraft, the Fi 156 A, were delivered to the Luftwaffe in 1937 and were quickly followed by the main production variant - the Fi 156 C.

Initially, the C differed little from the A but as the war continued, sub-variants were introduced which were changes to cockpit, seating and canopy layout, changes to defensive weapons and adaption for desert operations. They were followed by the D variant which was for aero-medical duties. There were other intended uses such as anti-partisan and anti-shipping operations but these did not come to fruition.

The Storch was initially built at the Fieseler Werke at Kassel in Germany. In 1942, production started at the Moraine-Saulnier (MS) factory at Puteaux on the western suburbs of Paris after which it moved to the Leichtbau Budweis factory at Budweis and then to the Mraz factory at Chocen, both in Czechoslovakia.



An Fi 156 being used by an unidentified senior officer. The badge on the cowling is also unidentified.

Around 2,867 Storch were believed to have been built during the conflict, but the end of the war was not the end of the aircraft. The French Air Force was so impressed by the Storch that production continued, the aircraft being designated the MS 500 Criquet (Cricket) series. 925 more aircraft were built before production ceased in 1965. Even then the Criquet served for another five years.

In action

The Storch was not a combat aircraft, and its importance in battle was overshadowed by other fighter and bomber aircraft, but there was one audacious operation early in the war where it came into its own. On 10 May 1940, 400 infantrymen used around 98 Storchs to land near Nives and Witry in Belgium as part of operation NiWi. The first wave of this massive formation took off at 0520 hrs, crossed the Luxembourg border north of Wallendorf and then headed for the Belgian town of Martelange. At 0600 hrs the Storch carrying the Witry commanding officer landed but other aircraft were scattered because of navigational errors and enemy gunfire. Meanwhile the Nives group got badly lost and was spread out around the countryside. A second wave landed just over two hours later and failed to find the first wave. However they set up defensive positions blocking the Neufchateau to Bastogne Road, repulsing French and Belgian counter attacks before being relieved by tanks of the 1st Panzer Division later that day. The Nives force held out until the following morning when they were relieved by tanks from the 2nd Panzer Division. 16 Storchs were destroyed or abandoned and it seems there were two crew killed, two wounded and one missing.

Storchs were also tried out on anti-submarine operations. Three C-2s were apparently delivered to Aalborg in Denmark in October 1940 to be used for anti-submarine and coastal patrols. Each aircraft was able to carry three 50 kg bombs but, within a month, the commanding officer of the unit wrote that their use was limited and other aircraft, such as the Heinkel 115, were much better suited.

The most well known action involving a Storch was Operation Eiche (oak) – the rescue of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in the Summer of 1943.

After Mussolini was replaced and then arrested on 25 July 1943, he was imprisoned at the Hotel Campo Imperatore, high in the remote Gran Sasso region in Italy's Apennine Mountains. Hitler ordered Mussolini's rescue and ten DFS 230 gliders took part in the assault which commenced at 1405 hrs on 12 September 1943. All but one glider landed without incident and Mussolini was quickly released without a shot being fired. The next phase was for Hauptmann (Flight Lieutenant) Heinrich Gerlach to fly a Storch into the limited landing area at the hotel which he did successfully. However, taking off again was going to be difficult as the SS officer who had tracked down Mussolini insisted on accompanying them. Despite the unexpected weight, Gerlach got airborne and landed safely at Pratica di Mare airfield. From there Mussolini was flown to Germany to meet up with Hitler. Gerlach and the SS officer were among those awarded the Knights Cross a week or so later.



Left: The Fi 156 D was the air ambulance version. German soldiers are seen loading a casualty through the unique access door.

Below: Captured Storch were popular with the RAF. This aircraft was seen at Melsbroek in Belgium at the end of the war.



Towards the end of the war, the Storch was designated for other more unusual, possibly desperate, uses. Sonderkommando Totenkopf (Death's Head) and Bienenstock (Beehive) units were formed in April 1945, manned by volunteers from the Army and Luftwaffe and believed to have been commanded by experienced former Legion Condor and Battle of Britain bomber pilot and Ritterkreuz winner Major (Squadron Leader) Otto Köhnke. Using Storchs as well as other small aircraft, operations were to be carried out behind Allied lines by personnel armed mainly with anti-tank rockets. On 25 April 1945 ten Storchs, each with two crew, were tasked to attack supplies, tanks and bridges in the Rottweil/Tuttlingen areas in southern Germany. Five took off and four returned (and of those, two were damaged). The following day nine Storchs took off to attack similar targets in the Dillingen area. A bridge at Günsberg was confirmed destroyed but five aircraft failed to return. The final mission took place on April 29 1945 as by now, fuel was in short supply. Three Storch took off, none returned.

