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JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019

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Association**  
The charity that supports the RAF family



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I approached  
the Association**

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**October – December 2019**  
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### COVER IMAGE

© Phil Formby: RAF  
 Association Befriender Iona  
 Docherty and veteran  
 Morag MacFarlane enjoying  
 a visit to the Robert Burns  
 Birthplace Museum, in Ayr.  
 Read more on page 26.



© Phil Greig

## From the editor

Inside this issue is all the latest about the One Member One Vote and one charity projects, and updates on the Association's welfare review.

From around the world we have news of our welfare work, winners of trophies, awards and certificates, and the latest from the RAF and other air forces.

Our members' features range from the cultural impact of a posting to India in WWII, through a 'guinea pig' of early plastic surgery in the 1940s and 50s, to the coldest days of the Cold War in the 1960s. And, of course, the impact of our current befriending scheme on both Morag MacFarlane and Iona Docherty, who feature on our cover this issue.

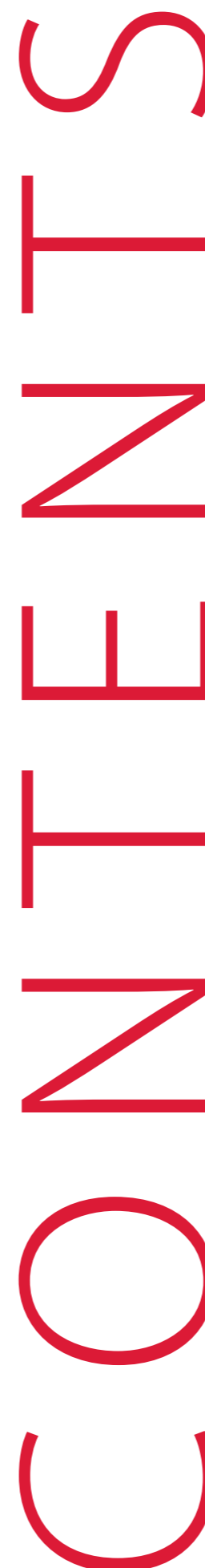
Air Mail's new, clear plastic wrapping is the first change from our review of our mailing processes. It's an important money saver while we continue our investigations into alternatives to plastic wrappers – and of course doesn't apply to copies sent in plain cover for security. Both plastics are still LDPE4, the most widely recycled plastic in the UK, so please take care to put yours in the right bin to preserve the world's resources.

Enjoy the read.

Annie O'Brian  
[airmail@rafa.org.uk](mailto:airmail@rafa.org.uk)

### Letters:

To comment in or contribute to Air Mail please email [airmail@rafa.org.uk](mailto:airmail@rafa.org.uk) or write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, at the Atlas House address on this page. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION.



## NEWS

2-25

All the latest news from the Association and the RAF family, including: winners all round – a Caseworker of the Year Award and an Individual Inspiration Award; happy tenth birthday to our Association Remembrance Garden; the news and the winners from Annual Conference; and all the latest on One Member One Vote, One Charity, and our welfare review.

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 A rare invitation to take part in some extreme aerial manoeuvres in our latest fundraising challenge.

**Like a guardian angel to me** (Cover story) 26  
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**Helping forces families find jobs** 29  
 The RAF Families Federation's new partnership to create a one-stop-shop for employment, training or volunteering for forces families.

**RAFALO of the year** 37  
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**Not long for this world?** 38  
 As the world held its breath during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, Ivan Farmer was working on the front line; on the Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles based in the UK.

**Letters from India** 42  
 An RAF wireless operator stationed in India in the 1940s had no idea that the hundreds of letters to and from his father in Yorkshire would one day become an archive. John Hazzlewood remembers them.

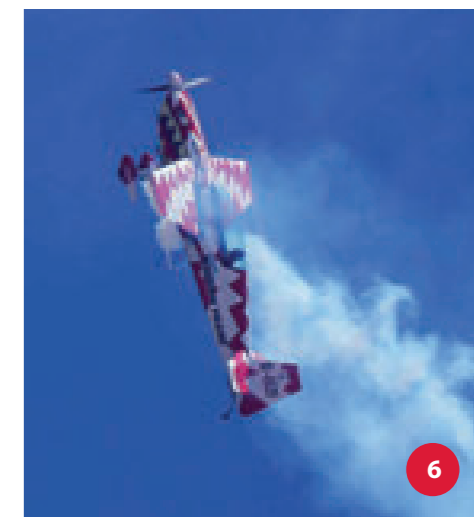
**Guinea Pig Doug** 50  
 Doug Vince's life may have been very different if he hadn't been treated by pioneering plastic surgeon, Archibald McIndoe, and joined the 'Guinea Pig Club'.

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# Message from the President

As I write for this issue of Air Mail my thoughts turn first to the National Memorial Arboretum and our Association's remembrance service and act of dedication which was held on 14 June, and then to the efforts of your Council which are focused on the delivery of the resolutions discussed and passed at Conference in May.

If you have not been to the Arboretum before, I can very strongly recommend a visit; to spend time reflecting — either at the main Armed Forces Memorial or the Association's own memorial garden which reaches its tenth anniversary this September — on memories of friends or family members who are no longer with us in person, but who are most certainly with us in spirit.

The Royal International Air Tattoo once again provides the opportunity for us to enjoy what is universally regarded as the best air show in the world. The Association will have a strong presence there for the whole of the long weekend. The RAF Benevolent Fund will also be using the occasion to highlight one of their centenary projects: reaching out to veterans who need support but who do not know help is available or who are too proud to ask.

I am delighted that the Association will shortly receive £500,000 as our share of the RAF100 Appeal, in which we were an equal partner with the RAF Benevolent Fund, the RAF Charitable Trust and the RAF Museum. This will help us to deliver much-needed welfare support to the RAF family and set us up well for the expected increase in welfare support that will fall from the Benevolent Fund's centenary work.

I look forward to meeting many of you throughout summer.

**Air Marshal Sir Baz North**  
President of the RAF Association

## National Presidential Certificate winners announced

The following members of the RAF Association have received National Presidential Certificates in recognition of their exceptional and long service to the Association. The awards were announced to coincide with Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday Honours:

Mike Chappell	Brecon Branch
The Edambusters	Stiching 1077 Branch
Steve Hutchinson	Wallasey Branch
Leslie D Mathews	Banbridge Branch
David T Wood	Skipton Branch



# NEWS Updates and information for members and the wider RAF family

## RAF Association caseworker wins national award



Above: Association Honorary Caseworker Peter McGraghan of Darlington Branch — shortlisted in 2018 and winner in 2019. © RAF Benevolent Fund

Left: Welfare volunteer of the year, Peter McGraghan (left), with beneficiaries Laurence and Kathryn Carlton. © RAF Benevolent Fund.

**An RAF Association caseworker who has helped more than 300 families has been named as the Caseworker of the Year at the RAF Benevolent Fund's annual awards ceremony.**

82 year-old Peter McGraghan of Darlington Branch has volunteered with the Association for more than 16 years. He served for five years in the postal service and was inspired to join the RAF after two airmen were billeted with his family during the Second World War. As a child, Peter witnessed the German bombers flying over his South Shields home and the RAF flying out to meet them.

Years later, he views his time as an Association caseworker as his opportunity to 'give something back'.

He added: "I still feel part of the RAF family, and this is why I like being a caseworker. I have met some wonderful people who I would not have met if I had just retired. As a caseworker, I find the people who have served in the RAF are loathe to ask for help and it is my job to make it easier for them to ask for help."

Karen Lehair, Area Welfare Manager for the North East at the Association nominated Peter: "He is the epitome of what the perfect caseworker would look like," she said. "Peter is thorough, detailed and has empathy and a real feel for the issues our RAF veterans face. He

just wants to help the people we support. I hope he is able to continue for many years to come — I would be truly lost without him."

Paul Hughesdon, Director of Welfare and Policy at the RAF Benevolent Fund, said: "The Fund's awards are an opportunity to pay tribute to those supporters without whom we would not be able to continue our vital work. Peter's dedication and commitment to those people in need is outstanding and I'd just like to thank him from everyone at the Fund."

Last year the Fund spent £21million supporting 53,000 members of the RAF family with a range of welfare services including financial assistance, mental wellbeing and family support. The RAF Association and our volunteers helped people access £3.4million of that.

This is the seventh year that the RAF Benevolent Fund has recognised the outstanding contributions of its supporters, personnel on stations and corporate partners who support the charity each year. The awards ceremony, which was sponsored by Lockheed Martin, was held at Plaisterers' Hall, London. Previous RAF Association winners in this category include David Stacey in 2017 and Stuart Carvell in 2016. Frank Barrett was nominated alongside Peter McGraghan in 2018.

# One Charity – update

Members are being encouraged to raise questions, give their views and find out more about becoming One Charity (see pages 4-5, Air Mail, Jan-Mar 2019).

Fresh from presenting his update to Annual Conference in May, Association Secretary General Nick Bunting summarises the findings and progress so far on work to review branches' continued registration as individual charities as agreed by Conference 2018:

"Research completed confirms it is legally possible to merge branches and operate as One Charity should Conference agree that is the best structure for the future of the Association. Charity regulators such as the Charity Commission and Office of the Scottish Charity Regular (OSCR) are broadly supportive of the plan, but seek assurance that branch committees don't remain as de facto trustees if we do progress.

"However, there is still significant work required to consult with key stakeholders, agree the business case for merger, identify deal breakers and develop clear plans for the process".

Conference 2019 agreed that information regarding One Charity should continue to be gathered, and a working group has been set up under the chairmanship of Dr Bryan Pattison OBE, Vice Chair of Council. The other members of the working group are the Vice Chairs (or nominees) of the Area Councils: Emma Smith (Northern) – Hull Branch; Brenda Cox (South East and Eastern) – Melton Mowbray Branch and Club; Roy Loblely (Wales, Midland and South Western) – Swindon Branch; Ken Watt (Scotland and Northern Ireland) – Glasgow Branch; and David Rotherham (European) – Jersey Branch along with David Hewings – Bognor Regis Branch and Club, Neville Drury – Mablethorpe Branch, Graham Malster – Grimsby and Cleethorpes Branch and Club and the President, Chairman of Council and the Secretary General.

"Members are now encouraged to read the published Briefing Note for Area and Annual Conferences and look through the presentation to Annual Conferences," continued Nick Bunting. "Both are available on the Members' Portal and include far more detail, timetables and options than can be published here. These documents also outline options that would help us respond to concerns raised by the charity regulators. Hard copies of the documents, for those without internet access, can be requested through the Association's Contact Centre on 0800 018 2361."

All members' views and comments are welcome and should be addressed to: [onecharity@rafa.org.uk](mailto:onecharity@rafa.org.uk)

Members' Portal: [rafa.org.uk/portal](http://rafa.org.uk/portal)



© Phil Greig

# One Member One Vote

As was predicted, considerable debate surrounded the One Member One Vote presentation and vote at Annual Conference, and an almost equal split of those in favour and those against saw the resolution fail to make the two thirds majority required to move forward.

There were impassioned speakers both for and against this most significant change to the way the Association operates and, in light of the views of both sides, the following emergency resolution was proposed by Aylesford and Malling Branch. It was passed with 96.15 per cent of delegates in favour, and 3.85% per cent against:

"This Conference notes the [OMOV] debate and points made during Conference 2019 and resolves that Council continues the study into the enfranchisement of the membership, in particular those groups such as the serving and those on HQ rolls that are not represented by the current delegate system. Reporting back its findings to Conference 2020 along with any proposed changes (if any) to the Association's governance document."

Next steps will see Council task the Branch and Membership Committee to consider the emergency resolution and report back to Conference 2020. Beryl Dennett-Stannard, Chair of the Branch and Membership Committee, said: "I was heartened at such a lively debate at Conference and can fully understand both the support for One Member One Vote and for the arguments against. The emergency resolution will see us refocusing to address the concerns of the many, by considering how best to serve those groups that may feel disenfranchised and not represented. I look forward to an exciting year ahead!"



# Record number of flying scholarships

A record 11 people received their RAF Association Flying Scholarships at Annual Conference from the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier. They beat off competition from more than 250 applicants. One scholarship gave the winner 35 hours of flying lessons, with the remaining ten being for 12 hours.

"I'd love to fly fast jets in the RAF, that's the dream," said Alexander Braybrook, winner of the 35-hour scholarship and Cadet Flight Sergeant with 115 (Peterborough) Squadron. "My parents were over the moon when they found out. I got the news on my 17th birthday, which I think is the best present I'll ever get."

Out of 250 applicants, 16 cadets were shortlisted for aptitude testing and panel interview at the officer and aircrew selection centre at RAF College Cranwell. Thanks to generous sponsorship from MBDA and the Aviation Focus Group, the Association was able to offer more scholarships than in previous years.

The three 12-hour scholars sponsored by MBDA are Cadet Flight Sergeant Milan Gandhi, 18, of 1454 (Harrow) Squadron, Cadet Flight Sergeant Joe Stevens, 18, of 88 (Battle) Squadron, and Cadet Sergeant Ben Wober, 17, of 606 (Beaconsfield) Squadron.

The two 12-hour scholars sponsored by the Aviation Focus Group are Cadet Sergeant Maleha Khan, 19, of 2428 (Hedge End) Squadron, and 16-year-old Cadet Corporal Alfie Williams of King Edward VI Grammar School (Louth) CCF.



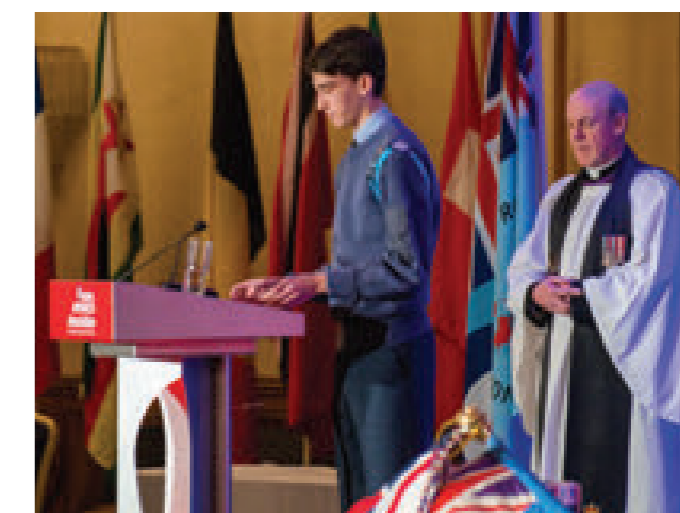
Cadet Sergeant Abbi Flynn, who conquered a fear of heights to achieve the award, said: "This scholarship offers me an opportunity I could never have received elsewhere. It will help me in reaching my career goal of becoming an RAF pilot, but without the financial burden of funding my own flying training, which I simply wouldn't have been able to afford."

The scholars will start their tuition this summer at the South Warwickshire Flying School at Wellesbourne airfield near Stratford-upon-Avon. Depending on their rate of progress, the course could earn the scholars their Light Aircraft Pilot Licence.

Group Captain Del Rowlands, Director of Membership for the RAF Association, said: "We're delighted to be offering these dedicated young people the chance to learn to fly through our flying scholarships. This year's applicants were particularly strong, and on behalf of the Association I wish them all the best during their courses and in their future careers."

The other 12-hour flying scholars are:

Cadet Flight Sergeant **Olivia Brown**, 18 of 1279 (Melton Mowbray) Squadron  
 Cadet Flight Sergeant **Robin Dalton**, 17 of 2443 (Okehampton) Squadron  
 Cadet Sergeant **Abbi Marie Flynn**, 16 of 739 (Scarborough) Squadron  
 Cadet Warrant Officer **Thomas Grieves**, 18 of 110 (City of York) Squadron  
 Cadet Flight Sergeant **Allan Haddow**, 18 of 137 (Ayr and Prestwick) Squadron



Top left: Cadet Sergeant Maleha Khan receives her certificate from the Chief of the Air Staff Sir Stephen Hillier.

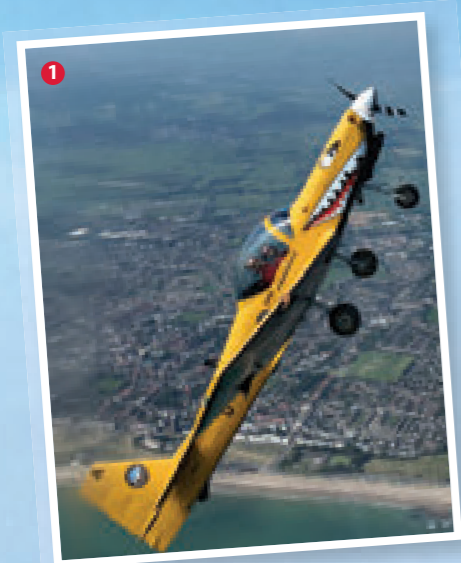
Bottom left: Flying Scholarship winners take a selfie with the Chief of the Air Staff Sir Stephen Hillier.

Above: Cadet Flight Sergeant Alexander Braybrook delivers a reading during Annual Conference's Sunday service.

All images © Heidi Burton



# For adrenaline junkies only



## The Association has launched four brand new, heart-in-mouth aerobic experience fundraising days.

Ultimate High Fighter Pilot and Space Experiences, Top Gun and Utter Nutter days can be booked immediately and places are expected to go fast. The dates run from late September 2019.

The experiences are available thanks to the support of Ultimate High's founder and chief executive officer, Mark Greenfield, who says: "I support the RAF Association because I appreciate the commitment and sacrifice shown by the men and women of the RAF, as well as their families, in helping to keep our country safe and secure. At Ultimate High most of us are ex-RAF, and we know that in order to protect our way of life that we had to write a blank cheque up to and including the value of our lives. It is brilliant that the RAF Association is here to help someone in the RAF family when they need help in return."

Fundraisers will be paired up with current or former military fast jet pilots; many from the Gulf War or Bosnia. They include former Red Arrows pilots, test pilots, Jaguar, Typhoon, Hawk and Harrier pilots, as well as Spitfire display pilots.

Here's a teaser for each experience:

### Ultimate High Fighter Pilot

Flying with your ex-military instructor you will learn how to operate like a fighter pilot in the T67 Firefly ex-military training aircraft. You take the controls and start with gentle loops and rolls. Other manoeuvres can include a loop, aileron roll, stall turn, barrel roll, Cuban 8, slow roll, vertical roll, Derry turn or more. The flight is tailored to you; so your trip is as wild or mild as you choose.

### Ultimate High Space

Feel the launch pad acceleration (3G), marvel at being weightless, with zero gravity (Zero G). Then experience the deceleration of earth's atmosphere on re-entry (4.5G) — all in a T67 Firefly ex-military training aircraft. Sitting side-by-side with your instructor, you can also try to fly these forces yourself.

Includes a briefing on space flight, safety and parachute use.

### Top Gun

Voted the UK's top adventure day by Channel 4's Gadget Show, the Top Gun experience is unique in Europe.

The day includes flying air combat and aerobatics with an opponent aircraft — yourself! An ex-military flying instructor will demonstrate a formation take-off and close formation flying in the T67 Firefly aircraft. Flying close to another aircraft, you fly some aerobatic manoeuvres to acclimatise you to the G-force, and then you will be introduced to tail-chasing and air combat against your opponent.

### Utter Nutters

Flown in the world's top two-seat certified competition aerobatic aeroplane (the Extra300) with an air display pilot, you will have the opportunity to experience the massive forces at the very edge of the flight performance envelope. Can you handle the big five extreme manoeuvres: the cravat, inverted loop, Ruade, inverted push-up to Lomcevak, and Mulleroid?

More detail and booking forms are on the Association's website: [rafa.org.uk/ultimate-high-aerobatics](http://rafa.org.uk/ultimate-high-aerobatics)

*Main picture:* Experience weightlessness with Ultimate High 'Space'.

1. A T67 Firefly climbs during an Ultimate High 'Fighter Pilot' experience.

2. Train your guns on an opponent in the 'Top Gun' adventure day.

3. Push yourself to the limit in the Xtra 300 with 'Utter Nutter'.

All images © Ultimate High



# ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

The President, Air Marshal Sir Baz North, welcomed the highest number of branch delegates and their guests for some years to the Hilton Birmingham Metropole hotel for 2019 Annual Conference on 11 May. But he also noted his disappointment that, with only 122 delegates present, there would be fewer than one third of Association branches represented in the significant decisions being debated and voted on.

Business was live streamed and also recorded on YouTube. Members who were not able to be present and who have access to the internet can look out for the time codes given throughout this report, which will direct you to where you can still watch video of all of Conference business. **For copies of the full written report of Conference and of the One Charity and One Member One Vote reports issued before Conference please log on to the Members' Portal or telephone the Association's Contact Centre on 0800 018 2361.**

Messages of greeting were received from Her Majesty The Queen, Patron of the Association, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, past President, and from His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, also a past President. The Silent Tribute to the fallen was conducted by The Reverend Dr (Gp Capt) Andrew Wakeham-Dawson, Deputy Chaplain-in-Chief (Personnel).

