

# AIR MAIL

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JULY - SEPTEMBER 2015

 ROYAL  
AIR FORCES  
**Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family



*The*  
**BATTLE OF BRITAIN**

*75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

LEADING THE NATION'S THANKS



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen  
Registered Charity 226686 (England & Wales), SC037673 (Scotland).

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**London evacuees with gas masks  
and luggage all set for evacuation  
to the country**

© PA Images

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## From the Secretary General

**A**s Annual Conference is such an important event in our calendar, my update this time will focus on Eastbourne.

We had a really good conference and the feedback we've received from the members attending has been very positive.

People very much liked the style, format and presentation of the conference pack, in fact 97 per cent of those who responded gave us the big thumbs up. And it appeared that we got it there on time for most of you. We will be looking to improve the content of the brochure for 2016 and to reduce the number of loose papers that have accompanied it in previous years.

The registration process saw a huge improvement over 2015, with many welcoming the opportunity to register on the Friday night. Having Area Directors co-ordinate the signing in of 'their' Branches clearly proved a winner too. Be assured that we will be printing names larger on the badges for next year, to make sure those of us who need to wear glasses occasionally can read them!

On a similar theme, we recognise that in trying to make presentations as short as possible quite a lot of information was put on the screens. With hindsight we should have used less information to make slides easier to read. Overall, though, there were many very positive comments about the information being shared.

We tried electronic voting for the first time this year and despite one or two hiccups the overwhelming response was very positive and many are keen to use the system again. Several delegates suggested that Branches can practice at Area Conferences, but also have some additional training and support at Annual Conference.

The majority of members and delegates expressed a wish to book for Blackpool 2016 online. This option will be



investigated, as well as offering conference material online earlier, but this won't replace the hard copy conference pack.

Looking beyond 2016 and following the overwhelming support by Conference, we will be exploring venues close to the National Memorial Arboretum for the 2018 Conference. Findings will be presented in 2016 to give Branches and delegates plenty of time to prepare for the possible alternative to traditional venues.

And on that note I say goodbye and we all look forward to seeing you at the Hilton Hotel in Blackpool in 2016.

## National Presidential Certificates

**T**he following people were awarded National Presidential Certificates to coincide with HM The Queen's Birthday Honours List in recognition of their ongoing support and dedication to the RAF Association.

**RAFA Calendar Girls**  
**Mr Geoff Bridgman**  
**Mr John Duke**  
**Mr Mick Flory**  
**Mr Roy Lobley BEM**  
**Mr Howard Provis**

Carterton/Brize Norton Branch  
Calne and District Branch  
Chepstow and District Branch  
Teignmouth Branch  
Swindon Branch  
Barry Branch



# What's happening on social media?

Here's a selection of some of our most popular recent tweets and Facebook posts. Have you joined the conversation yet?

## RAF Cosford Air Show donation

**T**hank you to the RAF Cosford Air Show for another generous donation.

Director of Fundraising & Marketing Michael Bolton, pictured right, accepted a cheque from RAF Cosford's Station Commander, Gp Capt Adam Sansom, when he attended the launch of this year's show.



## A very special wedding

**G**eorge Kirby and Doreen Luckie got married on 13 June in the hotel where they live in Eastbourne. It was a special day for another reason – it was also George's 103rd birthday! This made them the oldest couple in the world to get married.

George joined the RAF in 1933 as a physical training instructor and served for 25 years. Instead of wedding gifts the couple asked for donations to the RAF Association and a Navy charity.

While in Eastbourne for our Annual Conference, President AM Sir Dusty Miller went to congratulate the happy couple on their upcoming wedding and to thank them for choosing to donate to the Association.



## Extending a helping hand to Branches

**S**trengthening our membership is a key part of the Association's ongoing work, as without our members we have no organisation. To help Branches recruit and retain members we are launching two new schemes: Helping Hand and Branchmatch Grants. Branches that are voting members of the Association can apply for either form of support.

### Helping Hand Grants

Branches can apply for a grant of between £500 and £1,500 which is matched (where possible) by the Branch's own contribution. These can be used for improvements to a Branch's facilities to support the recruitment and retention of members, which can include Branch premises (not bar serving areas) or equipment, the formation of new Branches or the replacement of standards. This does not include works that would be classified as annual maintenance.

### Branchmatch Grant

Branches can apply for a grant of between £1,500 and £5,000 which must be matched by the Branch's own contribution. They are intended for capital improvements to a Branch's facilities which will support the retention and recruitment of members. These can include Branch premises (all areas apart from the bar service area) and equipment which supports members.

A Branch can apply for a maximum of £5,000 over a 24 month period. The 24 months is calculated from the date of the final drawdown of any previous award. This can be a combination of Helping Hand and Branchmatch grants.

Full details, including application forms and information on the process and when and how a Branch will receive funds are available from [helpinghand@rafa.org.uk](mailto:helpinghand@rafa.org.uk) and [branchmatch@rafa.org.uk](mailto:branchmatch@rafa.org.uk) or by calling your local Branch Support Officer through your Area Office.

## £2 million from Shoreham



**N**ow in its 26th year the Shoreham Airshow has become one of the highlights of the European airshow calendar. From humble beginnings as a small fete in the corner of Shoreham Airport which raised £1,300, to last year's show which raised in excess of £200,000, the show has raised over £2 million for the Association.

To mark this incredible milestone a symbolic presentation of a cheque for £2 million was made to the Association at the show's launch day in May.

"We did the same when we reached £1 million and now we have reached £2 million, we felt it would be nice to do something similar," said Derek Harber, airshow organiser.

The cheque was presented to our President AM Sir Dusty Miller, who said: "What an achievement to have raised such a terrific amount for our Association. The hours of work that the team at Shoreham puts into running this event proves to others that if it runs in a professional manner you can compete with the world's best aviation events. As all of you are volunteers, you should be so proud!"

Vic Norman, who runs the Aerosuperbatics, Brietling Wing Walkers, was also at the launch. He has displayed at all 25 airshows and has been named as Patron for the 2016 event. He said: "In my opinion Shoreham is the best UK airshow; it is a family event and one of the pilot's favourite venues. I am so honoured to be asked to be its Patron for this year."

The 2015 Airshow broke all records and won several major awards including being nominated as the Best UK Airshow by Aeroplane Magazine. "It is going to be a hard act to follow this year, but rest assured we have a lot of new exciting displays to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain," commented Rod Dean, Flying Display Director.

To see the latest list of aircraft that will be flying at Shoreham on Saturday 22 August and Sunday 23 August go to [www.shorehamairshow.co.uk](http://www.shorehamairshow.co.uk)

## Share your Far East stories

**A**s well as being the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain, 2015 also sees the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Japan Day on 15 August.

The next issue of Air Mail will include some of your memories from the Far East Campaign, so if you would like to tell your story, please email [marketing@rafa.org.uk](mailto:marketing@rafa.org.uk) or write to:

Far East Stories  
RAF Association  
117<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Loughborough Road  
Leicester  
LE4 5ND



# RAF Scampton VE Day reunion 2015



**O**n 7 May 2015 RAF Scampton hosted a reunion commemorating VE Day. Over 120 guests attended the event many of whom were Second World War veterans from Bomber Command. Dambuster Johnny Johnson and Dr Mary Stopes-Roe (Barnes Wallis's daughter) also attended. By kind permission of the Station Commander Wg Cdr Harrop, the station's Heritage Centre was the venue for what turned out to be a memorable occasion.

Miss Annie Andrews started the day by singing a selection of familiar songs from the 1940s. The Red Arrows added excitement as they conducted a routine training sortie, enjoyed by all. Guests were able to visit the rooms and displays on show within the Heritage Centre, including Wg Cdr Guy Gibson's office, which has been reconstructed to its original 1943 layout.

The visit ended with a number of low-level passes by the Lancaster from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, with its four Merlin engines singing out once again over familiar ground.

## Taking Talking Air Mail to greater heights

**T**he Yorkshire Region has produced the audio version of Air Mail for the past 20 years. We are grateful to all the volunteers who have recorded, edited and distributed this to our members who have partial or full sight loss.

We would like to particularly thank Ian Wroe for his dedication and commitment in producing Talking Air Mail since 1996. He was working as a recording engineer for Huddersfield's Kirklees Recorder talking newspaper at the time and took on the production side of the project – perhaps not realising he would still be in the driving seat almost 20 years later!

Ian is yet another example of the vital and varied work our volunteers do.

We are developing Talking Air Mail to enable more people to benefit from it. For example, non-visually-impaired members may prefer to receive an audio version of the magazine, so they can listen on the move.

Please email [lisa.thipthorp@rafa.org.uk](mailto:lisa.thipthorp@rafa.org.uk) or call 01780 783645 if you or a member you know would like to receive Talking Air Mail.

## Wings win will help make garden grow!

**B**ernard and Brenda Russell are the latest Wings Lotto rollover winners, having just landed winnings of £4,750.

"I wanted to join the RAF but was turned down because I was colour-blind. Nevertheless I have always supported the RAF and gave up the National Lottery for the Association's Wings Lotto game as it is for such a good cause," says Bernard, a taxi driver who lives in Ashford in Kent.



"The winnings have come at a very opportune moment as we have plans for the garden. My wife is not as mobile as she was, so we are levelling out the garden, removing the steps and landscaping it. That work starts soon so it was fantastic to get a call to say we had won the rollover."

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

Joining Wings Lotto couldn't be simpler, sign up on line at [www.rafa.org.uk/get-involved/wings-lotto](http://www.rafa.org.uk/get-involved/wings-lotto) where you can enter the lottery using a credit or debit card or set up a direct debit. You can request an application form by calling 0800 0182 361.

## Are you ready for a special Battle of Britain mission?

**T**he 'Battle of Britain Scramble' will take place on 15 September. Starting at RAF Wittering at 0830hrs, teams of four must make their way to a secret location in London by whatever means they can by 1700hrs.

Sounds simple? Oh, did we mention that this must be done without money?

The dress code, for those interested in sartorial matters, will be Battle of Britain themed attire.

At the start of the scramble teams will be issued with a mission brief, a collecting bucket and co-ordinates of the finishing point.

Prizes will be given for the fastest team, the best dressed team and the most money raised en route.

For further details email [challenge-events@rafa.org.uk](mailto:challenge-events@rafa.org.uk) or call 0800 0182 361.

Over and out!

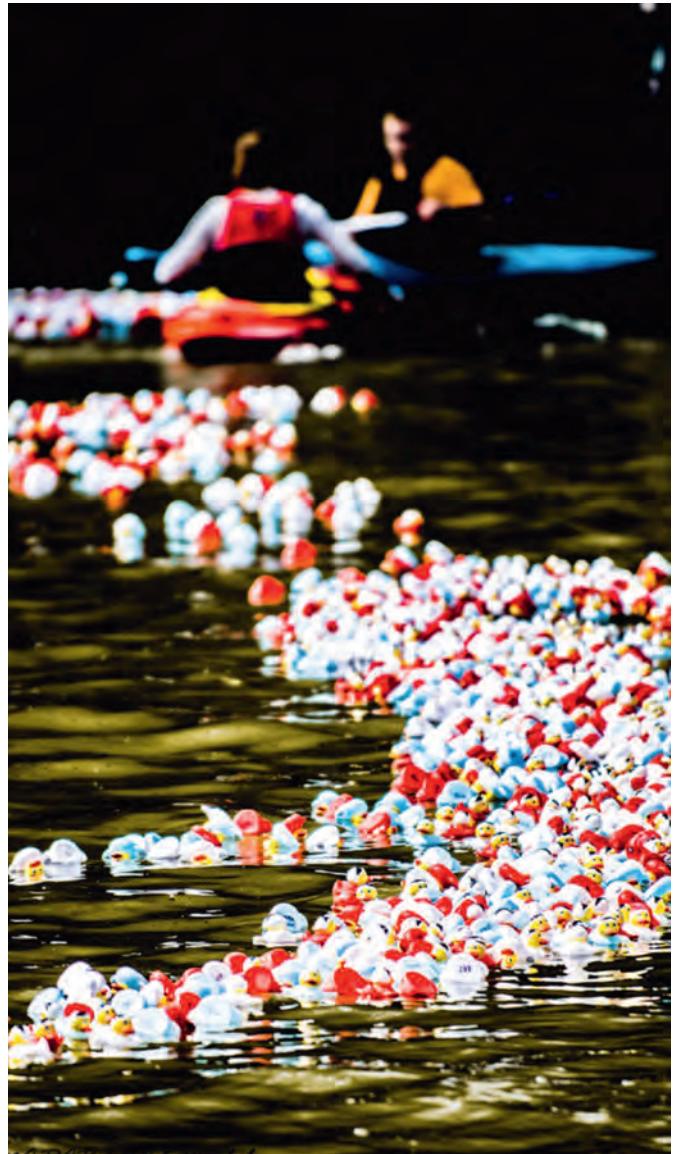


Photo: © Marc Blackwell Photography

## Lechlade duck race provides another quacking day out!

**Sgt Ali Hedworth of XXIV Sqn, RAF Brize Norton led a team of dedicated volunteers to deliver another successful Lechlade duck race.**

Over 4,000 people attended the race on the River Thames in Gloucestershire and an amazing 3,500 ducks were sold. The race was started by Manish Bhasin, who presents the Football League Show, and Miss Wiltshire.

RAF Brize Norton personnel were on hand to help out – over 60 of them, along with volunteers from Lechlade Lions and Highworth Canoe Club. More than 30 young people from Brize Norton Air Cadets and Fairford Maritime Cadets helped out too.

The total raised is still being tallied, but Ali estimates the event will have raised over £4,000 for the Association.

Well done and thank you to everyone who helped make this day a success. Now to start planning for next year!

## Every gift in every Will makes a difference

**When making your Will your first priority should be to provide for your loved ones and then any causes that are dear to you. Leaving the RAF Association a gift in your Will helps us continue to support the RAF family.**

These acts of generosity are one of the most valuable and lasting ways to show your support. No matter how small an amount, an item or a percentage of an estate, your gift helps us to provide vital support to those that need it the most.

If you would like further information about gifts in Wills or our Will-writing service, please call Vinny Manak on 0116 268 8791 or visit [www.rafa.org.uk/legacy](http://www.rafa.org.uk/legacy)





# SCOTTISH AIRSHOW



5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup>  
SEPT  
2015



DISPLAY LINE UP  
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

RED ARROWS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN  
MEMORIAL FLIGHT

VULCAN XH558

TYPHOON

*Sally B* (B-17)

FALCONS PARACHUTE TEAM

AND MANY MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED...

AYR LOW GREEN - 5<sup>TH</sup>  
(FREE ENTRY FOR ALL)

PRESTWICK AIRPORT - 6<sup>TH</sup>  
(AIRCRAFT EXHIBITION DAY - TICKETED  
PLEASE SEE [WWW.SCOTTISHAIRSHOW.COM](http://WWW.SCOTTISHAIRSHOW.COM))

[www.scottishairshow.com](http://www.scottishairshow.com)



In association with South Ayrshire Council





# RAF Leeming team's footie challenge

**M**any football fans dream of visiting all 92 football league grounds, but very few dream of visiting them all within 92 hours!

Nige Owen, Steve Hoole, Nick Hanny, Steve Foley and Jamie Cumming from RAF Leeming did just that in May.

After a New Year's Eve conversation a team was formed and a plan was hatched. Within a few weeks they had planned a route which would take just 76 hours. The team realised that larger cities would cause the biggest problem, so the route and timings were built around visiting cities at night. Steve Hoole contacted Vauxhall and the CEO donated a vehicle, plus fuel, for the entire journey.

Nige said: "We chose to raise money for the RAF Association as it is the primary Air Force charity and a few of the team had used Storybook Wings while on deployment."

The team set off from Sunderland's Stadium of Light and made such good time that they took a detour to Wembley Stadium. Their luck continued so the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff became bonus ground number two.

Finally they pulled up at their 92nd ground, Newcastle's St James Park but Steve and Nige, being Sunderland fans, had already planned that they would never finish the challenge at their rival's ground. Everyone got back in the car and finished where they had started 71 hours 8 minutes earlier, tired but happy.

There were many high points for the team said Nige: "Reading FC asked us what we were doing outside their ground at three in the morning. Once we explained, they said that we were going about it all wrong and should follow them inside where they would allow us to take a photo. They put all the stadium lights on, brought a ball to the side of the pitch and said let us have a kick-about – any football fan's dream!

"We didn't have good luck the whole time though: one of our team, who shall remain nameless, was so intent on getting food that the banner we had with our Virginmoneygiving page details on was left in a well-known chain of sandwich shops!"

The team has raised over £1,000 so far. If you'd like to add to this total you can visit <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/92ClubsIn92Hrs>



## Win a digital toaster

**Y**ou could soon be the proud owner of a Hotpoint digital toaster thanks to member benefits partner Hotpoint.

Association members can buy household appliances from the Hotpoint Privilege Purchase Club and get up to 30 per cent off high street prices.

Simply follow the link from the members area of the Association's website or call 01733 287889.

To be in with a chance of winning the toaster send your name, address and telephone number to [competitions@rafa.org.uk](mailto:competitions@rafa.org.uk) or by post to:



Hotpoint Competition  
RAF Association  
117½ Loughborough Road  
Leicester  
LE4 5ND

See [www.rafa.org.uk](http://www.rafa.org.uk) for terms and conditions. Closing date: 31 July 2015.

## Where have you seen Wings?

**We asked for your unusual Wings pictures.**

Ken Needham from the Letchworth, Hitchin & District Branch sent us this tasty looking photograph!





Shoreham-by-Sea Branch Royal Air Forces Association presents

# SHOREHAM AIRSHOW



CELEBRATING 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN  
**22nd-23rd August 2015**  
SHOREHAM AIRPORT • WEST SUSSEX



**WIN A FLIGHT IN AN ICONIC SPITFIRE**  
See [www.shorehamairshow.co.uk/win](http://www.shorehamairshow.co.uk/win)

# [www.shorehamairshow.co.uk](http://www.shorehamairshow.co.uk)

f shorehamairshow @shorehamairshow Charity Number: 1071257





# RAF Cosford team going around the world to raise money



**A** team of 11 instructors from the Number 1 School of Technical Training at RAF Cosford will be cycling, running and rowing 25,000 miles to raise money for three charities, including the RAF Association.

The challenge was the brainchild of Sgt Rick Turner, he said: "The decision to specifically support the three charities comes as my son has spent time at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford, and all members of the team, including families, have at some point experienced support from the RAF Association or Macmillan."

You can donate to the team's efforts via <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/Awesome21>

## Print on demand is coming...

**T**his year will see the launch of the Association's new print on demand service. The service will allow Areas and Branches to tailor and order a range of Association branded posters and leaflets for membership, welfare, fundraising and volunteering activities, as well as for Battle of Britain commemorative events.