The last recorded use of a Storch in a combat zone occurred around the same time as the desperate attempts by Sonderkommando Totenkopf. German aviatrix and test pilot Hanna Reitsch is recorded as flying Generaloberst Robert Ritter von Greim in a Storch from Gatow airfield outside Berlin to an improvised airstrip near the Brandenburg Gate in the embattled city centre, after which she returned to Gatow.

Survivors

The Storch was very popular with the RAF and a number were captured and put into RAF use. Air-Vice Marshal Harry Broadhurst used a captured Storch in North Africa and when he became Air Officer Commanding 83 Group for the Normandy Invasion in June 1944, he brought the aircraft with him to Europe, even flying Winston Churchill in it. Up to 48 different Storchs were used by the RAF, nearly all of them unofficially! Due to its popularity as a STOL aircraft during and after the war, it is not surprising that there are at least 29 Fi 156 survivors spread across the world in flying and static condition. There are at least 60 examples of the MS 500 series aircraft (differentiated by different engines) also in existence.

Where to see a Storch

RAF Museum Cosford or Imperial War Museum Duxford



Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment (A&AEE) Boscombe Down's analysis of take-off and landing of the MS 500 Nr 130. They were impressed with the take-off and landing distances.

Aircraft specifications:

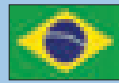
Wingspan:	46 feet, 9 inches / 14.3 m
Length:	32 feet, 6 inches / 9.9 m
Height:	10 feet / 3.1 m
Empty weight:	2,050 pounds / 860 kg
Max. weight:	2,921 pounds / 1,324 kg
Powerplant:	one 240 hp Argus As 10C-3, 8 cylinder invert V piston engine
Armament:	one rear-firing 7.63mm machine gun on pivot mount
Crew:	two
Max. Speed:	109 mph / 175 km/h
Min air speed:	32 mph / 51 km/h
Service Ceiling:	15,090 feet / 4,600m
Range:	239 miles / 3845 km

Source: The Collings Foundation

World Military News

by J.M. Henderson

Brazil



The Brazilian Navy's new helicopter carrier, the Atlantico, has arrived in the country. This ship was the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ship HMS Ocean until last year. It is based in Rio de Janeiro and will operate a mixture of Jet Ranger, Caracal and Seahawk helicopters.

India



The Indian Navy is to receive 24 Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk anti-submarine warfare helicopters under the USA's foreign military sales process. These helicopters will replace the Westland Sea Kings currently used for this role. No timescale is yet known for delivery. The Indian Navy will also receive more than 100 machines, built in India. They will replace the long-serving, locally built, version of the French Alouette III, the Chetak.

Indonesia



Indonesia is planning to purchase five Lockheed C-130J Super Hercules and an unspecified number of Boeing Chinook heavy-lift helicopters as part of its modernisation programme for its armed forces. It currently operates 12 older Hercules, some of which are more than 50 years old.

Ivory Coast



The Cote d'Ivoire Air Force has recently received two second-hand Antonov An-26 transports from Bulgaria. They are based at Abijan.

Japan



The Japanese Air Self-Defence Force is likely to receive up to 13 Grumman E-2D Advanced Hawkeye airborne early warning and control aircraft to replace its current fleet of older model E-2Cs. Four are already on order and one more is likely to be ordered in each subsequent year. The Japanese version of this aircraft carries more fuel than its US Navy counterpart as it only operates from land bases. Japan also operates four airborne early warning and control versions of the Boeing 767 airliner. Japan has also received the first of two Boeing 777s to replace the two Boeing 747s currently used by the Japanese Air Self-Defence Force for Very Very Important Person (VVIP) transportation. The second should be received by the end of the year. The aircraft are based at Chitose Air Base, near Sapporo, on Hokkaido Island, Northern Japan.

Kenya



Kenya has ordered up to four C-27J Spartan transports from Leonardo in Italy. The first is due for delivery in 2019.

