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The charity that supports the RAF family

April-June 2021



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nation

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Welcome

Serving the nation. It's a concept as varied as the individuals and the roles in the RAF. In this edition we touch on just a few of those stories of service, from myriad choices.

Thirty years ago the British joined an international coalition to fight against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. We talk to a prisoner of war and his wife, and to a government minister about Operation Granby and the need to support veterans of it and other conflicts. And we meet the aircrew remembering their fallen colleagues by cycling 600 miles to visit their graves.

From 1949 to 1963 National Service was the experience of almost every young adult male in the country. In *Cobras, Control Towers and Communal Living* we listen to the stories of just some of the two million who served, and gave vital support to our country in the UK, the Korean War and other conflicts.

More than one hundred years ago the Royal Flying Corps was extending the opportunities for young men to serve — in the new airborne wing of the British Forces. The tales from RAF Association members who served then, armed with a hand gun (if they were lucky) and flying aircraft made of wood, linen and optimism, bring those early days to life in *Winging It*.

Annie O'Brian
Editor



AIR MAIL MAGAZINE
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Thank you to:
all contributors and supporters from across the membership and secretariat of the Association.

Published on behalf of the RAF Association by Key Publishing Ltd.



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

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

Cover image: Winner of the Peoples' Choice award in the 2020 RAF Photographic Competition. "Helping Hand". See page 32. © Corporal Phil Dye, MOD/Crown 2020.

Air Mail copy deadlines:

July - Sept 2021: 7 May

Oct-Dec 2021: 5 August

Jan-Mar 2022: 5 November

Apr-Jun 2022: 4 February

Average distribution

(posted) in last 12 months:

50,735

ISSN 0002-2446

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7-19 News

All the latest from the Association and the RAF family, including: a Christmas appeal thank you; recognition for Project BAG DROP; the latest on RAFA Rides; ducks in the desert; an Annual Conference update; 2021 Census news; and fighting loneliness with Connections For Life.

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During the mid-20th century, national service was a fact of life for an entire generation. From stalking submarines to death in the desert, Association members recall their time spent serving the nation.

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We present a roundup of the 2020 RAF Photographic Competition winners, whose images highlight both the spectacular and everyday aspects of the RAF and those who serve in its ranks.

38 Winging it

Those who served in the Royal Flying Corps during WWI were the pioneers of aerial combat. Many of these airmen later joined the Royal Air Forces Association - and told truly hair-raising tales of their time in service.

50 Genesis of the world's biggest airshow

As the Royal International Air Tattoo turns 50 this year, we look all the way back to late May 1971 and its first airshow.

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Dear Air Mail..

... your letters and emails



A Bloodhound missile at the RAF Museum. Public domain.

Rocket man

In 1959, RAF Yatesbury received a static Bloodhound MK1 missile and launcher to be used as a gate guardian. As an 'experienced' missile man I was ordered to set up said weaponry. After figuring out how the 28ft long, 5,000lbs missile fitted to the launcher, the two finally came together with the help of the station's largest crane. Once in place, various officers came forward to take credit until the Station Commander began frowning at the lock between missile and launcher. The officers melted away and I was pushed forward. I explained that it was a perfectly safe mechanical lock, but he insisted that it be supported with timber! That is how a state-of-the-art missile came to be propped up by an old railway sleeper, in full view of every passing vehicle on the A4. I was mortified. PETER BRYAN

Green in the gills

While I was Officer Commanding Supply at RAF Cottesmore in 1992-94, we won two national Energy Efficiency awards for reducing consumption of electricity, gas and water. Our monitoring had revealed that the particularly lush greens on the nine-hole golf course resulted from major leaks in the incoming main, while the excessive consumption at the bomb dump was due to an illicit fish farm located in an emergency water tank! Other initiatives, such as fitting radiant panels in the hangars, which warmed people but not equipment, also helped. However, the suggestion that we work 09:00 - 16:00 in the winter and 07:00 - 18:00 in the summer to make best use of natural heat and light was less well received! DICK TAPLIN