**Morning Session. Time codes given in the reports below relate to the following YouTube film: [bit.ly/2HOR0tw](https://bit.ly/2HOR0tw)**

## Financial statements

Honorary Treasurer Philip Tagg announced a surplus net income of £204,000 for the year and a balance sheet that grew by £1.3million in 2018. You can watch his full report online at: 00hrs 37mins 11secs. Following questions to officers, Mr Tagg then moved the adoption of the Financial Report 2018, which was approved. He also proposed the appointment of RSM UK LLP as the auditors for 2018, which was also approved.

## The Annual Report for 2017

Chairman of Council, Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe, presented the Annual Report and updated delegates on the progress the Association has made and the issues it has faced over the last year. This can be seen online at 00hrs 48mins 30secs. After questions to the officers of the Association, the report was approved unanimously.

## 2018 and the Future

The Secretary General gave a presentation highlighting the importance of the work of the last year, and the efforts being made to meet the Association's objectives for 2030. This can be viewed at 01hrs 44mins 48secs.

## One Charity review

Resolution 1 sought Conference approval to receive the presentation on the One Charity review, which was given following one objection and a clarification. The Secretary General then explained the work done examining and reviewing individual charity registration, and branches becoming legally part of the Association under a single charity registration. The full presentation to Conference 2019 on the One Charity review can be viewed at 02hrs 40mins 30secs.

The President explained that the review work into One Charity, as directed by Conference 2018, would require further development before Conference would be asked to make a decision. Delegates gave their approval for the work to continue in order to report to Conference in 2020.



The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Honorary Treasurer and Secretary General (above) took questions from the floor, these can be seen at 03hrs 00mins 15secs.

Following the questions, Conference agreed by acclaim to accept Resolution 14, to re-appoint Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe as Chairman of the Council.

**Afternoon session: Time codes given in the reports below relate to the following YouTube film: [bit.ly/2X3JW2t](https://bit.ly/2X3JW2t)**

## One Member One Vote

On behalf of Council, Beryl Dennett-Stannard highlighted the work done on a feasibility study into all members of the Association receiving the right to vote on Association elections and resolutions, through a direct vote of all the membership. The full presentation to Conference 2019 on the One Member One Vote review can be viewed at 00hrs 00mins 00secs.

## Resolution 3 - One Member One Vote

**\* Special Resolution No. 3.** This Conference resolves that following the feasibility study by Council in response to the Resolution passed at Annual Conference 2018 that all members of the Association are given the right to vote on Association elections and resolutions, through a direct vote of all of the membership.

**Proposed:** Council

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAINED
49.14%	47.41%	3.45%

Resolution 3 needed the support of two-thirds of the delegates present and voting. It was not carried, therefore resolutions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 automatically fell. The President noted that those speaking against Resolution 3 had acknowledged that further work should be considered for those members of the Association who currently do not have a delegate at Conference, such as those members of headquarters branches and those serving who are not associated with a branch, and that this would now be further considered by Council.



1. Standards paraded at the start of the Sunday Service.

2. The Femmes' singing in close harmony at the Gala Dinner.

3. Caroline Woodward from the Families Federation provides information for a visitor to the Market Place.

4. RAF Cosford Voluntary Band - a vital part of the ceremony and song.

All images © Heidi Burton.

## Further Resolution Results

Resolution No. 12 to amend the Area and branch regulations was passed by 96.3 per cent.

Resolution No. 13 to amend the Standard Club Rules was passed by 98.21 per cent.

Resolution No. 14 was considered during morning business and is reported above.

Resolution No. 15 was passed by 97.17 per cent. There will now be a review of the democratic and administrative structure of the Association as currently prescribed by the Governance Handbook so that it is fit and ready for the future and able to deliver on its charitable vision into 2030. The results will be reported to Annual Conference 2020.

Resolution No. 16, resolving that Council will source a venue in Birmingham for the 2021 Conference was carried. Before the debate and vote, the President reported on comments from branches regarding 2020 Annual Conference dates, which coincided with Armed Forces Day. The Annual Conference Committee agreed to report back to Council following a review. Conference business was suspended to allow proposals for the Association's Annual Conference in 2021 to be presented. After outlining venues which had been considered by the Annual Conference Committee, a return to the Hilton Birmingham Metropole was proposed. Conference business was then resumed and the resolution was successfully carried by a verbal vote. You can watch this presentation at: 01hrs 34mins 54secs.

## Emergency Resolution 1 was proposed

"This Conference notes the debate and points made during Conference 2019 and resolves that Council continues the study into the enfranchisement of the membership, in particular those groups, such as serving personnel and those on HQ rolls that are not represented by the current delegate system. Reporting back its findings to Conference 2020 along with any proposed changes (if appropriate) to the Association's governance document."

**Proposed:** Aylesford and Malling

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAINED
96.15%	3.85%	0%

## Address by the Chief of the Air Staff

The Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, Lady Hillier and the recipients of the flying scholarships and their guests joined Conference at 1530hrs. Sir Stephen gave an update on RAF100, on the RAF's strategy and how the economy and the development of threat is changing the lives of RAF serving personnel. He then awarded the Flying Scholarships, as reported on page 5. His address was not broadcast via the live feed of conference business.



The President nominated Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier to become Life Vice-President of the Association and this was approved by acclaim by Conference (above).

## Vote of Thanks

Taff Rees proposed the vote of thanks and the Association acknowledged with gratitude the help of all those who made the Conference in Birmingham such a success.

## Photographs and queries

All photographs in the article are ©Heidi Burton. Photographs taken over the Conference weekend will soon be available on [bit.ly/RAFACONFERENCE2019](https://bit.ly/RAFACONFERENCE2019). If you have any enquiries about the RAF Association Annual Conference 2019, please contact Kelly Brotherhood on: 0116 268 8770 or email: [kelly.brotherhood@rafa.org.uk](mailto:kelly.brotherhood@rafa.org.uk).



# 40 years celebration and new chairman at Storrington

In late April, residents at the RAFA Housing Ltd housing complex in Storrington, West Sussex, celebrated 40 years of their independent living scheme.

Along with visitors, local councillors, the local vicar and contractors who maintain the homes, 30 residents raised a glass to the next 40 years.

A singsong of old pub and RAF songs, cakes and nibbles topped off the occasion.

The scheme, in Storrington, West Sussex, is run by RAFA Housing Ltd, a subsidiary of the Royal Air Forces Association. It provides homes for members of the RAF family of retirement age, who are in need of support and housing. An Independent Living Manager provides support for residents and manages the buildings. The scheme aims to provide stress-free living, with activities organised both by and for the residents and an out of hours care line provided by Chichester Care Line.

**New chairman:** The board of trustees at Storrington has a new chairman, Bob Hingston. Bob brings a wealth of experience in developing and managing Housing Association properties and is looking forward to continuing and improving the quality housing service that the Association's residents deserve.

Any member of the RAF family, ex RAF or their spouse, can apply to 'Storrington' via the RAF Association, on 0800 018 2361 or at [rafa.org.uk/storrington](http://rafa.org.uk/storrington)



"Cheers, 40 years" said the celebration bunting at RAFA Housing Ltd, Storrington © RAFA Housing Ltd



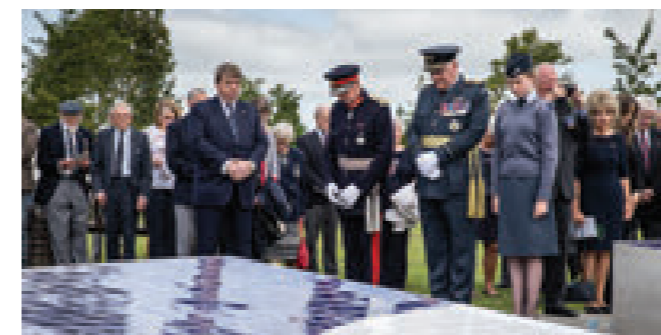
©Phil Greig

The Association's family-friendly Colour Chaos charity fun runs will be taking place again this summer and autumn, when participants at three RAF stations will be showered with colour as they run, jog, dance or walk their way to the finish line.

Each route is 5km, and participants celebrate reaching each kilometre mark by being showered with coloured powder paint. Families are encouraged to join the fun, and everyone will be issued with a free Colour Chaos t-shirt.

Tickets are only £10 per person and there's a special price of £35 for families of five. Children under five are free of charge and are welcome to come in fancy dress. Participants are also encouraged to get sponsored and raise money to support the RAF family. The events will be held on station at RAF Cosford (28 July), RAF College Cranwell (10 August) and RAF Wittering (1 September). For more information and details on how to book visit [rafa.org.uk/colourchaos](http://rafa.org.uk/colourchaos)

## A decade of remembrance



Dignitaries and families at the 2017 service © Phil Greig

On 28 September the Association's Remembrance Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) turns ten.

Since it was formally opened by HRH The Princess Royal in 2009, more than 335 memorial stones and 40 crosses have been laid for individuals or branches. The garden is dedicated to all those who – regardless of length of service – selflessly devoted their lives to their country, be they: serving or former RAF personnel; the families who supported them; those working in the aviation industry; or those involved with commercial airlines. Essentially, anyone who shared the ethos of the RAF.

Every June since 2009 the Association has held a private service of remembrance attended by the loved one of those commemorated, to dedicate the crosses and stones laid in the last year. The single exception to this was in 2018 when the event was expanded as part of the Association's RAF100 celebrations and held at the Armed Forces Memorial, just a few hundred metres away. The garden also provides a place of quiet contemplation for visitors to the NMA, where they can remember Association and family members who have died.

## New volunteer training



Training Administrator Zoe Linnett demonstrates RAF Association Volunteering Learning © RAF Association

More than 1,000 RAF Association welfare volunteers have started receiving their invitation to log on to their dedicated new online learning system.

Called RAF Association Volunteering Learning, its rollout started in early June and will continue until the end of July. The new system has been tested and designed to be user friendly and give our befriender and caseworker volunteers the ability to browse through all the welfare training opportunities available and book onto courses. They will also be able to track and check the training they have attended. A range of online and face-to-face courses will be listed, giving them the opportunity to further develop their skills. Along with details on the courses' content, there will be session times and locations to help volunteers decide what and when is best for them and their development.

The new system will be rolled out area by area. It is easy to access, and support will also be readily available. It started with volunteers in the Wales, Midland and South Western Area in June and will conclude with volunteers in the South East and Eastern Area at the end of July. Anyone with questions about the system can contact [welfaretraining@rafa.org.uk](mailto:welfaretraining@rafa.org.uk)

WINGS BREAKS  
HOTELS  
STAY WITH FRIENDS

ROYAL AIR FORCES  
Association  
The charity that supports the RAF family

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# Awards presented at spectacular Gala Dinner



The 2018 National Presidential Certificates and Association trophies were awarded at a gala dinner and ceremony at the 2019 Annual Conference in Birmingham.

## National Presidential Certificates:

The most prestigious recognition that the Association bestows is the National Presidential Certificate. They are given to outstanding individuals whose continued personal efforts have made a substantial difference to the RAF Association and the wider RAF family.

1. For exceptional and extended service over many years, **Mike Smith**, of **Cranwell Branch**.
2. For a tremendous united effort, loyalty and unswerving dedication, **Pip and Ilene Iles** from **Basingstoke Branch**.
3. For more than fifty years of continued and outstanding service, **Cliff Mewett**, of **Bognor Regis Branch**.
4. For many years of dedicated service to **Moray Branch** and to the wider community of Scotland, **Martin Latham-Scott**.
5. For exceptional and dedicated service, **Bob Bertram MBE**, of **Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Branch**.
6. For exemplary branch leadership and displays of initiative and enthusiasm, **Ken Watt**, of **Glasgow Branch**.
7. For his outstanding service to the branch, **John Mason**, from **Worcester and District Branch**.

8. For dedicated support and valued leadership of the branch, **Paul Branson**, of **Mid-Somerset Branch**.

9. For work across Berwickshire and Northumberland, and outstanding dedicated support for the welfare of comrades and their wider communities, **George Prentice BEM**, of **Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Branch**.

Five other recipients were unable to be at the awards ceremony. Their awards will be presented locally: **Dave Stanbury**, of **Plymouth Branch**; **John Taylor**, **Salisbury Branch**; **Frank Smith**, from **Huddersfield Branch**; and both **Barry Kindred** and **Alan Bellamy** of **Harrow Branch**

## Trophy awards for 2018 The branch award winners were:

10. **The Sir Thomas Pike Trophy**. This is awarded to the branch which achieved the highest net collection including income from air shows. With a total amount raised of over **£17,225**, the trophy went to the **Bognor Regis Branch** and was collected by Branch Chairman **Cliff Mewett**, and Wings Appeal Co-ordinator for the branch, **Marion Mewett**.

11. **The Lord Stirrup Trophy** was awarded to the UK branch which achieved the highest net collection per member excluding income from air shows. Raising more than **£694 per member**, the trophy went to the **Carrickfergus Branch** who have consistently provided outstanding support to the Association. The branch also won the **Lord Craig Trophy** for the highest net Wings Appeal collection, excluding income from air shows – with an impressive total of **£50,020**. Both were collected by **Chairman Noel Williams**.

12. **The Gwynne-Vaughan Wings Appeal Trophy** was awarded to **County Fermanagh Branch**: the UK branch that achieved the highest net collection for the Wings Appeal per member including income from air shows. With over **£166 raised per member** and a grand total of **£6,655 and 59 pence**, the trophy was collected by the Wings Appeal Officer for the branch, **Gwen Hall**.

13. **The Trefusis Forbes Trophy** was given to the overseas branch which achieved the highest net collection for the Wings Appeal per member, including income from air shows. The winner raised **£10,007** in total, which is **£100 per member**. The trophy went to **Jersey Branch**, and was collected by Chairman of the branch **David Rotherham** and Vice Chairman **Peter Clarke**.

14. **The Bill Bailey Trophy** was won by **Costa Blanca Branch**. As they were unable to attend, the trophy was collected by Overseas Area Director, **Sarah Waugh**. Given to the overseas branch which achieved the highest net collection for the Wings Appeal per member, excluding income from air shows, the **Costa Blanca Branch** won by raising **£4,389 and 19 pence**; or **£51** per member.

15. **The President's Cup**, is given for outstanding achievement by an Association branch. This year it was awarded to **Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea Branch** who embraced RAF100, put on a dedicated production in the local theatre, and throughout the year collected more than **£11,000** for the Wings Appeal.

16. **The Sir John Baker Trophy**. This is awarded to the branch judged to have the best communication process – covering all means of communication: verbal, printed and electronic. For the second year, the award went to **Aylesbury and Halton Branch**, and was collected by Chairman **Derf Mockford**, and the newsletter, website and social media editor for the branch, **Kevin O'Neill**.

## The RAF Station trophies:

*These are given to RAF stations, units, detached formations, tri-service units or Ministry of Defence establishments with RAF personnel.*

17. **The Lord Tedder Trophy** was awarded to **RAF College Cranwell** for the highest net collection for the Wings Appeal. They raised in excess of **£19,078** and the award was collected by Flight Sergeant **Michelle Rees-Martin** and Corporal **Ash Oldroyd-Clarke**.

18. **The Sir Charles Wheeler Trophy** is given to the UK-based RAF unit achieving the highest net collection for the Wings Appeal per head of the organisation's total personnel. Raising more than **£62** per member and a total of over **£8,635**, the trophy was awarded to **600 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force** and collected by Senior Aircraftman (Technician) **Jonathan Rymel** and Corporal **Marney Unthank**.

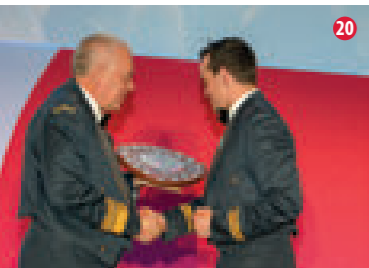
*The RAF Air Cadets National Choir were applauded off the stage after a wonderful performance, and hailed by Association President Air Marshal Sir Baz North as the real 'Britain's Got Talent'.*







**19. The Ken Jago Trophy** was awarded to **Combined Air Operations Centre Torrejón** — as the overseas-based unit achieving the highest net collection for the Wings Appeal per head of the organisation's total personnel. Raising a total of **£210**, which equates to over **£8** per head of personnel, the award was collected by Squadron Leader Mike Greene and Warrant Officer Estoban.



**20. The Marquis of Amodio Trophy** is given to the RAF unit recruiting the highest number of new members pro rata to unit personnel. This award recognises the special relationship between this station and Aylesbury and Halton Branch. The branch has a sterling record of recruiting new members, and with station personnel and RAFALO support, **RAF Halton** has recruited more members per head of station personnel than any other. The trophy was collected by Flight Lieutenant Andy Furlong.



**21. RAF Cosford** won **The Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy** which is presented for exceptional achievement by an RAF unit in support of the Association. In 2018 especially, RAF Cosford provided outstanding support at events such as freedom parades in Birmingham, Cannock and Worcester, during the Association's Annual Service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum, and at the Birmingham International Tattoo - where uniformed standard-bearers paraded alongside the Association. The example set by the Station Commander, Group Captain Tone Baker, has been described as 'simply superb' and his Senior RAFALO Dean Atkinson has also been especially noteworthy throughout, from arranging the station's first Colour Chaos event through to leading the Wales, Midland and South Western area RAFALO contingent. Group Captain Tone Baker collected the award.



**22. The Wally Marriott Trophy** is awarded to the RAFALO judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the Association. This year's RAFALO of the Year, **Ash Oldroyd-Clarke**, received his trophy on the night and is the subject of a full page feature on page 37.

**The rafaYOUTH trophies** are open to **Royal Air Force Air Cadets in both the Air Training Corps and the Combined Cadet Force, also to Girls' Venture Corps Air Cadet Squadrons and Air Scout troops** — to recognize their support for the Association throughout the year.



**23. The Sir Douglas Bader Trophy** is awarded to the youth organisation making the greatest per capita contribution to the Wings Appeal. Raising a total of more than **£206 per person** the trophy went to the air cadets of **1224 (Wharfedale) Squadron** for the eighth time since 1981. The squadron also won **The Sir Robert Saundby Trophy** for the 13<sup>th</sup> time since 2000, for raising **£6,388**, the highest net amount for the Wings Appeal. Collecting the trophies were Warrant Officer David Wood, Cadet Corporal Lukas Manville and Cadet Daniel Taylor.

**24. The Sir Gus Walker Trophy** is presented to the youth group making the second greatest per capita contribution to the Wings Appeal. Raising over **£105 per person** and a total of **£1,480** the trophy went to **1582 (Stanford-le-Hope) Squadron** and was collected by Flight Lieutenant David Mortimer and Cadet Edward Mortimer.

### The Membership trophies.



**25. The Dame Anna Neagle Trophy** was awarded to the **Overseas Area** for achieving the highest renewal rate of annual membership - with a renewal rate of 34.72 per cent. It was collected by overseas Area Director Sarah Waugh.

**26. The Area Member Recruitment Trophy** is awarded to the Area achieving the highest number of new members in the year and was won by the **South East & Eastern Area** with more than 3,300. It was collected by Chairman of the South East & Eastern Area, John Gilmour.

These and other photographs are available on: [bit.ly/RAFAconference2019](http://bit.ly/RAFAconference2019)



RAFALO of the Year  
Ash Oldroyd-Clarke  
(right)

All photos on these pages © Heidi Burton

## Bomber Command documentary needs you

© Ant Palmer



Pathfinder pilot Ernie Holmes DFC, being interviewed for the documentary.

Film-makers are keen to interview any veterans who were involved with Bomber Command in any capacity, particularly any WAAFs who were stationed with any of the bomber squadrons.

A major new documentary for the cinema is being produced about Bomber Command called 'Lancaster'. The film takes a close look at the key role played by all those who worked in Bomber Command during WWII, as well as the aircraft like the Lancaster that helped win the war.

Co-director of the film Anthony Palmer said "We owe a great debt to all these brave men and women, and we want to make sure their stories are recorded so that future generations can appreciate the sacrifices they made to secure our freedom".

If you're interested in being interviewed for the documentary please contact Anthony Palmer directly, via email at [ant@tallboyfilms.co.uk](mailto:ant@tallboyfilms.co.uk) or call 01962 676 129.

## Fundraising is a picnic for teddy bear

*If you go down to MOD Abbey Wood today ...*

A large WRAF teddy bear in 1918 uniform has helped raise £753 for the Association in a raffle at MOD Abbey Wood. Named Flight Lieutenant Teddington by Air Marshal Julian Young she is one of only two WRAF bears produced by the Association. RAFALO Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones and the RAF committee at MOD Abbey Wood masterminded the raffle and took Teddington from section to section before organising a coffee and cake morning to raise awareness of the event. "This will make a lovely present for my six year-old daughter," said raffle winner Alasdair Cantlay from Support Enabling Operating Centre. The prize was presented to Alasdair by Air Commodore Adam Sansom, President of MOD Abbey Wood's RAF Association committee.