Items will be available through the print on demand website with areas of editable text, so you can make the copy specific to your Area or Branch.

The service will be launched this summer and further details will be sent via Area newsletters and future issues of Air Mail.





# Motorcycle Branch back on the road after relaunch

**T**he RAF Association Motorcycle Branch and its members got the biking season well and truly underway with over 5,000 other bikers. The Branch President Air Cdre Lee and member SAC Meade were just a few of the riders that took part in the Bike 4 Life ride along the M54 from Shrewsbury to the RAF Museum at RAF Cosford. The ride was led by ex World Superbike champion Carl Fogarty, supported by former Top Gear presenter Richard Hammond.

With more events planned this year the Branch will be representing the Association at Ride to the Wall at the National Arboretum, the Battle of Britain Memorial ride from RAF Halton's Motorcycle Club and many more. If you would like to join the Branch, become a committee member or support in any way please get in touch. See details at [www.rafamcc.wordpress.com](http://www.rafamcc.wordpress.com)



## Connected healthcare: new product launched by CS Healthcare

**M**ember benefits partner CS Healthcare has launched an innovative new product aimed at bridging the gap between the NHS and private cover, connecting people to more affordable healthcare.

HealthBridge provides a range of benefits up to an overall limit of £15,000 per person per policy year, helping avoid possible lengthy NHS waiting times.

HealthBridge provides support when it is needed at a local hospital guided by CS Healthcare. Heart and cancer treatment and surgery would need to be undertaken on the NHS, however HealthBridge's range of recovery and support benefits will help ensure a smooth recovery.

With no need to complete a health questionnaire, joining is straightforward and simple with pre-existing conditions

automatically excluded under Moratorium Underwriting terms\*\*.

More information about HealthBridge can be found at [www.cshealthcare.co.uk](http://www.cshealthcare.co.uk)

Contact CS Healthcare today on **0800 917 4325**^ for a quote. RAF Association members receive their **first month's cover FREE\***. Simply quote promotional code **880**.

\*RAF Association Members receive their first month's cover free when they join. Full terms and conditions apply and are available on request directly from CS Healthcare. This offer is not available in conjunction with any other offer and is not available to existing members of CS Healthcare including those who cancel and rejoin. \*\*Further details on terms of underwriting are available at [www.cshealthcare.co.uk](http://www.cshealthcare.co.uk). ^Calls may be recorded and may be monitored for training, quality assurance purposes and/or prevention and detection of crime.

## A bit of Wings Appeal competition

**A**ir Training Corps (ATC) squadrons in the Greater Manchester area are being encouraged to compete with one another to raise funds for the RAF Association. A new initiative has been launched to 'make every day a Wings day' and also raise awareness of rafaYOUTH.

The man behind the project is the RAF Association's Northern Area Director Darrell Slater-Smith. He said: "I was in the ATC myself and remember that every September someone would turn up with Wings Appeal collecting tins. They would then come back at the end of the month, collect the tins, announce how much we had raised and disappear again until the next September."

After 13 years in the RAF, Darrell became Northern Area Director five years ago. He felt that times had not moved on in the area and resolved to change it. He discovered that eight ATC squadrons in the North West had not collected for the Wings Appeal in the previous five years.

There are no Branches within the M60 around Manchester, so consequently there is little fundraising. Darrell decided to use Greater Manchester as a test-bed with the ATC squadrons in that area. Flt Sgt Vikki Moore has been appointed as the Great Manchester ATC Wing's first Charities Officer and she acts as a link between the Association and the local ATC squadrons.

"We have given the squadrons a challenge to compete against each other in raising funds. They all have tins and stickers, and are encouraged to come up with their own ideas to raise money – for instance making good use of social media," says Darrell. "We have set each squadron a challenge of raising £500, possibly £800. If they each achieve £500, the 37 squadrons will raise £18,500."



The initiative is also being used to promote rafaYOUTH, the online youth membership scheme for young flying enthusiasts who are into aviation and adventure. At the last Greater Manchester Training Day, 74 new members joined rafaYOUTH.

Flt Sgt Vikki Moore has already received an Area Presidential Certificate for her work on the scheme and our President AM Sir Dusty Miller, has presented every cadet who fundraised for the Association last year with a certificate. The most successful squadron in the Northern Area was No 1832 (North Manchester) Squadron which raised over £1,000.

For ideas on how your Branch or Area can work more closely with ATC squadrons, contact Youth Community Manager Helen Gibson on 0116 268 8789 or email [helen.gibson@rafa.org.uk](mailto:helen.gibson@rafa.org.uk)

# RAF Association Annual Conference 2015

**This year's Annual Conference was held at the Devonshire Park Centre in Eastbourne from 15-17 May.**

Around 400 members came to the sunny seaside town to hear about the progress being made to revitalise the organisation and ensure we continue to support the RAF family well into the future.

We were pleased to have local media interest and also a mention on BBC Radio 2's Steve Wright in the Afternoon show!

As ever, Friday afternoon was dedicated to our serving members, our RAF Association Liaison Officers (RAFALOs). Their seminar included updates from all parts of the Association and gave them the opportunity to share ideas on how we, as a charity, can help them in their role as the link between the central organisation and the serving RAF family. They were also able to quiz members of the senior management team.



*RAFALO seminar*

**On Friday evening an informal 'meet and greet' event was held in the Floral Hall. It gave members a chance to catch up with old friends and socialise with new ones.**

National Presidential Certificate winners attended a drinks reception where our President Sir Dusty was able to meet recipients and find out more about their outstanding contributions to the Association. This gave him the welcome opportunity to personally thank all those who have put in so much time and effort to support their fellow RAF family members.

**Conference was officially opened on the Saturday morning with the traditional parade of standards, a welcome address from the Mayor of Eastbourne, Cllr Janet Coles and a reply from our President.**

After the ceremonial element came the business of Conference and a presentation by Secretary General Nick Bunting on performance in 2014 and what the future holds for the Association.



*The Mayor of Eastbourne, Cllr Janet Coles*

David Prowse, Director of Membership and Operations then introduced a section on the theme of this year's conference – volunteering. More information on the six volunteers highlighted can be found on page 18.

Following the volunteering presentation Conference attendees were fortunate to hear an update by the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Andrew Pulford. He gave a comprehensive update on today's RAF, covering its people, operations and aircraft updates. He went on to underline the importance of the RAF charities

including the Association, in their contribution to the 'Whole Force Approach', alongside civil servants, contractors, Regulars and Reserves. CAS's speech was as informative and lively as ever and we're very grateful for his time.



*Sir Andrew Pulford*

Last September we were delighted to attend the prestigious Third Sector Excellence Awards, as the Association received recognition in two categories. Ena Day, who had just been on stage was highly commended for over 60 years of volunteering, as was Lisa Thipthorp, Storybook Wings Manager. Both were invited to the stage to receive their certificates from CAS.

More accolades followed with the presentation of this year's Flying Scholarships. You can read more about the outstanding young people on page 27. National Presidential Certificates were then presented by Sir Dusty.

Conference business got underway after lunch, with presentations of the Annual Conference Committee's report by the Chairman of the Committee, Taff Rees. Nigel Bairsto followed with his Chairman of Central Council's report and Philip Tagg, who was reappointed unopposed as Honorary Treasurer, gave a financial and auditor's report for 2014.

A number of resolutions were discussed and voted on before Conference was closed for the day. Details of resolutions carried, lost and withdrawn can be found on page 14.



## Conference Awards and Gala Evening

The Floral Hall was the venue for this year's glittering event, with Tim Humphries from BFBS taking to the stage again to announce the winners.

Thanks are due to the Bognor Regis Branch Choir, the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, Association favourite Heather Marie and Flt Lt Matt Little for their musical contributions.

### Branch trophies for Wings Appeal Collection



Lord Craig and Lord Stirrup trophies - Carrickfergus Branch Treasurer Isobel Day

**Sir Thomas Pike trophy**, awarded for the highest net Wings Appeal collection, including airshows - Shoreham-by-Sea

**Lord Craig trophy**, awarded for the highest net Wings Appeal collection, excluding airshows - Carrickfergus

**Gwynne-Vaughan trophy**, awarded for the highest net collection per member including airshows in the UK - Shoreham-by-Sea



Shell Mex trophy - Northern Area President Martin Watkins



Sir Charles Wheeler trophy - RAF Linton-on-Ouse FS Dominic Owen

**Lord Stirrup trophy**, awarded for the highest net collection per member excluding airshows in the UK - Carrickfergus

**Trefusis Forbes trophy**, awarded for the highest net collection per member including airshows (overseas) - Jersey

**Bill Bailey trophy**, awarded for the highest net collection per member excluding airshows (overseas) - Luxembourg

**Sir Douglas Bader trophy**, awarded for the highest Wings Appeal collection per capita by an ATC Squadron - No 2117 (Kenfig Hill) Squadron

**Sir Robert Saundby trophy**, awarded for the highest Wings Appeal collection by an ATC Squadron - No 1224 (Wharfedale) Squadron

**Shell Mex Trophy**, awarded for the area with the highest percentage annual membership renewal - Northern Area

**Overseas Membership trophy**, awarded to the Branch with the highest percentage increase in membership - Trinidad & Tobago

**Amodio trophy**, awarded to the overseas branch with the highest number of new members - Trinidad & Tobago

**President's Cup**, awarded to the Branch judged to have made the most outstanding achievement in the year - Ayr & Prestwick

**Dickie Collins Branch Club Efficiency trophy**, awarded to the Branch Club that is judged to be the most efficient of those Clubs whose parent Branch has over 200 ordinary or life members - Torquay

**Best Branch newsletter trophy** - Kenley & Caterham

### RAF Stations and Units

**Lord Tedder trophy**, awarded for the highest Wings Appeal collection - RAF Brize Norton

**Sir Charles Wheeler trophy**, awarded for the highest Wings Appeal collection per head in the UK - RAF Linton-on-Ouse

**Marquis of Amodio trophy for RAF Stations**, awarded to the RAF station that recruited the highest number of new members pro rata to unit personnel - RAF Northolt

*continued on next page*



*Trefusis Forbes trophy - Jersey Branch Chairman Martin Willing*

**Ken Jago trophy**, awarded for the highest Wings Appeal collection per head in overseas - JFC Brunssum

**Airshow Plate**, awarded for exceptional achievement by an RAF station or unit in support of airshows - RAF Scampton

**Sir Geoffrey Bromet RAF Unit trophy**, awarded to the station or unit that demonstrates exceptional achievement in support of the Association - RAF Wittering

**Wally Marriott trophy**, awarded to the RAF Association Liaison Officer judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the Association throughout the year - Cpl Kerry Sawyer from RAF Marham

## Conference Resolutions

### Resolutions carried

#### Resolution 1

This Conference resolves that the requirement for Associate Members to be sponsored by Ordinary or Life Members be rescinded with effect from 1 January 2016 and that the governing documents be amended accordingly.

#### Resolution 4

This Conference resolves that when several Members of Area or Central Rolls attend Annual Conference they may elect a Delegate from amongst themselves to that Conference with full voting rights and voting strength equal to the number of such attendees, this to take effect for Annual Conference 2016 onwards and that the governing documents be amended accordingly.

#### Resolution 6

This Conference resolves that Conference 2017 be held in Eastbourne.

#### Resolution 7

This Conference resolves that Council considers a venue near the National Memorial Arboretum (Alrewas) for Conference 2018 and reports its findings to Conference 2016.

#### Resolution 8

This Conference reminds Central Council that a resolution adopted by Conference is binding on the Association and it is incumbent on Central Council to ensure that the staff implement

the resolution in the spirit in which it was adopted and the supporting comments behind the resolution are taken into account in its implementation.

#### Resolution 9

This Conference recognising the mutual benefit to squadrons, units and Branches, urges all Branches to adopt Air Cadet Organisations (Air Training Corps/Combined Cadet Forces [RAF], Girls Venture Corps Air Cadets, Air Scouts and Air Explorer Scouts) in their locality and therefore effectively supporting these organisations in their work of providing sources of efficient personnel to the RAF.

#### Resolution 11

This Conference resolves that the class of four year Ordinary and Associate Membership be withdrawn for prospective new Ordinary and Associate Members with effect from 1 January 2016.

#### Resolution 15

This Conference applauds the issue of car stickers to all Members and requests that as the tax disc is now discontinued, a car sticker that could occupy the space previously occupied by the tax disc is produced.

#### Emergency resolution 16

Propose that for one year only Central Council are authorised to co-opt onto Central Council a Member with welfare experience.

### Resolutions not carried

#### Resolution 5

This Conference resolves that a Registered Members Group (RMG) can, should they wish to, qualify to receive membership and welfare (and any other qualifying) rebates and that any such financial assets that they may accrue can be administered by a neighbouring Branch.

#### Resolution 10

This Conference resolves that the class of Associate Membership without Air Mail be withdrawn for prospective new Ordinary and Associate Members with effect from 1 January 2016.

#### Resolution 13

This Conference regretting that Overseas Members do not qualify to enjoy the same privileges afforded to UK Members (e.g. discounts and offers etc) resolves that Central Headquarters aims to rectify this situation.

### Resolutions withdrawn

#### Resolution 2

This Conference resolves that application for Associate Membership of a Branch shall be made directly to the Secretary of the Branch in a similar fashion to the procedure for application as an Ordinary Member as laid down in Byelaw 5(1) and the governing documents be amended accordingly.

#### Resolution 12

Central Headquarters is requested to be more pro-active in promoting access to the online version of Air Mail.

#### Resolution 14

This Conference resolves that where a Branch or Member has an email address hard copies of correspondence will not be sent.

#### Resolution 3 - fell due to resolution 1 being carried

This Conference resolves that Associate Members of a Branch may, in addition to Ordinary or Life Members, also propose prospective new Associate Members and that Byelaw 5(3) be amended accordingly.



## Sunday

The final day of Conference started, as ever, with a time to reflect and commemorate at the Service of Dedication. Many of our standards were proudly paraded ahead of current and former members of the RAF and other services in the bright sunshine. The service was led by new Chaplain in Chief AVM Jonathan Chaffey and everyone was treated to a spectacular flypast by a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Many passers-by stopped to pay tribute to the many men and women of the Royal Air Force who have given their lives in defence of our country.

Conference was then concluded with the presentation of parade trophies, the final resolutions carried over from Saturday, a vote of thanks and the closing ceremony.

Bags were packed, trains were boarded, cars were started up and everyone made their way home after a very successful and enjoyable conference.

**We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Hilton Hotel in Blackpool next year.**

## RAFALO of the Year 2015

**T**his year's Wally Marriott trophy was awarded to Cpl Kerry Sawyer, an armourer at RAF Marham. The award is for the RAFALO making an outstanding contribution to the Association.

According to Norwich Branch President, Stuart Colbourne, who nominated her for the award: "Kerry has given unstinting and constant support to the Norwich Branch. Over the past three years she has been instrumental in raising funds for the Association in every conceivable way. Her endless energy and tireless support for the Branch and the Association has been truly inspirational.

"Kerry has turned out to collect on the streets of Norwich in all weathers, served as an escort to her Branch Standard during Battle of Britain parades and been the pivotal link between the Branch and RAF Marham. She has been instrumental in organising the Branch's involvement in station activities, which has cemented relations between the RAF and the Association for which the Branch is extremely grateful."

Adding to the nomination, Sqn Ldr Phil Haddon, RAF Marham's Senior RAFALO, said: "I have been privileged to have Cpl Sawyer on my committee. During my tenure I witnessed a professional and proactive key member who was actively involved with the Association in many roles. Kerry was instrumental with her passion and enthusiasm which led to her becoming involved with attendance at both the Area and Annual Conferences, co-ordinating and collecting for the Wings Appeal in 2013 on the station and with the Norwich Branch, leading and assisting with the Association's fundraising stall at the 2013 RAF Marham airshow. She has also supported the Norwich Branch, where she attended the monthly meetings and provided me with comprehensive feedback on the Branch concerns/achievements and set up an Association page on RAF Marham's intranet.

Cpl Sawyer has presented herself as a reliable and trustworthy individual, who is able to deliver a credible output. I have relied on her quality of information. In my time on the committee her performance has never been found wanting. She has been an outstanding RAFALO and I wholeheartedly recommend Kerry as a candidate for the Wally Marriott trophy.

Flt Lt Si Nelson-Kirby added his endorsement to Kerry's nomination, saying: "Kerry has been an exceedingly enthusiastic and highly committed RAFALO. She has dedicated large amounts of her off-duty time to support a wide range of activities, including organising and hosting a two-day recruitment drive and 'Rockaoke' evening at RAF Marham.

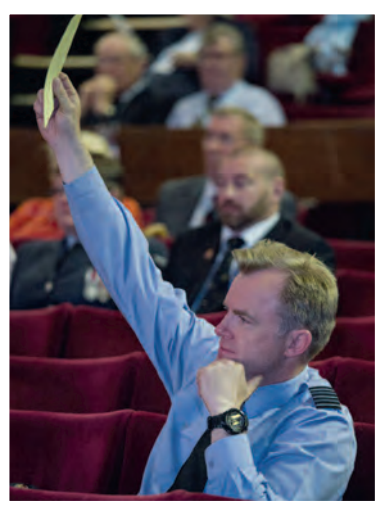
"Kerry also helped raise over £600 at Marham's Friends and Family Day, after arranging for the Association's mobile exhibition trailer to be at the event. Overall, Cpl Sawyer's contribution to the Association has been fantastic."

David Prowse, Association Director of Membership and Operations, said: "Kerry is one of many RAFALOs who contribute so much to the RAF family – representing the serving RAF at Branch events, raising awareness on station and in the local community, and raising money week in, week out. I was particularly pleased to see that Kerry was nominated as RAFALO of the Year, not by her Station committee, but by a Branch. She has clearly made an impression on the Norwich Branch! Kerry is a well-deserved recipient of the award and is a credit to the Association and the RAF."





# Annual Conference 2015 in pictures









# Celebrating you – our volunteers

**T**he theme of this year's Annual Conference was volunteering, so what better way to highlight the commitment and dedication so many of you show to the Association and those we support than to talk to some volunteers?

Everyone who volunteers does so for a different, personal reason, and the nature of their volunteering varies too. As there was only time to showcase six volunteers it is important to bear in mind that this is only a tiny and brief snapshot of the enormous amount of time and effort put in by so many of you.

Introducing the session was David Prowse, Director of Membership and Operations. He started by saying: "At last year's Conference we heard about the effect receiving help from the Association can have on people's lives, and how serving and former-serving members of the RAF family have truly benefitted from the help they have received from people here – most of whom are volunteers. Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organisation. This is not an exaggeration – the RAF Association simply could not function without the tremendous dedication of those who give their time freely to support us."