Weight of authority

In 1998, at the age of 52, I had recently been commissioned as a Pilot Officer VR(T) in the Air Training Corps. I believe this made me, at the time, the oldest holder of this rank in the entire Corps. One morning at ATC summer camp at RAF Linton on Ouse, heading for breakfast I passed the Officers' Mess. Spotting two Squadron Leaders and a Wing Commander I snapped up my best salute, to which the Wing Commander replied: "Good Morning SIR". I can only assume that my girth and grey hair made more of an impression than the little thin bar on my rank slides! ALASTAIR ARMITSTEAD



Old English Sheepdog. CC BY-SA 4.0

Man or dog?

Over half a century ago, at RAF Barkston Heath, a colleague and I would occasionally carry a 'Dulux' sheepdog in our Land Rover. When the Warrant Officer found out he was apoplectic, and threatened to charge us if we allowed the dog in the vehicle again. One day, I decided to ride in the back under the canvas, and as we entered the yard I gave a loud bark. The WO sped to our vehicle and began raving at my pal who was driving. He assured the WO there was no dog in the vehicle - all while I was still whining in the back. The explosion which occurred when the WO finally looked in the back only to see me panting, with my hands at the side of my head like dog's ears, was a joy to behold. MICHAEL BARNES

Eggcitement at Northolt

While I was stationed at RAF Northolt in 1960, word began to spread one fine June morning that one of our Ansons had crashed on the roof of a nearby building. Having taken off, it had just got its wheels up when both engines died. Losing height, it hurtled towards a nearby warehouse complex before neatly crash-landing on its roof. The thankfully unhurt crew and passengers then descended with the help of ladders and ropes. The incident made national headlines the next day, when the full story became known. The Anson had crashed into a warehouse belonging to the Egg Marketing Board, and the passengers were from the press being taken for a 'good-will' flight! PAT LELLIOTT



Ticker-tape tantrum

In 1961 I was duty NCO at the main guardroom at RAF Wittering, when the ticker-tape machine indicated there was a fire. The code specified number one hangar, so I got on the tannoy: "Attention, attention there is a fire in number one hangar." A minute later an officer telephoned saying that he was in the hangar and there was no sign of a fire, but by this time the fire engines were already on their way. Despite scrutiny of both the (very much unburnt) hangar and the ticker-tape machine, it was only later discovered that nearby workmen had been using an excavator when they severed the main electricity cable, and their bungling attempt to reconnect it had given my machine a mind of its own. MIKE WHITE

To comment in or contribute to Air Mail, please email airmail@rafa.org.uk. Alternatively, write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, RAF Association, Atlas House, Wembley Road, Leicester, LE1 3UT. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION. The editor's decision on inclusion is final, and longer letters may be abridged due to limited space. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication. The deadline for inclusion in the July-September issue is 7 May.



© Jim Martin.

A near-run thing

In the early 1970s I was on a parade where the local cadets, St. John's Ambulance, Guides and Brownies were also represented. Afterwards, the RAF contingent boarded a waiting bus to be transported to the nearby British Legion club for a pint and a chat with the members. Before departing, however, our Commanding Officer leaned into the coach: "Thank you very much for an excellent turnout gentlemen", he said. "I can honestly say you were the smartest body on parade." The compliment was somewhat undermined when he added: "The Brownies were a very close second!" I'm still not sure to this day whether he was joking. JIM MARTIN

Postcard peril

Scheduled at short notice on a return flight to Singapore in 1973, I phoned my parents to tell them the news, adding that I'd send a postcard from every stop along the way. We set off the next day, with our first stop on the west coast of Africa. While the aircrew attended a met office report I ventured off to find a postcard. The trip did not go as planned. Soon, two security guards marched me to an office and began interrogating me in an unfamiliar language. The gist seemed to be "what are you doing and why!?". Imagine my horror when I realised that the aircrew had begun returning to the aircraft and getting ready to leave. Thankfully my absence was noticed and I didn't end up in an African prison – but I didn't get my postcard either. DAVID JUDD

From the President

As I write, the UK has given the first COVID vaccine dose to more than 20 million people. However, dark winter months, job losses, the social isolation of lockdown, and separation from our families have had profound impacts on the physical and mental health, and the finances, of many of our members.