Kuwait



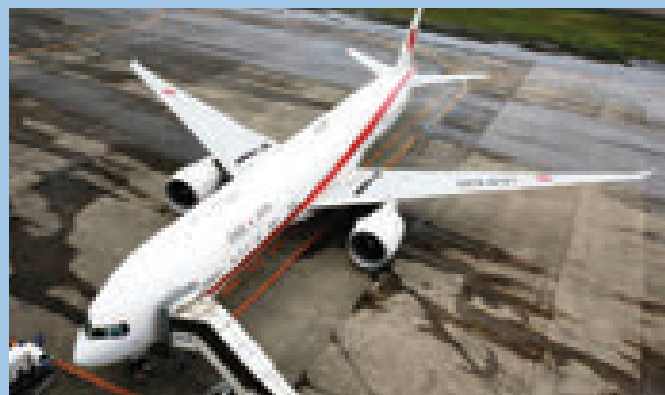
The Kuwait Air Force has agreed to purchase 28 FA-18 Super Hornet fighters from Boeing to replace their current fleet of 'legacy' Hornets. 22 single-seaters and six two-seaters are involved and delivery should be completed within 30 months.



A United States Navy Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk © J M Henderson



Romanian Air Force Antonov An-26 arriving at RIAT 2005 © J M Henderson



The Japanese Air Self Defence Force's new VVIP Boeing 777 © JASDF



The Singapore Air Force's first Airbus A330 MRTT © Airbus

Philippines



The Philippine Air Force could be about to acquire two Basler gunships. These are an updated version of the venerable Douglas DC-3 Dakota. They would be used for counter-insurgency missions alongside the in-service North American OV-10 Broncos and the Embraer Super Tucanos currently on order.

Portugal/Romania



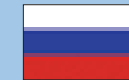
Portugal is to sell a second batch of F-16 Fighting Falcons to Romania. 12 were initially supplied some two years ago and another five (four single-seaters and a two-seater) will now also be provided.

Qatar



The Qatar Emiri Air Force has increased the number of Hawks on order from BAE Systems from six to nine. The first aircraft should be delivered in about three years. Qatar has also ordered 28 NH90 helicopters from NH Industries, a European consortium including Airbus and Leonardo. They will receive 12 naval versions of the machine and 16 troop transports.

Russia



The Russian Air Force has ordered its first batch of the Sukhoi Su-57 fifth-generation highly-maneuvrable stealth fighter - the quantity involved is not yet known. This aircraft has been in development for many years and its first flight took place around eight years ago. The Air Force also ordered more fourth-generation Mig-35s at the same time.

Saudi Arabia



The Royal Saudi Navy has received the first of ten Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawks from the USA. They will be used on the four new warships that are being procured, based on the United States Navy's Littoral Combat Ship.

Slovakia



Slovakia is to purchase 14 F-16 Fighting Falcons to replace their current fleet of Mig-29s, in preference to the Saab Gripen. They will receive 12 single-seat aircraft and a pair of twin-seaters. These will be the latest version of the F-16 and deliveries should commence in about four years after training in the United States.

Singapore



The Republic of Singapore Air Force has received the first of six Airbus A330 Multi-Role Tanker Transports. It was delivered to Changi in August. These new aircraft will replace the ex-USAF Boeing KC-135 Stratotankers currently in service.

UK



The final operational flight of a United Kingdom Westland Sea King helicopter took place on the 25 of September after nearly 50 years' service. The last three airborne surveillance and control aircraft of 849 Naval Air Squadron from RNAS Culdrose were involved. They are to be replaced next year by Merlin helicopters carrying the Crowsnest radar system which will serve on the new Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

USA



The US Air Force has selected the Boeing MH-139 helicopter, a derivative of the widely-used European Leonardo AW-139, to replace their 40-year, Vietnam-era, Bell UH-1 'Huey' machines. These helicopters will be used for security and support duties across the United States. Around 84 helicopters will be obtained from 2020 onwards, with Leonardo assembling them and Boeing adding military components. Both companies have their plants in the Philadelphia/Pennsylvania, area. The MH-139 was selected in preference to two variants of the Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk.

When Hurricane Michael, a Category Four storm, hit the Florida Panhandle in September 2018, it devastated one of the US Air Force's major training bases, Tyndall Air Force Base. It is home to an F-22 Raptor training wing and a unit operating unmanned F-16 fighters. Many of the aircraft had been evacuated but a number were unflyable and had to be secured in the hangars. Unfortunately, the winds were so strong that the hangars lost much of their roofing and the debris damaged the aircraft inside. The extent of the damage has not yet been revealed. Meanwhile, F-22 training has been transferred temporarily to Langley AFB, Virginia which is another F-22 base. A



A United States Navy Grumman E-2D Hawkeye © J M Henderson

Trustee Spotlight Fiona Barber

Chair of the Welfare Committee

What is your background?