It was only fitting that we recruited a volunteer to help us recognise the work of our volunteers. BFBS presenter Tim Humphries gave up his Saturday to attend Conference to present the stories of a small number of those who give up time to help others.

Tim introduced each volunteer in turn and either invited them onto the stage or played a video if they weren't able to be in Eastbourne.

## Don Barltrop

In his years as a volunteer, retired Sqn Ldr Don has been Secretary of the Peterborough Branch, as well as Huntingdon, and a member of Area Council.

At 81, Don still finds the time and energy to attend Branch meetings.

Don represents thousands of RAF Association members who give up hours of their time in running Branches, delivering welfare, fundraising and all sorts of roles – and many remain modest about quite how much they do.

Many, like Don, are getting on in years yet still stand outside a supermarket with a collecting tin for hours at a time, trudge up and down streets delivering newsletters or go out into the community to make visits. This is the friendship, help and support that Don and everyone like him deliver without thinking about it.

You can see a video of Don talking about his volunteering on our YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/RAFWingsAppeal](http://www.youtube.com/RAFWingsAppeal)



## Sqn Ldr Caz Viles



As well as former-serving RAF personnel who work so hard for the Association, there is also a large number of serving personnel who give their time and energy to support and promote the RAF Association on stations.

One such example is serving Sqn Ldr Caz Viles, who while based at RAF Brize Norton was the chair of the RAF Association Liaison Officer (RAFALO) committee. During her time there the committee raised thousands of pounds every year.

Caz moved on from Brize and is now at the MOD, where she has been for two years. She has set up a new Whitehall Branch of the Association, as well as remaining a RAFALO supporting her local Branches in London. Caz is a great advocate for the Association, and is typical of many members that are currently serving.

## Ju Hone



The entire Storybook Wings initiative depends on the work of volunteer editors, as well as administrative help allocating stories to editors and ensuring that everything runs smoothly.

Ju's husband is in the RAF and she volunteered to work in the Storybook Wings office – as a means to improve her CV and gain new work skills. Not only did she improve her skills, but she



also gained confidence, and completely fell in love with the work she was doing and the impact her work has on those who benefit.

You can see a video of Ju talking about her volunteering on our YouTube channel.

### Cpl Kerry Sawyer



Kerry is RAFALO of the Year, an award given to the RAFALO deemed by the Association to have given the most in their role (see page 15).

Kerry has been a massive part of the Association since she joined, serving on the RAFALO committee at RAF Marham where she is posted as an armourer. She is also a member of the Norwich Branch and is always the life and soul of any Association event: a great example of the energy and invigoration that our serving members bring.

### Callum Readie



With so many charities to support – and many military charities too – what is it that makes people want to raise money specifically for the Royal Air Forces Association?

Eighteen year old Callum Readie chose to run the London Marathon for the Association in 2014, and raised over £2,500. Since childhood he has done all sorts of sponsored swims, football events, runs and jobs in an effort to raise money for the charity.

So why does Callum choose to support the RAF Association over, arguably, more modern and well known charities?

You can find out by watching his video on our YouTube channel.

### Mrs Ena Day



Ena has been volunteering for the Association for 68 years. She has raised thousands of pounds for the Association. With cheerful tenacity she has organised countless fundraising events such as raffles, table top sales and jumble sales. She has also spent hundreds of hours collecting for the Wings Appeal in supermarkets and in the street. This voluntary work ethic continues today and Ena continues to spend many hours in all weathers raising funds to enable the continuing delivery of welfare to those in need. Ena believes that the welfare of our serving and retired men and women is paramount, which is why she continues to serve our country and society.

Tim concluded by saying: "As an outsider, and someone really quite new to the RAF Association, I have to say I am struck by the commitment and dedication of those who give their time freely to support the organisation – in such a wide-ranging way.

"What is clear is the fantastic work that is being done by people who have a special feeling for the RAF family, and it would seem to me that the term 'family' when used here is exactly the right word – you are clearly all like family, and I think that everyone here can really enjoy the right to feel part of something truly special."

The videos and interviews showed the vastness of our volunteer network, how talented and giving that network is and that without your fantastic efforts, this organisation would simply not exist. But at the same time as celebrating the great work being done, the Association also has to also be grown up enough to apply a heavy dose of realism.

There is no denying that, while support for the organisation is outstanding, we are all part of an ageing membership, and we should all recognise that work needs to be done to recruit more volunteers: younger volunteers who can learn and take over, and secure the longer-term future of the RAF Association for the sake of the RAF family.

Barry Furness has led the organisation's new volunteer strategy and he concluded the presentation by telling Conference about the volunteer recruitment plan, which will be launched later this year.

# Leading the Nation's thanks in Durham

## Durham Cathedral Concert – Friday 5 June 2015

**This was the first of two concerts organised by Brian Murphy in the Northern Area as part of the Association's commemorations of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain. It was attended by HM Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham Mrs Sue Snowdon and a number of local civil and military dignitaries.**

The Band of the Royal Air Force College performed by kind permission of the Air Force Board and the concert was conducted and compered by Flt Lt Matt Little GTCL (Hons) FTCL LRSM DipTCL RAF with guest vocalist Heather Marie.

The concert took us on a musical journey starting with the build up to the Second World War with conscription and an increase in the number of workers and output from local factories and mines. We remembered the Durham Light Infantry in France with the Imperial March played on the organ by Canon Dr James Lancelot, Master of the Choristers and Organist at Durham Cathedral, and guest vocalist Heather Marie joined the Band to sing Foggy Day evoking a brief moment of peace that Chamberlain experienced in the fog at dawn in the early part of the war.

We were reminded of the fear and sacrifices made by families with parents away and the evacuation of children. The experience of children was brought to life by Molly Joyce reading an account written at the time by a young girl of a similar age. We continued through the Battle of France to the Battle of Britain and a chance to hear how it felt to be flying a Spitfire with a poem read by Darlington Branch Secretary Peter McGraghan.

The war continued and those in military service longed for home. Heather Marie captured that feeling with a stunning rendition of the shanty Shenandoah. The Band and Choir performed "We Gather Lilacs as a thank you for the sacrifice made by all involved and a beautiful performance of Fantasy for Violin by SAC Hannah Wheway emphasised the plight of all affected by war.

This year has seen the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day and the spirit of that day came to life as the audience joined in with London Parade. Heather Marie sang one of her most popular songs: It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow, and Union flags were waving throughout the Cathedral, feeling more like the last night of the Proms with Pomp and Circumstance No 1.

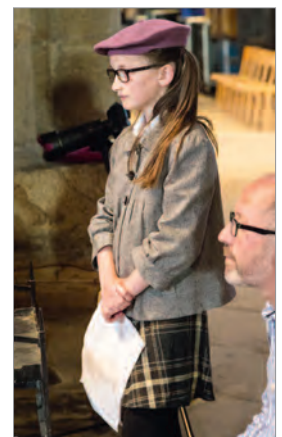
The Standards were marched back out to the RAF March and all the performers were given a standing ovation before Heather Marie's encore of We'll Meet Again.

This entertaining and enjoyable concert showed the diversity of this group of talented musicians while acknowledging and thanking those that were involved during the Battle of Britain and the Second World War.

If you would like to see the Band and Heather Marie perform, there will be another opportunity on 26 September at Liverpool Cathedral.

Free tickets can be requested from the Northern Area office via email to [northern@rafa.org.uk](mailto:northern@rafa.org.uk) or by calling 01772 426930.

*All photos: © YCS Photography.*





# Register for Battle of Britain Service

**T**he RAF Association continues to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The Battle of Britain webpages are now live on our website [www.rafa.org.uk/battleofbritain](http://www.rafa.org.uk/battleofbritain) where you can find more information about commemorative events around the country and stories from those that remember this important time in history.

The Service at St Paul's Cathedral on Tuesday 15 September is open to all Association members and tickets are also being made available to the public. You can register your interest in attending the service at St Paul's on the webpage. The closing date for applications is Monday 20 July and names and contact details are required for each person wishing to attend. Further information will be sent out in August.

We are hoping for a good turnout of Branch Standards at the St Paul's Service and are inviting Branch Standard Bearers to participate.

Any Standard Bearers who wish to be involved should contact Mick Larkman, Branch Support Officer, by emailing [mick.larkman@rafa.org.uk](mailto:mick.larkman@rafa.org.uk) or by calling 0208 286 6667.

Any other queries can be directed to [battleofbritain@rafa.org.uk](mailto:battleofbritain@rafa.org.uk) or by post to:

Battle of Britain Commemorations  
RAF Association  
117 ½ Loughborough Road  
Leicester  
LE4 5ND



# Young memories of the Battle of Britain

Thank you to everyone who got in touch with their memories of the Battle of Britain. We had a large number of stories from people who were a child at the time and you will find a selection of these recollections over the subsequent pages.

Further stories can found on our Battle of Britain webpages: [www.rafa.org.uk/battleofbritain](http://www.rafa.org.uk/battleofbritain)

## Don's story

**"During daylight raids, my father would turn the dustbin lid upside down and stand on it to give him a better view of the dogfights above us. One day he shouted excitedly that 'We've got one' and the bin lid split and he fell in it!" Don McCarthy was eight years old in 1940. They got so used to the bombing that his mother decided they would only go down to the shelter at the bottom of the garden when the bombs fell nearer. One night they did get very near and a blast blew in the window of the bedroom where they were sleeping.**

"Often the sirens went and nothing happened. Then other times you could hear the drone of the bombers, then the flak started. I used to wait for my favourite gun which had a different sound and lasted a bit longer. I don't know why, but I felt safer," says Don. "After the raid, we would go out next morning with a bucket and collect all the shrapnel."

Don's father had served in the First World War but he never knew what exactly he had done. Plans to research his father's war record were scuppered by the Blitz when German bombs destroyed a great deal of paperwork. Don's brother was a pilot in the RAF during Second World War and flew nearly 60 operations in the Western Desert before returning to the UK. His sister also joined the RAF and kept a record of what she did and got it published before she died. She called it 'Erk in a Skirt'.

"During the Battle of Britain, she was actually at RAF Lossiemouth working on aircraft wreck recovery. She saw some very distressing sights including a terrible collision between a Wellington and a Mosquito. She remembered buying extra pairs of underwear as the young lads going out on missions always wanted to take a pair with them as a lucky charm," said Don who lives near Scunthorpe. He followed his brother and sister into the RAF when he turned 17 in 1951, serving as an MT mechanic for five years.



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## Basil's story

**Basil Addington-Smith clearly recalls a German attack on RAF Tangmere, the fighter station not far from his wartime home on the south coast.**

"One day I was cycling home from the office along the seafront when I heard the sound of many aircraft and almost immediately the sirens wailed. I could see little but a series of small dots high up coming in from the south over the sea," he says. "They came quickly and soon some 40 or 50 aircraft with black crosses passed overhead then began to dive in waves towards the direction of Tangmere. Distant explosions followed and soon there were aircraft in all directions, some climbing and some trying to escape by flying low over the sea."

The Tangmere Spitfire and Hurricane squadrons got airborne just in time, but some aircraft were damaged on the ground. One hangar containing mainly transport vehicles was destroyed along with a number of buildings. There were also some casualties. Some of the German Stukas were shot down – Basil cycled out to one crash site and picked up a petrol filler cap as a souvenir.

"Strange as it seems now, we soon became accustomed to the sight and sound of dog fights in the sky above us. It was a sobering thought that the young pilots who were fighting above us could also be seen in the local pubs in the evenings. Some of course were dying."

A few hours after the raid on Tangmere, the bomb craters had been filled in and the station was operational again. Three years later Basil himself was responsible for organising the labour to repair bomb damage at Tangmere and the nearby Naval Air Station at Ford.

"The summer of 1940 was notable for much glorious sunshine and, as the battle developed, we were privileged spectators to many dogfights. A few months before the war started, four tall masts were erected on the coast between Bognor and Worthing. Speculation was rife about their purpose – death rays was one rumour! In fact radar had arrived. I was surprised that the Germans made no serious attempt to destroy these masts."



## Eric's story

**For eight year old Eric Parrish, watching the bangs and the puffs of smoke from the aerial battle above him was exciting. However it was also extremely dangerous as the debris of the Battle of Britain rained down around him in east London.**

"There was a lot of metal in the air. Shrapnel from the exploded anti-aircraft shells could be fiercely jagged and sometimes red-hot when it hit the ground," says Eric. "When a piece of shrapnel hit a roof, it would smash tiles and make quite a hole. There were also the shell caps – the pointed end housing the timing mechanism. These weighed about one to two pounds and would pierce a roof without any trouble.

"All this hot metal, including spent bullets, was raining down during the battles and we could hear it smashing on roofs and thudding into the earth or crashing through garden sheds. Heaven help the greenhouses, they didn't stand a chance."

Eric was evacuated from his home town of Ilford in Essex in July 1939. The pupils at his school were all assembled in the playground with their suitcases and gas masks and then marched down to the station. They had no idea where they were going. Eric and his cousin ended up in Ipswich with a newly married young couple who were not comfortable bathing two young boys – so they did not have a bath for four weeks! However as Eric was an only child, his parents missed him too much and they sent for him to return home.

"I would stand at the entrance of our shelter and watch the scene unfold above me," says Eric who is now 84. "Apart from the aircraft noise, the anti-aircraft guns and the sounds of the battle, there was the smell. At time we could smell the fuel and the cordite from the cartridges being fired by the machine guns and aircraft cannons."



London evacuees with gas masks and luggage all set for evacuation to the country. Photo: © PA Images.

## Geoffrey's story

**Ten year old Geoffrey Smith grabbed a garden fork and rushed off to challenge the German fighter pilot who had parachuted down into a field behind his house. A group of adults found the pilot in the long grass and surrounded him brandishing garden implements!**

"He put his hands up and was told to sit down. He appeared to be injured so someone gave him a cigarette. Then a woman came out with a tray with a teapot and cups! He was obviously grateful for that," said Geoffrey. "It was half an hour before a policeman arrived followed by an ambulance with an Army escort to take him for a check-up. It was an exciting episode for us with aircraft high up still involved in the battle."

Geoffrey was living between Biggin Hill and Croydon during the Battle of Britain and was thus underneath many of the aerial battles.

"On one occasion, we were having tea when six Spitfires came across the field much lower than usual. They came over our house so low that I rushed out the front to watch. I saw the sky full of German bombers and the six Spitfires started to climb steeply to intercept them," said Geoffrey, now living in Exmouth in Devon.

"I rushed to tell my parents, but they did not believe me and told me to get on with my tea! Then the noise of guns and the roar of bombers taking evasive action broke out and we sat stunned. It was too late to run to the garden shelter. Luckily the bombers turned tail and went back. The next day there was just one sentence on the news about it, describing how six Spitfires had routed 60 German bombers. There was a lot of that kind of news that day – and indeed most days during the Battle of Britain. Of course at the time we only called it 'the war' and hoped that we would win."

## George's story

**Twelve year old George Fletcher-Baker lived in Sittingbourne in Kent during the Battle of Britain. The town was more or less on the flight path for the German bombers as they made their way to bomb London. Whenever the sirens wailed, there was a fear that some of the bombs might come down on them.**

"We watched as our Spitfires did battle with the ME109s. I know at the time we really had no idea what we were watching," says George. "The sky was a jumble of vapour trails as the enemy was engaged, then suddenly a parachute opened and a Spitfire pilot was descending. At the same time, another Spitfire circled around him until the pilot was safely on the ground. Some of the German pilots had reportedly machine-gunned our lads as they parachuted down so we were watching the wonderful care that our pilots had for one another. It really was something to watch.



*A WWII Messerschmitt BF109 brought down during an air battle over Ramsgate. Photo: © PA Images.*

"At that age, everything seemed exciting," recalls George. "We went to crash sites to look for souvenirs. I was curious and did not react as I should have. Once we were playing football with me in goal when we saw two aircraft diving down and heard the staccato sound of gunfire. Everyone scattered for cover but I remained in the goalmouth just watching it all!"

George joined the ATC during the war and got his first air experience flight in an Anson at Detling, where they also got the chance to sit in Spitfires on the ground. By coincidence, after his initial training when he joined the RAF in 1946, George's first posting was Detling. He went on to spend 22 years in the RAF an MT fitter and now lives at Earby in Lancashire.

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## Harry's story

**"I had a ringside seat of this historic battle," says Harry Rossiter. He was living in Laindon in Essex and was just 18. He was serving in the local Civil Defence as a youth cyclist messenger.**

"During one summer afternoon in September 1940 when the battle was at its height, a twin-engine ME110 was shot down and descended in flames at Culvers Farm at Little Burstead. Now I was attached to the local ambulance and first aid station so, mostly out of curiosity and a sense of duty, I cycled to the scene to find the ambulance crew already there.

"The ME110 had struck a tree and one of the two-man crew had been catapulted into an adjoining field and landed heavily, breaking a leg. The ambulance crew gave him first aid, made him comfortable and offered him a cigarette. He kept asking about his crewman called Henry but he was trapped in the burning plane and was obviously dead."

Harry, who is now 92 and lives in Exeter, recalls one of the ambulance crew asking the injured airman for his autograph. His name was Lieutenant Carl Stix and he signed his name, leaving a bit of blood on the paper from a small wound on his hand. Two years later, a newspaper carried a story of a Lt Carl Stix escaping from a Prisoner of War camp in Canada. He was soon recaptured and returned home after the war.

That day there were eight crash sites around Laindon – seven of them were Luftwaffe casualties and there was one RAF Hurricane. Local people got used to crashing aircraft, most of them German. One day a German pilot who had got out of his aircraft successfully got stranded by his parachute in some poplar trees opposite the home of Harry's grandmother.

"Across the road from Granny's bungalow were two or three women who had moved there from London and they now seemed bent on revenge on this German. One of the women was waving a meat cleaver and shouting that she was going to 'carve his bleedin' guts out!'"

Harry's Granny said he was only doing what he was told and she was not going to stand by and see murder done. She ran across and shoved the woman away, telling her that the young German probably had a mum worrying about him and she had no right to attack him even though he was the enemy. "That was my Granny," says Harry. "She kept this woman away from the German pilot until the police came and took him away."

Harry later joined RAF Bomber Command and flew 30 operations in Lancaster bombers in 1944 with 115 Squadron.



## Robin's story

**During the Battle of Britain, Robin Burton was moved from his family home at Margate to stay with relatives at Hook near Chessington in Surrey. It was felt it would be too dangerous to stay in Margate because of the threat of invasion, but in fact it was more dangerous in Surrey because of the number of bombs that rained down, some of them jettisoned by fleeing German aircraft.**

Robin was nearly seven at the height of the battle. He recalls lying on his back in the garden with his father, watching the twisting contrails against an otherwise clear blue sky and hearing the distant accompaniment of machine gun fire. He carried conkers to school in his cardboard gas mask case, leaving the gas mask at home to enable the safe transfer of the conkers!