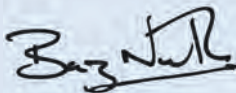
So it is with enormous gratitude that I thank our volunteers, branches and employees who have supported our telephone Connections For Life campaign. This is a greatly valued service that our members in need find priceless, bringing them great succour and hope. I ask all readers of this edition to look at its news and adverts and to consider volunteering for further service to your communities by joining our team in providing ongoing telephone friendship to those who find themselves in need. The short training session for those accepted onto the scheme will prepare you to offer friendship and a supportive shoulder for them to lean on.

To those individuals and branches who have renewed their membership and who have made, and continue to make, personal and branch donations to support the our vital welfare services I offer my sincere thanks. Your actions and generosity have enabled the Association to sustain its critical charitable good works and to ensure that our members do not struggle to cope when we could be helping them.

As members, we should all take pride in the latest statistics on the work of our charity. In a typical year the RAF Association: handles 45,000 enquires; supports more than 85,000 individuals to remain active, thriving and valued members of their communities; and reduces loneliness and isolation by making over 120,000 friendship and welfare check calls. 52 per cent of all RAF community welfare cases are managed by our welfare volunteers. Meanwhile the Association enables RAF personnel to continue to serve our nation by providing childcare for more than 400 of their children in RAF station day nurseries, and by installing connectivity through wi-fi that has been accessed more than 150,000 times by personnel on RAF bases.

There is some way to go before the COVID-19 storm will have been weathered and it will take the ongoing efforts of our members, branches, supporters and volunteers to overcome the challenges of 2021. Your Association is committed to reducing the effects of enforced isolation and to relieving the other pressures, brought by the pandemic and everyday life, that challenge the independence, dignity and freedoms of our members.

A date has been set for this year's Conference (15-17 October) and, if circumstances allow, I sincerely hope that we will be able to meet, once again, face-to-face.



**Air Marshal Sir Baz North
President**

"Your actions have enabled the Association to sustain its critical charitable good work"



News

For members and the wider RAF family

Thank you

The Association sends its thanks to every donor who contributed to its Christmas appeal. The Light Up A Veteran's Life plea in December 2020 – the first ever run on television - raised just under £82,000, smashing



Thank you for responding to our Christmas Appeal – so we can continue our Connections for Life support. © RAF Association.

its fundraising target by more than 20 per cent.

“Christmas was very different for us all in 2020. But for many veterans who remember the close camaraderie of their RAF service as some of the best times of their lives, it was incredibly lonely,” says the Association’s Director of Fundraising, Rachel Huxford. “So our immense thanks go to everyone who responded to our appeal to help end that isolation. Every donor is helping bring much-needed companionship into the lives of veterans.

“As a result, our new service ‘Connections For Life’ is already providing friendship to more than 2,000 RAF veterans or their widows or widowers,” Rachel Huxford explains. “The RAF Association is also phoning round for the second time since the outbreak of the pandemic to check on the wellbeing of more than 30,000 others who are no longer serving.”

Connections For Life Co-ordinator Sam Squire says: “I know first-hand the difference that these connections make. Every day I speak to individuals who have experienced the same feelings of isolation, and who tell me how Connections For Life has changed their lives for the better.”

Most creative use of lockdown



RAFATRAD Ltd has been highly commended by the Charity Retail Association for its part in Project BAG DROP during 2020’s first lockdown.

The trading arm of the RAF Association was recognised alongside Yorkshire Cancer Research in the ‘Most Creative Use of Lockdown’ category at the new Charity Retail Awards.

When the pandemic first hit, the RAF Association responded quickly to ensure beneficiaries received the support they needed. Project BAG DROP was part of its comprehensive set of four types of emergency response delivered as part of Operation CONNECT.

Usually, the focus for RAFATRAD each summer is selling merchandise at airshows to raise funds for the Association. With all the shows cancelled, the warehouse and employees had spare capacity.