I grew up in London but joined Lincolnshire police when my husband was posted to work as a navigator on the Vulcans at RAF Waddington. I retired as chief superintendent and went to work for Age UK. I spent a year volunteering with a local Citizens Advice Bureau and have recently been involved with NHS England, helping with strategic direction and assessing what new medicines, devices and treatments will most benefit patients.

What skills do you bring?

I see the bigger picture but can draw the lines to individual needs at a local level. As a lay member I can bring a different perspective to a service background, using that to work with fellow trustees and ensure the Association governance, compliance and finance is in line with Charity Commission regulations.

How did you come to be co-opted?

When I discovered the Association was looking for co-opted members, I was immediately interested and, after a conversation with the Chair, Secretary General and two trustees, I was hooked. I thought the trajectory of the charity was very stimulating and I wanted to help shape that journey.

What does your role on Council involve?

I've been co-opted since the beginning of 2018 and took on the Chair of the Welfare Committee role after 2018 Annual Conference. The development of the Association is reflected in the welfare work. It's now more research and evidence based, so we can really tie up what people need at different times in their lives and provide it at those points. I'm really enjoying the new role and the challenge of it.

One of the key duties of Council is to look at the sustainability of the Association and work to achieve it. In this respect we are no different to other charities. There is a constant challenge, particularly with sustainable income generation. Being a trustee does come with certain legal implications, but it's also an opportunity to aid the development of the Association.

What are the challenges you feel the Association faces?

We have more young people joining us than ever before, but older members are sometimes experiencing more difficulties as time passes. We need to look at this and work out what we can provide, across the breadth of the RAF family. There's also the challenge of keeping members energised to support the RAF family.

What are you looking forward to?

A highlight was 2018 Annual Conference at Yarnfield. It was great to talk to people who have been involved in the Association for years and hear of their hopes and aspirations. I was hugely inspired and impressed at the commitment and standards of our volunteers.



© Heidi Burton

What do you get from volunteering?

Being part of the extended RAF family feeds me, in terms of my own personal development. Volunteering will give me a sense of achievement and help me to keep learning as I find out more about the charity. It's a real mutual partnership.

What would you like to achieve?

I'd like to be able to show a real vibrant, organic welfare offer, supportive of the whole RAF family. Looking longer term I'd like to see how the welfare work can be more embedded within the branches and branch clubs. They're a good source of volunteers and volunteers are key to how we can deliver the welfare work right across the UK and overseas. I would also like to support the continued development of the Association and look at working in partnership with our sister service charities.

What do you like doing in your free time?

I've been married to Carol for four years and she has two grown up boys and grandchildren. As they live reasonably near, we are fortunate to see them all often. We also have three dogs who take a lot of walking. Musical theatre is one of my passions — a favourite show has to be The Lion King — and I've also been a fervent Leicester City football fan for many years.

New Year 2019 Crossword

by Enigma

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9						10								
11										12				
13				14		15		16				17		
18										19				20
21		22				23				24				
25										26				
27								28						

Across

- 1 This starts on 1/1 (3,4)
5 RAF aircraft (7)
9 Earlier deputy abbot (5)
10 It could drive an aircraft forward (9)
11 First layer of paint? (9)
12 Cuttlefish ink found in Chinese piazza (5)
13 Occurrence (5)
15 Hurtling mass of snow (9)
18 Temperate sailors can go to hospital
department (9)
19 Info that is often found in a bottle? (5)
21&23 The RAF in RAFA (5,3,6)
23 See 21
25 Dora and Geena mix this drink (9)
26 Like the work of Charles Lamb (5)
27 I'm nitty – ugh! But this high-sounding
28 Begin the French 23 down, for example (7)