"All schoolboys were aircraft recognition experts back then. I remember the rear part of a Spitfire protruding from the side of a house in Tolworth, I retrieved a piece of its metal skin with part of the roundel on it and dashed home to show my mother. She was not impressed and gave it to the salvage collection while I was at school the next day. I never really forgave her!" says Robin, who now lives in Shepperton in Middlesex.

"I used to chat to the gunners manning a heavy anti-aircraft gun in a field at the end of our road. I liked the lovely noise it made on the odd occasions that they fired it. An oil drum bomb was dropped into that same field just after they had left. I also remember many of the mothers carrying shiny silver shopping bags, probably having some connection to the nearby RAF Chessington which was a barrage balloon depot."

Before the family left Margate, Robin's father had brief custody of a Luftwaffe crew that had been shot down. He was caretaker of Sam Isaac's Restaurant near Dreamland in Margate so he locked them in the food storeroom and told them to help themselves.

When they moved to Surrey, his father built an Anderson air raid shelter at the bottom of the garden. It flooded easily so could not be used for its intended purpose. It did, however, serve as nature reserve for newts and other creatures that Robin retrieved from the nearby ponds!

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## Ron's story

**At the height of the Battle of Britain, the Hobley family set off for a working holiday to pick hops in Kent. They felt it would also be a chance to escape the bombing for a while, but they could not escape the war – they were attacked by a German fighter as they made their way from London to Kent.**

"Luckily the German aircraft missed its target. Our driver was slamming on his brakes and swerving from side to side, resulting in the occupants ending up in a cocktail of saucepans, kettles, plates, knives and people," said Ron who now lives in Ware in Hertfordshire.

"Sometime later we arrived at a Home Guard post where they had a German pilot in custody. Believing that he was the one who attacked us, some women grabbed knives and tried to attack him but were restrained by the Home Guard.

"A few days later, on 15 September, it was my eighth birthday. As we played alongside the huts which were our accommodation, we watched the battle that was taking place above us in awe; the white streams which criss-crossed the sky and the sound of machine gun fire.

"Suddenly a German aircraft came in low sending us kids running for cover in sheet terror. I believe he crashed in a field a mile or two away. I am sure the attending Spitfire then came in low, dipped his wings at us cheering kids."

London, despite the bombs, was looking to be a safer place than the hop fields of Kent, said Ron, who joined the RAF ten years later through National Service and spent some time stationed at RAF Kenley, one of the frontline fighter bases at the height of the battle.



*A Hop picker in Kent watching the planes go over head during the Battle of Britain. Photo: © PA Images.*

## Tony's story

**A young Tony Smith was haunted by barrage balloons throughout the Second World War. He remembers the huge balloons suspended over Norwood Junction railway yards in London as the Battle of Britain raged overhead.**

"If the cable was severed, they would silently descend, envelop the house and suffocate me. Of course the reverse is true but I was only five years old!" says Tony. "By chance I started school at the height of the Battle of Britain. History was being made. I was part of it but was unaware.

"At playtime, I was greeted with a shout of 'Where's your gas mask?' I had left it in the classroom and was told to go and get it and keep it with me at all times. The cardboard container disintegrated quite quickly and was replaced by a tin on a piece of electric flex."

Tony recalls there was no room for an air raid shelter at the school, instead one corridor had a blast wall built down the length of it to offer some protection. Due to the evacuation of many children, class sizes were quite small, sometimes only six. He remembers a black radiator in the school hall around which the children huddled in the bitter winter following the Battle of Britain. There were no health and safety regulations then which would have got the school closed today.

"We grew up rapidly in those days. It shaped my attitude to life. We knew that the Germans (whoever they were) were coming. It was a strange inexplicable atmosphere in which we knew that England would win what was called a 'war'. There was no doubt. No adults doubted it," said Tony who now lives in Catford in London.

"Above us there were masses of fighter planes engaged in life or death duels. I imaged that the noise they made was the propellers scraping the sky. The contrails were a new phenomenon as the planes were flying much higher. I remember the chatter of machine gun fire. The future of Great Britain was at stake but, aged five, I didn't know this. It was all too exciting. I did not hear the rhetoric of Churchill on the wireless about 'the Few' nor their 'Finest Hour'."



*Barrage balloons in 1938. Photo: © AP Photo.*

## Finance Update

**The Annual Report and Financial Statements for year ending 31 December 2014 were presented to, and agreed by, Annual Conference on 16 May 2015. The document contained 43 pages of accounting and statutory reporting requirements. Johnston Calder, Director of Finance and IT has prepared the following short overview.**

The value of the Association, taking into consideration homes, property, investments and all other assets was £26.6 million, up by almost £1 million from the previous year. The Association's current financial health is good; however, there is significant uncertainty in identifying future welfare needs of the RAF family and the funding required to address these needs. Additionally, declining membership numbers, uncertain legacy income and increased stress on the charity sector, as the government seeks to make further cutbacks to state-funded welfare, will exacerbate the situation.

During the year, income of £9.9 million was received, which was an impressive total as these are still difficult economic times. The income total included legacy of £2.8 million, the annual Wings Appeal raised £1.6 million, investment income of £0.6 million and the holiday homes contributed £1.2 million.

In 2014 the Association spent £8.7 million: £2.9 million in support of the residential and Wings Breaks hotels and over £3 million on providing friendship and welfare support. There were no significant changes in the nature of the charitable activities and the high levels of service have been maintained.

The Association's investment portfolio held by Rathbones increased by almost £1 million to £20 million. During the year a further £44K was received from the administrators of Kaupthing Singer and Friedlander and the Association has now recovered 82.5p in the pound in respect of its investment. The Association has no current plans to sell any of its investments as its financial plan generates sufficient income to cover the costs of delivering its charitable activities. Additionally, the Association continues to review its reserve levels to ensure that it is well positioned to support short and long-term needs of the RAF family.

Johnston said: "The good financial position is due to the commitment and contribution of our members. This is not taken for granted and please accept my personal thank you for all the outstanding work that makes it possible for the Association to support the RAF family today and in the uncertain future."



# 2015 Flying Scholarships

One of the highlights of Annual Conference was the presentation of this year's Flying Scholarships. As last year, these were presented by the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Andrew Pulford.

The scholarships are awarded to outstanding members of the Air Cadet Organisation (which includes the Air Training Corps [ATC] and the Combined Cadet Force) and the Girls Venture Corps Air Cadets. The scholarships recognise the continuous support of these organisations to the Association.

The top candidate is rewarded with a course of 35 hours flight training in a light aircraft, which covers all or part of the tuition needed to obtain a National Private Pilot Licence. In previous years four runners-up received 12 hours training each, however, this year as part of the 2015 Business Plan 'Investing in the Future', we have increased the number of 12-hour awards to five.

David Prowse, the Association's Director of Membership and Operations, said: "This year we received our highest ever number of applications for these prestigious awards. The quality of the 140 applications received was extremely high and decisions, accordingly, very difficult to make. I know the interview board had great difficulty selecting the top six. The winners this year can therefore be justifiably proud of their outstanding achievements."

The winner of the 35 flying hour scholarship was:

Cadet Corporal Joel Thornton from No 58 (Harrogate) Squadron ATC.

The five 12-hour scholarships were awarded to:

- Cadet WO Victoria Delaney, No 2137 (Lymm) Sqn
- Cadet WO Daniel Dedman, No 158 (Braintree & District) Sqn
- Cadet Sgt Joseph Potter, No 2248 (Rutland) Sqn
- Cadet Sgt Ramzi Saissi, No 114 (Ruislip & Northwood) Sqn
- Cadet Sgt Bridie Wakeford, No 340 (Edenbridge) Sqn

Joel plans to attend Loughborough University to study mechanical engineering and is hoping for a bursary to undertake flying training with the Royal Air Force following completion of his university course.

Speaking after the presentation Joel said: "It was an amazing feeling when I found out I had won; it is a very prestigious award and represents the first major step in my aviation career. I want to go to university and hopefully gain an undergraduate bursary to train as an RAF pilot once I complete my studies.

"The pilot career path is very competitive, especially for military pilots. This scholarship will help me to stand out from the crowd and will hopefully lead me on to my dream career."

Entries for next year's scholarships will be accepted from 1 October this year.



Above: Cadet Cpl Joel Thornton with the Chief of the Air Staff



Above: Cadet WO Victoria Delaney



Above: Cadet WO Daniel Dedman with the Chief of the Air Staff



Above: Cadet Sgt Bridie Wakeford with the Chief of the Air Staff



Above: Cadet Sgt Ramzi Saissi with the Chief of the Air Staff



Above: Cadet Sgt Joseph Potter with the Chief of the Air Staff



# rafaYOUTH trip scales new heights



**B**uilding on the success of last year's Award, the 2015 Cyprus Award headed towards its second year under the rafaYOUTH umbrella with high hopes: we just didn't know that the height would be close to 6,000 feet (2,000m)!

The rafaYOUTH Cyprus Award (formerly the RAF Association Cadet Award) recognises young people who have shown outstanding commitment and effort to aspire to the aims of rafaYOUTH, often overcoming difficult or challenging circumstances. This April 11 young people were able to attend, following the generous sponsorship of a further place by the Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Branch.

Rather than experiencing the usual sand that surrounds RAF Akrotiri, the team headed up to Troodos Station at nearly 6,000 feet above sea level. It certainly gave the team a different look on RAF life in Cyprus particularly when it started snowing!

Callum Noer from 1271 (Bathgate) Sqn ATC said: "It was an experience like none other; it's something that I will never forget. We went to RAF Akrotiri, Nicosia, the UN Buffer Zone; we saw things that hardly anyone in the world can say they've seen!"

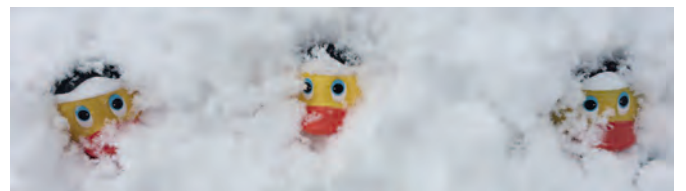
The core activities were arranged by the fantastic Cpl Mark Byrne and RAFALO team at RAF Akrotiri. The Cyprus Award team was given the opportunity to write their own itinerary this year, which was particularly helpful for two of them who used the trip as the residential element of their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Another cadet, from 2329 (Castle Douglas) Sqn ATC, Carrie Duffy said: "This was the best thing by far that I have ever done within my time in cadets. The people on the trip were great and we had so much fun. The trip was a great success and that's down to the cadets and staff which made it simply amazing."

Adam Street, who is a Flight Sergeant at 2425 (Nottingham Airport) Sqn and rafaYOUTH volunteer said: "The rafaYOUTH Cyprus Award is an amazing opportunity for both cadets and staff to improve their social, communication and interpersonal skills. Personally the trip was the highlight of my year. The trip is a fantastic thing and I hope that it continues and grows so that many more cadets to have this unique chance."

Emily Stray, a Cadet Warrant Officer at 2327 (Havant) Sqn and part of the trip's staff team, said: "It was a whole new view for me being a staff member. It gave me skills and ideas on how I can lead cadets and indeed take with me into the Royal Air Force."

Keep your eyes on the rafaYOUTH Facebook page for details of next year's award and nomination instructions.





# Marathon efforts for the RAF Association



**It was another great year for RAF Association marathon runners, with 16 serving personnel among the 26 people running to raise money for us.**

Fern, Layla, Rich and Allan are all members of 600 (City of London) Squadron, serving as Reservists alongside their full-time jobs. Fern said: "We wanted to run to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 600 Sqn. The RAF Association is a charity close to all our hearts, so we were over the moon when we got our marathon places."

A team from RAF High Wycombe secured their much sought after places through the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry's Charities Forum. All three Armed Forces receive five places in the marathon as Prince Harry is the Patron of the London Marathon Charitable Trust.

Nick Wilkins of Peterborough was one of our civilian runners, and he's raised over £2,000. He said: "I chose to run for the RAF Association as I am delighted to help anybody connected to the RAF. Those in current service keep us safe and those who are no longer in service gave us this free society we live in today. Also not forgetting those who have passed away and leave relatives behind that need support. A colleague also mentioned that his elderly grandparent had a much-needed short break thanks to the Association."

## Get in the running for 2016

**We already have one runner in training for next year's London marathon. If you would like to join him then read on...**

We have places available for next year's marathon. You will be asked to raise a minimum of £2,000 by the end of 2016, but you can start now, there's no time like the present. In return you will get a guaranteed place, a Wings Appeal running vest and a training T-shirt. You will also get our fundraising pack full of tips and great ideas to maximise your fundraising without turning it into a chore. As if that wasn't incentive enough, anyone who runs to raise money for the Association, their friends and family are invited to join us at the RAF Club for a post-race reception.

Anyone who has entered the marathon ballot directly can still run in our colours and fundraise for us. If all this talk of running has inspired you to get involved then email [challenge-events@rafa.org.uk](mailto:challenge-events@rafa.org.uk) or call 0800 0182 361 to register your interest.



Above: (L-R) Wg Cdr Jodie Peck, Mr Richard Dixon, Cpl Reuben Jones, Miss Lorna Creak, Sqn Ldr Adrian Lovejoy.

# Military Veteran Portrait Project comes to the UK



**D**isabled US veteran combat photographer Stacy Pearsall has taken nearly 4,000 portraits of military veterans as part of her highly successful Veterans Portrait Project. The idea caught the imagination of British Army veteran Stephen Porteous, who has recently launched a UK version, VPP:UK.

"This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day," says Stacy Pearsall. "I can't imagine a more fitting time to expand the Veterans Portrait Project, and to honour my British comrades and allies."

Stephen added: "For the first time in living memory British Armed Forces are not involved in direct combat operations anywhere. The VPP:UK strives to document veterans' portraits and stories for future generations, and to ensure they're always remembered. Along with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, this year also sees several other important milestones such as the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

"My time in the Forces made who I am today. As veterans, we do not ask for thanks and we don't expect gratitude. As members of the public, this doesn't mean we can't show our respect. This project is a fantastic way of giving something back to them, and I am thrilled to be involved."

Stacy, who was a staff sergeant in the US Air Force, founded the Veterans Portrait Project while recovering from injuries sustained while serving as a combat photographer in Iraq. She spent countless hours in hospital waiting rooms where she met a WWII veteran. He'd inspired her to get back behind the camera and tell another type of story – the veteran's story. What started as Pearsall's way to thank her fellow veterans for their service grew into a larger, nationwide campaign. Since 2008, Pearsall has amassed almost 4,000 veteran portraits, which are exhibited at various facilities throughout the US.

Nick Bunting, Association Secretary General said: "Those who serve their country give so much, so it is fitting to recognise our Armed Forces veterans. This project will give the public the chance to see the range of RAF veterans, from Battle of Britain pilots, through the Falklands conflict right up to more recent overseas missions."

Stephen attended the Association's Annual Conference in Eastbourne and captured portraits of many members and employees, all proud Service veterans.

The VPP:UK tour will visit major cities throughout the UK capturing images of veterans and exhibiting their portraits in prominent venues and museums.

You can see the photographs Stephen has taken by visiting [www.veteransportraitproject.uk](http://www.veteransportraitproject.uk)

If anyone is interested in taking part they can contact Stephen via the website (address above), by emailing [hello@veteransportraitproject.uk](mailto:hello@veteransportraitproject.uk) or by calling him in Germany on +49 (0)5154 7093565.





## PETE BROCKLEHURST

**T**he 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain this year has presented a fresh opportunity to highlight the work of the RAF Association. Here we talk to Pete Brocklehurst, Community Fundraising Officer, about the ways Branches can raise money in this important year and beyond.

“It’s all about large numbers of small donations collected by volunteers from Branches who show their passion and dedication to the Association,” says Pete. “I would like to pay tribute to them and thank them for their help year after year. Despite the large number of competing charities and the pressures on family budgets, we still find people are very generous.”

Competition does mean it is more difficult to get pitches at places like supermarkets and train stations so the Association depends on getting ‘feet on the ground’ with collecting tins and other fundraising activities. “There is a small nucleus of people at each Branch who organise the fundraising, but we would like to encourage anyone who can devote a bit of time to get involved.”

**“It’s all about large numbers of small donations collected by volunteers from Branches who show their passion and dedication to the RAF Association,”**

Brew for the Few is going to receive some attention this year. The initiative was launched in 2007 to encourage people to organise fundraising tea parties and has proved to be popular ever since. People have organised events in their homes, at work, in Mayors’ parlours and on RAF stations. RAF Brize Norton developed this further by holding a bake-off competition, where people brought their own cakes to compliment the cuppa. They raised £1,500 in the process.

Pete said: “Brew for the Few has been ticking along for a while now, so we decided to relaunch it this year. We aim to make it the world’s biggest tea party across the summer. You could have an afternoon tea party or a 1940s themed tea dance. We can provide Brew for the



Few packs which contain ideas on how to organise events, and include posters and invitation cards.

Pete and his two colleagues, Ian Wright and Claire Hodson, can help Branches with their fundraising. This includes supplying pin badges, windmills, stickers and tins, as well as sorting out insurance cover and street permits for fundraisers. Apart from encouraging more Branch members to join in around the world, they are also specifically looking for volunteers to help collect in London on Battle of Britain Day in September.

Once Branches have raised money, Pete is encouraging them to process their collections online via the Wings Portal. This just requires two people from each Branch to register; one to input the amounts raised and the other to verify and authorise it. So far 30 Branches have signed up to use the Portal, but Pete says cheques will continue to be acceptable for the foreseeable future.

Brew for the Few packs can be downloaded from [www.rafa.org.uk/brew](http://www.rafa.org.uk/brew)

For any enquiries related to the Wings Appeal or Portal, you can contact the team on 0116 268 8797 or by emailing [wings@rafa.org.uk](mailto:wings@rafa.org.uk)



# Addressing the loneliness problem

**L**oneliness among the elderly is now recognised as a serious and growing issue and the RAF Association is determined to undertake work to combat loneliness among its members and the wider RAF family. As part of this work, the Association will launch a 'befriender' scheme before the end of the year and establish more initiatives in the next 12 months.

"Loneliness is a real issue for many members of the RAF family and we want to do what we can to address it," says Rory O'Connor, Director of Welfare and Policy. "We hear a lot of anecdotal evidence, but recent research by charities such as the Royal British Legion (RBL), Age UK and the Silver Line proves the extent of the problem.