'Flight Lieutenant Teddington' (right) poses with Chief of Materiel (Air) Air Marshal Julian Young.  
© Steve Jones



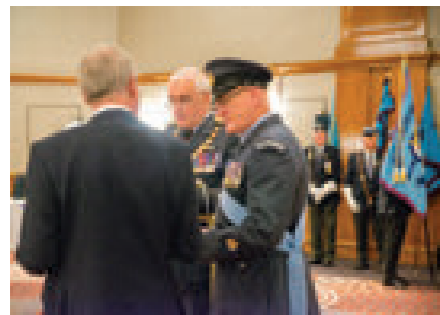
## Standard Bearer news



Shawn Marston receives the cup to recognise his win from Association President Air Marshal Sir Baz North. © Heidi Burton

### Association Standard Bearer Competition

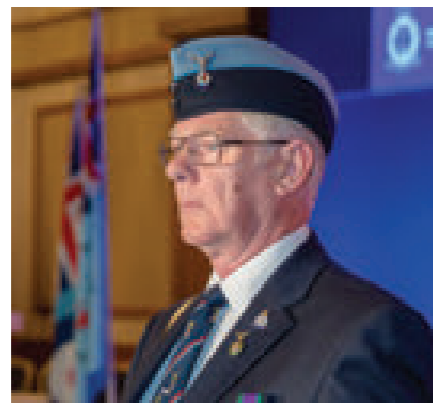
The Association Standard Bearer competition was hotly contested at Annual Conference. Competitors Harry Dowson of Skipton Branch, Paul Ellis of Calne and District Branch and Shawn Marston of Shrewsbury and District Branch were judged on adherence to orders, confidence in reaction to orders and competence in handling the standard. President, Air Marshal Sir Baz North, who judged alongside Council Chairman Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe and Warrant Officer Rab Davies, said: "It was a close competition and clearly well rehearsed by all." He thanked them all for representing the Association so well, before announcing Shawn Marston as the winner and the Association Standard Bearer for the next year. **A**



The judges debate the standard of display at the 2019 national competition. © Heidi Burton

### Mike Facey steps down after 25 years

Mike Facey of Neath Branch has stepped down from carrying Association standards after 25 years. His final duty was at the Sunday service at the 2019 Annual Conference. The Association thanks him for his service, which has previously included carrying the Association standard and being deputy standard bearer, as well as Area and branch duties. **A**



Mike Facey carrying an Association standard for the last time. © Heidi Burton

## David is an inspiration

**Association member David Gibson has won an Age Scotland Individual Inspiration award for his work providing free travel to veterans via his charity, Fares4Free.**

Fares4Free asks taxi drivers and companies to give free fares to help veterans and their families access essential services and to combat social isolation. After finding himself with time on his hands during the day, he initially offered free taxis to a local charity shop before becoming aware of the need within the veteran community.

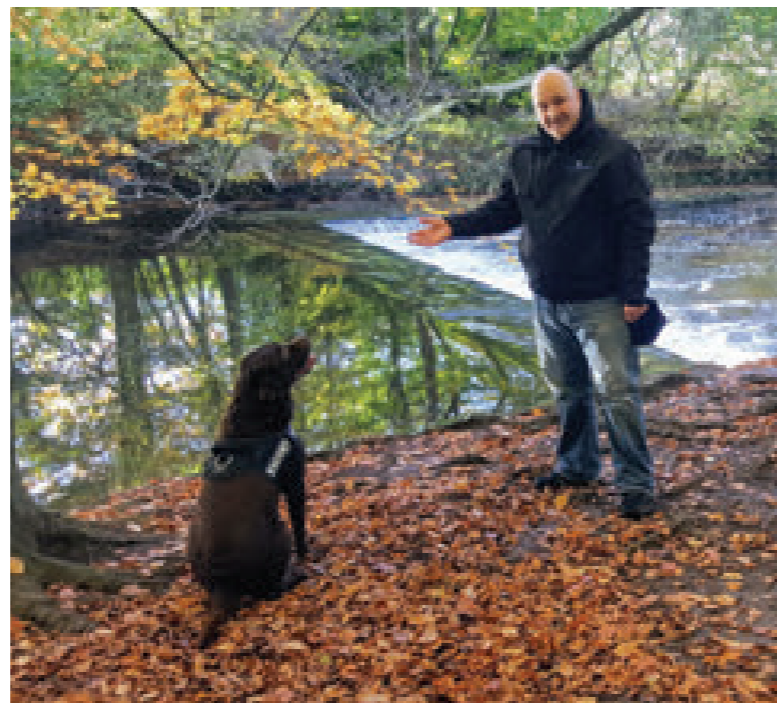
"Reverend Neil Galbraith here at the RAF Association Wings Café was very helpful", says David. "He pointed me in the direction of people who could explain the problems faced by a significant minority of veterans from early service leavers to older veterans."

After seeing first-hand the need among veterans for transport, David partnered with Unforgotten Forces. This is a collaboration of 16 leading organisations, led by Poppyscotland and including the RAF Association, which supports thousands of older Armed Forces veterans in Scotland. In under three years, Fares4Free has given almost £160,000 of free taxi rides to veterans throughout Scotland.

Ken Watt, chairman of the Association's Glasgow Branch said: "it became obvious very quickly that this was an opportunity for some of our veterans who are unable to make their own way to functions and things like cafés to get together."

In March, Age Scotland, the leading national charity for older people, awarded David an Individual Inspiration Award at their National Conference in Glasgow. Unforgotten Forces was also recognised for their work in April, when it won the Working Together Award at the prestigious 2019 Soldiering On Awards.

See David Gibson talk about his award on YouTube: [bit.ly/DavidGibson](https://bit.ly/DavidGibson) **A**



Dave with his Labrador, George. George travels in the taxi and acts as a companion to veterans and serving personnel facing stressful appointments such as benefits or psychological assessments, or difficult treatments. © Dave Gibson.

## Precious contact



Corporal Livesey outside the Contact Houses at RAF Brize Norton © RAF Association

**Since he and his wife separated, the time Corporal Neil Livesey gets to spend with his two young sons is even more precious. Thankfully, because of the contact houses at RAF Brize Norton, they can stay with him for days at a time.**

"My boys love it when they stay here with me at the weekend. They always ask if they're going to come to 'Daddy's house,'" says Neil (36) originally from Chester.

As he is serving, Neil is eligible to stay with his family at any of the eight contact houses maintained by the RAF Association at RAF Brize Norton, as well as other contact houses at RAF stations across the country.

"It's an absolute godsend for me, and it means my wife Becky can have time off from looking after our sons," Neil continues. "I've also used contact houses when my parents have come to visit, and when Becky and I lived at RAF Cranwell, her parents stayed for Christmas in a contact house there."

"I'd absolutely recommend it to other RAF personnel and their families, and I'm often surprised that more people aren't aware of them. You do have to plan ahead, but it's very simple to book and you can even organise large family groups to stay with you in multiple houses, depending on availability."

Earlier this year the contact houses at RAF Brize Norton were redecorated thanks to Association funding, and are available to all serving personnel. Each house is fully and comfortably furnished, with fixtures, fittings, utensils, and other essentials for individuals and families. The Association has also recently funded the addition of an extra contact house at RAF Benson.

In 2018 the Association refurbished 100 contact houses in the UK – helping around 18,000 people to stay connected to their families. **A**



Celebrating the opening of the latest of the eight contact houses maintained by the RAF Association at RAF Brize Norton © MOD/Crown 2019

## Perfect Day

In March 2019, nine members of the Kettering Branch visited the Military Intelligence Museum and Chicksands Priory at Joint Forces Command Chicksands.

"This location is highly recommended. At the museum, visitors are exposed to the history of military intelligence including the Intelligence Corps, and photo reconnaissance from WW1, WW2 and the Cold War", said Paul Sweeney of Kettering Branch.

"The story of the Priory (now used as the Officers' Mess for JFC Chicksands), starts with the Gilbertine Religious Order in 1322, its conversion into a home by the Osbourne Family (between 1536 to 1936), the building's use by the Y-Service during WW2 and the subsequent use of the site by the United States Air Force from 1950 to 1995.

"Both portions of this visit were superbly supported by volunteer guides and well worth the trip".

JFC Chicksands is a defence training organisation, training 4,000 intelligence professionals each year in the disciplines of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, geospatial, photographic, security and counter-intelligence analysis. Trainees include regular and reserve military personnel and civil servants.

Visitors must make prior bookings as the museum and priory are inside a gated military community. More information from: [militaryintelligencemuseum.org](http://militaryintelligencemuseum.org) and [chicksandspriory.co.uk](http://chicksandspriory.co.uk) **A**



Top: Front of museum



Bottom: Kettering Branch investigates the Military Intelligence Museum and Priory at Chicksands © Peter Sweeney



# Partnering the Fund in their 100th year

**Air Vice-Marshal David Murray, Controller, Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund talks about partnership and future work:**

"The RAF Benevolent Fund has achieved much in the past 100 years, but that work has not been done in isolation. For 90 years, the RAF Association has joined the Fund in our mission to look after the RAF family.

"Our partners are all experts in their individual fields, providing the specialist care needed to support the entire RAF family to overcome the challenges that they face. The Association is no exception and, in particular, the Association's expert caseworkers who often provide the vital link between the Fund and beneficiaries.

"During my tenure as Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund and as a past RAFALO and Association branch President, I have seen first-hand the dedication and determination possessed by Association caseworkers as they go about their work. Their assessments often lead to greater support than originally sought, thanks to the caseworkers' extensive knowledge and their drive to see the best done for the veterans who they meet during times of individual difficulty.

"Last year, the RAF Benevolent Fund spent some £21.4 million on welfare and through their efforts, RAF Association caseworkers

allowed the Fund to disperse £3.4million of that support to those in need.

"Together we have done great things. However, together we must do more.

"During our centenary year the focus of the RAF Benevolent Fund will be on reaching those veterans that we know are out there who need our support but do not know our help is available or are too proud to ask. Over the next three years we intend to run a campaign to raise the numbers that we help from 55,000 to 100,000 a year, spending an additional £20 million in the process. It is an ambitious target but it is one that I know we can achieve with support from our RAF Association friends".



*"Together we have done great things. Together we must do more", says Air Vice-Marshal David Murray.*  
© RAF Benevolent Fund

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# Welfare review - latest

Since the announcement of the Association's welfare review (Air Mail, Apr-Jun 2019), the proposals have been the subject of comprehensive consultations with employees and the GMB union. The conclusion reached is that the reasoning and logic behind Council's proposals remain in the best interest of the Association as a whole. Nevertheless, we have listened carefully to our employees, and some of their suggestions will be implemented. Taking everything into account, the following decisions have now been made:

## Area welfare structure

The Association's seven area welfare offices in England and Wales will be replaced by three larger, regional hubs based in Leicester (HQ), Preston (Area HQ) and Weston-super-Mare (Flowerdown House).

As agreed after feedback from the consultation this change will come into effect on 6 September 2019 — allowing sufficient time to transfer seamlessly our services and safeguard the experience of our beneficiaries. A suggestion to appoint a temporary Regional Welfare Cluster Officer has also been adopted, to set up and support the development of volunteer groups.

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

## Respite breaks

A review found that the fundamental building structure of Richard Peck House hotel was reaching the limit of its ability to remain compliant and meet beneficiary needs.

Following the employee consultation, we have made the decision to close Richard Peck House on 26 July 2019, with the final guests leaving on 23 July 2019. Research is now underway to determine how our charity could best meet the future needs of beneficiaries seeking respite care breaks in the north-west of England.

We recognise that this process has been difficult for our area welfare and hotel employees affected by the outcomes of the reviews. The decisions are in no way a reflection on them; something we have tried to reassure them about during our recent consultations. We thank them all publicly for their continued dedication and commitment, and their feedback and professionalism during the process. Those facing redundancy as a result of the changes are being supported and will be given priority in applying for job vacancies within the Association.

## Welfare policy changes affecting branches

At the time of Air Mail going to print, plans to bring branch welfare activity fully under the Association's welfare governance practices are continuing. As well as benefiting those we help, this will also provide more support to our welfare volunteers. A steering group is being formed to aid the process. The group will develop its implementation and ongoing branch discussion timeframes in due course, and any resulting decisions will be announced soon afterwards.

Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe CB OBE, Chairman of Council, said: "While change can often necessitate making difficult decisions, Council strongly believes that these changes are essential in ensuring the Association is fit for the future. We have a proud history of supporting the RAF family — in 2018 we supported 85,000 beneficiaries. We want to continue to do this in the best and most effective way we can, for the benefit of those we help. As we seek to continuously improve, we will invest as necessary in our welfare services, with decisions being informed by evidence-based analysis of current and future needs. Thank you, on behalf of Council and the whole of the Association, for your understanding and support as we proceed."

*Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe CB OBE explains the decisions made by Council*  
© Phil Grieg



# Nation mourns Charles Clarke



Above: Air Commodore Clarke (centre) at the Royal Courts of Justice, starting the RAF100 baton relay on 1 April 2018 © MOD/Crown 2018.

Left: Air Commodore Charles Clarke (left) sharing stories with guests at the RAF's centenary celebrations on 1 April 2018. © MOD/Crown

## The RAF Association reported in May the death of Air Commodore Charles Clarke OBE at the age of 95.

Our website, social media and Area newsletters described the member's long and distinguished RAF career.

"Charles Clarke was a Bomb Aimer during the Second World War and one of the last surviving prisoners of Stalag Luft III at the time of the Great Escape.

"Joining the RAF in 1941 at the age of 17, Charles was posted to 619 Squadron at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire.

"His Lancaster Bomber was shot down over Germany during an operation to Schweinfurt in February 1944. Three of his crewmen died in the crash, but he survived and was taken prisoner.

"Charles was a recent arrival at the Lower Silesian camp, Stalag Luft III, during the Great Escape. Although not involved, he was aware of the operation and recalled hearing a shot fired by guards when they discovered prisoners were missing.

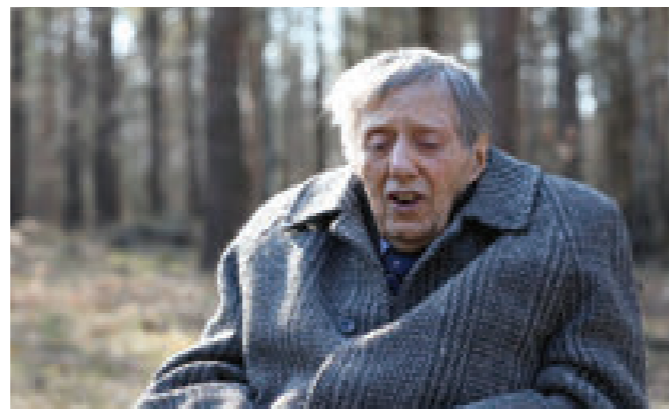
"The following day, he and his fellow prisoners were made to stand outside for several hours while the Germans counted them. Of the 76 prisoners who managed to get away, 73 were recaptured and 50 of those executed.

"Following the Long March from Stalag Luft III, Charles and his comrades were eventually abandoned by the Germans as the Allies neared victory. He was freed by the British 11th Armoured Division at the end of April in 1945.

"Air Commodore Clarke retired from the RAF in November 1978. He was a member of the RAF Association and also supported many other charities, including Bomber Command Association and the Middlesex Wing of the Air Training Corps. He was President of the RAF Ex-Prisoners of War Association.

"Charles was heavily involved in the RAF100 celebrations in 2018. He started the RAF100 baton relay on 1 April from the Royal Courts of Justice in London, helping start its journey to 100 sites associated with the RAF over 100 days – including the Association.

"Later in 2018, Charles visited the site in the Black Forest where his Lancaster Bomber was shot down 74 years before — to pay his respects to his fellow crew members who perished."



Air Commodore Clarke paying his respects to his lost crew in the Black Forest in 2018 © MOD/Crown 2018.

# Responding to the need for mental health support

**Findings from the Association's latest major welfare study reveal that 82% of respondents are living with at least one sensory impairment or long-term health condition and that mental ill health occurs across the board.**

The survey, which was launched in January 2018, continues to help us understand more about the activities and needs of people in the RAF family. The Association circulated the survey to people who are currently serving, have served, or are the family member of a serving person or veteran. More than 4,000 members responded.

We asked people about the sensory impairments and long-term health conditions that respondents are living with. Mental ill health was identified across all of our RAF family population groups, in the following proportions:

- 19% of serving personnel
- 16% of working-age veterans (up to 65 years old)
- 3% of older veterans (age 65+)
- 17% of relatives of serving personnel and/or veterans

NHS England states that one in four adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year, with mental health problems presenting the largest single cause of disability in the UK. Consequently, mental health is a key priority for the government.

Based on our research findings and the national health landscape, the Association's welfare team is committed to ensuring that any member of the RAF family who is affected by mental health can find appropriate support.

Last year the Association delivered more than 70 Mental Health First Aid courses to members of the RAF family and is on track for a similar number in 2019. The course, led by qualified Association trainers, teaches people how to identify, understand and help someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue.

Rory O'Connor, Director of Welfare and Policy at the RAF Association said, "We are committed to making the mental health training we provide as relevant and as effective as possible and are currently working with the RAF's Psychological Skills team to develop new training specifically designed for the needs of the RAF family. In 2020 we are also planning to expand the reach of the training so that as many members of the RAF family can benefit as possible.

"Working in collaboration with the RAF, we look forward to identifying and providing person-centered, evidence-based welfare services," he continued. Watch out for more news on this in future editions of Air Mail.

If you or someone you know is affected by mental health and requires support, please contact the RAF Association by telephone: 0800 018 2361 or email: [welfare@rafa.org.uk](mailto:welfare@rafa.org.uk)



A young man suffering from depression consults with his psychiatrist. Image published by kind permission of Time to Change.



# Dear Editor ...

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



## Belly-landing at Langham

In the April-June Air Mail you featured an article about RAF Langham [p.41] and I was fascinated to see a picture of a Beaufighter 'belly-landed' there. I wondered if it was one of the half dozen or so which had to return after a big strike on 15 June 1944 with major damage to their undercarriage... At Langham those which were fit to land did so on the runway, the rest came 'in wheels up' on the grass, just like the picture in Air Mail...

[Arthur flew as a navigator on the same sortie, which successfully attacked German shipping - ed.] I shall always remember the Polish squadron leader excitably calling us: 'Oh Wing Leader, oh Wing Leader, what a bloody good show!'

Arthur Steel

Ed. - While the heritage centre at Langham Dome don't have a date for the photograph, they think it very likely that the crashed Beaufighter was from this mission.

## Inverted chevrons 1

Ex Sgt Phil Harris's letter (Air Mail April - June 2019) about inverted chevrons caught my eye. I graduated with the 46th and final entry of Administrative Apprentices on 13 December 1963 as a Junior Technician Clerk Secretarial. This photo was taken the following day with my single inverted chevron proudly displayed. The technician ranks were discontinued under the 1964 trade structure when the Junior Technician badge became a four bladed propeller. What a sense of loss and prestige we Junior Technicians felt at losing our hard-earned chevron! When on exercise with the army in Libya it caused some confusion among the soldiers when I pointed out that a Junior Technician was senior to a Senior Aircraftman.

Wg Cdr John Dyer RAF (Ret'd).



© Arthur Steel



© Anthony Walker

## Inverted chevrons 2

When I passed out from my Air Wireless Fitter (AWF) Course at No.2 Radio School RAF Yatesbury in April 1956, I was elevated from an Aircraftman to a Junior Technician, wearing one inverted stripe over a hand clasping sparks badge and eventually posted to V Squadron at RAF Fassberg in West Germany 2nd TAF. The same year I was told by my Commanding Officer that I had to transfer to XI Squadron because they needed a Corporal AWF. I then had the inverted stripe removed only to be replaced by a normal Corporal stripes, and my pay rank was shown as Acting Corporal Paid. Had I passed more exams, I could have risen to Corporal Technician, again with inverted stripes.

Anthony H Walker

## Stateless in NY and London

When I joined the RAF in 1948 I didn't realise I had thus lost my citizenship. Born in New York in 1930 I came to UK at 6 months and was brought up in Surrey. After demob I wanted to explore Europe with a couple of friends. But the US Embassy refused me a passport, saying I had forfeited my citizenship by serving in the armed forces of a foreign nation.

So I was stateless, and had to report to the police fortnightly. Two years later I managed to get naturalised as a British subject. When I was 40 I queued up at the American Embassy for a visa to visit friends in Boston: "Sorry - can't give you a visa, but can offer a passport - because the law has been repealed - Britain was an ally!" I thus enjoy dual citizenship, and have since worked in America.

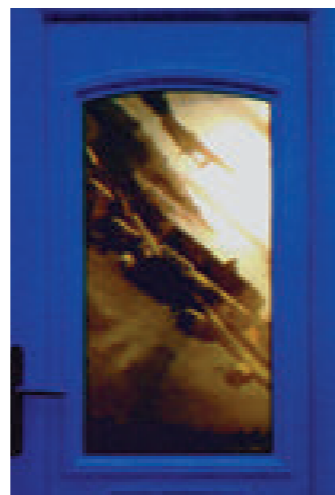
Ex LAC John Dechesne (now John Munro)

## Doorbuster

This is my new security door with the Dambusters in the window. I am proud of that.