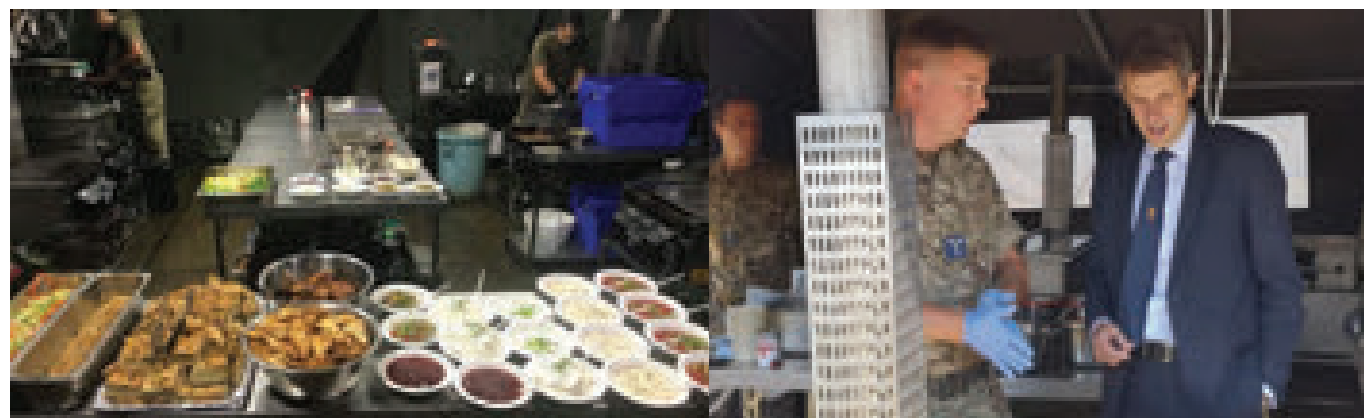
Down

- 1 Remote planet for Roman sea god (7)
- 2 Uncanny (9)
- 3 Wander or blunder (5)
- 4 Again in favour to lessen the rogue (9)
- 5 Solicit over right fish (5)
- 6 To force into naval service (5-4)
- 7 Flower of animal with cheek (5)
- 8 Recount (7)
- 14 Red illumination at back of car or train (9)
- 16 US lawyers (9)
- 17 To enlist compulsorily (9)
- 18 Aerodrome (7)
- 20 Perhaps sense church solution of volatile oil (7)
- 22 365 days to get new desire (5)
- 23 Strike with fear (5)
- 24 Nothing to an enormous letter (5)

Solution to this crossword can be found on page 60

[illegible]

'A taste of home'



3MCS in action: a field kitchen ready to serve a Tex-Mex themed dinner.

Senior Aircraftman Nathan Spink explains the workings of a cook set to the Secretary of State for Defence, Gavin Williamson MP.

Favourite recipes from 3MCS

Whether on exercise in the baking heat of the Middle East, supporting operations from Cyprus or working in the UK, the RAF's 3 Mobile Catering Squadron (known as 3MCS) provides catering support to service personnel around the globe.

As a serving Association member, you may have been fed by them last week. Veteran members may have fond memories of 3MCS or their forerunner, the Mobile Catering Support Unit (MCSU), which has been actively supporting operations since 1975. They led the catering operation to feed over 4,000 military personnel and security staff during the 2012 London Olympics and have teams on permanent standby to deploy anywhere in the British Isles in the event of an aircraft crash. The squadron is currently supporting RAF personnel in Cyprus and Crete who are involved in operations against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Using bulk ration packs, they conjure up delicious meals from a range of raw ingredients that try to give personnel a taste of home, such as fish and chips, a roast dinner or a fantastic curry. The squadron can also provide mobile laundry facilities able to wash and dry up to 1,000kg of laundry each day.

Throughout 2019, Air Mail will meet some of the squadron's personnel, who will share their favourite recipes with you. The chefs and stewards are used to cooking comfort food in large quantities,

and they are equally at home in the competition kitchen: several of the squadron have been successful in RAF and defence cooking challenges, and some are members of the Combined Services Culinary Arts Team, taking part in international competitions.

Squadron Leader Steve Micklewright has commanded 3MCS since February 2017 and is due to move on to another job soon. He said "The food is no different to what you can get in any of the messes really. The difference is the environment in which it is served and, more importantly where it is prepared. Once they get on site, a team will start building the tented field kitchen and setting up the cookers. Normally we'll look to be feeding people within a few hours. The guys can work anywhere: on a recent exercise in the Middle East one of my teams was working in a pre-built kitchen, whilst the others were cooking under canvas in temperatures up to 60 degrees. Having good quality, familiar food helps with health and keeping people fit for their job, plus it's a real morale booster".

Steve's favourite at this time of year is Corned Beef Hash: "It is great comfort food, and I always hope for the guys to make it when I am around. It's especially good at this time of year, and since I'm not a professional chef it's easy for me to make. I love it with some crusty bread and a fried egg".

A



The 3MCS team, augmented by chefs from the Army and other RAF Stations, on a recent exercise in the Middle East where they were feeding around 500 troops each day.