"With a large percentage of our membership over the age of 65, we suspect loneliness will affect many of our members and beneficiaries."

A report last year found that the number of men aged 65 or over living alone is expected to rise by 65 per cent in the next 15 years, to a total of 1.5 million. In England in 2012/2013 over 1.2 million men aged over 50 reported a moderate to high degree of social isolation, with 710,000 men aged over 50 reporting a high degree of loneliness.

A new RBL report on relationship and isolation difficulties among the ex-service community says that eight per cent of them cite loneliness as a problem – around 370,000. It is ahead of bereavement, relationship break-up and lack of recreational facilities and a social life. One in four men over 65 have said they have suffered from loneliness, with older adults living on their own being more susceptible.

The problems are compounded by associated issues such as the reduction in social care services and the reduced time that carers spend with elderly people.

"For many of those who have served in the RAF, no matter how long ago, keeping that link can be important. They enjoy talking about shared experiences with others," Rory continued. "This will feed well into our befriending scheme, which will focus on companionship, rather than the more 'formal' welfare services we provide.

Anyone who would like to become a befriender will undergo a short training course to ready them for the role."

More details on the befriending scheme will be shared later in the year via Area newsletters and Air Mail.

*All photos: © iStock.*





# Working to change perceptions of dementia

**The RAF Association is working with the Alzheimer's Society to promote the Dementia Friends programme.**

Dementia Friends is the biggest ever initiative to change people's perceptions of dementia. It aims to transform the way the nation thinks, talks and acts about the condition.

Dementia touches the lives of millions of people across the UK and Dementia Friends was launched to tackle the stigma and lack of understanding that means many people with the condition experience loneliness and social exclusion. We need to create more communities that are dementia friendly so that people affected by dementia feel understood and included.

Whether you attend a face-to-face session or watch the online video, Dementia Friends will teach you more about dementia and the small ways you can help. From telling your friends and Branch members about Dementia Friends to visiting someone you know living with dementia, every action counts.

Joanne Truscott, the Association's Welfare Training Manager, is a Dementia Friends Champion. Talking about the programme, she said: "I'm personally very

passionate about ensuring people with dementia are treated fairly and with dignity. By working with the Alzheimer's Society members of the Association have a fantastic opportunity to get the message out there about understanding dementia, dispelling some of the myths and becoming a more dementia-friendly society.

"The training reinforced my understanding of the issue of dementia, and provided me with a structured set of resources that I can use during my own training sessions with Association volunteers and staff. I will include this learning in all Welfare Officer training courses. This information will be disseminated across all the welfare staff teams, who will then deliver the same information sessions during their Area Seminars and Conferences.


"Our aim is to ensure that all Association employees and volunteers involved in any welfare activity have attended a Dementia Friends session. This will not only give them a much greater understanding of the needs of people with dementia, but will help spread the message that it is possible to live well with dementia."

Over one million people in the UK have become Dementia Friends already. As part of Alzheimer's Society's long-term commitment to help more communities and organisations become dementia-friendly, a new target of creating four million Dementia Friends by 2020 has been set. Will you be one of the four million?

To become a Dementia Friend, visit [www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk) call Joanne Truscott on 01 16 268 8767 or email [welfare@rafa.org.uk](mailto:welfare@rafa.org.uk)



BECOME A  
FRIEND

GINA 

#dementiafriends



# The RAF Families Federation

## The Armed Forces Covenant explained



*Pictured above, L to R: Maggie Fuller (Lincolnshire and the Midlands, plus RAF Valley), Jo Wilkinson (East Anglia and the South East), Nat Haynes (South and South West) and Julie Price (North England and Scotland)*

**When the Families Federation visits units it's still clear that, while many Serving Personnel have heard of the Armed Forces Covenant, it is hard to describe what it's actually about.**

RAF FF Covenant Co-ordinators (pictured above) have been in post for nearly two years and it's been a busy time. The roles were established by funding from the Libor fines and they were tasked to monitor, advise and support the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant. Key aims have been to share good practice and initiatives, raise awareness of the Covenant, both inside and outside the RAF, and identify the key issues that are most important to RAF personnel and their families.

**The key principle of the Covenant is that the Armed Forces Community should not be disadvantaged because of military service. It is not there to confer advantage over the local civilian population.**

The breadth of the Armed Forces Covenant has been both a challenge and a benefit. It encompasses issues such as health, education, housing and commercial services. This is on behalf of the whole spectrum of the Armed Forces community, including Service personnel, their spouses and partners, children, and veterans. To be effective the Covenant requires commitment and working together from a wide range of organisations such as local authorities, NHS organisations, schools and colleges, and commercial organisations.

### Never a typical day

One day we may be attending a Community Covenant board, made up of representatives from the local authority,

county councillors, one or more NHS Trust, local charities and personnel from local military units. Each Community Covenant board oversees the implementation of the Covenant in a particular area and our role is to share good practice from other areas, provide them with an update on Covenant news or policy and advise them on the particular needs and issues relevant to RAF personnel and their families.

Other days might involve meeting with schools to advise them on how to get the most benefit from their Service Pupil Premium or support them to access the MOD Education Support Fund. No one day is quite the same as another and we can clock up some impressive mileage between us as we travel far and wide.

The really good news for serving RAF personnel and their families is that there is a huge amount of enthusiasm and commitment amongst the authorities, organisations and companies charged with delivering the Covenant. Changes may not always be very visible to families on a day-to-day basis but that doesn't mean that they aren't having a big impact on many areas of disadvantage.

### What's next?

Over the few years, there has been great momentum behind the Covenant and our biggest challenge is to ensure that this continues in the future, despite the end of operations in Afghanistan perhaps impacting on the fantastic levels of support shown to the military by the British public. There is still much to do to further raise awareness, both within the RAF and amongst the organisations delivering the Covenant to us.

To find out more visit [www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk), the MOD Covenant website or your local authority website.



# News from the RAF Benevolent Fund

## RAF veterans aided by new advocacy service

**The RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) has launched a new advice and advocacy service to help veterans navigate the maze of welfare benefits and NHS and local council services. The new service aims to identify the benefits and care services to which a veteran, his or her partner, and dependant family members are entitled and, if necessary, take up the case directly on their behalf.**

Veteran RAF Regiment Gunner Malcolm 'Geordie' Wallace said: "Mum's health took a turn for the worse and taking care of her was my first priority. We left our jobs and home, and moved from the Shetlands to Northumberland to be closer to her and our family. The Advice and Advocacy Service really helped us land on our feet and made a difficult time so much easier."

Paul Hughesdon, RAF Benevolent Fund Director of Welfare and Policy, said: "We know that younger veterans, such as those who served in Afghanistan, have very different needs from older veterans, who perhaps fought in World War Two or served in the RAF during their National Service years. Our new service is able to provide advice on the benefits and services available to each individual – from retraining and childcare assistance to funding for home adaptations and care home fees."

Anyone who served in the RAF is eligible to use this service; there is no requirement to already be in receipt of benefits or

demonstrate financial need. Additionally, carers of elderly veterans are welcome to reach out on their behalf and the service is available to widows and widowers of RAF veterans.

For assistance from the Advice and Advocacy Service, please email [advice@rafbf.org.uk](mailto:advice@rafbf.org.uk), call 0800 169 2942 or write to: Advice and Advocacy Service, 67 Portland Place, London, W1B 1AR.



Above: Gunners from 58 Sqn RAF Regiment deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 Photo: © Crown Copyright.

## Wally's hearing is restored thanks to new partnership

**"I'm glad God's not deaf," said Wally Banford, 84, as he was fitted for a hearing aid this summer.**

Wally, who served in the RAF during his time in National Service, first started noticing his hearing loss during church services when he had trouble hearing the vicar.

"My hearing definitely is not what I had in 1953 when I was going into the RAF!" said Wally.

Wally contacted the RAF Benevolent Fund for help and the charity arranged for him to visit the headquarters of Starkey, a world leader in hearing aids. After a hearing test, he selected small, discreet hearing aids and had a tour of the on-site manufacturing centre.

"Getting old isn't for sissies. I didn't want hearing aids, but hearing loss is isolating," said Wally. "These small hearing aids are just what I was looking for. Now I can hear better and continue to be sociable and stay active."

Wally's visit helped launch a new partnership between Starkey and the Benevolent Fund, which offers hearing



Above: Wally Banford is fitted for his own hearing aid.

services and hearing aid packages for current and former RAF members and their families.

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**Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund**  
THE HEART OF THE RAF FAMILY

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Battle of Britain

Reading the timely letter in praise of the Battle of Britain ground crews, it might be worth remembering the 'erk' aircrews that manned the gun turrets and AI radar sets in that epic battle, flying with Blenheim and Defiant squadrons. The lowest rank usually recorded for aircrew then is that of sergeant and all assumed to be pilots.

There were 78 other ranks that served with Fighter Command of which four lost their lives. They were AC2 Cooper 600 Sqn, AC1 Phillipson 604 Sqn, AC1 Reece 235 Sqn and AC2 Roy Payne who joined the RAF in May 1940, completed his basic training then his radar training and was killed while returning from his first combat air patrol with 23 Sqn in the September, still an AC2.

They surely were 'The Few of the Few'

**Tony Eaton**

The latest issue contained much of interest, especially the stories of the four lady nonagenarians who served at the time. I too am a nonagenarian, albeit a little younger. I enlisted in 1942 but lived in the London area throughout the war and was involved in London's struggle for survival.

Over the years I have observed all too frequently the total ignorance of the life of civilians especially those who lived in southern England. The Luftwaffe mounted large and successful attacks on Portsmouth, Southampton and Plymouth which caused huge damage with many civilian casualties and then they did their best to destroy London which suffered every day and sometimes twice daily for many weeks of massive attacks by bombers with fighter support.

The attacks caused huge damage to the docks, warehouses, factories etc and destroyed large areas of housing causing many thousands of casualties amongst firemen, rescue workers, nurses ambulance drivers etc; who worked throughout the raids and many made the ultimate sacrifice.

Too often in Battle of Britain commemorations I have noted a lack of reference and respect for the civilian suffering and would ask that all RAF Association members, at any future commemorations, spare a minute in

reflection upon the civilian suffering and casualties.

Even more overlooked and unknown by the younger generation – those under 75 – was the more serious winter 'Battle of Britain' from November 1940 to May 1941 when Luftwaffe bombers devastated many other towns during their nightly attacks over the whole seven months.

The nation should give thanks and be grateful for the civilians' role throughout the war years.

The civilians suffering did not end until the last V1s and V2s had landed in London. By that time 67,000 civilians had been killed. Lest we forget.

**Edgar Fillis**

## Letters to the Editor

Often when watching a football match I see a player, with a good chance of scoring, pass the ball instead to a better placed colleague who scores and gets all the credit - so unfair!

Thus I was delighted to see the letter from Helen Mills in the Spring Air Mail pointing out that, without the ground crew, there would have been no "Few". On that topic, it may be of interest that originally Churchill had worded his speech "Never in all history..." But an aide questioned "What about Jesus Christ?" And after a moment's thought Winston altered it.

I was a radar mechanic, servicing the Rebecca/Eureka equipment in the planes supplying our troops behind the lines in Burma; without us, there would have been no Chindits.

We seek no glory, but it is nice when someone like Helen draws attention to the 'back room boys'.

**Brian Foster**

I was very interested to read on pages 14 & 15 of the Air Mail April/June 2015 edition 'Another 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary' about the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RAF Fighter Control/Aerospace Battle Management specialisation section.

Pages 16 - 18 reminded me as a NCO Fighter Plotter GSM (General Situations Map) Floor Supervisor & Fighter Table Supervisor/Radar Operator at RAF Patrington East Yorkshire, in the

1950s of the tale told to me by a long serving NCO who had enlisted during World War II in the RAF as a Clerk (Special Duties). When posted, he reported to the Station HQ and was sent to the Typing Pool and instructed to type a letter. The SNCO i/c was baffled at his slow typing speed and asked him how he had managed to pass his trade training course, to which he replied: "I have never typed a letter before!"

The Air Ministry in its wisdom was fearful that the trade 'Fighter Plotter', would reveal to the Germans that we were using RDF (Radio Direction Finding) later to be called RADAR (Radio Aids Detection And Reporting) by the Americans.

**Roy Smith**

I read with interest Peter Grey's item on forgotten War Graves in France. May I say that it is not just the men who lie in France who are forgotten? To this end, I am in the process of conducting an exhibition at the Radnorshire museum in Llandrindod Wells raising awareness of the rich aviation history that even this 'out of the way' part of Wales has.

We are covering military and civilian flying, this includes RFC and RAF who lived here but also the very many crash sites in the county (allied and enemy). As well as such facts, this was the home of the Bufton Brothers, three of whom joined the RAF in WWII and two of them were instrumental in setting up the Pathfinder squadron.

The exhibition will run from 4 July to 8 August and we hope to raise awareness of Radnorshire's rich aviation heritage as well as jog memories of events/people we may have missed.

So yes I too hope future generations will not only look after the graves but also remember these men with respect.

**Phillip C. Jones RAFVR(retd)**

I would like to comment on Dennis Moon's letter about Halton (Apr-Jun 2015).

For most of my time as a 'Trenchard Brat' (73<sup>rd</sup> Entry, Jan '53-Dec'55) I was a drummer, initially with the Brass Band (WO 'Bandie' Hammond), latterly with the Halton Pipes & Drums (WO 'Bandie' Bailey).

I think Dennis Moon has confused 'WO Calton' with Halton SWO



WO 'Flem' Carlton. 2(A) Wing W/O's name in those days was Carter, a jovial man!

When the Pipes & Drums paraded on formal occasions during my time, I do not recall the Goat Mascot, 'FS Lewis' being paraded, certainly not during the twice-daily parades down to Workshops & Schools. I recall 'Lewis' had been retired and put out to grass.

Yes, 2(A) Wing Pipes & Drums did entertain the WAAF's on occasion; the girls would lean out the windows of their blocks, cheer and clap madly!

As for 'Entry Spirit' - a part of the Halton Legend - after the 73<sup>rd</sup> graduated in December '55, the 'Brass' tried quashing it by splitting the various Entries up and distributing the 'Brats' among the three Apprentice Wings.

Given the strength of the RAF Halton Aircraft Apprentices Association today, I like to think the Brass failed for once!

**Mike Hamence**

#### Radar

Having been a Radar Mechanic - later Fitter - (Air) 1943-47, I was interested to read your pages in the April-June issue on the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the RAF Fighter

Control/Aerospace Battle Management specialisation".

First of all, I do not think that was the designation of what was set up in 1940. Surely that was RAF Fighter Control, which is now Aerospace Battle Management? The word 'specialisation' seems unnecessary to me.

Much more importantly, I was surprised to see in the same column a reference to the discovery of radar in 1935. Electromagnetic waves could be said to have been discovered however, that was in the previous century. Heinrich Hertz found in 1887 that some materials conducted the radiation some reflected it. Early proposals abroad were for the application of this to detection by ships of other ships in fog. 1935 was the date of a report to the UK Air Ministry on 'The Detection of Aircraft by Radio Methods' by Robert Watson Watt, Head of the Radio Research Station, Slough, and it was that which led to the development of what came to be called radar, all of it based on discoveries long before.

Sorry to go on about this, but I hope you agree radar is not something that was ever 'discovered'.

**Ted Bell**

#### Other anniversaries

I wish, through Air Mail, to remind members of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorating the defeat of Japanese forces in Burma and South East Asia. Soon there will be none left to tell them of us and say: "for your tomorrow we gave our today".

**Harry Basford**

#### Query

As always I enjoy reading Air Mail and some of the new layout is well arranged. Your account of the Battle of Britain was most informative but has reminded me of some questions I have been asking myself for sometime.

Firstly was Radio/Telephone Operator - Direction Finders a trade during the Battle of Britain and secondly, when were DF stations i.e. Radio Direction Finding Stations first used, is there a history of their involvement and was radio telegraphy also in use during the hostilities?

Any answers would help a 92 year old ex-RAF Radio/Telephone Operator - Direction Finder trying to qualify his small contribution to the war effort.

**D Evans**

## BOOK REVIEW

### AUSTRALIA'S FEW AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Kristen Alexander

**The Battle of Britain was immortalised by Winston Churchill's words, Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.**

This is the story of eight Australian fighter pilots engaged in the Battle of Britain. Of the eight - Jack Kennedy, Stuart Walch, Dick Glyde, Ken Holland, Pat Hughes, Bill Millington, John Crossman and Des Sheen - only one of them came home.

A moving tale of some of the less acknowledged members of the 'few', Australia's Few and the Battle of Britain contributes a totally fresh perspective to the existing wealth of historical literature on the famous Battle of Britain. The book is grounded in detailed and wide-ranging research, but the inclusion of papers and records of the eight airmen make it a singularly compelling personal read, as well as a highly detailed account.

Alexander acknowledges that she 'selected' eight of the '30 or so' Australians who flew in RAF during the Battle of Britain and the work does not pretend to be an all-encompassing account of their involvement.

Nevertheless, it communicates the important message that the lives and stories of the 'unknowns' during the war are still of equal importance to the more well-known, even famous, figures.

A fresh combination of military and personal biography, the book is rich with details of RAF operations during the Second World War, both on the ground and in the air.

Available from Pen & Sword Aviation, An imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd  
47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS

ISBN 978-1-47383-379-1 Price: £25.00 (hardback)



# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News



**1. North Costa Blanca Branch** members headed for Benidorm for the second NCBB AGM and Valentine Weekend .

Branch members, and some from the Costa Blanca Branch, stayed at the Mediterraneo Hotel. Saturday morning saw attendees assemble for the AGM which, although businesslike, was enjoyable, especially as the guest of honour was Simon Martin, the retiring Overseas Director. The highlight of the weekend was the evening event held at the Benidorm Palace with excellent food and breathtaking entertainment . Sunday was a quiet day of relaxation before departing Benidorm on the Monday morning. Without doubt, an outstanding weekend, with many members requesting a repeat in the future.

Photo shows Simon Martin receiving his farewell gift from Branch Chairman Bob Hunt.



**2. Brecon Branch** Chairman Dave Coombe and John Coulthard of Brecon RBL came up with a scheme to raise money for both organisations. Having successfully applied for and received one of the Tower of London ceramic poppies, they then proceeded to raffle it.

A local gallery (Tŷ Cam of Talybont-on-Usk) was found to mount it on a plinth of cherry wood from a 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage in Pencelli near Brecon.

With the help of Ardent Gallery, Brecon Militaria Fair and the Clarence Inn who sold tickets, the original goal of £200 was surpassed. This was helped by the Cadets of 415 ATC Squadron who sold tickets on the day of the draw. The final total was £504 and two drachmas. The actual draw was made by Capt Andy Hamilton of the Royal Engineers. The winner was Dave Cox of Simpsons framing in Bristol.