Gordon Claydon

Gordon's new door  
© Gordon Claydon



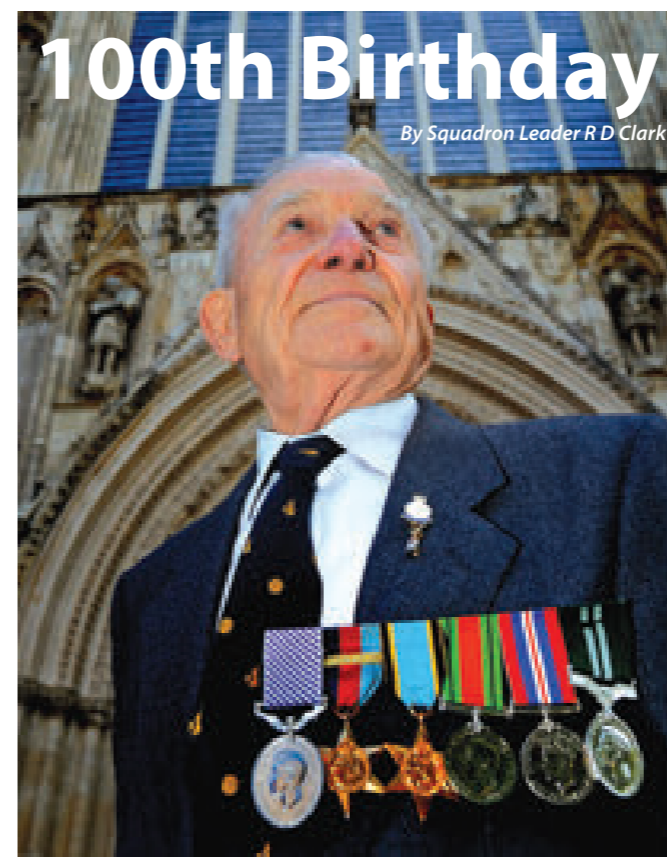
To comment in or contribute to Air Mail please email [editor@rafatrad.co.uk](mailto:editor@rafatrad.co.uk). Alternatively, write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, RAFATRAD Ltd, Atlas House, Wembley Road, Leicester, LE1 3UT. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION. The editor's decision on inclusion is final. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication.



Giles Fowler, one of a team of four who undertook a recent paramotor tour of more than 40 current and former RAF stations, said, "We have raised over £2,200 for the RAF Association - to support the RAF family. A huge thank you to all who allowed our charity event to take place. We were warmly greeted at every airfield, with some interesting questions about our flying machines". The challenge took two days

and was split over six legs, starting from the former Bomber Command airfield at RAF Goxhill in Lincolnshire and finishing at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire. Pictured (l-r) after completing the challenge are: Paul Mockford, Katie Paggett, Andy Greaves and Giles Fowler.

© MOD/Crown 2019



© Crown/MOD

On 11 April 2019, Association member Flight Lieutenant William Terence (Terry) Montague Clark DFM AE - a veteran of the Battle of Britain - celebrated his 100th birthday.

Terry joined the RAF in 1938, and was called up to full-time service in 1939. He acted as a Radio Observer with the night-fighting 219 Squadron, where his job was to find and track enemy aircraft and relay their location to his pilot.

In July 1941 Terry was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM), though he always says that he was just doing his duty, and the real heroes of the war were the men of Bomber Command who took the war to Germany night after night, suffering tremendous losses along the way. He also felt sorry for the German crews as, like him, they were only doing their job.

A quiet, unassuming man with a gentle sense of humour, Terry has a love of life and a taste for "a little whisky" on a special occasion. He was also the inspiration for the Rare Tea Company's 'Tea For Heroes' blend; sales from which continue to help raise funds for the Association.



© Terry Clark

# Bomber Command veterans' chance for correct medals

**Campaigners researching medal entitlements on behalf of WWII veterans have uncovered a little-known rule that will allow Bomber Command personnel to exchange their France and Germany Star for an Air Crew Europe Star with clasp.**

Bomber Command Medal Campaign members Heather Allsworth and Nigel Favill found the evidence deep in the National Archives at Kew. Many Bomber Command veterans had been disappointed that they did not get a specific medal for their campaign after the 2012 Military Medals Review by Sir John Holmes — as all other World War Two campaigns were awarded a star — and Heather and Nigel were researching to see if they could help.



The result of their work is that all RAF aircrew operating in Bomber Command, together with other RAF aircrew who flew from Royal Air Force bases in the United Kingdom over Europe, who commenced their operational service between 6 February 1944 and 5 April 1944 and served a total of 120 days or four months — are eligible for an Air Crew Europe Star. Any RAF aircrew veterans who commenced operations before 6 February 1944 and served at least 120 days or four months should already be in receipt of the 1939-45 Star and the Air Crew Europe Star.

The eligibility criteria for the Air Crew Europe Star was complex. The "letter of the law" interpretation widely known and reported on many websites is that the 1939-1945 Star must already have been earned before commencing qualifying service for the Air Crew Europe Star.

But Heather and Nigel had discovered an Air Ministry document, dated 1946, saying: "Atlantic and Air Crew Europe Stars - Slight Change. The 1939-45 Star must still be earned also but it need not be earned first. For example, 4 months service by air crews, any two of which are in the Atlantic Star area, will qualify for the 1939-45 and Atlantic Stars".

This confirms that, although four months or 120 days still have to be served by aircrew to qualify for both the 1939-45 Star and the Air Crew Europe Star, the first two months or 60 days can be attributed to the Air Crew Europe Star. In addition it needs to be noted that there are no rules to say that the 1939-45 Star 60 days / two months' service prior qualification could not be earned after D-Day.

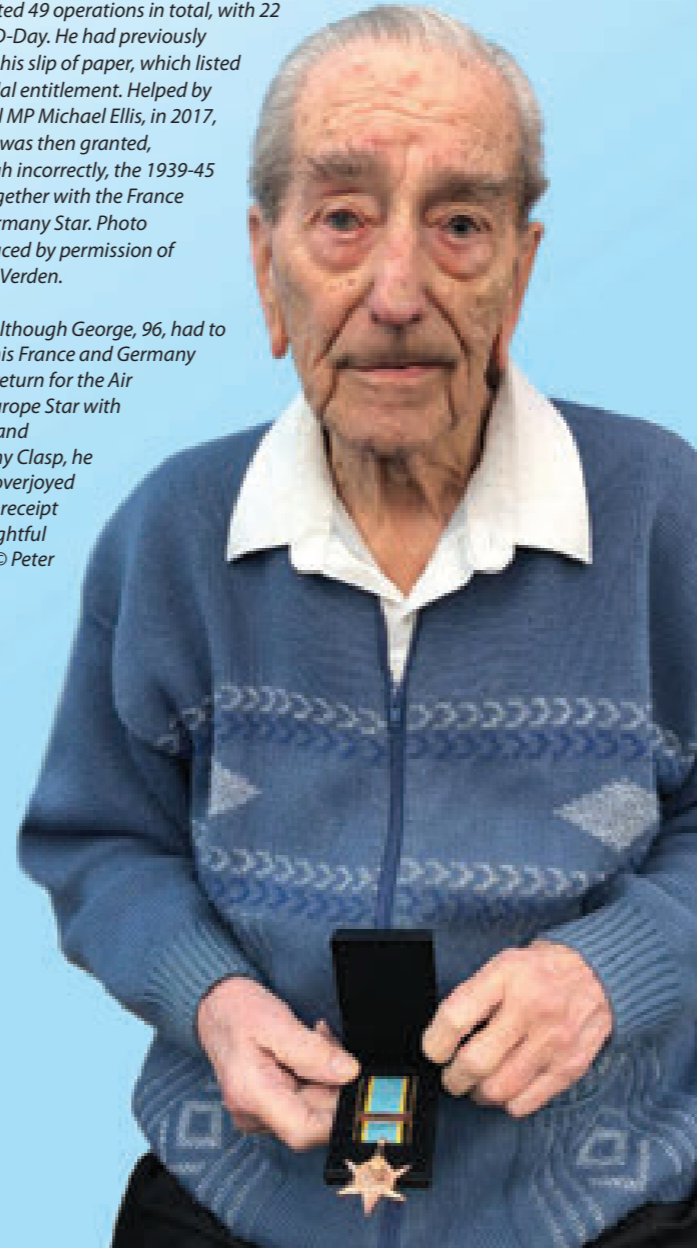
Heather says, "Due to the fact that the Air Crew Europe Star was grouped with the Atlantic Star and the France and Germany Star there could be many incorrect combinations of medals given to veterans. It is right and proper that they should be in receipt of their rightfully earned medals".

## Find out more:

- Apply for a medal exchange on: [gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge/apply-for-a-medal](http://gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge/apply-for-a-medal)
- Find supporting documents such as log books and service records using: [raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/units/air-historical-branch/sources-of-information/](http://raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/units/air-historical-branch/sources-of-information/)
- The Ministry of Defence has assured Heather and Nigel that they will consider all applications in relation to the "not well known" Air Crew Europe Star 1946 rule.
- Support for applicants has been offered by Heather Allsworth and Nigel Favill of the Bomber Command Medal Campaign Group. Please contact them, by email only: [office@bombercommandmedal.com](mailto:office@bombercommandmedal.com)

*Left: George Verden joined the RAF in 1941 when he was 18 years old, and served as a Wireless Operator and Rear Gunner. He completed 49 operations in total, with 22 before D-Day. He had previously mislaid his slip of paper, which listed his medal entitlement. Helped by his local MP Michael Ellis, in 2017, George was then granted, although incorrectly, the 1939-45 Star, together with the France and Germany Star. Photo reproduced by permission of George Verden.*

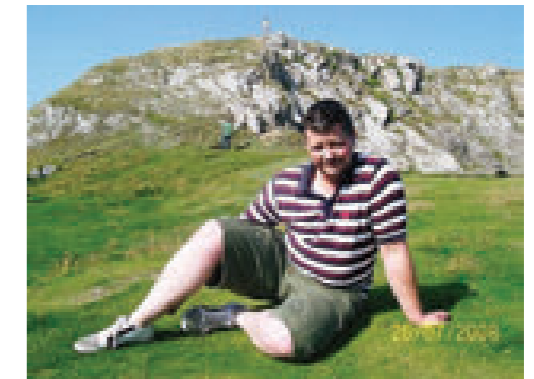
*Right: Although George, 96, had to return his France and Germany Star in return for the Air Crew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp, he is now overjoyed to be in receipt of his rightful award © Peter Verden*



# Last Flight Home



*Left: The Last Flight Home' print now hangs at Flowerdown House Hotel. It is signed by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC OM DSO\*\* DFC\*, Warrant Officer Norman Jackson VC, Wing Commander Roderick Learoyd VC (Matted) and Flight Lieutenant Bill Reid VC and the artist of the original painting Robert Taylor.*



*Above: Richard Bratt, in whose memory the print was donated to Flowerdown House Hotel. Published by permission of Richard's family.*

**A limited edition print donated to Flowerdown House Hotel by a family in memory of their son has been specially preserved thanks to a branch donation.**

Richard James Bratt had served in the Gulf from 1990 to 1991 with 1st Division Armoured Division Transport Regiment – Royal Corps of Transport. His mother, Jean Gladwell said: "Richard was only 19 when the Gulf war happened and the final clear up affected him for a long time after. He told me stories of boys his own age who were in ordinary clothes and had no food for days. These were the stories he could tell his mum. His brother on the other hand had the stories of them collecting body parts and bodies and burying them in mass graves. He left as my youngest and came back older than any of us."

Richard went on to serve two terms in Northern Ireland and one in Germany before he took his own life in 2017.

The print of 'The Last Flight Home' was one of a limited edition of 850 copies made in 1986. Each is signed by four Victoria Cross Holders of Bomber Command – including Leonard Cheshire. It was

donated to the hotel by Richard's parents, Jean and Terry Gladwell, his older brother Tony Scott and Richard's children Honey and Jackson Bratt.

"Our freedom was hard-won by people like my son, and history needs to be shared and remembered lest future generations forget the price paid by all who went before," says Jean. "Richard was proud to be part of this country's Armed Services family and would have liked to think of future servicemen and women enjoying this print as part of their history."

Hotel Manager Nick Rickwood said: "Mid-Somerset Branch members attending a social event at Flowerdown House shortly after the print was donated recognised its historical value. They offered to pay for its framing and preservation under UV protected glass. With their support the print is now framed and sits proudly in our TV lounge for the pleasure and enjoyment of our guests and visitors at Flowerdown House Wings Breaks Hotel."

Jean hopes to return to Flowerdown this summer with Richard's children to show them the print in its new setting.

# Not your average SPA day!

**The RAF Association is offering a unique opportunity to join the RAF Sports Parachute Association (RAFSPA) for a fully immersive, military style parachuting experience day.**

Become a member of the RAFSPA team for a day at RAF Weston-on-the-Green, receive a military briefing, train with the team, have a tour of the facilities and enjoy a tandem parachute jump.

For details, including dates, cost and the minimum fundraising target, please visit [rafa.org.uk/rafspa](http://rafa.org.uk/rafspa) or call 0800 018 2361.



*Enjoy a tandem parachute jump. © Glen Stanley*



# “Like a guardian angel to me”

Almost 70 years since leaving the Hereford Regiment of the Women’s Royal Air Force (WRAF), Morag MacFarlane has been supported through the befriending service offered to veterans by the RAF Association.

Following the recent death of her husband, and with her sons no longer living locally, the retired social worker from Prestwick could quite easily have found herself alone were it not for volunteer befriender, Iona Docherty.

“After Bill passed away, Iona came into my life just when I needed her the most,” recalled Morag (87), “and she’s been like a guardian angel to me ever since.”

“We hit it off instantly, and we see each other every week to visit cafés, go shopping, or just to meet for a cup of tea and a chat. We’re almost like sisters.”

Iona, who has overcome her own personal difficulties including lengthy treatment for a complex and rare auto immune disorder, has also benefitted from her friendship with Morag.

Iona (36), said, “Once I recovered from my treatment I wanted to give something back to society, and because I’d always dreamt of joining the RAF, I thought that helping veterans would be a perfect way of doing that.

“Meeting Morag has helped me get my confidence back after my recovery, and realise what a difference I can make to someone’s life.”

Since they met, Iona has helped Morag look to the future by taking her to the shops, and on days out to local tourist spots such as the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Ayr. She’s also helped her to arrange a summer visit from Morag’s sister and niece, who live in Australia.

Morag is a part of the RAF family because of her service. “I had to give up my career in the Forces when I was just 18, as I had to return home to Scotland to care for my mother,” she said.

“Decades later, while Bill was in hospital and I was wondering who to turn to, I was told that even though I’d served for less than two years, I was still entitled to receive support from the Association.

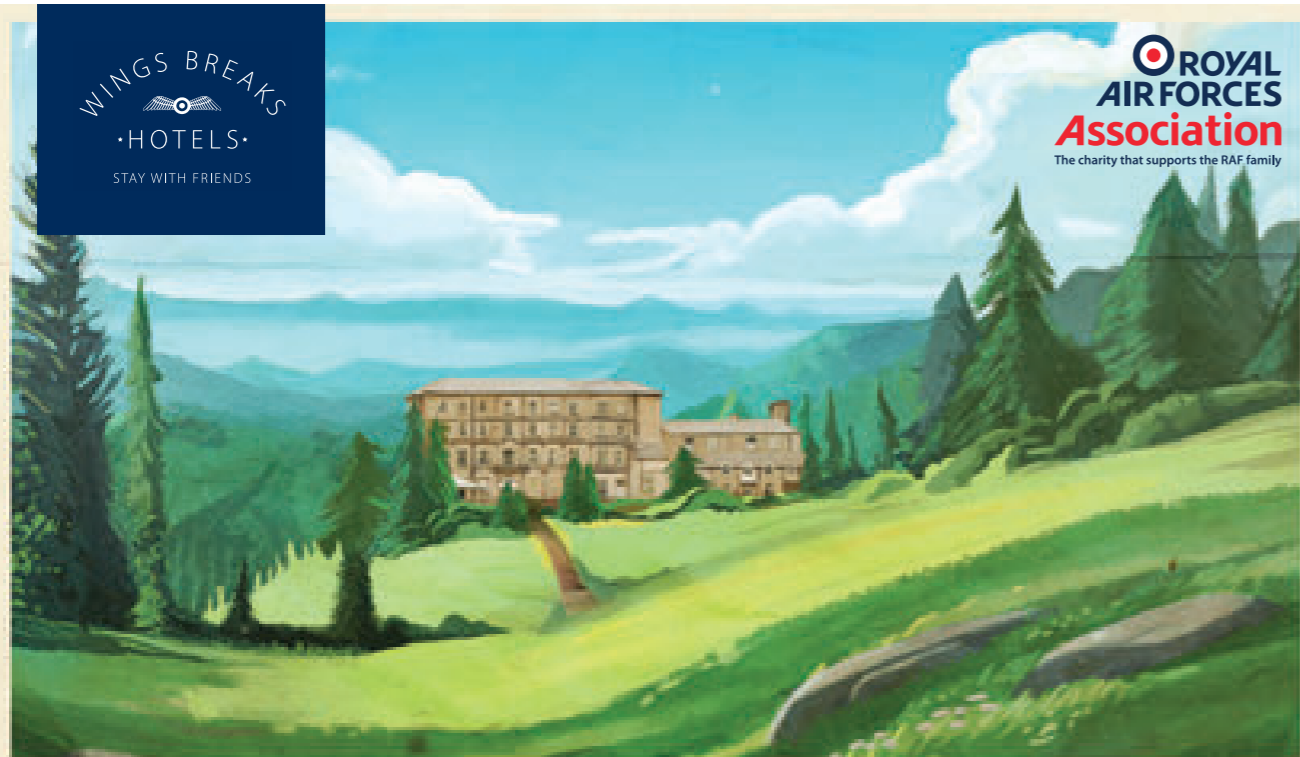
“I’d never have thought of approaching them but I’m so glad I did, as Iona has helped me so much since I met her, and I’m looking forward to many more happy days with her.”



“Iona came into my life just when I needed her the most” says Morag (right) of her befriender © Phil Formby



RAF Association Befriender Iona Docherty (right) and veteran Morag MacFarlane enjoying a visit to the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, in Ayr. Look out for a video of their interview on our YouTube channel this summer. © Phil Formby



## WHEN WAS YOUR LAST HOLIDAY?

RAF veterans don't always get the break they deserve.

Call Rothbury House, Northumberland on **01669 620 235** or email

**rothburyreceptionist@rafa.org.uk** and book your escape to the country today.



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen  
Registered Charity 24866 (England & Wales)  
103495 (Scotland)



[www.rafmct.org.uk](http://www.rafmct.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1101767

## Royal Air Force Music Anniversary Concert Tour

Celebrating the 15th anniversary of the RAF Music Charitable Trust



12 July - Chester Cathedral

21 September - Sheffield Cathedral

10 October - Cast Theatre Doncaster

25 October - Exeter Cathedral

26 October - Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare

Tickets and further information: [www.rafmct.org.uk](http://www.rafmct.org.uk)

# Helping forces families find jobs



The project has arisen as a direct result of this Army Families Federation research © RAF Families Federation



The project team from the RAF Families, the Naval Families Federation and the Army Families Federations. © RAF Families Federation

The three forces families federations are pacing through the planning phase of building a new employment and training platform. Partially funded by the RAF Association, it will be known as 'Forces Families Jobs' when it goes live in September 2019.

Project team members from the Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation and RAF Families Federation are collaborating on this one-stop-shop for employment, training or volunteering. Families will be able use this site knowing that it is a forces-friendly environment showing businesses and organisations who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant. Each organisation's profile shows its specific pledges of support to forces families and personnel.

RAF Families Federation Director Maria Lyle said: "According to the Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2018, over the previous year just over a quarter of all RAF spouses experienced difficulties finding suitable employment. In our 'Life in the RAF 2018' report, 24 per cent of partners cited managing their own career as being the hardest aspect of life with the RAF (the highest answer). That is why this new platform can be such a powerful tool in supporting RAF family members, and I am delighted that our parent organisation the RAF Association is also supporting the set up, so the site will be as effective as possible."

### Organisations sign up

At time of writing, just under 80 businesses and organisations had uploaded their profiles, including organisations such as Santander, Travis Perkins, Fujitsu, Home-Start, PA Consulting Services Ltd, Hilton International Hotels, various NHS Trusts, Amazon, Vodafone, and Nottingham Forest Community Trust.

### Training and volunteering

As well as displaying jobs, there will be information and signposting to military-friendly training that's available; much of which is provided free to spouses and partners.

Aware that volunteering may appeal to some families, as a stepping stone back into work without the pressure of employment, the partners are also making sure the site will share information from charities and voluntary organisations.