Squadron Leader Steve Micklewright's favourite, corned beef hash with a fried egg on top. © bgwalker/iStock

Corned Beef Hash

(serves 4)

Ingredients

350g (1 can) of corned beef, cut into chunks (some of my chefs cut it very small; others prefer it chunkier)

600g potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks

1 white onion, diced

2 tbsp brown sauce (you could use Worcestershire sauce or tomato ketchup)

1 beef stock cube

20g butter

4 tbsp milk

400g (1 can) of baked beans

100g cheese, grated

Salt and ground black pepper to taste

Method

Set oven to 180°C

Cook the potatoes in lightly salted boiling water for 15-20 minutes, until tender

Sauté onions until golden brown with a knob of butter

Add chunks of corned beef into fried onions

In a bowl mix the brown sauce (or tomato ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, etc.) and beef stock cube; stir together gently

Add mixture to Corned Beef, simmer for 5 mins and season to taste

Drain the cooked potatoes and mash them with the butter and milk

Season to taste

Pour the baked beans into an ovenproof dish and spread the corned beef mixture over the top

Fork on the mashed potato mixture, spreading it out evenly

Sprinkle the cheese over the surface and bake for 30 minutes or until golden brown

Squadron pictures courtesy of Stamford Mercury (Lee Hellwing) & 3MCS

Taking the plunge

A view-from-the-sky account from Jon Chitty, President of the Huntingdon Branch, who parachuted to raise funds with the v100 project.

"I was suckered to do a tandem jump at an Association dinner.

"At the Hinton parachute centre [weeks later], quiet reflection seems to be the order of the day among the group of intrepid jumpers. A good and softly humorous briefing from the chief instructor of the school about how the jump will 'unfold', time for a coffee and toilet break, before I meet my chap.

"Harness offered and fitted. Quick brief as to what to do or not do in the aircraft. Walk out with another three tandem jumpers and a couple going solo to film us with video cameras. On board, we shuffle backwards on our bottoms in two seated columns facing aft. Sitting in, or on, the laps of our instructors, it's very cosy indeed for the 15 minute climb.

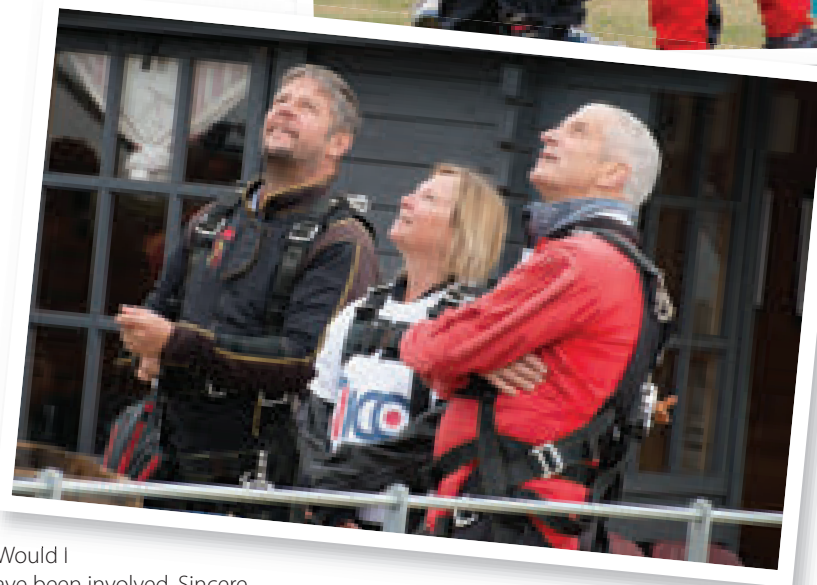
"Bottom shuffle again to the open hatch; I sit with my legs in open space. We then GO – and it's fantastic. No sensation of dropping, just that of flying and we turn over before the drogue takes effect and I'm looking back up at our aircraft.

"We right ourselves – or rather he does! 40 to 60 seconds of free fall before he pops the main chute. It was actually really cold hurtling down at 130mph. But a marvellous view, the sensation of moving very quickly, the wind (the goggles they give you are essential), and the incredible feeling of being free.

"When the rip cord is pulled you notice the silence – just the wind in the canopy and you can take in the broader view as well as looking down at the landing area. Then, all to soon, we come in for a bottom slide landing. Quite odd to do but safe and that has to be the name of the game for such a day.