Photo (© Brecon and Radnor Express) shows John Coulthard, Dave Coombe, Captain Andy Hamilton and Clare Dent of Ardent Gallery who acted as Master of Ceremonies.



When the regular "Quizzers" who meet for the monthly quiz at Brecon RAF Association Club heard that the Branch needed a new House Flag, they decided to use the proceeds of the quiz to buy a new one.

Some of the team members are shown presenting the new House Flag to the Branch Chairman Dave Coombe (far left). The teams represented from left to right are - Confused.com, Missing Link, At the Bar, Lions, Phoenix, and Non Conformists.



**3. Penarth Branch** Chairman Tich Taylor presented Cadet Cpl Callum Searle of 1148 (Penarth) Air Training Squadron with a Certificate of Merit to show its appreciation and sincere thanks for his support during the visit to Steenberg on the occasion of the anniversary events for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash of Wg Cdr Guy Penrose Gibson VC DSO & Bar, DFC & Bar, RAF and Sqn Ldr James Warwick DFC RAF in 1944.

Picture shows Cadet Cpl Searle with Penarth Branch Chairman, Tich Taylor.



# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News

**5. South African Area** Annual Conference was this year hosted by its East London and Border Branch, ably organised by Chairman Alan Harris and his hard-working committee. The conference venue was the Gonubie Hotel on the picturesque eastern outskirts of East London.

In honour of 'The Fallen', a commemoration service took place at the East London's East Bank Cemetery's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Plot. The Cemetery is the resting place of several RAF aircrew who died while undergoing training in the Empire Air Training Scheme in WWII at the local airfields of East London, Grahamstown, Queenstown and Port Elizabeth.

Photo shows Conference delegates at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Plot, East London.



**6. Swindon Branch** members will be available at the RBL's recently opened 'Pop In' Centre in Swindon to help members of the RAF family. The once high number of RAF units in North Wiltshire has meant that many former RAF personnel have settled in the area. This prompted the RBL to offer the Association the chance to have a presence in its Regent Street Centre.

Hugh Thompson, Welfare Officer, said: "We are very grateful to our RBL colleagues for offering us this opportunity to present the RAF Association and its services in a very public place. Someone from the Branch will be at the Pop In Centre every Wednesday afternoon from 1 pm until 4 pm.

We may be able to help those in financial difficulties or just provide some companionship. If you think we can help, do come along and see us. We would also encourage anyone thinking of joining the Association to pay us a visit."



**7. Cardigan Branch** sadly report that it has decided to call "TIME!". Active membership has reduced so much in recent years due to old age plus, in some cases, members moving to be nearer families. The last meeting and AGM was held at the Gogerddan Arms, in March. Afterwards members regrouped for a delightful buffet provided by the management which enabled everyone to thank visitors including Cllr. John Williams & the RNA who have supported the branch for very many years.

Members are going to transfer to be a Registered Members Group and will carry on with meetings (without the paperwork) and the Wings Appeal crew are going to carry on "normal" service as long as they can. Attendance at local Service events will continue as normal as long as members can still stand up!



Back Row: Mike Chappell (Regional Chairman Brecon); Mike Hiles (Llanydloes); Cllr John Williams (Area Vice-Chair, Towyn).  
Front Row: Lillian Bright (Chairman, Knighton); Annette Williams, Pam Chappell (HWO Brecon); Jane Spraggs (Wife of Chairman, Cardigan).

Humphrey Spraggs is shown with the first and last Branch Certificates of appreciation from HQ on setting up and 60 years of service. Humphrey had a letter to Air Mail published following the article in a previous edition of a Plt Off Bear who had a round-the-world trip in Lyneham C130! Humphrey has been a major fund-raiser for Wings Appeal at Supermarket collections over the years with boxes rivalling his human assistance in value. He nearly got bear-napped on one of them!!





# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News



**1. WRAF Branch** held its 3<sup>rd</sup> AGM at the Esplanade Hotel, Scarborough. Another very successful year with membership rising constantly and money raised for both Branch funds and Wings Appeal. The Branch retained the trophy for the 'smaller branch with most new members over the year' for a second year! New Chairperson, Sandra Finlay, was voted in and thanks were given to Jacky Reid for all she achieved as Chair in 2014.

The meeting finished with a talk on Welfare and the Work of HWOs given by Anthony Hopkins. All were made welcome by hotel staff – with several trips out to restock the bars!! A lovely meal together and entertainment by Joel, the Hotel's "crooner". As usual, when a large group of WRAF get together, there was a lot of fun and banter and all enjoyed the seaside location with two even braving the North Sea – in February brrrr!



**2. Germany Branch.** Last year the Branch lost two of their stalwart members: Peter Richardson (Treasurer and Secretary) and Peter Baldwin (Chairman). Prior to his death, the Chairman had asked Jim Walsh to take over the reins of Secretary/Treasurer who had to organise the AGM. As most members live in the area of Javelin Barracks (old RAF Bruggen) it was decided that the meeting would be held there. Several members turned up and the Branch future was discussed. One or two proposals were put forward for consideration. Members will be informed once a decision has been made. If any of you who normally get notified by 'snail mail' now have a computer; please inform Jim:- Jimwalsh1942@yahoo.co.uk.



**3. Cranwell Branch.** Mike Smith and his wife attended the Afghanistan Service of Remembrance at Lincoln Cathedral. The morning started with coffee and biscuits at RAF Waddington talking to relations of personnel who were killed during the 13 years - a moving experience. Afterwards, attendees were ushered into a luxury coach and had a police escort whilst travelling to the Cathedral, an interesting experience! It looked as if the whole of the Lincolnshire Police Service vehicles were parked near to the Cathedral.

A large number of Service personnel from neighbouring RAF units and so many Squadron standards were on display. The whole service had come together within 2 weeks - a staggering achievement both from the RAF planners, the Cathedral staff and the Lincolnshire Police. It was an excellent commemoration to the 453 personnel who lost their lives and the larger number of personnel who were injured in Op. Herrick.



**4. Waddington Branch** members visited Westerly Care Home, Woodhall Spa in March to meet Victor (Bill) Bolton, an ex RAF fitter who was celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Victor was presented with a framed plaque by RAF Waddington RAFALOs Flt Lt Simon Nelson-Kirby and SAC Ashley Cafferkey. The branch supplied a birthday cake.

Present were Victor Bolton and his stepdaughter Diane, Dave Green (Chairman), Ashley Cafferkey, Brian Petty, Andrew Radford, Pauline Radford, Bryan Hall, Junko Green, Richard Elgie, Val Petty, Phil Doorbar and Simon Nelson-Kirby. Refreshments were provided by Mrs Jayne Tewnion the care home manager. Victor also received a birthday card from Her Majesty The Queen.



# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News

**5. Doncaster Branch.** In March 1053 (Armthorpe) Squadron ATC held a graduation parade for newly qualified cadets. The Reviewing Officer was Air Cdre Stewart CBE FRAES. During the Parade Cadet Flt Sgt Ryan Fox was presented with the "Young Person of the Year" runner up award by WO Rowlands RAF (Regt), SWO RAF Linton on Ouse, in front of Air Commodore Stewart, parents and Ryan's very proud mother. Ryan was the Branch nomination for the "Young Person of the Year" Award.

During the evening 1053 Squadron was also presented with the RAF Association Doncaster Branch Cup (and a cheque for £223) in recognition of its efforts and support during the 2014 Wings Appeal season. The cadets of 1053 (Armthorpe) Squadron realised in excess of £1000 during the year for Wings Appeal.



**6. Lossiemouth Branch.** Two stalwart members have been rewarded for their tireless work with Presidential awards; Janet Payne, very long serving branch secretary and also secretary of North East Scotland. Her commitment, not only as secretary but also as a welfare officer, is total; David Greatorex, treasurer, has been a member for nearly 60 years. Congratulations to them both, very well deserved.

A long standing member, Billy Forsyth died age 86 last October. After his death, Maureen, his wife, went through his pockets and collected a total of £235 in foreign currency. She has donated this to the branch. Billy will always be remembered. Photo shows Billy and Maureen.

Two members are moving south of the boarder, Simon Jones, past vice chairman, and Roy Twiggs welfare officer. Thanks for all your work. Welcome to new Chairman, Marty Latham. Having just retired from RAF Lossiemouth, he has brought the average age of the committee down by about 20 years and his fresh ideas will be most welcome.



**7. North Cotswold (Chipping Camden) Branch** has, for the third successive year, been awarded the Cup for collecting the most money per head of membership in the Wales, Midlands & South Western Area.

During 2014 the Branch collected £10,169 towards Wings Appeal. Ray Scantlebury, representing the Area Executive, is shown presenting the Cup to Chairman Peter Griffith, at the AGM. The Branch was also presented with another certificate for collecting in excess of £10,000.

It is very rare indeed for a branch to be awarded the cup three times, and even more so on three successive years. Congratulations to all involved especially Keith Moule who organises the collection teams. A special thanks go to the Stratford on Avon 1289 Squadron ATC for their excellent support. They were very active throughout the year in raising money on behalf of the Branch. Wings Appeal for this year currently stands at £250 due to donations received at the March AGM.



**8. Tunbridge Wells Branch** Chairman, Ron Sawyer presented the badge of office to Maurice Verrell recently elected President. Maurice is a long standing member having served 25 years as Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman at different times. The Branch wish him well in his new role.

When submitting Branch News to Air Mail, please note that wording should ideally be around 100 words, accompanied with supporting photograph which should be of at least 300 dpi. Please note that due to space limitations, submission does not guarantee publication.

Please ensure that you give as much information as possible about those shown in any photographs and any copyright information relating to the photograph.





# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News



**1. Bridport and Lyme Regis RMG** sponsored the ball for Bridport F.C.'s final home game of the season against Gillingham Town in the Toolstation Western League.

A spokesman for the group said that they liked to be involved with the local community in order to keep a high profile for the charity, especially those that had supported them in the past which is why they had decided to liaise with the club.

Picture shows the Bridport Manager, former Portsmouth, Reading, Watford and Middlesborough striker Trevor Senior, accepting the ball from group leader John Hill prior to the game on Easter Monday.



**2. Northern Ireland Area.** Brian and Carol Titterington attended the official opening of Croc an Uininn (Hill of the Sheep) viewing point and the unveiling of the Spitfire memorial plaque which took place outside the village of Glenelly in County Donegal

Readers may recall the programme on BBC2 Dig WWII hosted by Dan Snow telling the story of how the Spitfire had crashed into the Croc an Uininn and the discovery and excavation by local Northern Irish historian Jonny McNee.

Pictured are members of the Gleneely Development Association who organised funding for this project, Jonny McNee, Lt Col David Sexton - Chief of the Irish Republic Defence Forces, Stephen Sealey representing the Weston Group and AVM David Niven, Air Officer Northern Ireland.



**3. Downham Market Branch** held its monthly meeting in April where the Chairmanship formally changed hands from Peter Kingston to Len Algar.

President, Gp Capt Harv Smyth, CO RAF Marham, presented a clock to Peter and a set of glasses to his wife Jean as thanks for their years of loyal and dedicated service to the Association. The Branch is delighted that Peter will still be involved.

At the end of the meeting an informative presentation was given by Flt Lt Ady Hargreaves on the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.



**4. Aberdeen Branch.** Photo shows seven of nine members enjoying a coffee after an afternoon visit to Aberdeen International Airport in April. The tour was arranged by Kellie Heath, the Airport's Media and Communication Manager, who organised a

guided journey by airport bus around the airfield's perimeter track including visiting the apron at the terminal, viewing runways past and present and even a relic of WWII, the barely visible area used for compass swinging.

Bird management was very evident and conducted efficiently by bright yellow trucks with Tannoy systems emitting distress calls causing the crows to fly away. The volume of fixed wing traffic was steady and frequent, but helicopter movements in the air and on the ground were almost non stop, surprising all members. The two hour visit was fascinating and was thoroughly enjoyed.

All were very grateful for the excellent commentaries given by the four colleagues of the manager who went to great lengths in explaining the functioning of a very busy airport.



# Branch News

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**5. Dudley Branch.** John Deane (77) collected the British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours to recognise his long association with air force groups who remember past heroes and encourage the flyers of the future.

John's work includes raising funds to pay for a cenotaph in Dudley, organising Battle of Britain, Remembrance and Armistice commemorations plus co-ordinating Wings Appeal with cadets from the Air Training Corps. He said: "It was quite a surprise, it is nice to be recognised, I would like to think it might inspire others."

John from Kingswinford, was presented with the BEM by West Midlands Lord Lieutenant Mr Paul Sabapathy CBE. The ceremony was held at the Mayor's Parlour at Dudley Council House.



**6. Stockton & Thornaby Branch** members enjoyed a visit to RAF Linton-on-Ouse where they were welcomed by Northern Area Chairman, John Allison BEM, who is civilian RAFALO at the station.

Branch President, Denis Grubb, presented two paintings of Lancaster bombers to the Station Museum, recalling the days when Linton was a Bomber Command station operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force.

During the tour of the station, several members had the opportunity of "flying" over Yorkshire and the Lake District on the simulators used by the trainee pilots.



**7. Barry Branch.** At the recent AGM a presentation was made to Sqn Ldr D Crandon. He received, from Branch Secretary Howard Provis, a Silver Salver in appreciation of his 12 years as Branch President. David is stepping down to concentrate on his work with the Air Cadets and will be greatly missed, especially for his sense of humour and as President, helped forge closer links between the Branch and the Air Training Corps.

The Branch was also very pleased to welcome its new President Sqn Ldr Jim Muir who brings much experience and a new perspective to the role of President. Jim expressed how honoured and humbled he felt to be asked to take on the role of President of a very worthy, hard working Branch and looked forward to supporting the team of volunteers. The Branch also presented Howard Provis with a Certificate of Merit for his significant contribution and guidance as Secretary to the Branch.



Photo shows Howard presenting outgoing President Dave Crandon with Silver Salver in the presence of the incoming President Sqn Ldr. Jim Muir

**8. Rotherham Branch** is proud to have a lifetime member, Frank Wells who has received Maundy money from Her Majesty The Queen when she visited Sheffield Cathedral on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2015. Frank was one of only 89 gentlemen in the Sheffield Diocese to receive this honour.

As well as being a very active member of the branch he was, until recently, the Church Warden at Rotherham Minster, having done this for 6 years. Photo shows Frank with son Russell.





# Branch News

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**1. Exmouth Branch.** In the last couple of years the Branch has had a period of instability with several changes in Club stewardship. The present tenants have turned round a failing business and created a centre of excellence for all to enjoy. The building has recently been renovated. Work is on-going to refurbish the Brierley Bar (named after Norman Brierley, a Branch founder who passed away earlier this year) and the kitchen. The Branch thrives; sadly not all taking advantage of the new club. It is a vibrant private members club with over 200 members many who are Branch members, supporting many organisations including the Air Crew Association. At the recent AGM the Area Director praised the efforts of the committee for their perseverance and commitment in overcoming all of the obstacles and putting the Branch back on the map.



**2. Newcastle on Tyne Branch.** In April, the Branch held its annual ANZAC Commemoration Ceremony at Chevington Cemetery, Northumberland coinciding with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings where the legend of ANZAC was born. RAF veterans from several local branches, the RBL, RAF Police Assn, Royal Observer Corps Assn and the RBL Riders Branch together with residents of the local villages and ATC cadets attended. RAF Boulmer provided a Guard of Honour, the RAAF was represented by Sqd Ldr Derek Reinhardt and New Zealand by Lt Cdr Kane Sutherland. Kevan Jones MP represented the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Approximately 250 people attended - more than ever before. Wreaths were laid and ATC cadets placed poppy crosses on each of the ten ANZAC graves in the cemetery. After the addresses, the ceremony ended with a march-past. The salute was taken by Wg Cdr Richard Sharp. All then moved to the nearby Trap Inn where a buffet reception was held.



**3. Poole Branch.** At the Wales, Midlands and South West Area AGM and Conference weekend held at the Derwent Hotel, Torquay, 3 awards were received by Committee Members of the Branch. National President, AM Sir Dusty Miller KBE, presented the Branch President/Treasurer, Doug Collett, with a National Presidential Certificate and a Regional Presidential Certificate for his outstanding leadership of the Branch. Honorary Welfare Officer, John Watch, was awarded an Area Presidential Certificate for his commitment to providing welfare support and visits to hundreds of ex-RAF veterans and their next of kin in the Bournemouth, Poole & Purbeck area during the past 8 years. The Certificate was presented by retiring Area President, AVM Patrick O'Reilly CB.



**4 Eastern Area.** In April a band concert was held at The Apex, Bury St Edmunds given by the RAF Honington Voluntary Band with the Honington Military Wives Choir entitled "Salute To Our Services". Bury St Edmunds Branch organised the attendance of Standard Bearers to open the concert.

Photo shows the Standard Bearers present: E Ribbans (Bury St Edmunds); M Mansfield (Haverhill); G Oxford (Stowmarket); R Broscomb (Dereham); G Denness (Newmarket); E Warner (Woodbridge); M Marsh (Sudbury); Ms (SAC) M Andrews and J Wood (RBL Thetford Branch).



# Branch News

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**5. Huntingdon and District Branch.** Branch RAFALO Abbie Gunsmoke-Smith ran the Bath Half Marathon in 2 hours 15 mins and raised £130 towards the Branch Wings Appeal, she is shown here presenting her cheque to the Branch Chairman Gp Capt Ron Saunders.

**6. Republic of Ireland Branch** hosted the Anglesey Branch to a highly successful and enjoyable lunchtime gathering in the National Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire.

Extra guests were the President, Chairman and members of the Lisburn Branch, Northern Ireland (NI), and the Regional Manager NI.

Photo (l-r): Pete McWilliams (Chairman Rol Branch), Air Cdre Spike Milligan (President Anglesey), Sarah Waugh (Regional Manager NI and Overseas Area Director), Jim Kelly (President Rol) and Jack Abbott (Chairman Anglesey).

**7. Romney Marsh Branch** members attended the South East Area Conference at the Potters Leisure Resort in March 2015.

Branch Wings Appeal Officer Bob Spinner received on behalf of the branch a certificate of appreciation for the sum of £10,000 plus collected by branch members.

Photo shows Bob Spinner accepting the award on behalf of the branch.

**8. Costa Blanca Branch** continues to be actively involved with current events in the Torrevieja area of Spain.

In April, at the invitation of the Mayor, the Branch took part in the 'Association's Day' in Torrevieja where the activities of the Association were displayed to the public.

In May the Branch, with the Standard, paraded at a special VE Day 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service held at the La Siesta Church Remembrance Garden.