### Employers' profiles

All businesses who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant are now able to download the employers' form, complete and it send back to [help@forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk](mailto:help@forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk) so their profile can be uploaded onto the platform: [bit.ly/FFJemployers](http://bit.ly/FFJemployers)

### Project research

This project has arisen as a direct result of the Army Families Federation research, 'Military spousal/partner employment: identifying the barriers and support required', published in June 2018 which states a key recommendation as the introduction of an online jobs platform. This research can be found online at [bit.ly/PartnerEmployment](http://bit.ly/PartnerEmployment)





# BRANCH NEWS

including region, area and overseas news

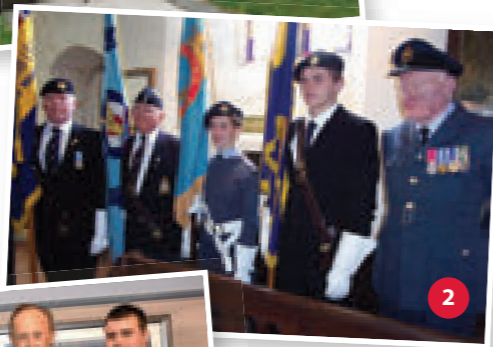
## Alresford and District Branch 1

To commemorate the RAF's 100th and the branch's 70th anniversaries, a new path leading to the war memorial at St John's church was laid and dedicated — to improve access for wheelchair users. Branch Chairman Derek Sweetenham worked with the Parochial Church Council and the Diocesan Council after the idea was floated at a branch meeting, and the project was made possible due to the generosity of two members who donated a large proportion of the costs. The photograph shows branch members with the Reverend Julia Miles of St John's at the inauguration of the path.



## Barnstaple and North Devon Branch 2

Branch members attended a commemorative service at Woolsery Church, North Devon for pilot David Peak who died on 18 January 1949 when his Spitfire crashed in the parish on a training flight from RAF Chivenor. The service was arranged by retired Squadron Leader C. Pomeroy and the Woolsery Society. Relatives of David's family attended, as well as the Royal British Legion and the RAF Air Cadets. Standards were paraded and The Last Post sounded.



## Barry Branch 3

Branch members recently attended the Wales, Midland and South Western Area AGM and reunion in Plymouth where they heard they had successfully retained the Branch Efficiency Cup. There was also good news in the standard bearers' competition on the Friday evening, when newly-appointed Rhys Horton came a very creditable third in his first ever competition. Branch Secretary Howard Provis was also appointed to the Area Council. Photograph shows (back L-R) Howard Provis, Terry McKeown (Chair) Geoffrey Horton (Welfare Officer), Rhys Horton, (front L-R) Carole Provis, Jim Doyle (Vice Chair) holding the Efficiency Trophy, Margaret McKeown (Social Secretary).



## Bedale and RAF Leeming Branch 4

In March the branch celebrated the dedication of their standard. This was conducted at RAF Leeming's St. Bede's Church by Reverend Squadron Leader Geoffrey Firth. The service was well attended by members of the branch, the Royal British Legion and the local community, including the Mayor of Bedale (and Association member), Mr Andy Hallett. Branch President, Group Captain Blythe Crawford, Station Commander RAF Leeming said "This branch bridges the gap between RAF Leeming and our local veterans, highlighting the important role of the Association in raising funds and providing support to all members of the wider RAF family, both serving and veteran."



## Bognor Regis Branch 5

In May, branch members staged an event to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of 1310 Flight, which flew medical supplies from Bognor Regis to Normandy following the D-Day landings. The town was reunited with 1310 Flight in 2009 when Bognor Regis Branch became the first to adopt an operational squadron. The Chinooks of 27 Squadron were tasked with supplying aircraft and crews to 1310 Flight, which provided essential support to the army in Afghanistan. 18(B) Chinook Squadron also sent aircraft and crews and accepted affiliation to the branch in 2011. From 2009 until 2015 branch members sent monthly welfare boxes to those serving in Afghanistan on 1310 Flight.



## Bridport and Lyme Regis Registered Members Group 6

Member Bob Bickers presented an Association plaque to Camille Hilton, landlord of The Lord Nelson pub in Bridport, in appreciation of her hosting members' monthly meetings for the last two years. Members Jonathan Tomlin and Pauline Brooks also staffed the Association's stall at a car boot sale which raised £254 (pictured).

dedicated by the Reverend Richard Graham. He was assisted by the Reverend Derek Weir, who was the presiding chaplain at RAF Aldergrove for 43 years. During the dedication the Reverend Graham said: "The tradition of standards is a long and honourable one. They provide a rallying point in times of difficulty or stress and a potential symbol of the organisation to which they belong, signifying loyalty to the Crown."

## City of Bristol Branch 7

In February the branch hosted a curry night to bring together Poppy Appeal collectors from across Bristol. As well as branch members there were representatives of the Royal British Legion and MOD Abbey Wood including the Chief of Materiel (Air), Air Marshal Julian Young. The guest of honour was 'the last British Dambuster', George 'Johnny' Johnson who chatted with attendees, posed for photographs and signed copies of his book. The event was organised by Chris Della Porta from MOD Abbey Wood who also led attendees in a wartime singalong. Thanks go to Jean Calway BEM and her team for the excellent catering.

## Costa Blanca Branch 10

The branch carried out a public collection hosted by the local Quesada Fish & Chips Restaurant over the Easter weekend. Public donations totalled €445, with the restaurant also donating €210 in 5, 2, and 1 cent pieces (c.16,000 coins). The photo shows Mrs and Mr White, (branch Database Manager), and Judi Wilkinson (branch Membership Secretary), using a public display board designed and constructed by branch Vice-President Norman Scotting. The branch is immensely grateful to Quesada Fish & Chips for their co-operation and hospitality, and they will be listed as a contender for the branch's Wings Trophy Award.

## Cannock Chase Branch 8

Val Loughrey has taken over as Chair of Cannock Chase Branch; the first woman to do so in its 73-year history. Val, a former Wolverhampton Girls' High School pupil who lives in Cannock, served in the WRAF for nine years. Upon returning from Cyprus, where she was an active member of the Aphrodite Branch, Val worked for the Ministry of Defence and was awarded the Queen's Imperial Service Medal (civil service) for her work. Previous Chairman Brian Gamble is now Branch President.

## Cranwell Branch 11

In March, members attended the branch AGM where Branch President and Commandant of RAFC Cranwell, Air Commodore Peter Squires, presented flowers to supporters who help to run the branch. Also presented was a 50 year badge to Roy Canvin, and 25 year badges to Honorine Ball, Ron Ball and Mike Smith. A 25 year badge was also presented by Branch Chairman Tony Crossman to the Commandant. The third Association-sponsored concert occurred in a local school, with the performance raising about £1,500 for the branch's Wings Appeal. The month ended with 15 members visiting the RAF Association Hotel at Rothbury. All had a fantastic week with excellent weather.

## Carrickfergus Branch 9

The Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, Mrs Joan Christie OBE, joined branch members in Joymount Church as their new standard was



## Dudley Branch 12

The efforts of two local RAF Air Cadet squadrons (Dudley and Stourbridge) were celebrated, for helping Dudley Branch during their 2018 Wings Appeal. President John Deane presented a certificate and shield to Stourbridge's commanding officer. The photograph shows cadets of 347 (Dudley) Squadron with John Deane (centre right) and Chairman Keith Bloomer (centre left).



## Fareham Branch 13

90-year-old branch member and former Flight Lieutenant Eric Nixon (pictured) was awarded the 'Citizen of Honour' award at the Mayor Making Ceremony in Fareham, Hampshire on 9 May. The citation spoke of his 42 years' service in the RAF and his 40 years as a member of Fareham Lions Club serving the community — including 13 years as a school governor. For the past nine years Eric has spoken to many groups about living with Alzheimer's, and the importance of carrying on with life.



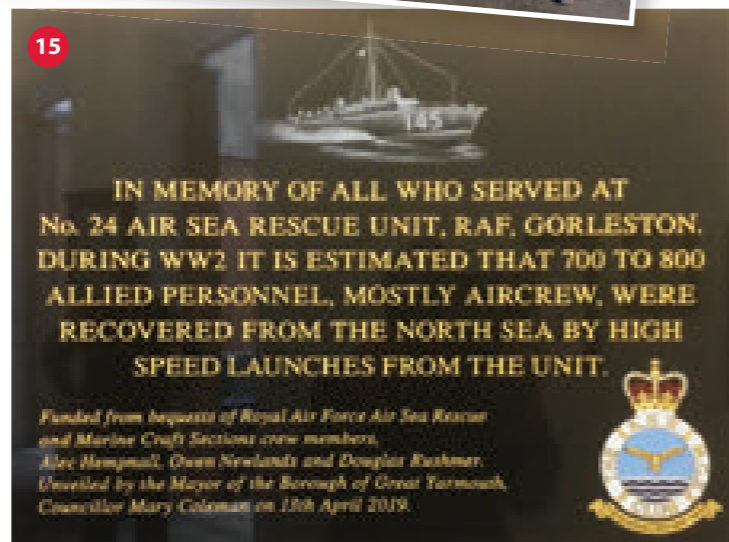
## Global Branch 14

In March, branch member Joyce Edwards celebrated her 96th birthday. A former Aircraftwoman 1st Class, Joyce served with 90 Squadron at RAF Tuddenham as a Military Transport driver taking crews to their Lancasters during WWII. She was presented with flowers by the branch Chairman Steve Mullis and his wife Julie. On the weekend of the branch AGM, members visited 99 Squadron at RAF Brize Norton for a tour around a C17 and Base Hangar. Later that night they were joined by the Association's Challenge Fundraising Manager Helen Tempest, and Area President Air Commodore Allan Vaughan for the branch's fourth AGM.



## Great Yarmouth Branch 15

In April the branch supported a dedication, rededication and wreath laying at the memorial to Unit 24 Air Sea Rescue, RAF Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk. Over 100 people gathered at the memorial to the Air Sea Rescue Unit and Marine Craft Service at Brush Quay, with the standards of the Great Yarmouth and North Walsham branches also present. The Mayor, Councillor Mary Coleman, unveiled three benches and a special service was also held. The previous day a plaque had been unveiled by the Mayor in the Town Hall to recognise the dangerous and important work undertaken by Air Sea Rescue during WWII.



## Hartlepool Branch

The branch's 2018 Wings Appeal raised £16,365 from supermarkets in Hartlepool and across Teesside. Collections were also held in the streets of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar assisted by cadets from local RAF Air Cadet Squadrons. Fundraising events included a garden party and Armed Forces Day. Branch Chairman David Stacey praised the small band of branch members who gave up many hours of their time to participate in the various collections. Special praise went to Wings Appeal Organiser Paul Jenkins, who also collected the Certificate of Achievement from Area President Air Vice-Marshal Nigel Bairstow at the Northern Area Conference.



## Huddersfield Branch 16

Life Vice-President Frank Smith was awarded the National Presidential Certificate at the branch's St George's Day Luncheon in April. Frank, a Battle of Crete RAF veteran, has dedicated over 70 years' service to the branch, having been continuously active since 1946. He was also the driving force behind a permanent memorial for the crew of Wellington bomber Z1327 which crashed near Huddersfield in 1942. As Frank was unable to travel to the Association's Annual Conference to receive his award, the certificate and pin badge were presented to him locally by Branch President Jason McCartney.

## Huntingdon and District Branch 17

The branch's Wings Appeal team had their first fundraising outing on bank holiday Sunday which was very successful with lots of visitors to the stall. The 'name the bear' competition was very popular. The branch has a thriving social events calendar with something varied and diverse planned for each month. A recent talk was on Oliver Cromwell - born in Huntingdon - a very interesting and controversial character who apparently had quite a sense of humour. The branch meet on the first Wednesday of every month.

## Hythe and New Romney Branch 18

In January, Mr Rajahupal Sriharan of the Dymchurch Village Stores was presented with the Ken Howell Wings Appeal Premises Shield by branch Chairman Roger Townsend. The trophy is awarded annually to the shop or store that collects the largest amount of money in the club's Wings collection tins. This is the fourth year in a row that Dymchurch Village Stores have won the trophy.

## Kettering Branch 19

The Kettering standard bearer attended the committal of the ashes of the widow of Paul Knight at a short service at the Brigstock Memorial on 12 May. Paul Knight was significantly involved in establishing the memorial to several crew members near Brigstock, Northamptonshire of Lancaster DV361 which crashed on 22 December 1943 as a result of an engine fire during a cross country test flight. The Knights were great friends of Kettering Branch.





## Mablethorpe and Sutton Branch <sup>20</sup>

Branch Chairman Neville Drury, and Treasurer and Welfare Officer Alison Drury have been awarded the Area Presidential Certificate at the Area Conference. Thanks to them the branch has been thriving, and achieved a Wings Appeal total of over £10,000 in 2018. The branch also received the President's Cup at Annual Conference, for outstanding achievement nationally.



## Mansfield and District Branch <sup>21</sup>

In February, branch members attended a commemoration to mark the 75th anniversary of the loss of a Stirling bomber from RAF Winthorpe (now Newark Air Museum). The aircraft crashed at Kings Clipstone near Edwinstowe having run out of fuel in bad weather. Five of the crew were killed and two injured. The memorial is on private land and was dedicated in June 2015. Anyone wishing to visit should contact admin@newarkairmuseum.org. The branch has already started collecting for this year's Wings Appeal and is looking forward to a busy summer.



## Moray Branch <sup>22</sup>

The branch's first event of the year was the annual laying of a wreath at the Dallachy memorial for ANZAC day on 25 April. The event was hosted by personnel from RAF Lossiemouth. Also in attendance was the new deputy Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire, Air Commodore Alistair Monkman; former Commander of 617 Squadron and also former Lossiemouth Station Commander. The photograph shows Moray Branch's Deputy Chairman Eddie Pratt. The year's fundraising began in May with the first collection being at Tesco in Elgin, where the people of Moray supported the Association generously.



## North Cotswolds Branch <sup>23</sup>

The branch started their Wings Appeal collections at the Stratford-upon-Avon Tesco Superstore, where the Mayor of Stratford visited to wish them well for 2019. The branch collects at every opportunity for the Wings Appeal and was delighted to receive the cup in Plymouth at the Area Annual AGM and conference for the seventh consecutive year.



The winner of the July - September branch news photo competition is Moray Branch.



## Peterborough Branch <sup>24</sup>

The branch's long-serving standard bearer Ron Arthur enjoyed his 90th birthday earlier in the year. Ron joined the RAF in 1947. After passing his trade test in electrical engineering Ron serviced aircraft – usually Lancasters – before undergoing bomb training and being classed as an essential tradesman. In his role as branch standard bearer Ron attends events such as the Battle of Britain, remembrance, and armed forces parades as well as anniversaries, funerals and many dedication services. He is a stalwart of Peterborough Branch and an integral part of the branch's committee.

## Plymouth Branch <sup>25</sup>

The Hugh Trenchard token arrived at the Hoe Promenade, Plymouth, from Torquay Branch in September in the presence of standard bearers, air cadets and other honoured guests. A couple of days later a service was held at the Harrowbeer Airfield Memorial in the presence of Branch President Group Captain Rick Colver, standard bearers, military guests, local mayors, landowners, schoolchildren and air cadets, plus members of the public. Thank you to all the branches who attended the area conference held in Plymouth. We trust that you enjoyed your visit to our city.

## Poole Branch <sup>26</sup>

At the Annual Service to commemorate the founding of the RAF, held at St Clement Danes Church, the branch standard was paraded by Cadet Warrant Officer Will Reed of 2391 (Parkstone) Squadron. He also carried the standard at the 2018 Birmingham International Tattoo. We are indebted to him for representing the branch on these notable occasions.



## Romsey Branch

Despite fielding a reduced number of collectors, the branch had a successful Wings Appeal collection. The Battle of Britain service and Remembrance Day service were also well attended. The branch's highlight of the year was the RAF100 Anniversary Tea held in conjunction with Braishfield Village Association. The branch had its AGM in March and looked back over the past year's events, when they were entertained by several interesting local speakers at their monthly meetings. These covered various topics including New Forest ponies, flying boats at Calshott and National Air Traffic Services (Swanwick).

## Ryedale Branch <sup>27</sup>

At the AGM held in March, Chairman Cyril Shreeve stepped down after 20 years in the role. He handed over his badge of office to Andrew Sollitt MBE, who has held the role of Branch Honorary Secretary for the past year. Cyril was appointed Chairman in 1999 and was presented with a certificate of appreciation and gifts from branch members to recognise his long service. He will continue as President. In April, Wing Commander Alun Walton of RAF Fylingdales presented the wives of the branch's three remaining founder members with flowers (see photo) to mark the birthday of Barbara Shreeve.



## St. Austell Branch 28

Mr Derek Warren, who has served as the Chairman of the St Austell Branch since it was re-formed in 1984, stood down at the branch AGM on 21 February 2019. He was wholeheartedly thanked by those present for his long and dedicated service to the branch, and was presented with a letter of commendation from the Area President, Air Vice-Marshal Martin Clark, and a suitably engraved Association plaque. The branch hopes to see him regularly in the future; but perhaps in a more relaxed pose. John Turner (pictured) has succeeded Derek as Chairman.



## WRAF Branch 29 30

In February the branch once again enjoyed its AGM weekend. This year the event was held at the Copthorne Hotel, Birmingham and our guests over the weekend were Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, Mr Nick Bunting and Mrs Ailsa Gough. Since the first meeting in 2013 attendance at our AGMs continues to rise, and this year more than 80 members were at the meeting. As a virtual branch we feel that we have proved that you can still reach out and enjoy contact with other members, and the social aspect of our branch is just as strong as the regular branches.



## York Branch

The annual branch church service was held at All Saints Pavement in March, with the Reverend Allan Hughes officiating in his last service prior to his retirement as branch padre after 15 years' service. This was also the last service attended by a representative of RAF Linton-on-Ouse prior to the station's closure. Also in March, Chairman Brian Mennell presented the branch with a certificate from the Association to mark the raising of over £10,000 for the Wings Appeal over the last year. The certificate was accepted by Wings Appeal Officer Ian Smith. Total funds raised this year stands at over £4,000, with several major collection events still to run.



## Submissions to Branch News

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

## Best branch photo

Congratulations to Moray Branch for the winning photo of the annual laying of a wreath at the Dallachy memorial for ANZAC day on 25 April by Deputy Chairman Eddie Pratt. The hamper of treats from RAF Association supporter Wilkin and Sons of Tiptree in Essex will be coming your way.



# RAFALO of the year: Corporal Ash Oldroyd-Clarke



At May's Annual Conference Corporal Ash Oldroyd-Clarke was awarded The Wally Marriott Trophy in recognition of his outstanding contribution as RAF Association Liaison Officer (RAFALO). Ash's citation noted his persistent, dedicated approach and tireless work with station authorities to better the lives of serving personnel and the broader RAF family. Below we ask Ashley about his ten years with the Association, and life in the RAF and beyond.

## Tell us a bit about your RAF career

I joined the RAF in 2001 and served at various units in the UK and Germany, completing four tours of the Falklands and one in Iraq. I'm currently at RAF College Cranwell. My best tour was recruiting in the Careers Office in Hull which incidentally started my work with the Association.

## Why did you decide to become a RAFALO?

I was introduced to the Association by my then-boss, Warrant Officer Chris Osborne. I liked what he was doing and slowly increased my involvement. When Chris retired from the RAF he gave me his RAFALO tie, and I still help at the air shows he attends in his current role as Event Retail Manager with the Association.

## What events/projects have you been involved in?

The highest profile event has to be the RAF100 parade in London last year. I have also been involved in setting up and operating the Association's Lincoln Christmas market stall for many years. I've helped with "Brew for the Few" and worked at numerous air shows on behalf of Association. Scarborough Armed Forces Day is my favourite event. I'm really proud of the relationship I've built with two local businesses where a lot of our fundraising is carried out. The Agra Indian Restaurant in Sleaford has been outstanding with their support, and I cannot thank Downton and Oldrids in Grantham enough for their continued support for us.

## What are you most proud of having achieved as a RAFALO?

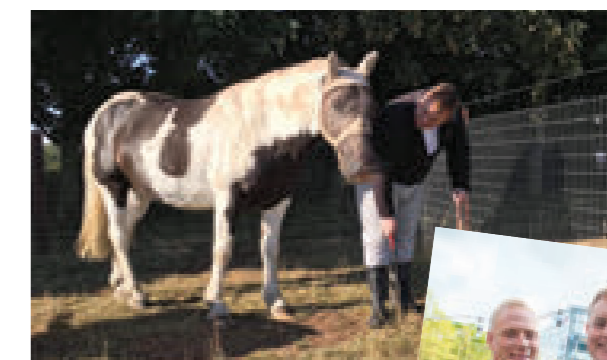
Helping to make the team at RAF College Cranwell into a very successful and dedicated group of volunteers, and working alongside the Association's Cranwell Branch. I am also now the Treasurer of Grantham Branch.

## What does it mean to you to win this award?

It's a very prestigious award and it's great to be acknowledged by the Association, but I see it as a team award. Without the fantastic support from Flight Sergeant Michelle Rees-Martin and the rest of our team I wouldn't have been able to support as many projects as I have.

## If you weren't in the RAF what would you do?

I really enjoy fundraising, so maybe something in the charity sector. If not, I'd like to be a publican.



## Do you have any unusual hobbies or pastimes?

Myself and my husband Keiren have a horse, which takes a lot of our time, and we are hoping to add to our family soon.

## What's the best piece of advice you've ever received? Have you followed it?

I was told by an old family friend, Mr Frank Ward, to join the RAF. I did so and he was correct. Thank you Frank!