"Disconnect the harness from each other, stand up, and a strong hand shake of thanks, before then walking/waddling off for another cup of coffee.

"Lots of high fives as others touch down. A brilliant morning of adventure. Would I do it again? Yes and I'm very pleased to have been involved. Sincere thanks to [members] Donna Cook and Linda Donald, for all their help and friendly nudging to make sure I could raise £1,475 and it all came together so very well on the day."



Above top: We made it! v100 jumpers at Hinton © Heidi Burton
Above: A long way up! Jon Chitty (in red) watching the other v100 jumpers at Hinton © Heidi Burton

Solution: New Year Crossword 2019

Across: 1 New Year; 5 Typhoon; 9 Prior; 10 Propeller; 11 Undercoat; 12 Sepia; 13 Event; 15 Avalanche; 18 Abstinence; 19 Genie; 21 Royal; 23 Air Forces; 25 Orangade; 26 Elian; 27 Tiny Tim; 28 Startle.

Down: 1 Neptune; 2 Weiriness; 3 Error; 4 Reprobate; 5 Trout; 6 Press-gang; 7 Oxlip; 8 Narrate; 14 Tail light; 16 Attorneys; 17 Conscript; 18 Airport; 20 Essence; 22 Yearn; 23 Alarm; 24 Omega.

Notices

Reunions

RAF Administrators Apprentices Association. 2019 AGM and reunion. Weekend of 14, 15 and 16 June 2019. Northampton Marriot Hotel. For full details please see <https://rafadappasn.org>

Old Colleagues



R.A.F. Henlow 1958/59
Cambridge & District League Winners 1958/59
Cambridge & District Cup Winners 1958/59
Luton & District Cup Runners Up 1957/58/59
Sgt. McEwan SAC. Bennet SAC. Powley Cpl. Blouc SAC. Janson Cpl. Tingle
SAC. Houghton P/O Colgate
SAC. Curtis LAC Horn G.C. Le-May SAC. Birch G.C. Wood Cpl. Ley Cpl. Maunder

RAF Henlow Football Team 1959. Any of the old team "kicking" around. Please contact Tony Ley seven-iron@talktalk.net 01271 814395.

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

Welcome extended to anyone who served at **RAF Changi**, including HQ FEAF between 1946 and 1971. See www.rafchangi.co.uk for joining information or apply to Malcolm Flack, Membership Secretary 01494 728 562 memsecchangi@telco4u.net for free enquiry pack

Tony and Margaret Wiles (ex-RAF Regiment and Women's RAF), who celebrated their Blue Sapphire wedding anniversary just before Christmas, would like to hear from any old friends and colleagues from their RAF days (1952 to 1975). Wiles.margaret@sky.com

Jack Wilson wishes to contact Allen M Dow, who joined the RAF in 1951, and was promoted F/O in 1953. Anyone with information, please respond by e-mail to xrafvr2605@gmail.com

Chris Coe is looking to arrange a reunion with members of **48th Entry Cosford Ground Wireless**. Can Frank Kane, Dave Smiley, John Noble, 'Tich' Hanvey, Jim Davies, 'Trog' Williams and anyone else I've forgotten, please get in touch. Contact 900 Chris Coe on 01254 488 5001 or email chrispnecoe@gmail.com*

Notices – free for all members

Notices in Air Mail are now free for all members.

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

The terms and conditions are:

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

Send your text to notices@rafatrad.co.uk or call 0800 018 2361. Deadline: Notices for the April - June 2019 issue of Air Mail must reach the magazine's offices by: **15 February 2019. Acceptance of submissions may close earlier if the pages are full.**