# Branch News

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## 1. Birmingham Moseley Branch.

Recently, Nick Bunting, Secretary General, visited to talk about ways of increasing membership and some good pointers were raised in the discussion.

A pleasant afternoon was had by all and many members were able to speak with Nick. The Branch thanked him for his visit and hope to see him again in the near future.



2. **Bedford Branch** had a busy weekend of 25/26 April at the Bedford branch and branch club, with Saturday spent celebrating a very young Hugh Jones's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Hugh who served initially in the UK, then Malta at the height of the campaign before finally seeing service in Rhodesia as a flying instructor, enjoyed a great party laid on by family and friends.

Sunday saw AM Sir Roger Austin KCB, AFC accept an invitation to attend the branch's annual St George's Day Sunday lunch and to personally present Peter Kemp with a Presidential Certificate for services to the branch over many years. Peter has been involved in many aspects of the branch and branch club, especially welfare and wings, was also presented with a branch and branch club certificate for services locally.



3. **Morecambe & Lancaster Branch.** Over a very cold, wet and windy May Bank Holiday weekend, stoic members of the branch and 455 (Morecambe & Heysham) Squadron Air Cadets turned out to support the RAF Association Northern Area Exhibition trailer at Morecambe Carnival.

Trade was slow but £1,158.49 was still raised for Wings Appeal and good publicity gained for the Branch.

4. **Sud-Ouest Branch** members attended the inauguration of a plaque which has now been placed on the War Memorial in the village of Audenge due west of Bordeaux. The plaque commemorates two airmen who crashed in the village on 10 June 1944 whilst flying their Mosquito of 151 Sqn from RAF Predannack in Cornwall. Although they both survived the crash, regrettably both injured airmen died in hospital the following day and were then buried in Bordeaux.



However, on VE Day at the ceremony in Audenge, Matthew Birch, the grandson of the pilot who was WO Terence Birch, paid homage to his grandfather and came from Gloucester to unfurl the plaque in his honour. The navigator, Sgt Ernest Tickle, is also honoured on the plaque but no family members could be found to attend the ceremony. Can anyone help us to find the family? Sgt Tickle was born in Windle on the outskirts of St Helens on Merseyside. The St. Helens Branch has so far drawn a blank. The Mayor and residents of Audenge would love to have a family member of Ernest Tickle visit and a warm welcome is assured. The Branch email address is: rafasof@orange.fr

Photo shows Matthew Birch revealing the plaque with the Mayor and Sud Ouest France Branch Chairman, Beryl Dennett Stannard in support.



# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News

**5. Mablethorpe & Sutton-on-Sea** members, friends and visitors celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day with a memorable cream tea featuring full waiter service. Everyone enjoyed a selection of finger sandwiches, scones, jam, fresh strawberries and cream rounded off with homemade cakes and fancies, not forgetting the bottomless tea and coffee pots.

Background music of the era supported a local crooner Rick Eyre who sang many of the popular war time songs. Tributes were paid to the veterans present and past who secured peace in Europe, so many with their lives.

The event raised £350 for Branch Wings Appeal. Thanks to Chairman Neville & Treasurer Alison with 4 of their friends who made this possible.



**6. Dunstable Branch** is proud to have been able to adopt the two ATC Squadrons in Luton since the closure of the Luton Branch. 10F (Luton Airport) Squadron was adopted in February during the official opening of the new Headquarters. The Certificate of Adoption was presented to Group Captain Gorman on behalf of the Squadron by the Branch Chairman, John Gilmour.

2465 (Luton Ickneild) Squadron was adopted in April at the Dining In/Dining Out Night and the Certificate of Adoption was presented to Officer Cadet Ryan Brown, recently appointed Officer Commanding, by John Gilmour.

At the Annual Meeting and Mayor Making Ceremony of Dunstable Council, the Branch were requested to participate in the event. Chairman, John Gilmour, was invited to act as Mace Bearer on this occasion. This was in recognition of the standing the Branch has in the local area.



**7. Ellesmere Branch.** ATC cadets from branch affiliated squadrons are pictured on a visit to the National Trust property at Dunham Massey in Cheshire.

During WW1 this Georgian house opened its doors as the Stamford Hospital offering a sanctuary from the trenches for 282 wounded soldiers. To mark the centenary of the First World War the house has been transformed into the hospital once again.



The cadets, from 28 Sqn (Shawbury), 78 Sqn (Whitchurch) and 1165 Sqn (Oswestry) found the day instructive and enjoyable. The trip was organised by the Welfare Officer Tim Potter.

**8.** Richard John Stephens will be 100 on 10<sup>th</sup> August. He lives in Pembroke Dock where he was stationed during World War II and was a member of **Pembroke Dock Branch** until its closure and is now a member of South West Area HQ branch. Picture shows him at VE Day Service at Tenby. Congratulations!



## Talking Air Mail

For details of the audio version of Air Mail please call Lisa Thipthorp on 01780 783645 or e-mail [lisa.thipthorp@rafa.org.uk](mailto:lisa.thipthorp@rafa.org.uk)

A Yorkshire Region initiative

# Branch News

including Region, Area and Overseas News



**1. Armourers Branch.** The first AGM for the newly formed Branch was held in March. Ian Thomas (Chairman) opened the AGM and welcomed the guest of honour Griff Griffiths (Membership Development Manager). The atmosphere was incredible, with the feeling of being part of the armourer family very much in evidence by those retired and those still serving alike. The AGM business concluded, members were treated to an excellent three course meal followed by coffee and mints and traditional toasts. Afterwards the bar was declared "open" and the Armourers and their partners retired to the bar. The evening concluded with a rousing rendition of 'The Reputation' sung in best armourer tradition. A very successful first AGM and a very positive foundation for the future growth of the branch.



**2. Melbourne Branch.** Another wet ANZAC Day this year but nevertheless a determined attendance from members, with a march contingent of 27 out in the rain and one or two in cars.

The turnout was excellent and all of the photographs show all in perfect parade ground step. TV coverage was really good. The Branch is particularly proud of its two aircrew who turned out in wheel chairs, despite the inclement weather; Flight Engineer President Ray Brookes and Mid-upper Gunner Frank Meech. Well done everyone.

## A Thank you

I would like to say a great big thank you to the members of **Burtonwood and Warrington Branch** for making Dad's "Celebration of Life" very poignant and touching. My father Michael Healy had been a long serving life member of RAF Association along with myself. Dad passed away in April and his funeral took place later that month. Dad was one of the founder members of **Burtonwood Branch** which more recently joined branches with **Warrington**.

Dad was a very active member and was still out collecting last year. He would have been proud that the branch honoured him in the way that they did. It was a sad and emotional but momentous occasion.

...Patricia Healy

## Correction

In the January-March 2015 issue of Air Mail, in the Branch item relating to **Hull Branch** of the RAF Association, we incorrectly stated the squadron to which the area was dedicated. It should have read 460 Squadron RAAF, we apologise for any dismay caused by this error.

## News from RAFATRAD Ltd

**In line with many other retailers, from the 1 July 2015 the pricing structure for retail sales in relation to packing and postage charges has changed. Prices will no longer include a packing and postage element which will now be charged separately according to the value of the order placed.**

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Details of the new charges can be found on page 64 along with our updated price list.





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# THE MANY RAF ground crew in the Battle of Britain

by Chris Goss

The exploits of The Few during the tempestuous days of the Battle of Britain (10 July to 31 October 1940) have been well documented but what of those, male and female personnel, who kept them flying? Chris Goss pays tribute to those who were wounded or paid the ultimate price during those three months in the Summer of 1940.

The first recorded casualties were either Coastal or Bomber Command related and not connected with enemy action, the first of them occurring on 10 July at RAF Silloth in Cumbria. Whilst refuelling Avro Anson serial K5316 of 1 Coastal Operational Training Unit, AC2s Bill McInall, Len Ralph, George Roach and Syd Slater were all injured as a result of an accident. The following day it was Bomber Command's turn when, whilst loading bombs to Vickers Wellington P9236 of 115 at RAF Marham, a bomb exploded injuring Flt Sgt Tom Allen and four other ground crew. However, it would be another 16 days before the next casualties occurred—yet again an accident to a Bomber Command aircraft but this time seven would lose their lives. Whilst loading bombs to Fairey Battle L5528 of 150 Sqn at RAF Newton in Nottinghamshire, one of the bombs fell off and began to burn. Despite a heroic effort from the aircrew and ground crew to put out the flames, the bomber exploded killing six from 150 Sqn and killing one and injuring another from RAF Newton. One of those who died was Flt Lt Walter Blom DFC—he had been awarded the DFC on 10 May 1940, the first day of the Battle of France. Despite his Battle being badly damaged and he being drenched and almost blinded by fuel, he carried out the attack, during which his bomber was damaged again, and he flew back 90 miles to Ecury-sur-Cooles when after landing the Battle was classed as a write off. Another who died in the same accident was experienced ground crew Flt Sgt Bill Franklin, holder of the British Empire Medal. Sadly, there would be three more deaths before the month was over when three unauthorised passengers were killed when Bristol Blenheim L6722 of 29 Sqn crashed off Worm Head in South Wales.



Photo: Ground crew rearming a 73 Sqn Hurricane © Author.

August 1940 started quietly but saw the first recorded ground casualty to enemy action when Sgt Norman Dougal of 30 Maintenance Unit was injured in an air attack on RAF Sealand on 4 August. 8 August would then see the only Marine Branch casualties of the Battle of Britain when AC1 Ray Wheeler was killed and Sgt Wilf Vosper killed when High Speed Launch 116 based at RAF Calshot was attacked by German aircraft off the Isle of Wight.

12 August 1940 would see the first major air attack on mainland Britain and the days that followed would see an increase in casualties on the ground. On this day, casualties were recorded at RAFs Lympne, Manston and Hawkinge in Kent, Gosport in Hampshire, and it is believed that a total of 14 were killed and 10 wounded. The worst casualties occurred to personnel of 912, 930 and 933 (Balloon) Sqs based in and

around Gosport as a result of a major attack on Portsmouth Harbour by Junkers 88s. The following day, known as Eagle Day, would be even worse for the RAF. Unopposed, Junkers 87 Stuka dive bombers attacked the Coastal Command airfield at RAF Detling in Kent killing 24 personnel from the Station, 53 and 500 Sqs including the Station Commander, Gp Capt Edward Davis AFC. A further 42 personnel were wounded. Air attacks were also carried out against RAF Eastchurch in Kent (11 killed and 15 wounded including a number of ground crew from the Spitfire-equipped 266 Sqn) and RAF Andover in Hampshire (two killed and one



Above, Helping a pilot into his parachute, RAF Northolt. Photo: © Author.



injured). As proof of the Luftwaffe's intent for this last attack, German records state that 12 Junkers 88s from III Gruppe/ Lehrgeschwader 1 attacked Andover around 1700 hrs and that they scored six to eight hits on hangars to the south of the airfield and damaged eight to twelve aircraft outside the hangars.

14 August would see a reduction in major German activity due to poor weather but the Germans took the opportunity of sending individual aircraft against airfields, recorded as being

Abingdon, Little Rissington, Upavon, Brize Norton, Hullavington, Netheravon, Boscombe Down, Bicester, Worthy Down, Whitchurch, Cardiff, Old Sarum and Hamble to name just a few. Attacks and the inevitable casualties were recorded at Colerne near Bath (two killed and seven wounded all from 39 Maintenance Unit), Hullavington (four killed and seven wounded) and Sealand (one killed and eight wounded). However, three awful casualties occurred at about 1715 hrs at RAF Middle Wallop in Hampshire. Caught by surprise, the first the airfield knew was when a Junker 88 appeared overhead; a pilot from 609 Sqn relates what happened next:



Above, Ground crew waiting for the next sortie, RAF Northolt. Photo: © Author.

killed or mortally wounded with another 10 wounded. It would also see the first WAAF casualty when 19 year old ACW2 Marguerite Hudson was killed. Coming from Wadsley near Sheffield, she was later buried at Sheffield's Wisewood Cemetery.

15 August also saw attacks on RAF West Malling in Kent and Martlesham Heath in Suffolk but the attack which was to eventually lead to a shift in bombing to London occurred that evening when Croydon was attacked by German fighter-bombers. Casualties were inflicted on 111 Sqn ground crew (four killed and three wounded) and 1 Sqn RCAF (two wounded).



Above, 15 ground crew and five pilots, RAF Middle Wallop. Photo: © Author.

16 August would see attacks on airfields to the south predominantly in the Portsmouth area when Stukas attacked airfields at Tangmere, Gosport and Lee-on-Solent. However, there were a number of audacious attacks by single or small numbers aircraft against airfields in Oxfordshire, the most daring being against RAF Brize Norton at 1740 hrs which resulted in the destruction of around 46 training aircraft. Just two airmen, AC1s John Orr and John Price, were recorded as being wounded.

After a day's respite, the Luftwaffe returned to the skies over Britain on 18 August-known since as 'The Hardest Day'. Major attacks occurred against Kenley, Manston, Hornchurch, Biggin Hill and Ford with 15 killed or mortally wounded and a further

"When the alarm sounded, a maintenance party under Cpl Bob Smith was ordered to close the huge steel-plated doors of one of the hangars. They were desperately winding on the big hand cranks when the bomb entered through the roof. The blast blew the doors off the upper guide rails".

Bob Smith together with LACs Harry Thornley and Ken Wilson were crushed to death as the door fell on them whilst Cpl Frank Appleby lost an eye.

15 August 1940 would be called by the Germans 'Black Thursday' and would see air operations as far north as Montrose in Scotland and as far west as Portland in Dorset. As a result, RAF casualties on the ground saw quite a geographical spread. The worse hit airfield was Driffield in Yorkshire, the home of 4 Group Towing Flight, 77 and 102 Sqn. Seven Station and flying squadron personnel would be



Above, Groundcrew wait patiently for the next raid. Photo: © Author.



26 wounded. Ground crew casualties were suffered by 64 & 615 Sqns at Kenley as well as highly popular 32 year old Flt Lt Robert Cromie, the Station and 615 Sqn's Medical Office, who lost his life. He was buried in his home town of Ballymoney in Country Antrim.

The days that followed saw another respite in attacks with the Luftwaffe carrying out lone or low number attacks. New on the list of airfields bombed was Bibury, just north of Cirencester in Gloucester where 92 Sqn (Spitfires) and 87 Sqn (Hurricanes) would be based in rotation. The Junkers 88 that bombed Bibury on 19 August was briefed to attack Little Rissington just to the north but attacked Bibury instead and was later shot down but the attack resulted in the death of AC2 Arfon Jones. A particularly bad attack that day was against Honington in East Anglia when 13 ground personnel from the Station, 9 and 311 Sqns were wounded but seven were killed. One of the injured was the first Czech ground crew casualty of the Battle-AC2 Miroslav Svitorka.

21 August 1940 would see a series of attacks to the west of England and Wales notably St Eval in Cornwall and Porthcawl in Wales. Porthcawl was the home to 3 General Armament School and 7 Bombing & Gunnery Schools, vital for training air gunners whilst St Eval was a Coastal Command airfield. Eight members of the Blenheim fighter 236 Sqn were wounded at St Eval and two killed and 12 wounded at Porthcawl.

The airfield attack phase of the Battle of Britain had about two weeks to run but casualties still began to mount. For



Above, The door that killed, RAF Middle Wallop, 14 Aug 40. Photo: © Author.

example, five were killed and 13 wounded at Manston on 24 August and four 257 Sqn ground crew killed at Debden on 26 August. There would be only one casualty on 27 August. Following an air raid on Biggin Hill, 46 year old Sqn Ldr Eric Moxey took it upon himself to remove two unexploded bombs which were hampering operations. Sadly, at 2215 hrs, one of the bombs he was moving exploded killing him instantly; his actions resulted in the posthumous award of the George Cross on 17 December 1940.

The last two days of the month would see heavy casualties at Biggin Hill (30 killed and 13 wounded on 30 August) and Hornchurch and Debden (six killed, 12 wounded on 31 August). Clearly, the attack on Biggin Hill was severe and all but put the airfield out of action. It would also see two more female deaths-ACW1 Edna Button and NAAFI lady Mary Cremin. 39 year old Edna came from Tasmania and is buried in Cray in Kent whilst 24 year-old Mary came from Cork in southern Ireland and is buried at Orpington.

September 1940 would see the Luftwaffe continuing its major attacks against airfields but not for much longer. The last airfield attack which saw casualties was against long-suffering Biggin Hill at 1130 hrs on 5 September which resulted in one dead and four wounded. However, on 7 September, the Luftwaffe switched their attacks to London, the first two casualties of this phase being AC2 Tony Haining and LAC Norman Low (both of whom were wounded) who were on the strength of RAF Halton but must have been in London when the bombing started. Casualties from now on were infrequent and even on 15 September 1940, Battle of Britain Day, just three RAF personnel were recorded as casualties on the ground-one killed and



Above, Air raid RAF Middle Wallop. Photo: © Author.



Above, Damaged 615 Sqn Hurricane, RAF Kenley, 18 August 1940. Photo: © Author.



one wounded in Southampton and one wounded in London. Attacks away from London did still occur as shown on 26 September when four members of 13 Maintenance Unit RAF Henlow were killed and four injured in just such an attack.

October 1940 would see less casualties in London and other major cities but more to accidents as a result of the increase in RAF bombing activities. There were a still number of notable days. 1 October saw a low-level attack on RAF Carew Cheriton in Pembrokeshire by five Dornier 17s which resulted in the first Dutch ground crew casualty when Leading Engineer C Barthen of 321 Sqn was wounded and then on 6 October, Biggin Hill was attacked again with three killed and six wounded. A most unfortunate casualty occurred on 8 October 1940. Three Heinkel He 111s had been briefed to carry out nuisance attacks along the south coast towards Southampton; just outside Eastleigh, two of them attacked 924 (Balloon) Sqn killing three and wounding five. However, just before this, one of the Heinkels had been hit by light anti-aircraft fire, collided with a tree and crashed on the lawns in front of Stansted House near Rowlands Castle on the Hampshire/Sussex border. Plt Off Gilbert Elliot was staying with Lord and Lady Bessborough and on seeing the bomber crash, rushed towards it only to be mortally wounded when it exploded, killing the five German crew at the same.

For the remainder of the month, RAF casualties would occur across the UK including on 9 October, the last recorded WAAF death of the Battle of Britain, when ACW1 Carol Lawry, who is buried in Eastbourne, was killed. Even Scotland wasn't spared - an attack on RAF Lossiemouth on 26 October 1940 not only resulted in a Heinkel 111 being shot down but five ground crew from 21 Sqn being wounded and one killed when a direct hit by a bomb blew up Blenheim T2233 and also damaged a further two Blenheims.