## What quality do you most like in other people?

Honesty. I'm also continually surprised by the generosity of the people at events. One donation sticks out more than most. While collecting in Hull a homeless man donated £2; for someone who has very little it meant a lot to me. I bought him lunch.

## Tea or coffee?

Yorkshire tea - and it's best enjoyed with a slice of cake with the veterans from Grantham Branch.

Top left: L-R: "I see it as a team award" says Ash Oldroyd-Clarke (second from left). The rest of the team, from the left, are: Director for the Association's South East and Eastern Area Ailsa Gough, Cranwell Branch Chairman Mike Smith, and Senior RAFALO at RAF Cranwell Flight Sergeant Michelle Rees-Martin. © Heidi Burton.

Top above: Ash with Mr Darcy, the horse he and his husband Keiren keep at RAF Cranwell. © Kieren Oldroyd-Clarke

Above: Ash and husband Keiren at the Annual Conference Gala Dinner. © Heidi Burton





Thor and Blue Streak missiles on display at the National Space Centre in Leicester. © National Space Centre (Blue Streak on loan from National Museums Liverpool, World Museum, Blue Streak Missile Guidance Bay (nosecone) on loan courtesy of National Museums Scotland)

# “A feeling we may not be long for this world” by Mike Curtis

**Three days after Christmas 1958, Ivan Farmer was in Leicestershire looking forward to spending New Year with his new girlfriend Margaret. He was at home, on leave from his work at an RAF base in East Anglia when a telegram delivered by a Post Office rider on a red BSA Bantam motorcycle ended his time off and ensured that suddenly there was an Emily in his life as well as a Margaret.**

The telegram read: ‘Return to Unit immediately, posted to USA’. Ivan, who eventually married Margaret, had been chosen to participate in ‘Project Emily’ — the codename for the deployment on UK soil of the American Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles, with their thermonuclear warheads.

Four years later, the world held its collective breath as the United States and the Soviet Union confronted each other in what became known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The tension was especially tangible at the 20 Bomber Command squadrons operating the Thor missile — which were brought to full readiness during the 13 day standoff.

Ivan had joined the RAF as a trainee aircraft electrician and by the end of 1958 he was working at RAF Watton in Norfolk as a Junior Technician. After receiving the telegram cancelling his leave, he embarked on the tortuous rail journey back to Watton only to find his section closed. Ivan eventually found a lonely Flight Sergeant who told him to report to RAF Innsworth near Gloucester the following day.

Another rail journey with numerous changes got him to Innsworth two days later where he learnt more about Project Emily. Ivan was among 30 personnel going to Milwaukee. He would train on the Thor missiles which were being introduced to RAF service at bases in East Anglia, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. The project was funded by the Americans but any launches were under a dual key process in which both the United States Air Force (USAF) and the Royal Air Force had to insert their own key in the system.

“I thought we would be going to the USA in a noisy RAF transport aircraft but we had a big surprise”, says Ivan. “We were told to report to Southampton as we would be crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Mary Cunard liner! There followed an experience that has stayed with me ever since. It was incredible for a bunch of lads in their early 20s: there was great

food, great service and great entertainment on the ship. It was a taste of travel as it used to be experienced by people on a sounder financial footing than me!”

In New York, they stayed in a hotel for three days before six of them boarded a train to Milwaukee via Chicago. They spent the next four months learning how to work on the Thor missiles. Away from the base, they had a steep learning curve as well. There was no military accommodation nearby so they had to do their own cooking and cleaning – domestic chores, which Ivan says were somewhat alien to them.

“It was pretty much an adventure. We got a generous daily cash allowance from the US government”, says Ivan. “We were something of a novelty there and travelling out to the training base on the buses inevitably got us involved in conversations, often with veterans who had spent the Second World War in the UK. Likewise when we went out for a few beers, we were sure to be royally treated”.

The training was intense and Ivan felt he was somewhat misplaced as an electrician. However two RAF Chief Technicians helped him with the maths and the gyroscope theory as he got to grips with the missile guidance system. He says that the Thor was actually easy to work on – and described the American engineering as ‘excellent’.

*Continued...*



Ivan (front row, third from right) poses with comrades in front of the Thor missile at Vandenberg Air Force Base, USA. © Ivan Farmer.



Thor ballistic missile raised on the launch pad at RAF Feltwell, February 1960. The liquid oxygen tanks are visible in the foreground.  
© Keystone Press / Alamy Stock Photo.



The Cuban missile crisis was a political and military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union which lasted for 13 days in October 1962. The Soviet Union, led by Nikita Khrushchev, installed nuclear missiles on the island of Cuba, just 90 miles from the United States. President John F Kennedy ordered a naval blockade of Cuba and made it clear that the United States would use military power to neutralise this perceived threat. The world feared that this confrontation could prompt a nuclear exchange between the two superpowers.

After a return trip to the UK on another Cunard liner (the second RMS Mauretania which was launched in 1938 and scrapped in 1965), Ivan reported to RAF Feltwell which was home to 77 Squadron and was the parent station for four other Thor launch sites. Building work on the launch pads had started some months back and the missiles were gradually being flown into the UK in the cargo holds of USAF transport aircraft. Ivan rarely went near the launch pads and spent most of his time working on the guidance systems in one of the hangars.



Ivan today at Melton Mowbray Branch © RAF Association

"There were practice countdowns to launch on a regular basis. Most were 'dry' counts up to the refuelling point", recalls Ivan. "Occasionally there were 'wet' counts when the missiles were loaded with fuel. Once the fuel was in the missile, there was four minutes to launching it. There was a USAF captain on each site and an RAF launch crew under a Flight Lieutenant, usually aircrew on a ground tour. Of course we were not allowed to talk about what we did on the base, having signed the Official Secrets Act."

"The Cuban missile crisis did change the atmosphere at RAF Feltwell and the other Thor bases. It was the same for everyone at the V-bomber bases too", says Ivan. "You took it in your stride but there was a feeling that we may not be long for this world. We tried to keep up with it through the radio and the newspapers. We were put onto 12 hour shifts and they doubled the number of safety officers to certify the valid launch codes. There was one lengthy 'operational hold' during the confrontation. It was a very tense period. In the village, the local landlord complained that his pub was empty as no one came in during the crisis!"

Ivan did witness one actual launch of a Thor missile. Every so often, one UK-based missile was selected at random, loaded onto a transport aircraft and flown to Vandenberg Air Force Base north of Los Angeles. There it was checked over to ensure that it was being maintained correctly and then it was launched. Ivan was among the crew that accompanied one of the Feltwell missiles on a test trip. It worked but was 0.3 miles off target, which was deemed acceptable at that time.

"I look back with some pride on the way that the RAF coped with the Thor project", said Ivan. "At that time missile technology was in its infancy but the service rose to the challenge and the personnel of all ranks and trades assimilated the new technology which was alien to nearly everyone. Then four years after the missile was deployed in 1959, we heard a news flash that the Thor was to be withdrawn".

The rundown of the Thor force took about six months with the final stand down in September 1963. Ivan, who was one of the last to leave RAF Feltwell, was posted to RAF Scampton to work on the Blue Steel nuclear missile which was carried by RAF Vulcans and Victors. Later he worked as an electrical instrument technician on Nimrods at RAF St Mawgan and RAF Luqa in Malta and qualified as an RAF gliding instructor. He worked on Canberras at RAF Cottesmore before leaving the RAF as a Chief Technician in 1977. Ivan then had a successful career as an engineer, sales executive and consultant with a Leicester-based precision engineering company which took him around the world.

Ivan and Margaret were married before the Cuban missile crisis, and were together for 58 years before Margaret passed away. They settled in Leicestershire, not far from another former Thor missile base just south of Melton Mowbray, where they raised their son and daughter before also becoming grandparents. The brickwork of the Thor launch pads can still be seen today on the old airfield at Melton Mowbray. Ivan is still involved today at Melton Mowbray Branch

A Thor rocket can be seen today in the Rocket Tower at the National Space Centre in Leicester. Visitors can stand directly underneath it, and also view it from platforms half way up and 27 metres up, at the top ([spacecentre.co.uk](http://spacecentre.co.uk)).



# Letters from India



Sergeant John Hazzlewood in India, aged 23.

**When John Hazzlewood was posted to India as an RAF wireless operator during the Second World War, he had no idea the large number of letters he would send home during his five years abroad - and the equally large number written to him by his father - would one day form a unique archive. Association member John tells us his story, from his beginnings as an AC2 (Aircraftman).**

I joined the RAF as a volunteer reservist five days after Britain declared war on Germany. Having perfect night vision I was selected as a night fighter pilot. To my great disappointment, after completing the first stage of my training - as a wireless operator - I was told I had to be taken off pilot training and sent out to India, where there was a great shortage of wireless operators.

I sailed from Glasgow along with 22 other RAF wireless operators aboard the Warwick Castle in a large convoy. This became gradually smaller as ships anchored at various ports in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean up to Aden, where we broke off and continued alone to Bombay, now Mumbai. We had been at sea for seven weeks. It was a sheer pleasure cruise. Sadly that beautiful ship was later torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean.

After landing in Bombay, a 1,000 mile train journey took us to Central Wireless Station (CWS) just outside Ambala, in the Punjab. In those days of course the whole sub-continent was India; Pakistan did not exist.

The first day I was at CWS I went to the main wireless building, where men were taking down Morse Code messages from London and elsewhere. As I had not yet been given anything to do I took the opportunity presented by an unused typewriter to write a brief letter home, simply telling my new address.

From then on I wrote frequently to my father back home in Yorkshire, and when he wrote to me he made carbon copies of his typing. Although these letters could take a long time to arrive - and often turned up in the wrong order - they all eventually reached their destination. When I returned from India I found my father had kept every one, hundreds of letters in total.

My use of the typewriter to compose that first letter did not go unnoticed however. When the Warrant Officer saw me typing with all ten fingers he came over and told me to follow him to a small isolated building where there was a single teleprinter (T/P). He said they badly needed someone with typing skills to operate it - they had only two-finger typists.

So that became my job, working with three others on four shifts continuously every 24 hours. Every fourth shift was 'off duty'. All the Morse Code messages, neatly written on a pad, were brought

from the wireless building to the T/P room by Indian messenger boys to be transmitted to Delhi (in winter) or Simla (in summer). Every message was in code, so we did not know what we were sending.

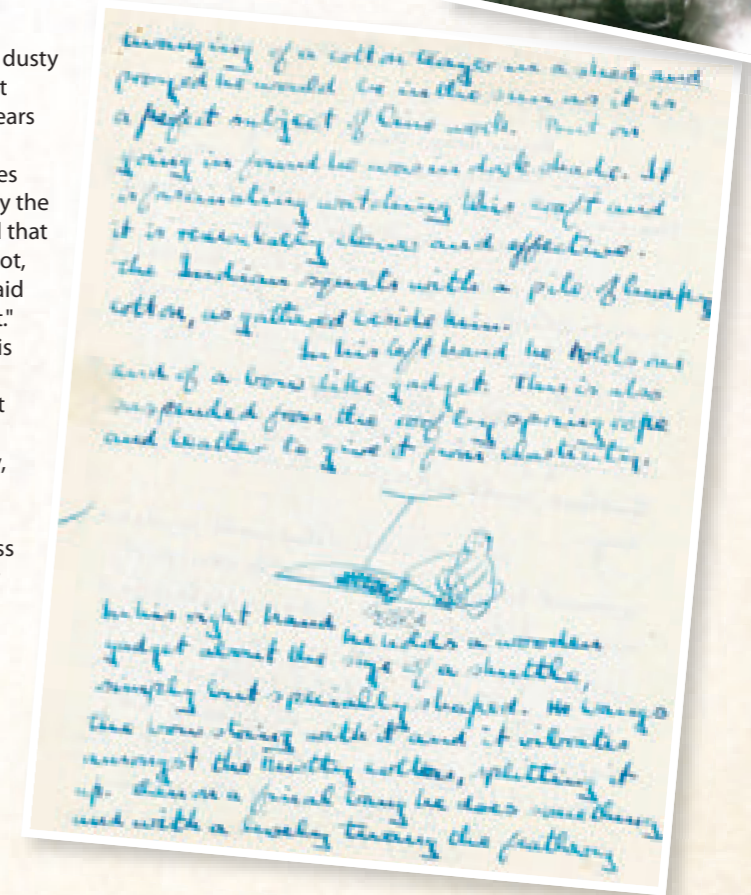
Living and working in Ambala was quite an experience for me. The station was a long way from Ambala town, and was surrounded by infertile soil on which scraggy cattle were 'grazed'. I liked to walk or cycle around the surrounding land and see the sights, and remember in one village coming upon a man teasing cotton using traditional tools. His craft fascinated me so much that I wrote a page-and-a-half description to my father - complete with sketch drawing.

I was once in the Public Library in Simla and, in a dusty heap in a corner, saw a tatty book with a title that intrigued me. It was a biography written many years earlier about people in India, not long after the famous Indian Mutiny. The margins of some pages had written notes amending statements made by the author. In one exchange the author had asserted that an individual had died. A note read "No, he did not, he got out." A second note, in a different hand, said "Yes he got out, but he was re-captured and shot." There were about half a dozen exchanges like this throughout the book. Ever since reading those handwritten remarks I have cursed myself for not taking the book from the heap, which I am sure was destined for a rubbish bin. It was real history, going back to the days of the Indian Mutiny.

There was nothing to do in our leisure time unless we went into the town, either by hired bicycle or in a horse-drawn tonga (a light carriage). There, we could use one cinema showing English language films, but a second cinema was out of bounds for us. It showed only Indian films and was not deemed to be safe for us. There were two places to eat - 'Ma Bradley's' run by a motherly English lady of uncertain age, had the best food, so I went there. The other was more popular because it had games to play such as snooker, but served poor food.

Top: Borrowing a bicycle to get to Ma Bradley's for food.

Below: "I liked to walk or cycle around the surrounding land and see the sights and remember in one village coming upon a man teasing cotton using traditional tools".



Continued...

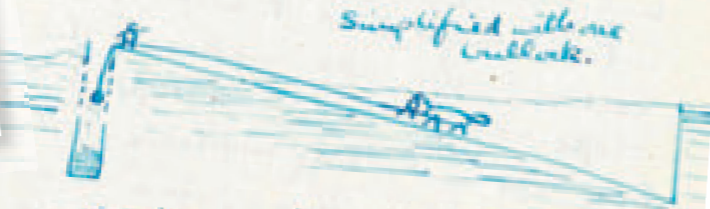




Above: One of the horse-drawn tongas that John used to get to the cinema in Ambala.

Right: Describing and drawing how the wells worked that he saw on his travels.

dekhurial. the water flows from the trough into irrigation channels. there were a row such wells, mostly simple ones, round about. we got some fine views of it.



We went into Siri then (see my map of some northwards) and on to a village in Jharkhand, called Begampur, as it is clustered round the Begampur Mosque. We did not go in this Mosque as we were too thirsty. But we climbed to the top of the tower of the Bedi Mandir which overlooks it and took some fine aerial photos.

then we made straight for the Kuthi Minar and lost no time in visiting the Government Dake Bungalow for a glass of water, pot of tea, bread and

In spite of its rather grim location 'out in the blue' as we called it, surrounded by stunted trees, I enjoyed life in Ambala. I seem to have the ability to enjoy life wherever I am. Across the scrubland a few miles from camp was an Indian Army Cavalry School. One day I asked if I could be taught to ride a horse. The British Officer agreed, and I had lessons which served me well on future leaves when I rode a horse trekking in the magnificent Himalayan Mountains: once reaching a height of 13,000 feet via a narrow track to the top of the Rhotang Pass.

Then Japan entered the war by bombing Pearl Harbour and sweeping towards India, capturing several famous British bases. They took Singapore with surprising ease before turning north to Burma. A huge pile of top priority messages quickly built up in the T/P room and the commanding officer (CO) asked me what could be done about them. I said "Give me two airmen — they don't need to be Signals personnel - and I will clear the lot by midnight including all the new ones that come in." I got the men, one each side of me doing the paperwork and putting the messages in front of me, then taking them off the message holder. I had nothing to do but type, and drink essential mugs of chah (tea). By the time I went off duty every message had gone, and I went to bed exhausted.

When I got up at lunchtime the CO sent for me. "Headquarters have asked who was on duty last night. You have a posting to New Delhi tomorrow". This was wonderful news. For one thing, Delhi was heaven compared with Ambala, and for another every airman posted to Delhi was immediately upgraded to Sergeant. This was

necessary for the cost of living, but the real reason was the British civilians - still with a peacetime British Raj mentality - who said no serviceman was acceptable in Delhi below the rank of Sergeant.

So, after spending two years in Ambala I then had three years in Delhi, the capital of India.

America joined the war following the Pearl Harbour bombing and American servicemen increasingly turned up in Delhi. In a letter home I commented on the easy time they had, at least compared with us. "These Americans have a tea party of a time — I never thought any country would pamper an army as they are pampered."

While in Delhi I met an old friend unexpectedly and wrote home to tell my father (who also knew him) the happy news: "Yesterday I received a letter re-addressed from Ambala from Harry Beevers saying he was in Delhi. He has been working in an office a stone's throw from me for six weeks and we did not know. He'd not heard

that I had left Ambala ... Ten minutes after I opened his letter I was bouncing into his office to say "How do" — and he just looked blankly at me, not believing his eyes at first."

I launched and edited a magazine for the RAF in India, broadcast talks on All-India radio, published newspapers and at the end of the war a four-page newspaper for RAF members in Delhi keeping them informed of the progress of getting them repatriated, all in addition to my Signals work.

When the war ended, I returned to England and studied printing in Leeds. I then worked from London as Sales Director for a printing firm in Yorkshire, then for the Chartered Institute of Building in Ascot. Finally, self-employed, I edited various magazines from my home in Ludlow. When I was 72 I retired from this and worked part time for the local newspaper in Ludlow as voluntary assistant to the Editor.

About six years ago I moved to Tywyn, in Gwynedd, Wales, the best move I ever made in my life. I have been a member of the RAF Association since soon after I came to Tywyn. I met the wife of the local branch Chairman and when she learned of my RAF connection I was invited to become a member of the local branch committee.

The Association had a big celebration in Tywyn for the 100th anniversary of the RAF. At 99 years of age, I am nearly as old as the RAF itself, so I was in demand for celebrations marking that historic occasion. I was photographed against the miniature steam railway engine "Douglas" of the Talylyn Railway that runs from Tywyn to Abergynolwyn. "Douglas" has been adopted by the local branch and painted blue with RAF roundels upon it.

A visiting team of RAF motor cyclists joined the celebrations and took me to the site of a wartime RAF station in Tywyn for more photographs.

I loved India, and had a wonderful life there. All the letters to and from India, between father (a 'pure' Yorkshireman) and son are to be published in my memoirs. The originals will be used for the subject of a Masters degree by a university student, and finally will go to the archives of the West Yorkshire Archive Service. This service is the nearest to where I lived before the war, and numerous Yorkshire locales are mentioned in the letters.



On leave, John trekked on horseback to 13,000 feet and the Rhotang Pass, in the Himalayan Mountains.

I used to say that my years in India were the best time of my life, but now it has been replaced by my years in Tywyn. I never want to live anywhere else. I have wonderful friends in the Markham family, who have a 1,400 acre farm for Welsh Mountain Sheep and a herd of Welsh Black cattle. The land goes to the very top of the highest local mountain, Cader Idris. When Anne Elisabeth Markham found I have no blood relations anywhere in the world - I have outlived them all - she adopted me as a member of the Markham family by giving me a piece of Welsh slate, which hangs on the wall over my computer and bears a single word in Welsh. Teulu. There could not be a sweeter word with which to end this story. Teulu. Family.

Curious as ever - John drawing from a well in Ambala

John took photos and film as well as doing drawings and writing home about what he saw



John this year at home in Wales.

All images and letters provided by John Hazzlewood.



# Remembering Free French lost at sea



Main: The proposed site of the memorial overlooking the Channel at Le Treport. Inset: An impression of the Project 2020 memorial.

**Ile-de-France Branch is supporting a project to remember 118 airmen who lost their lives for the Free French Air Force and whose bodies were never found.**

'Projet 2020' is researching information and raising funds for a monument inscribed with the names, dates of death and the squadrons to which each airman belonged, and a map showing the approximate zone of each crash.

On 18 June 1940, General Charles de Gaulle made an appeal on the BBC for French volunteers to join him in London in the fight to liberate France from the German invasion. 4,000 men and women responded to his call and joined the Free French Air Force. Of these, 600 died in action and the bodies of 118 were never found. 95 were lost at sea, mostly in the English Channel. The coastal town of Le Treport has volunteered to be the site of the

monument and the project is sponsored by the Fondation de la France Libre.

Ile-de-France Chairman, Wing Commander Graham August, is helping with the research for a website, which will be accessed directly from the memorial by a QR code. It is hoped that the inauguration will take place in late June 2020 to coincide with the 80th anniversary of General de Gaulle's appeal.