Project BAG DROP set up four regional hubs across the UK and sourced, stocked and distributed scarce items to vulnerable members of the RAF family, who were unable to shop for themselves. Each bag contained 20 vital products such as toilet roll and soap, as well as tinned foods and tea. They were delivered to people’s homes, following government distancing guidance, by volunteers and employees.

Dan Greaves, RAFATRAD’s Head of Retail, said: “Being recognised has provided a real boost to everyone involved in the project.

“We are all used to working hard, but this last year has created so many new challenges. I am proud of how we all came together so quickly to create, manage

and deliver this vital project, with many people performing roles very different from their ‘normal’ jobs.”

One of our beneficiaries got in touch to tell us: “I am now 98 and am unable to walk very far. I was wondering how I was going to manage – so your help was very timely!! Good old RAFA to the rescue again!”

Some of the people helped by Project BAG DROP are now receiving additional support from the Association, such as a regular telephone call from a volunteer or more intensive welfare support.

Right: RAFATRAD Ltd was the organising force behind emergency bag drops across the UK during the first lockdown, such as this one for Mrs Williams.

© RAFATRAD Ltd

Below: Toilet rolls, tea bags, tinned foods, toiletries and other essentials replaced the pin badges, puzzles and ducks in the RAFATRAD warehouse.

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Ducks in the desert

A flight of the Association's Battle of Britain ducks has landed in Africa to help 27 Squadron raise funds. The ducks were taken tasking for a day by crews from the Chinook squadron in Gao, Mali. They spent time in the cockpit, testing one of the M134 miniguns and flying on that day's mission.

Squadron Leader "JP" Plenty, Officer Commanding A Flight said: "We will look to auction our 'combat veteran' ducks as part of some Chinook Display Team fundraising when we get cleared to prepare for a display."

Right: **Testing the Chinook's M134.**

© MOD/Crown 2021

Below: **"Low height" - Battle of Britain ducks on their Chinook cockpit tour.**

© MOD/Crown 2021



New - members' offers

All RAF Association members are eligible for a one-off £5 discount on RAFATRAD orders over £25. The offer, which is valid in April, May or June for items bought from the Association's online shop, is the first of four quarterly member benefits that will be unveiled in 2021.

RAFATRAD Ltd has a range of RAF, Association and aviation-themed products – from Red Arrows slippers and Tornado duvet sets to a silk chiffon scarf designed by Lady Hillier, wife of the former Chief of the Air Staff. Whether you need a beanie or a pompom hat, a blazer badge, book or babygrow – it's all in stock. And there is beautifully crafted silver jewellery on offer alongside homewares, toys, games and watches.

Look out for announcements of more benefits and offers in future issues of Air Mail, and in other communications from the Association.

Your single-use code is: MEMOFF5. It can be used when buying goods worth £25 or more (excluding shipping) from rafa.org.uk/shop and **0800 018 2361**. See the RAFATRAD adverts in this issue of Air Mail for more ideas of their range of goods.



Right: **The members' offer can be applied to purchases over £25, including this gold Sekonda men's watch with the Association crest** © RAFATRAD Ltd

Join the fight

The RAF Association is asking volunteers to join the fight against loneliness.

January 2021 saw the continuation of the charity's Connections for Life telephone outreach campaign to the RAF community and its extension to those aged more than 65 years old.

"As COVID-19 continues into its second year, and lockdowns and tier systems remain in place across the UK, we expect even more people to be suffering and isolated," says Katharine Lord, Connections Manager. "Our Connections for Life service brings us in touch with people who are really struggling with loneliness; we need to have more telephone friendship volunteers trained and on hand to help them through."

In the first UK lockdown, the Association and its branches contacted 30,000 people aged over 70 by phone. The calls have now been extended, to people who are 65 or older, after evidence that the Association was getting increasing numbers of calls for assistance from this younger age group. More than 2,000 people over 70 have already accepted regular telephone support from volunteers and many have also been referred for the Association's more intensive welfare support.