27 October would see the Battle of Britain coming to a close but not before the Germans commenced Operation Opernball (Opera Ball), attacks against Bomber Command airfields such as Mildenhall, Lindholme, Honington, Great Massingham, Newmarket and Wattisham. The final airfield, which was attacked on 30 October, saw the use of SD2 German butterfly bombs. Flt Lt Fred Berry and AC1 Frank Hamilton would be wounded whilst two men FS William Fisher and Sgt George Birkhead would be killed, all four are now believed to be the last RAF ground crew casualties of the Battle of Britain.

*continued on next page*



*Above, 'The Tap Room'-249 Sqn's ground crew RAF Boscombe Down August 1940.*



*Above, The importance of the WAAF is shown in this photo taken at RAF Rudloe Manor.*



## Postscript

No story of RAF ground crew in the Battle of Britain would be complete without mentioning AC1 Harry William Clack of 54 Maintenance Unit. Aged just 16, he was involved in recovering the remains of a Dornier 215 which had been shot down by fighters at Eaton Socon in Bedfordshire on 24 October. During the recovery the following day, the crane they were using touched overhead power lines and Harry was electrocuted and died shortly afterwards. Son of Harry and Winfred Clack of South Norwood, he now lies in Cambridge City Cemetery.



Above, Damage at RAF Driffield, 15 August 1940



Above, 87 Sqn ground crew, RAF Exeter, August 1940



Above, I think this photo says it all!



Above, This picture taken on 7 Sep 1940 shows a raid in progress over Wapping/Rotherhithe in London, if you compare it with modern day satellite imagery, the similarity is striking.



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# WORLD MILITARY NEWS

## EGYPT



Egypt recently became the first confirmed export customer for the French Dassault Rafale multirole fighter with an order for 24 of the aircraft. To get the aircraft into service quickly, three aircraft will be diverted from French Air Force production and the remainder will follow over the next 5 years.

## ITALY



**ITALY** - First Italian-built F-35A Roll Out. Photo: © Lockheed Martin.

The first Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II built outside the USA was rolled out at Alenia's new final assembly and check out facility at Cameri in Italy on 12 Mar 15 and is the first F-35A for the Italian Air Force. In addition to final assembly of Italian and Dutch F-35s, the plant will produce some 40% of the wings for all F-35As worldwide. In due course it will also maintain European F-35s.

## JAPAN



**JAPAN** - Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force MCH-101. Photo: © Agusta Westland.

The Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force has taken delivery of its first new Mine Countermeasures helicopter from Kawasaki Heavy Industries who are supported by Finmeccanica of Italy and Agusta Westland. The new helicopter is a derivative of the Agusta Westland Merlin used by the RAF and Royal Navy and is known as the MCH-101. It is equipped with an airborne mine hunting system and a laser mine detection system; the former is towed behind the helicopter on a sled. The MCH-101 will replace the ageing Sikorsky Sea Dragons currently in service.

## MALAYSIA



**MALAYSIA** - Malaysian A400M. Photo: © Airbus Defence & Space.

The first of Malaysia's four new A-400M tactical transports was delivered by Airbus Defence and Space in early Mar 15. Malaysia is the first country to receive this aircraft outside of the original launch nations.

## NEW ZEALAND



The Royal New Zealand Air Force has accepted the first three of eight Kaman Seasprite anti-submarine helicopters into service with No 6 Squadron. They will be operated jointly with the Royal New Zealand Navy from their frigates and patrol craft.

## INDIA



After protracted contract negotiations, the Indian Air Force will also receive the Rafale multirole fighter. An initial 36 aircraft will be built in France and it is thought that at least another 90 could be produced in India by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd in due course.

## PAKISTAN

The US government has approved the possible sale of fifteen Bell Viper attack helicopters to Pakistan. These helicopters would either replace or augment the Pakistan Army's long-serving Bell Cobras.

## PHILIPPINES



**PHILIPPINES** - Philippines Air Force C295. Photo: © Airbus Defence & Space.



Airbus has delivered the first of three C295 medium transports to the Philippine Air Force which will use them for airlift and humanitarian relief tasks.

## POLAND



**POLAND** - Airbus H225M Caracal. Photo: © Airbus Defence & Space.

Poland has selected Airbus Helicopters to provide the country's future military utility helicopters. The company will build 50 of its H225M Caracals and EC725s in Poland to meet the country's need for a new generation of helicopters for troop transport, search-and-rescue and anti-submarine warfare. The helicopters are due to be delivered from 2017 onwards with the initial aircraft probably coming from Airbus's French factory and then followed by local production.

## QATAR



Qatar has also agreed to purchase at least 24 Rafale fighters thus continuing this country's long tradition of purchasing aircraft from this French manufacturer. They operate or have operated Mirage F1 and Mirage 2000 fighters and Alpha Jet trainers in recent times.

## RUSSIA



Russia plans to restart production of its Tupolev TU160 "Blackjack" supersonic strategic jet bomber to enhance their Air Force's capabilities in terms of missile carriers. This will follow on from the current modernisation programme of the original fleet produced between 1984 and 2000.



## UNITED KINGDOM



The RAF's newly-upgraded Puma HC2 helicopter has been deployed operationally for the first time. They are based in Kabul, Afghanistan, as part of Operation Toral, the UK's contribution to NATO's training and assistance mission, where they have replaced the last RAF Chinooks in that country.

The RAF's Sentinel surveillance aircraft has been deployed to a base in the Mediterranean to take part in Operation Shader, the coalition action against ISIL. Tornados are already based at RAF Akrotiri on this operation.

No 32 (The Royal) Squadron has ceased to operate the BAe 125 aircraft after some 40 years of use. The last one returned from operations in the Middle East in early March where they have been in service for over 12 years. They were the only RAF squadron to have had an aircraft permanently deployed on operations overseas throughout that time. No 32 (TR) Squadron continues to operate BAe146 aircraft and an A109 helicopter.

Nine of the RAF's C-130J transports have been upgraded for extended-range operations. These Hercules have been equipped with external fuel tanks under a modification programme costing around £7 million. The external tanks have extended the range of the C-130J to around 3,000nm.

The first batch of the RAF's Merlin transport helicopters has now been transferred to Royal Navy control with the move of 846 Naval Air Squadron back to RNAS Yeovilton from RAF Benson in late March 2015. The Merlin is gradually replacing the Sea King with the Commando Helicopter Force; a second RN squadron, No 845, will commence transition to the Merlin at Benson later this year and they should return to Yeovilton in 2016.

The RAF has been heavily involved in the relief efforts following the earthquake in Nepal. Three of the new longer-range Chinook helicopters have been deployed and a C-17 Globemaster and C-130J Hercules have been delivering supplies and personnel.

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



The US Navy's new E-2D Hawkeye airborne early warning aircraft set out on its first operational deployment on the USS Theodore Roosevelt on 11 Mar 15. The aircraft serves with the VAW-125 'Tigertails' squadron and the deployment takes the form of a world cruise as the carrier redeploys from the East Coast of

America to the West Coast. The carrier's first port of call was Portsmouth, where she anchored in the Solent for 5 days. The carrier is now carrying out operations in the Middle East.

The USAF is to acquire a number of US Army UH-60 helicopters to replace the UH-1s it has used for some 40 years for ballistic missile launch site support. The UH-60s are being retired by the US Army and will be refurbished and upgraded by the USAF before entering service later in the decade.

**UK** - Sentinel R1 of 5 Sqn pictures at RAF Fairford. Photo: © J M Henderson.

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

**Mr D Adams** Exmouth  
**Mr D C Ahier** North Weald & Ongar  
**Mr J D Allen** Peterborough  
**Mr P Anselmi** Clacton-on-Sea  
**Mr G R Amos (Scott)** Lincoln  
**Mr W Archer** Spennymoor  
**Mrs P M Arvell** Peterhead  
**Mr F A Bacon** Colchester  
**Mr R J Bagley** Horsham & Storrington  
**Wg Cdr B Bainbridge**  
 Huntingdon & District  
**Mr C H Baker** Ilford & Woodford  
**Mrs N J Baker** Shaftesbury  
**Mr D Bannister** Thurrock  
**Mr W Bannister** Eastern Area HQ  
**Mrs P D Bannon** South Eastern Area HQ  
**Mr D E A Barnes** Eastbourne  
**Mr R A Barnes** Watton  
**Mr E G Bath** Trowbridge  
**Mr B Batten** Mablethorpe/Sutton  
**Mr E Beale** CHQ  
**Mr I D Beale** Romsey  
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**Mrs I G Beaumont** Trowbridge  
**Mr P G Beck** North Walsham  
**Mr F Belsham** Southend-on-Sea  
**Mr J Bennett** South Eastern Area HQ  
**Mr G S Benson** Stowmarket  
**Mr K H Bernau** South West Area HQ  
**Mr A Bethell** Sale  
**Mr T R Beveridge** Swindon  
**Mr J Bird** South West Area HQ  
**Miss P Bish** Steyning/Adur  
**Mr G R Bishton** Burnham-on-Sea  
**Mr I R H Black** Cape Town  
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**Mr W Blaine** Carrickfergus  
**Flt Lt F F Boler** Huntingdon  
**Mr G Bolt** North West Area HQ  
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**Rev M G Bowler** CHQ  
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**Mr P Smith** Northampton & District  
**Mr W G Smith** Lincoln  
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**Mr P E Squire** Chelmsford  
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**Please note: Air Mail cannot accept obituary notifications,  
 they must be notified to Branch and Area Offices**

# NOTICES

## Help

**Air dropped propaganda/surrender leaflets**, news, sheets, blood chits in all languages required by researcher. Info, squadron, dates, aircraft. Contact S E Baggett, 14 West Hill Avenue, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8JU. Telephone 01372 728404

**Flt Lt Thomas Charles Samuels**. We are trying to locate Flt Lt Samuels or a family member. He served in the RAAF during WWII moving to UK and was commissioned into RAF in 1950 retiring 1962. The RCMP in Surrey, BC, Canada have property belonging to him that they would like to return. Any assistance would be appreciated. Contact Gary Campbell at [garcar@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:garcar@nbnet.nb.ca)

Seeking information on a '1940 symphony' based on original **Tchaikovsky's 1812** which was written starting with melody of British Hymns with the German National Anthem as a counter melody growing stronger. It ended with anti-aircraft fire rather than cannons and the all clear siren. If you have any information that can help us in our search for this please e-mail it too [ian.wright@rafa.org.uk](mailto:ian.wright@rafa.org.uk)

## Old Colleagues

**RAF Butterworth & Penang Association** inc RAF Glugor, Western Hill and 114MCRU. Active Association with newsletters and annual reunion Stratford upon Avon. Contact Secretary on 01636 650281 (answerphone), e-mail [secretary.rafbpa@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.rafbpa@gmail.com) or visit our website [www.raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk](http://www.raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk)

**The RAF Locking Apprentices Association** welcomes contact from former apprentices who trained at RAF Locking or RAF Cranwell who wish to renew comradeship. Tel 01933 317357 or [www.raflaa.org.uk](http://www.raflaa.org.uk)

All personnel, serving ex-service or civilian, who have served at either **RAF Masirah** or **RAF Salalah** are invited to join the Masirah/Salalah Association for contacts, comradeship and future reunions. Contact membership secretary Colin Blakelock: [cblakelock@rogers.com](mailto:cblakelock@rogers.com). All will be made welcome

Welcome to personnel who served at **RAF Changi, incl HQFEAF 46/71**. Reunions, newsletters, contacts meet and greet. Contact M Flack 01494 728562 or [www.Rafchangi.com](http://www.Rafchangi.com)

Are you an **ex-Admin Apprentice living in Cyprus**? We are a small group of ex-apps who meet every three months for lunch and a beer. Other ex-app's or ex-be's would be most welcome. Contact Ray Burrow in Cyprus on 99-303572 if you are interested

**Association of RAF Women Officers**. Female officers of WAAF/WRAF/RAF and equivalent reserve positions or nursing services. Do join your Association. E-mail our Hon Secretary, Mrs Daphne Short: [mo.da@sky.com](mailto:mo.da@sky.com)

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

## Old Colleagues continued

**RAF Changi Association** welcomes enquiries for membership. 1000 current members. Reunions, newsletters, buddy lists and meets. Membership Secretary M Flack 01494 728562 or [www.Rafchangi.co.uk](http://www.Rafchangi.co.uk)

**102 Sqn Association Remembrance Day Service** Sunday 8 Nov 2015. All welcome. Meeting at St Catherine's Church, Barnby Moor 10 am for 10.15 service and wreath laying followed by service at Pocklington Airfield Memorial for further service and wreath laying. Contact Hon Sec, email [skularatne@aol.com](mailto:skularatne@aol.com) or call 01253 885253

Seeking info about **Crawford (Jock) Campbell**. Was his wartime navigator in Italy & Greece. He stayed in RAF as Master Pilot serving at Shawbury, St. Athan, Coltishall, Chivenor (target towing) and Air Traffic Control. Contact Ernie (Paddy) Burke on 01582 507185

Seeking Jim Parry, Stan Johnson **160 Sqn RAF Ceylon 1944/45**, also Pat Stevens **RAF Dyce 1943/44**. Contact [kellockthomas@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kellockthomas@yahoo.co.uk)

## Reunions

**RAF Seletar Association inc RAF Tengah**. Annual reunion 9 - 11 October 2015 at the Sketchley Grange Hotel, near Hinckley, Leicestershire. Local reunions also held. Contact Membership Secretary David Taylor on 01904 593259, email [dt@deltatango.net](mailto:dt@deltatango.net) or website [www.rafseletar.org](http://www.rafseletar.org)

**47<sup>th</sup> Entry Suppliers** annual reunion to be held at the Wortley House Hotel, Scunthorpe, Lincs on Saturday 3 October 2015. For more details contact [p.gibbodenton@btinternet.com](mailto:p.gibbodenton@btinternet.com) or [mdolan442@aol.com](mailto:mdolan442@aol.com). Tel 01635 821564

**102 Squadron Association**. Annual reunion for ex-squadron members, families and friends. All welcome. Contact Hon Sec email [skularatne@aol.com](mailto:skularatne@aol.com) or call 01253 885253

**RAF Mauripur Association**. 20<sup>th</sup> annual reunion 12-14 November 2015 at Falcon Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon. May be our final get-together so don't miss out. Contact David Holman, 01502 716995, email [daveholman@supanet.com](mailto:daveholman@supanet.com)

**UKSU Ramstein AB. Mackenbach 1B Football Team** reunion to be held on Saturday 5 September 2015 in Poole, Dorset. All welcome. Contact [georgemunday@fsmail.net](mailto:georgemunday@fsmail.net) or Tel: 01733 243166

### NOTICES

To place a notice call 01892 600191 to pay by credit/debit card or write to Rafatrad Ltd enclosing a cheque for the appropriate amount. See page 1 for our postal address.

### HELP and OLD COLLEAGUES

**Members:** Maximum of 30 words £3.50,  
**Non-Members:** Maximum of 30 words £20.00,  
**Extra words:** 80p each word

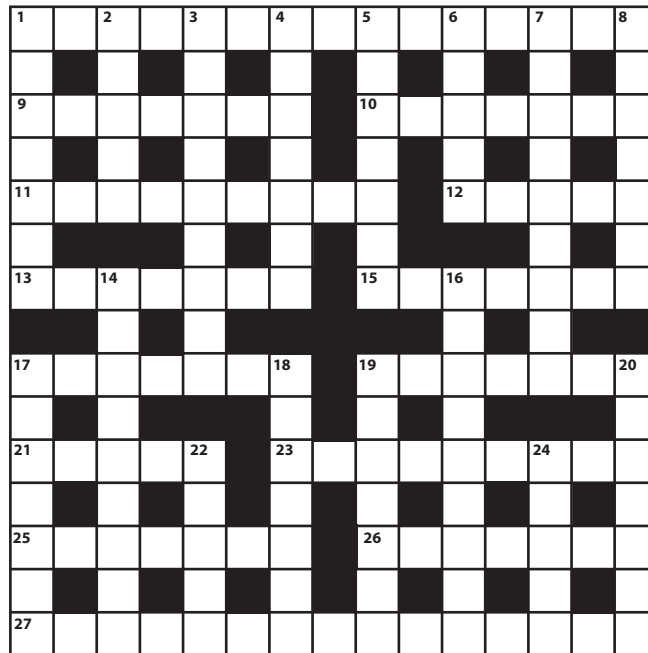
### REUNION

Maximum of 30 words £10.00. **Extra words** 80p each word



## Summer 2015 FUN CROSSWORD

by Enigma



### Across

- 1** 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration on 15 September 2015 (6,2,7)  
**9** Item which secures itself when tightened (4-3)  
**10** Ham it up! (7)  
**11** Covered sports centre (9)  
**12** Enraged some pirates (5)  
**13** Former passenger aircraft belonging to Neptune (7)  
**15** Dwelling place (7)  
**17** Deprive a tree of its foliage (7)  
**19** Re-sails somehow without wind (7)  
**21** Section of the orchestra (5)  
**23** Table a top card (4,2,3)  
**25** Stone-like concretions in, eg, the kidneys (7)  
**26** Bulky (7)  
**27** 31 December 2099 (3,2,3,7)

### Down

- 1** Large aircraft from Northern Ireland? (7)  
**2** Unspoken diplomacy surrounding independence (5)  
**3** Cockney speech (9)  
**4** Remote location for dismissed mail (7)  
**5** One of a pair of literary props (4-3)  
**6** Tribe taking part in Venice night life (5)  
**7** Snow slip (9)  
**8** Powdered food made by Aunt Mel (7)  
**14** Popular completed aircraft manoeuvre set up (9)  
**16** Deathly offence (6,3)  
**17** Complete break-up (7)  
**18** Showy in dress (7)  
**19** Suffering from bloodlessness (7)  
**20** Theatrical hangings (7)  
**22** Cram with material (5)  
**24** Farewell overseas (5)

### Notes

Solution to this crossword can be found on page 63

# CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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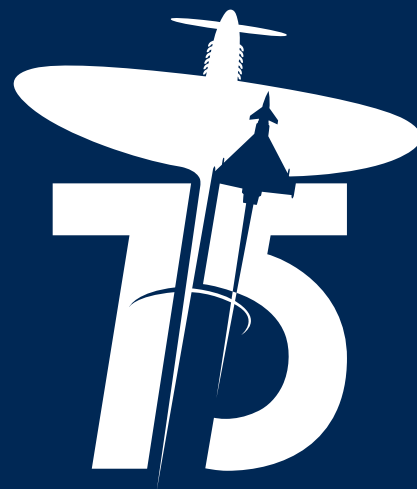
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