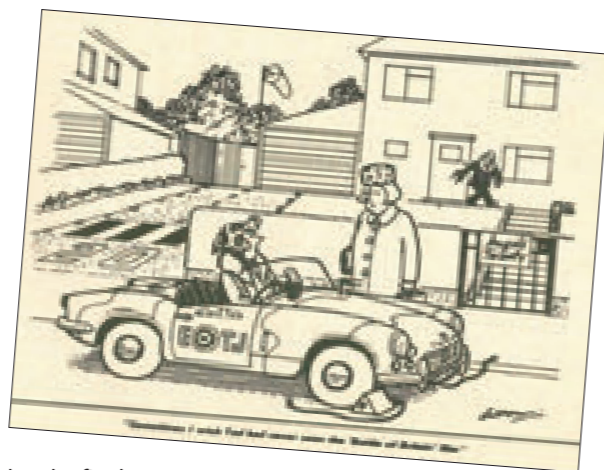
Support for the memorial can be given via Frederic Bentley at the Association AM Forces Aériennes Françaises Libres, 16 Cour des Petites Écuries, 75010 Paris, France or by calling +33 6 70 77 19 68 or emailing amfafl.contact@gmail.com; or through Geoff Lyon, Treasurer of Ile-de-France Branch on +33 6 07 10 49 76 or geofflyon@orange.fr. More information can be obtained from both these contacts.

## 50 years since Battle of Britain film premiered

**Fifty years ago this September, representatives from the RAF Association sat alongside flying ace Douglas Bader and former Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command Lord Dowding at London's Dominion Theatre for the film premiere of Guy Hamilton's *Battle of Britain*.**

Initial reviews were favourable. After the showing, Douglas Bader proclaimed that it had been "very good and entirely fair", and Lord Dowding noted "I have not had time to enjoy it. I was so carried away." The next day the Daily Mirror wrote that the film had "strikingly caught the atmosphere of those weeks of destiny... (and created) an honest, non-heroic tribute to The Few." While the Birmingham Daily Post marvelled at the final battle's superbly elaborate 'aerial arabesques', back on the ground it noted that the film frequently sank into cliché, with 'the erks and the lower classes supplying standard comic relief'.

Regional premieres around the country were also attended by Association representatives and members, with the President of the Eastern Area welcoming Air Vice-Marshal (retired) Johnnie Johnson to the Leicester screening and presenting him with a model Spitfire.



A sketch from Air Mail shortly after the film's release. © RAF Association

Caption reads: "Sometimes I wish Ted had never seen the *Battle of Britain* film"

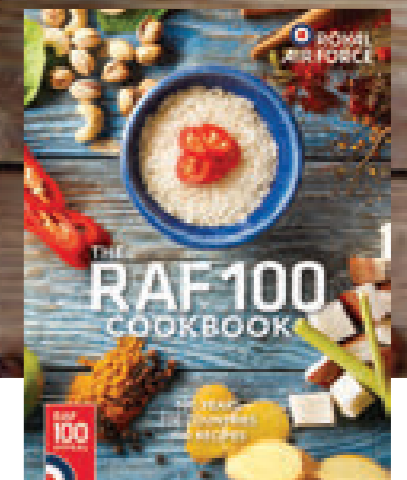
# Bread & Butter Pudding

From the RAF100 Cookbook

To make bread and butter pudding perfect, the bread should be stale, not fresh. White bread can be replaced with brioche, fruit loaf or left-over panettone. Fruit can be so baked in rum, brandy or a liqueur, such as Cointreau, and should be layered in the pudding and not sprinkled over the top. Before baking, the buttered bread should soak up the vanilla-flavoured custard prior to topping up with a final layer of custard. It can be baked as it is, but cooking in a bain-marie allows it to cook and set evenly.



English bread and butter pudding is the epitome of simplicity.



### Method

- Butter the bread, remove the crusts and cut into triangles. Butter a 5 litre ovenproof dish to stop the bread baking to it.
- Build up the bread in the dish like a jigsaw, sprinkling sultanas over each layer except for the top one — otherwise, you'll think of rabbits straight away when it comes out of the oven!
- Now make your custard: bring the milk, cream and vanilla (pods and seeds) to the boil. Meanwhile, whisk your egg yolks and sugar together until they become very pale, almost beige. Pour the cream mixture over the egg mixture and stir with a wooden spoon, then place the bowl over some boiling water and stir the custard until it coats the back of the spoon.
- Pass the custard through a sieve — not a fine one, you just want to get rid of the vanilla pod — then pour it over the bread leaving a bit behind to top up later.
- Leave the pudding at room temperature for around six hours to soak up the custard, then top up with the excess custard and put the dish in a bath of water, or bain-marie, and place in the oven at 130°C. Cook for around 25 minutes until it has just a slight wobble.
- Leave to cool slightly.
- Sprinkle caster sugar on top and glaze using a blowtorch or under a hot grill to create a crispy top, then dish up.

### Ingredients

*For the bread and butter pudding:*

- 12 slices of white bread
- 125g butter
- 30g sultanas
- 450ml double cream
- 150ml milk
- 2 vanilla pods, split lengthways and seeds scraped
- 7 large egg yolks
- 175g caster sugar

### To serve:

Good quality vanilla ice cream, fresh egg custard or a bit of both

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**Get your copy of the RAF100 Cookbook for £25 from rafatrad.co.uk or call 0800 018 2361 to order.**



# News from the RAF

by Mike Curtis



The F-35B Lightning will be going overseas later in 2019 to test the maintenance and logistics needed to support it © MOD/Crown

**While the F-35B Lightning II is getting most of the publicity, other brand new aircraft are being ordered or are coming into service with the RAF. An order has now been placed for five Boeing E-7 Wedgetails which will take over the UK's Airborne Early Warning and Control capability.**

The Wedgetails, costing £1.51 billion, will replace the RAF's fleet of Boeing E-3D Sentry aircraft at Waddington. They will provide a technological edge in an increasingly complex battlespace, allowing pilots to track and target adversaries more effectively than ever. It can track multiple airborne and maritime targets at the same time, using the information it gathers to direct fighters and warships. The deal also strengthens the vital military partnership with Australia, which also operates Wedgetails and the F-35.

As part of the transition to the Wedgetail, the existing E-3D Sentry fleet will be reduced from six to four, removing two of the aircraft which have been unserviceable for some time.

The RAF's training fleet continues to be upgraded with new aircraft. The Beechcraft Texan T1 and the Embraer Phenom 100 are now being used to train pilots at RAF Valley and RAF Cranwell, along with new helicopters, the Airbus Juno and Jupiter. The aircraft that the Texan is replacing, the Tucano, is going out on a high note. For the first time in five years, the RAF has decided to reform the Tucano display team. Flight Lieutenant Liam Matthews, an instructor on 72 Squadron at Linton-on-Ouse, has been certified to display the aircraft this summer.

"I'd like to thank everyone who has been involved in getting us to this point, considering the last time the Tucano displayed was during the 2014 season," said Flight Lieutenant Matthews. "It's been a big team effort to achieve our Public Display Authority and we are really looking forward to displaying the Tucano to the public during its final year of service in the Royal Air Force."

Crews for the RAF's new Poseidon MRA Mk1 have begun simulator training in the United States. The personnel, from CXX Squadron at Lossiemouth, are being trained by a mix of US Navy and the RAF P-8A so-called 'seedcorn' instructors who have been flying the Poseidon for some months. The training includes flying at low and medium level over the sea so that mission crews can train in anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare. Back in the UK, the new three-bay hangar for the Poseidon fleet has already changed the skyline at Lossiemouth and will be ready for use in the autumn of next year.

Lossiemouth, which marked its 80th anniversary recently, has also welcomed a new, fourth operational Typhoon squadron to augment its mission to protect UK and NATO airspace. The aircraft and personnel of IX (B) Squadron will be at the heart of the UK's Quick Reaction Alert force but they will also be used in the 'aggressor' role. Some of the aircraft will be painted in distinctive markings to identify them as 'training adversaries' in which they will play the role of opposing aircraft in mock dog fights and replicate the latest air combat tactics.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said: "I am proud to see our Combat Air capabilities continue to grow, a necessity as they will undoubtedly continue to be in exceptionally high demand on operations, here in the UK and across the world." Typhoons from RAF Coningsby are now involved in the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission which involves them being based in Estonia for four months. At the beginning of May, No XI (F) Squadron took over from the German Air Force which had covered the mission for the past eight months. Support vehicles, including aircraft tugs, fuel bowlers and other specialist equipment, were loaded onto the cargo ship MV Eddystone at the Army's Sea Mounting Centre at Marchwood near Southampton for the five day voyage to Estonia. The responsibility for getting the RAF vehicles from their bases in the UK to their new temporary home at Amari was given to the professional drivers from No.2 Mechanical Transport Squadron at RAF Wittering.

Representing the RAF at the handover ceremony, Air Vice-Marshal Ian Duguid, Air Officer Commanding Number 11 Group, said: "We have been working very closely with the German Air Force during our preparation and have shared both ideas and experience. They have done an excellent job over the last eight months and we will draw upon their support and our own extensive experience as we begin our own mission."

The new F-35B Lightning will undertake its first overseas deployment later this year. Aircraft and crews from 617 Squadron at Marham will be based at RAF Akrotiri on Cyprus for a short period. The deployment will train and test all aspects of moving the aircraft to a new location, including logistics, maintenance, and sustainment of all the equipment and crew that comes with the F-35B.

The RAF has also acquired some older aircraft in the past few weeks. The Britten-Norman Defender and Islander surveillance aircraft transferred to the RAF from the Army Air Corps on 1 April. The aircraft had been under the authority of the Joint Helicopter Command but are now under the RAF's Number 1 Group. The personnel will transition over the next few years.

A RAF officer has been awarded a Polish medal at a ceremony held at the National Army Museum in London. Squadron Leader Richard Lewis from RAF High Wycombe was presented with the Polish Army Bronze Medal by the Polish Ambassador to the UK, Arkady Rzegocki. The reception was held to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joining NATO.

**Your membership of the Association gets you a discount on subscriptions to the fortnightly RAF News – published by the Royal Air Force. Call RAF News at Sheffield Web on 01909 517 331 or email rafnews@jpress.co.uk. You will need to give your membership number to subscribe.**



The Beechcraft Texan T1 will take over the basic fast jet training role currently fulfilled by the Tucano T.Mk 1. Students will progress onto the aircraft from the Prefect and move forwards to the Hawk T2. © MOD/Crown 2019



The E-3D Sentry will make way for the new Wedgetails. This Sentry was on exercise in North Yorkshire, testing aircraft and personnel from the RAF, Army and Navy as part of the London Olympics Air Security Plan. © MOD/Crown 2012

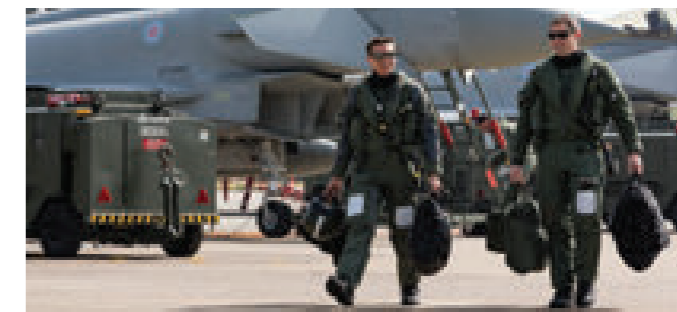
The award to Squadron Leader Lewis recognised his service at the NATO headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan as part of Operation Resolute Support. During his deployment, Squadron Leader Lewis was working alongside Polish and US officers advising on the implementation of strategic communications. For this work, Squadron Leader Lewis has also been awarded the United States Army Commendation Medal.



The Polish Army Bronze Medal, awarded to Squadron Leader Richard Lewis for his work with NATO © MOD/Crown 2019

At the awards event for The Times Top 50 Best Employer for Women in 2019 in April, Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliot, Chief of Staff Personnel and Air Secretary, and Air Commodore Maria Byford, the RAF's Deputy Gender Advocate, received the accolade along with Royal Navy colleagues. It is the first time the RAF has featured in The Times Top 50 Employers for Women since 2015. In gaining recognition in the listing, the RAF secured its place amongst a small cohort of selected organisations who have consistently made the commitment to become a top employer for women.

Speaking after the ceremony, Air Commodore Byford said: "As Deputy Gender Advocate for the Royal Air Force, I was delighted and very proud to attend the Times Top 50 Employers for Women 2019 reception with Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliot. The award recognises the significant progress that the Royal Air Force has made in improving policies to meet the life and family needs of our people, such as the introduction of flexible service, following the flexible duties trial, and the fantastic return to work rate for our servicewomen following maternity leave. It was truly inspiring to be able to network with the other organisations in the Top 50 and learn first-hand from their experiences."

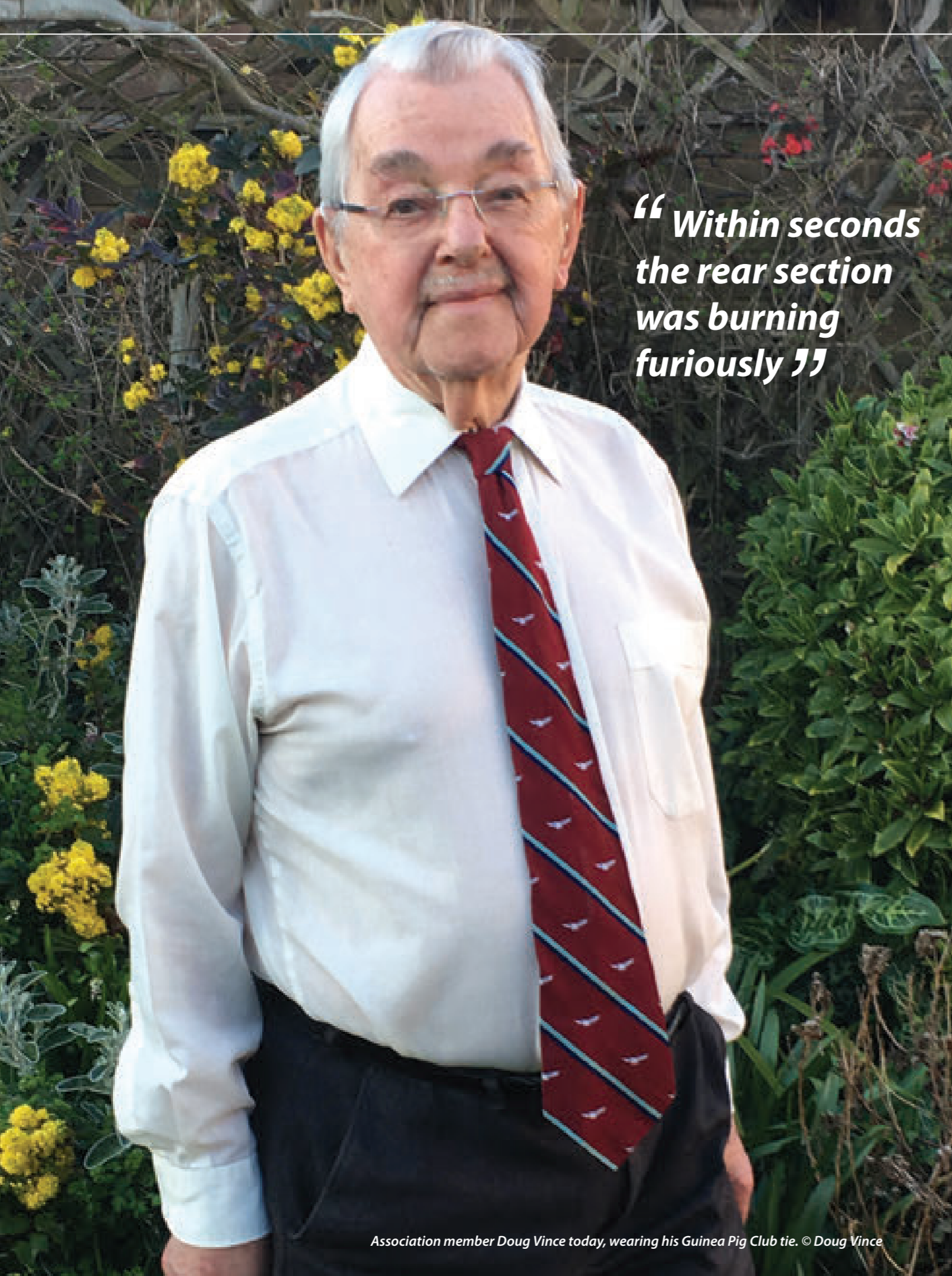


Typhoon pilots from XI Squadron walking to their aircraft. © MOD/Crown



Wedgetails are already used by the Australian Air Force, and will soon be introduced by the RAF. © MOD/Crown





**“ Within seconds the rear section was burning furiously ”**

Association member Doug Vince today, wearing his Guinea Pig Club tie. © Doug Vince

# Guinea Pig Doug

by Anne Maxwell

**When young Doug Vince’s father took him to an Empire Air Day during the 1930s, where Gloucester Gladiators and Hawker Harts were put through their paces, he decided there and then that he wanted to fly. Aviation was relatively new, and the excitement and glamour of being one of those conquerors of the skies made an indelible impression on Doug. Years later, aged just 18, he signed up to join the Royal Air Force. To his great disappointment he had to wait a year before he was called.**



Doug in 1941 during his time with the Home Guard. The cover on the motorcycle’s headlamp made detection by enemy aircraft more difficult. © Doug Vince

Doug wanted to be a pilot but could not get his head around the algebra tests that the role required he pass. Instead, he became a flight engineer. “Maths never was my strong point, but I had to laugh when they made me a flight engineer,” Doug recalled. “The pilot flew the aircraft and I’m sure he had his own calculations to do, but I was the one who had to calculate the fuel needed for all four engines. Fuel tank capacity, distance being flown and prevailing weather conditions all had to be taken into account!”

Doug eventually became part of 196 Squadron, based at RAF Shepherds Grove in Suffolk. The squadron served with Bomber Command from November 1942 to November 1943 and had taken part in the D-Day invasion and Operation Market Garden. Stirling aircraft had been used in front line operations but by the time Doug joined the squadron the Stirlings were used mainly to tow Horsa gliders, deliver fuel to front line combatants and engage in tactical bombing.

On 21 February 1945, Doug was flight engineer on board a Stirling LX126 which took off from RAF Shepherds Grove carrying 24 500lb bombs and heading for Rees in the Ruhr valley. It was an uneventful operation and, having completed its mission, the Stirling headed back to England. Everything proceeded smoothly and after crossing the English coastline the pilot switched on the navigation lights. It was standing orders to switch on the wing tip and tail lights as so many aircraft were returning to airfields in central England that these lights reduced the risk of collision.

Having received permission to land, the Stirling’s undercarriage was down, the flaps were deployed, speed had been reduced to 135mph and they were flying at an altitude of 600 feet. Then, without any warning or even the inkling of what was about to happen, a German Junkers 88 spotted the Stirling and opened fire. “When you’d flown an uneventful mission,” recalls Doug “the last thing you expect is to be attacked when you are so close to home and actually making your descent!”

The length of the Stirling was peppered with cannon and machine gun fire and within seconds the rear section was burning furiously. No-one was hit however, and the pilot was still able to control the aircraft. Guiding it towards its destination, orders were given for the escape hatches to be opened - time was of the essence. The fire quickly took hold and as they descended the last few hundred feet the navigator, bomb aimer, and wireless operator Sid McQuillan moved to the cockpit to avoid the fire that was burning furiously through the aircraft.

Doug and rear gunner Bruce McGovern were still in the rear, and Doug grabbed a fire extinguisher to try and tackle the flames in the fuselage. The fire had heated the extinguisher and as Doug grabbed the red-hot metal his right hand suffered third degree burns. He passed out briefly, which may well have saved his life as he was consigned to the cleaner air around the floor while the fire and smoke raged overhead. When he came round he saw a square of moonlight through the escape hatch and thought “I’m alive!” He then crawled towards the front of the aircraft, feeling no pain in his injured hand. On reaching an escape hatch, Doug and Sid McQuillan ran onto the wing and jumped 20 feet to the ground. The pilot, navigator and bomb aimer had all jumped from the cockpit escape hatch and they too had fallen 20 feet to the runway below.

There was no sign of rear gunner Bruce McGovern, and as Doug was being assisted by those who had rushed to help he insisted that Bruce was still on the burning aircraft. The pair had both been in the rear and Doug knew that Bruce hadn’t passed him. Doug was assured that Bruce had got out but he knew that they were wrong. He insisted that Bruce was still onboard but no-one would listen, and a needle in his arm put paid to any further argument. When Doug came round he was in the station hospital.

Continued...



The following day he and Sid McQuillan, who had suffered severe facial burns, were transferred to the RAF hospital in Ely where Doug discovered that 22-year-old Bruce McGovern had perished in the mid-section of the aircraft. To this day the fact that nobody would listen to him, and that he didn't press his argument more vociferously causes Doug deep sadness.

While being treated at Ely, Doug was introduced to surgeon Archibald McIndoe. McIndoe had trained with his cousin Harold Gillies and they led the field in pioneering plastic surgery. McIndoe visited Doug in hospital. "He held my injured hand and looked at it as if it was something really precious," said Doug. McIndoe looked at Doug's badly burned hand for several minutes. "I think we can help you," he finally said.