"We urgently need more volunteers for 2021," says Katharine Lord. "We'd love to hear from you so you can join our fight against loneliness."

Email friend@rafa.org.uk or telephone **0800 018 2361** to express your interest. You'll be asked to complete some details and have a chat with the Association's Connections for Life team and, if selected, you'll be put forward for the short online training course (less than half a day).

Fighting loneliness with friendship; one of the Association's Connections For Life telephone volunteers. © RAF Association



Royal Air Forces Association
**Connections
For Life**
Fighting loneliness with friendship

Coming together to cycle the globe

More than 300 participants have signed up for RAFA Rides 2021 in early June, and there is still time to join them. Riders will be virtually and actually cycling a total of 24,901 miles – the circumference of the world at the equator – to try to raise a target of £24,901 for the Association..

The cyclists will be completing their virtual circumnavigation of the globe in just 24 hours between 4 and 5 June. 300 people in parts of Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand are participating, and 200 others are taking part in the road ride in Leicestershire on 5 June (COVID-19 allowing).

Meet some of the RAFA Rides 2021 participants and find out what inspires them:

Sergeant Steve Gannan



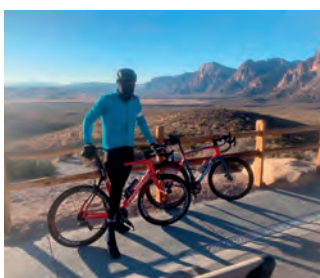
My perfect Sunday: Steve Gannan (far right in red) about to set off on his first socially distanced training ride with Doddington Cycle Club - a 40km loop on a crisp winter's morning. © From personal collection

51 Squadron, RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, UK

"Having had both knee and open heart surgery in the last four years I've found cycling an amazing way to get my cardio fitness back, as well as getting out and about and meeting new people.

"RAFA Rides 2021 provides me with something to aim for and push towards; I'll be entering the 70 mile event, aiming to push my average ride distance up and at the same time, raise some money towards an amazing charity."

Squadron Leader Shane Rutherford



39 Squadron, Creech Air Force Base, Nevada, USA

"I am supporting RAFA Rides 2021 for many reasons but principally, as we continue to face this pandemic, I fear that the pull on the organisation will be greater than ever. I want to do what I can to prepare them for that, and if riding my bike for 24 hours can contribute, then I will do it.

Some of the remote participants will ride in teams, using static bikes in gardens and in RAF buildings, while others will cycle on their local roads and tracks. Everyone joining in will be able to connect virtually via an online event stream.

Air Vice-Marshal Gary Waterfall, an ambassador for the RAF Association who started the RAFA Rides challenge in 2018, said: "This year's 24-hour event is set to be more exciting and ambitious than ever, with teams across the world.

"Secondly, after a 39 Squadron Senior Aircraftman was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness and repatriated to the UK, I have observed the work and support RAFA offers, and it is world class. We must contribute to allow them to continue as one of the pillars of the RAF enterprise. Our cycling event will be completed in Las Vegas."

Wing Commander Al Rutledge

Officer Commanding Engineering Wing, RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus

"Blessed with some enviable cycling terrain on our doorstep, and with a keen cohort of RAF and Army cyclists, RAF Akrotiri will be leading the British Forces Cyprus contribution to the global RAFA Ride 2021 effort.

"We're planning to do 30, 70 and 100 mile options; the latter offering a particularly challenging route to take in



Main photo: Flight Lieutenant Matt Barclay and Sergeant Steve Green with the Lightning and Whirlwind gate guardians at RAF Akrotiri © MOD/Crown; Action shot: Sergeant Green on final climb into Kurtis Dam © MOD/Crown

Mount Olympus — with a culminative ascent of over 10,000 feet. Avoiding the Cypriot summer heat, we will be going slightly earlier than the UK event, on 21 April."