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

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

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Mrs M F Adcock	Market Harborough
Mr J Agate	Wales, Midland and South West Area HQ
Mr T R Allen	Cape Town
Mr A Allsopp	Weymouth and Portland
Mr J Aspland	Eastbourne
Mr R Avann	1066
Mr R Bailey	Huddersfield
Mr J H Ball	Morecambe and Lancaster
Mr J Ball	Driffield
Mr W G B Bartlett	Mablethorpe and Sutton
Mrs T Beugels-Aret	Amsterdam
Mr G Birkin	Preston
Mr M Bishop	Tunbridge Wells
Mr S T Black	Isle of Man
Mr H J Blissett	Preston
Mr F J Bond	Peterborough
Mr L Bower	Uxbridge
Mr G T O Boyne	Dawlish
Mr R Bradford	Penzance
Mr F Brencley	Chepstow and District RMG
Mrs B Brock	Sale
Mr M Brockman	Northern Area HQ
Mr C Brooks	Wisbech
Mrs V Budden	Bridport and Lyme Regis RMG
Mr H Bullock	Driffield
Mr P B Burgess	Christchurch
Mr K Burrows	Andover
Mr Y A Calley	Swindon
Mr P Capon	Great Yarmouth and District
Mr M Cardwell	Driffield
Mr B Carpenter	Hayling Island
Mr F Carr	South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr J Cave MBE	Anglesey
Mr R Chappell	Malta GC
Squadron Leader R A Cherry MBE	Sud-Ouest
Mr C Clatworthy	1066
Mrs M Clifford	Mid-Somerset
Air Commodore J L Cloherty MB BCH	Aylesbury and Halton
Mr J H Colburn	South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr J Coleman	Ryedale
Mr P Coles	High Wycombe
Mrs S Coles	RAF St Mawgan
Mr T Colhoun	Londonderry
Mr G E Collins	Lincoln

Wing Commander M Colman RAF (Ret'd)	North Walsham
Mr M G Cook	South East and Eastern Area HQ
Mr B Cottam	Morecambe and Lancaster
Mr F Cougan	Leuchars
Mr E L Couzens	Wymondham
Mrs T Craine	Abbots and Kings Langley
Mrs J Crawford	Mablethorpe and Sutton
Doctor G Creber	Bracknell
Group Captain D Culmer CEng MIET RAF (Retd)	Biggin Hill
Mr R Dean	Brighton and Hove
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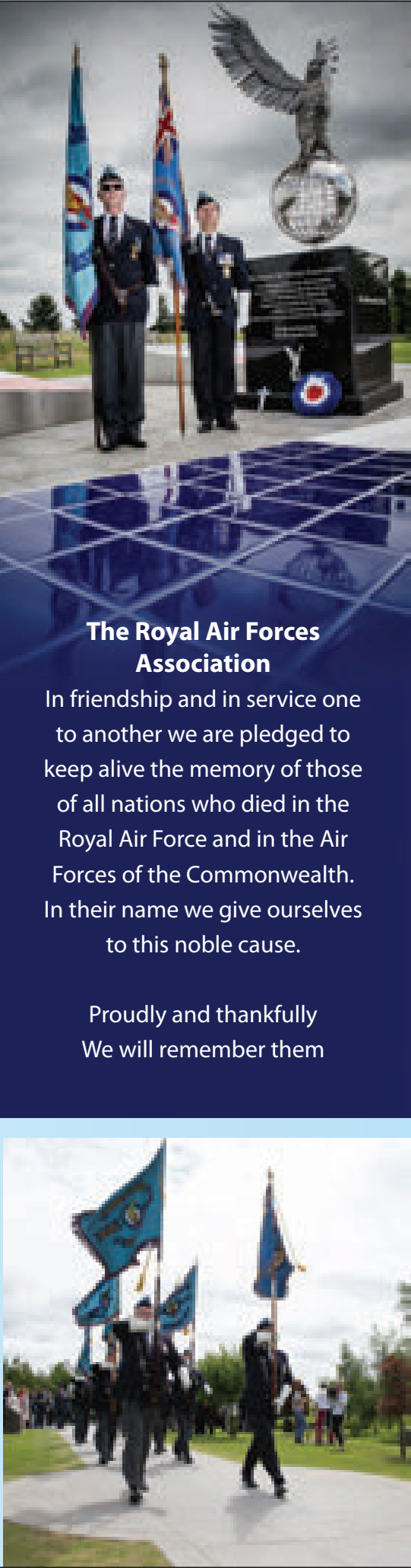
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We specially remember those who had reached or passed their 100th birthday:

Mr J S Hartley DFC	York
Mr R Huddert	Frome
Mr H Laronze	Sud-Ouest
Mr G Whincop	Cockermouth

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



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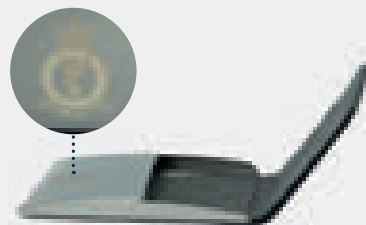
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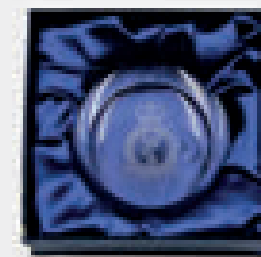
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