Archibald McIndoe, Consultant in Plastic Surgery to the Royal Air Force, operating at the Queen Victoria Plastic and Jaw Injury centre, East Grinstead. Painting by Anna Zinkeisen, 1944.

Doug was transferred to a specialist hospital in East Grinstead where skin was taken from his thigh and grafted onto his hand. The surgery was successful and the hand regained its normal use. The site of the graft, which covers the whole of the palm of Doug's right hand, lacks the usual palmar flexion creases but this does not affect its functional use.

The damaged Stirling from which Doug escaped.  
© Doug Vince



Doug, along with hundreds of other servicemen who suffered similar injuries and were helped by McIndoe and his team, were invited to join the Guinea Pig Club; so named because this type of surgery was innovative and the men being treated regarded themselves as the surgeons' guinea pigs. They were helping the surgeons to refine and develop the new techniques necessary to achieve the best possible outcomes from life-changing injuries. Without that surgery, the life of young Doug Vince may well have been very different.

Membership of the Guinea Pig Club numbered approximately 540 just after the war, and they started to meet annually, each wearing their Guinea Pig Club tie and badge with pride. There was a sad look about Doug as he said: "There were always lots of us at our annual gathering, but numbers have been dropping for some years. Unfortunately, at the last meeting there were only six of us. There may be other members who are still with us but they are probably not in a position to make the journey anymore."

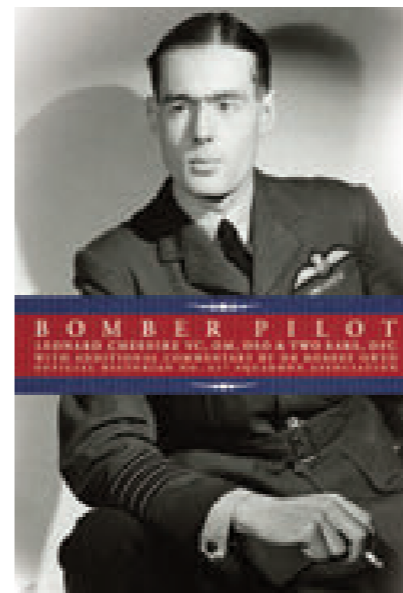
After the war, Doug entered civilian life and worked in sales. He married Margaret and described his wedding day as the happiest day of his life. Doug and Margaret had two children, Brian and Hazel, and a long and happy marriage lasting 64 years. He was widowed ten years ago and has just celebrated his 96th birthday. Doug now lives in retirement in Felixstowe, Suffolk and enjoys bowls, visiting his relatives and dining out with his friends.

Doug is a testament to the courage and fortitude shown by a generation of men and women who not only helped shape our world but without whom today's surgeons may not have been in a position to help the vast numbers of people who now benefit from plastic surgery.

### The Guinea Pig Club

- Established in 1941
- Members had to have had at least two surgical procedures
- Had around 540 members by the end of WWII
- Members included surgeons and anaesthetists as well as the patients who were undergoing their experimental reconstructive plastic surgery
- Burns treatment was in its infancy when the club was formed, and such injuries had often led to death before McIndoe and his colleagues stepped in
- McIndoe has the unique honour of being the only civilian commemorated at St Clement Danes, the RAF church on The Strand in London

# Culture Vultures

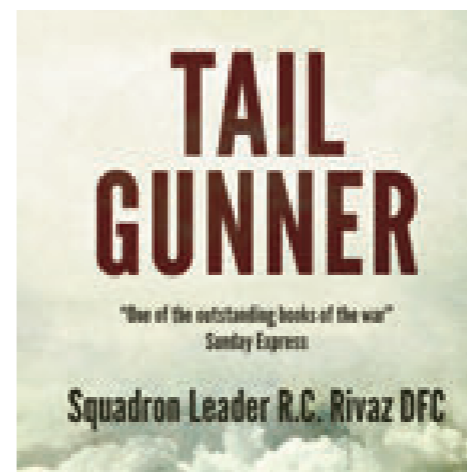


### Books of interest to the Association

**"Bomber Command Pilot"**  
by Leonard Cheshire VC  
Publisher: Fighting High

First published in 1943, Bomber Pilot is Leonard Cheshire's contemporary account of his experiences during his first three years with Bomber Command. His light style captures both

the exuberance of youth, yet also brings out the growing realisation of the responsibilities and dangers facing the young aircrew of Bomber Command. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his pioneering of low level marking and precision bombing, plus four years of fighting during which he maintained a record of outstanding personal achievement. In this new edition, Cheshire's original text is supplemented with an additional commentary by Dr Robert Owen, aviation historian and official historian of Leonard Cheshire's No. 617 Squadron Association.



### Audiobook releases

**"Tail Gunner"**  
by R.C. Rivaz  
Publisher: Endeavour Waves

Recently released as a four hour 38 minute audiobook, this gripping story of one man's involvement with RAF Bomber Command was first published in 1943. Written only months after the events described, R.C. Rivaz provides a fresh and immediate perspective on some of the most harrowing episodes of the war. Tail gunner to Leonard Cheshire VC, Rivaz recounts his experiences of night bombing attacks against heavily defended targets, recording in detail the sights and sounds of these dangerous raids. He describes equally well the colours of the setting sun from 15,000 feet, two crashes over the sea, and a dramatic shoot-out with German fighters — in cool but honest detail.



### Members' Grace

By Kev, member 177587

In 1918 Lord Trenchard said,  
I think aviation is the way ahead.  
The Navy's too wavy, the Army too coarse,  
we need to form a new kind of Air Force.  
And from Sopwiths to Spitfires, Lancasters, Mosquitoes,  
Venoms and Lightnings, Vulcans, Tornados,  
We've painted our history all over the sky,  
contrails of glory, the real 'Do or Die'.  
Now Typhoons, Voyager, the F35,  
but it's people who bring these aircraft alive.  
Johnny Johnson, Gibson, and of course Douglas Bader,  
men who kept fighting in the spirit of Per Ardua.  
So, mindful of all we have been and will be,  
I'm honoured that you have come here to join me.  
In friendship and service, one to another,  
our Association stronger as we all work together.  
So we thank you Dear Lord, may your love never tire,  
as we gather to commemorate, celebrate, inspire.  
And I'm sure we'll give thanks with each following course,  
that we are part of the family of the Royal Air Force.

### DVD releases

**"303 Squadron"**  
Certificate 15  
Dazzler Media



Recently released on DVD, Blu-ray and digital, 303 Squadron is the true story of the Polish Airmen who took part in the Battle of Britain and their contribution to victory in the Second World War. At a time when every day could be the last, the men of 303 Squadron didn't hesitate to perform extreme airborne manoeuvres to hit their

targets. Their skill and patriotism has since served as an example of true heroism for generations of Poles. The film not only tells about their spectacular actions during the Battle of Britain, but also shows their private lives; who they loved, lost and missed.



# World military aviation news

by J.M. Henderson

## Armenia



Armenia is negotiating with Russia to obtain some Sukhoi Su-30 fighter-bombers for its air force, a type it has been seeking to obtain for a number of years. However, until now funding has been an issue.

## Australia



The Royal Australian Air Force marked fifty years of operating the Lockheed P-3 Orion maritime surveillance aircraft in November 2018 with a formation flypast by three of the remaining aircraft at their home base of Edinburgh Field outside Adelaide, South Australia. The type has now been largely supplanted in Australian service by the Boeing P-8 Poseidon.

The Australian International Airshow, held at Avalon, Victoria, outside Melbourne, in late February and early March this year, saw the final appearance of the Pilatus PC-9 with the RAAF's Roulettes aerobatic team. The type is being replaced after 30 years' service by the Pilatus PC-21 which is taking over the PC-9's training role in the Service.

The RAAF is to obtain four Gulfstream G550 business jets for use in the electronic warfare role. The modifications will be carried out in the United States and the aircraft will then be based at Edinburgh Field.

The RAAF is also to lease three Dassault 7X business jets for use as VVIP transports. These aircraft will enter service in the latter half of 2019 and will replace the Bombardier Challengers currently used for this role.

Indian Air Force Sukhoi Su-30 at RIAT 2007 © J M Henderson



## Columbia



Columbia is considering purchasing second-hand Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons from the United States. These would replace the country's long-serving Israeli Kfir.

## Estonia



The Estonian Air Force has received the first of two of the US Air Force's retired Polish Mielec M28 utility transport aircraft that were originally bought for use with Special Forces. The second should arrive by the middle of 2019. The aircraft has a short take-off and landing capability.

## Germany



The Luftwaffe has changed its deployment plans for its new Airbus A400M transports. Until recently, it was only going to utilise forty of the 53 airframes on order, selling the balance of 13 to other nations. Furthermore all the aircraft were to be based at one airfield, Wunstorf in Northern Germany. However, all fifty-three aircraft will now be taken into service and an additional base established at Lechfeld in Southern Germany in the next decade.

## India



The Indian Navy is likely to receive 24 Seahawk anti-submarine warfare helicopters from Lockheed Martin with the proposed purchase having been cleared by the US Government. The helicopters will also perform anti-surface warfare missions as well as search and rescue and vertical resupply.

The Indian Air Force has received the first four Boeing Chinook heavy-lift helicopters from its order for fifteen. The remainder will be received by March 2020. These aircraft will be used in the northern and eastern areas of India supporting military operations in remote locations.



Pilatus PC-21 in RAAF Roulette colours at Avalon, Feb 2019 © J M Henderson



Stored USAF Mielec M-28 at 'The Boneyard', Arizona, Sep 2017 © J M Henderson



Grumman EA-6B Prowlers of VMAQ-2, Feb 2019 © US Marine Corps



Pilatus PC-9 of the RAAF Roulettes at Avalon, Feb 2019 © J M Henderson

## Nepal



Nepal is also to receive two Polish Mielec M28 transport aircraft from the US Government but these will be new-build aircraft. They are scheduled for delivery by the end of this year.

## Norway



Lockheed Martin is to establish an F-16 maintenance depot at Kjeller in Norway to service the Norwegian fleet as well as those of other European air forces. Kjeller is already the Norwegian Air Force's main maintenance base.

## Kenya



The first of three Leonardo C-27J Spartan transport aircraft for the Kenyan Air Force has made its maiden flight in Italy. All three aircraft should be delivered in the first half of this year.

## Poland



The Polish Air Force is to purchase an additional four Leonardo M-346 jet trainers to add to their current fleet of 12 aircraft. These additional machines should be received in 2022.

Poland is also acquiring at least four AW101 anti-submarine helicopters from Leonardo Helicopters at Yeovil, Somerset for operation by the Polish Navy. The AW101 is already in operation with the Royal Navy and other nations' navies.

## Saudi Arabia



The final two Royal Saudi Air Force Tornados in the UK have been returned to the Kingdom by BAE following their use over the last few years as development airframes at Warton in Lancashire. One aircraft was flown back to the Middle East. The other was unairworthy at the time and went as airfreight.

## Singapore



Singapore intends to replace its current fleet of F-16 fighters with the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II. It plans to purchase a small number of these aircraft in the first instance for assessment purposes to help them decide on their long term need. The F-16s will require replacement towards the end of the next decade.

## Slovakia



Slovakia has decided to buy 14 new Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons from the manufacturer. 12 single-seaters and two twin-seat models will be delivered in about four years.

## USA



The United States Marine Corps retired the last Grumman Prowler electronic warfare aircraft in US military service in March this year. The Prowler had been in service with the Marine Corps since 1977 and the last squadron was VMAQ-2 based at Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station in North Carolina. The US Navy had also operated the type but they retired their last examples a few years ago.

The US Air Force is planning to buy some additional F-15 Eagle fighters of the latest standard to replace the oldest ones currently in service in the air defence role. It is currently seeking funding for this purchase. The new aircraft would complement the F-35 Lightning that will also be bought but are cheaper to operate in their intended role.

The United States Air Force has suffered significant weather damage to another of its major bases. Severe flooding has occurred at Offutt AFB, Nebraska, the home of the USA's strategic reconnaissance force and the presidential emergency communications fleet.







# Notices

## Reunions

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

**RAF Boy Entrants 45th Ground Wireless.** A reunion will be held in Weston-super-Mare on Saturday 12 October 2019. Please contact Ron Suddes on [suddesr@aol.com](mailto:suddesr@aol.com) or 07840125396.

**RAF Boy Entrants Association Reunion.** 25th Association Anniversary, Harper Adams University, Salop. 6 - 8 September 2019. Details from [rafbeareunion@gmail.com](mailto:rafbeareunion@gmail.com) or call Rod on 07764-781657.

**230 (Tiger) Squadron RAF Association Reunion,** Matlock Bath, Derbyshire. 29 - 31 August 2019. Details from [230assocreunionsec@gmail.com](mailto:230assocreunionsec@gmail.com) or call Rod on 07764-781657.

**XV Sqn 1970.** Thursday 1 October 2020 is the 50th anniversary of XV Sqn forming at RAF Honington with the Blackburn (Hawker Siddley) Buccaneer. How many of us are still around? Who would be interested in a reunion near the date? Please message [g.m.dunbar@btinternet.com](mailto:g.m.dunbar@btinternet.com) with confirmation of interest ASAP.

## Old Colleagues

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

Welcome extended to anyone who served at **RAF Changi**, including HQ FEAF between 1946 and 1971. See [www.rafchangi.co.uk](http://www.rafchangi.co.uk) for joining information, or apply to Malcolm Flack, Membership Secretary, on 01494 728562 or [memsecchangi@telco4u.net](mailto:memsecchangi@telco4u.net) for a free enquiry pack.

On joining the RAF in 1944 I was mustered to radar as an Operator and posted to **Stoke Holy Cross** in Norfolk on CHL equipment. We also had the first equipment to plot the V2 rocket launch points. Posted in **1946/47 to Prades**, southern France where we had the centimetre equipment. Our radar unit was based on a mountain and used the Gee system. Looking for anyone else involved in these events. Contact Russell Howes at [rmhowes@btinternet.com](mailto:rmhowes@btinternet.com)

Were you a pupil pilot at **4 EFTS** RAF Brough 1943 on Tiger Moth and subsequently stationed at **28 EFTS** Mount Hampden Southern Rhodesia and **22 SFTS** Thornhill, Southern Rhodesia 1943-44 training on Cornell and Harvard? Norman Enders, a former pupil pilot at these squadrons, would like to hear from you. Contact via [jamesalister30@outlook.com](mailto:jamesalister30@outlook.com)

**RAF Khormaksar Rover Scout Crew** - how about a reunion? Contact Les Fowler on 01244301143. Also any old 8 Squadron friends (1956).

Request QUA **Sgt Tom Shaw** Ex Signaller/AE, Shackleton's and Nimrod Stage 2, RAF St Mawgan. Last Ops normal, he was managing the Black Horse Pub at Clapton in Gordano, Bristol early 1980s. Request QTH to Eddie Pratt (Ex MAEop). Also **SAC Mick Rowe** 1946586 last heard of 236 OCU tech support mid 1970s. Email [rocksteady587@hotmail.com](mailto:rocksteady587@hotmail.com)

Searching, for **J/T Parry (Jim)** CCS at RAF Changi in sixties. On 'D' watch, block 128. Contact B.W. Lloyd at [brianlloyd018@gmail.com](mailto:brianlloyd018@gmail.com)

## Other

Any family member of **Squadron Leader Brown** SMO RAF Tengah, Singapore, c.1953 to 1954 please contact Ron Davies on [ronmarg@meadowbank33.plus.com](mailto:ronmarg@meadowbank33.plus.com) to hear possible interesting information.

Connected to **RAF Linton on Ouse?** A special formal dinner will be held in the Officers' Mess on Friday 9 August 2019 at 1830 for 1900, prior to the cessation of flying training there later this year. For further information and booking forms please contact Mr John Allison BEM at [johna015@virginmedia.com](mailto:johna015@virginmedia.com)

RAF veterans' event at the **Nottingham War Memorial** at 10.50am on Sunday 1 September to honour those who have fallen and to remember the Royal Air Force's close association with the County of Nottinghamshire.

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# AD ASTRA



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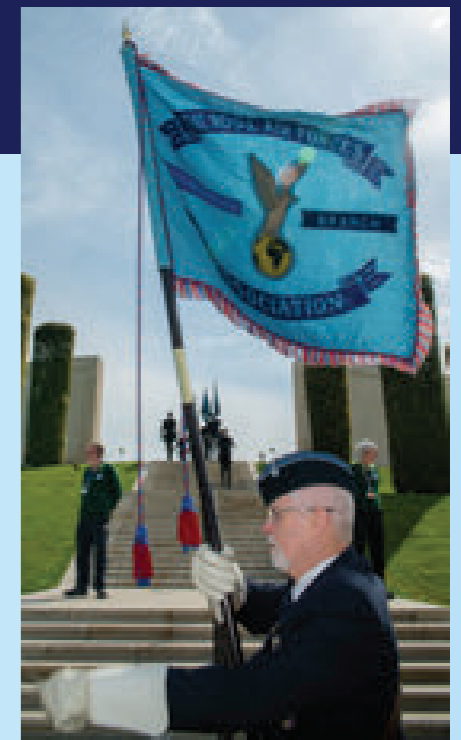
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In friendship and in service one to another we are pledged to keep alive the memory of those of all nations who died in the Royal Air Force and in the Air Forces of the Commonwealth. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause.

Proudly and thankfully  
We will remember them





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**Mr R Perren** Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea  
**Mr P J Persighetti** Basildon  
**Air Vice-Marshal L W Phipps CB AFC** Windsor and Eton  
**Mr B J Pickering** Batley and Birstall  
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**Mr G Wright** Stowmarket  
**Mr J Yarker** Skipton

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

**Squadron Leader M Bradley** Lisburn  
**Mrs R Stoddart-Stones** Aylesbury and Halton  
**Mr R Satchel** Haywards Heath  
**Mr J Lyon** North Cornwall  
**Mr A Cheese** Oxford and District  
**Mr W Hart** Harrow District  
**Miss E Farnfield** 1066  
**Mrs D Custard** Poole  
**Squadron Leader R P Kay** Cheltenham

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



# One of The Few

by Chris Goss



George Stroud

**Sergeant George Anthony Stroud joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in April 1939 and when the war began was called up. After flying training, in July 1940 he was posted to 150 Squadron to fly Fairey Battles but one month later he volunteered to fly fighters joining 504 Squadron at the start of September 1940, then 32 Squadron two weeks later and finally 249 Squadron on 30 September 1940. A day short of a month later he destroyed a Messerschmitt 109 and damaged another, but on 5 December 1940, his flying career almost ended as George recalls:**

"Memories fade but on this occasion this sortie was recorded by Tom Neil in his book 'Gun Button to Fire'. The Squadron Commanding Officer was Squadron Leader John Grandy later to finish as Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John. He had been wounded on 6 September 1940 and Flight Lieutenant R A 'Butch' Barton was leading our squadron. He was also my Flight Commander and I was flying as his No.2. Ginger Neil was leading A Flight.

"The weather had been poor for several days with little activity but on 5 December with Butch leading we were scrambled soon after breakfast. Patrolling over much of south Kent we eventually settled on a patrol line near Dungeness at about 20,000 feet. Bitterly cold in a Hurricane! We received occasional reports of incoming raids. Finally, after being airborne for 90 minutes when I should have been returning to base at North Weald with very limited fuel, approximately 20 Me 109s came in and sat about 1,000 feet above us. They made several swooping passes. Butch put us into a defensive circle, a most tiring tactic, turning hard and continually twisting one's neck through 180 degrees at the same time. A rather helpless situation-desperately short of fuel, outnumbered as usual and intercepted by relatively fresh opponents. We began a descending spiral during which several attacks were made on us and anyone could have been picked off. I was the unfortunate! Hit in the reserve tank, empty at the time, an explosion then a mass of flames. I had already opened the cockpit hood as a precaution we took in combat and made a rapid exit.

"Floating peacefully down in absolute silence and completely alone. I recall peeling off my smouldering civvie shoes and letting them fall. I landed in a field full of sheep at Chapel Bank near Wittersham and my aircraft serial V7677 coded GN-N crashed at Appledore between Stone Corner Farm and Odiane Farm. Picked up by local shepherd and RAF personnel from a nearby radar station and whisked off to Rye Hospital. There, under Dr Bulton, I began my rehabilitation..."



Above: 249 Squadron groundcrew in front of George's Hurricane at North Weald



Right: George's Hurricane just before it was shot down

George had been shot down near Hastings at 1215hrs by 23 year-old Austrian Leutnant (Pilot Officer) Josef Haibock, Adjutant of III Gruppe/Jagdgeschwader 26. It was Haibock's seventh victory; his total number of victories in the war would rise to 77.

George was admitted to Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead for plastic surgery and would not return to operational flying until August 1941, by which time he was in the Middle East. He continued to fly throughout the war and passed away in October 1998. Haibock was badly wounded in a strafing attack by American fighters on 25 February 1944 and was not released from hospital until September 1945. He passed away in July 2002 after a successful career in the post-war Austrian Air Force where he reached the rank of *Generalmajor*. **A**



The German pilot responsible-Lt Josef Haibock (2nd from right), 31 August 1940



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