John Gorman

Wing Commander Aerosystems Engineer, DE&S Lightning Delivery Team, F-35 Joint Program Office, Arlington, Virginia

"Our family made the big move to the USA in summer 2017. It has been a huge honour to serve overseas, and a wonderful family adventure, but the coronavirus pandemic has presented unique challenges; not least that we have been completely separated from our families back in UK. The knowledge that RAFA exists as an organisation who 'get it' and can offer us support, is a huge comfort. I know that this is equally appreciated by military families at home.

"Like many others, March 2020 saw home working becoming the norm, so I took the opportunity to switch my 26-mile daily cycle commute into Washington DC to working out on my indoor trainer. Cycling is a great vehicle to give back by raising money for those in need, while boosting morale with others through virtual meet ups. I have a passion for endurance events, which has been emboldened during my US assignment through gravel cycling. So when RAFA announced their ride was going global virtually, I saw this as my next big goal. My target is to ride for 24 hours straight on Zwift, joining with others around the world as we all meet our own goals through this challenge. I hope to see many of you on the virtual ride as we cycle round the globe raising awareness and money for RAFA!"

To join in, find more information or register, go to: ~rafa.org.uk/rafarides2021



John Gorman will be joining up with others on his cycling app from Washington DC. © John Gorman

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RAF Families Federation news



Have a great tour

Serving personnel overseas and those considering an overseas assignment can now be better prepared for their travels thanks to a new resource from the RAF Families Federation. The family-friendly overseas section of the Federation's website ensures there are no unwelcome surprises for service personnel or their nearest and dearest when on overseas assignments.

"Our research into the experiences of RAF families overseas in 2019 showed that information provided for them did not always fully prepare them for life

overseas," said Jade Coe, Overseas Project Lead at the Federation. "This project is a direct response to the issues identified by the research, bridging the information gap with web pages specifically for the overseas RAF community."

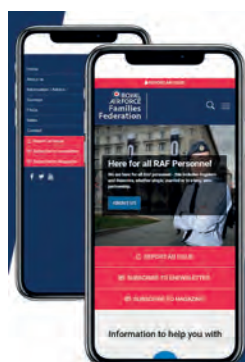
Funded by RAF Community Support - who also wanted to improve support and information for those planning an overseas tour - and compiled in partnership with a range of other RAF and Ministry of Defence stakeholders, the end product is a single online resource where personnel and their families can go for guidance throughout their overseas journey.

The new overseas section is broken down into the phases of an overseas assignment, making it easy for users to identify information appropriate for their circumstances such as: before applying – things to consider; once an assignment order has been received; while on an overseas assignment; returning from an overseas assignment.

Website improved

Alongside the new overseas section, the RAF Families Federation website has been improved to make it easier to navigate and use, particularly on a mobile device. So, wherever personnel or family members are, they can access the many reference sections or contact the team with any issues or concerns they may have during their service career: raf-ff.org.uk

Contact jade.coe@raf-ff.org.uk for questions or input on the overseas hub or the website.



© RAF Families Federation

New fund helps overseas families separated by COVID

Personnel and family members on overseas tours have been separated from family in the UK for far longer than expected because of COVID-19. Those with children are also facing unexpected challenges when using boarding schools.

Thanks to support from The Annington Trust, the RAF Families Federation has been able to launch a new fund to help.

The Federation is inviting overseas personnel to apply for items that could give them, or their family members a boost. Whether they are serving unaccompanied, or together as a family, this project is aimed at letting the RAF community know they are being thought of.

The funding is flexible and so far has included gifts such as board games, books, vouchers, hampers of favourite British foods, LEGO and outdoor toys.

Outreach and Support Team Manager at the Federation, Richie Morgan said: "This funding has allowed us to provide a taste of home for those who have been unable to return to UK. In some cases they have been separated for more 12 months."

For more information contact: richard.morgan@raf-ff.org.uk



Above: Funding to help RAF personnel separated by COVID-19 © RAF Families Federation

Op Manna memories

International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) is appealing for memories and materials to help commemorate the 85th anniversary of Operation Manna this July. Stories with links to the world's first airborne food aid mission will be displayed beside a newly commissioned sculpture at the IBCC in Lincoln. July will also mark the tenth anniversary of the launch of the commemorative centre.

Op Manna began on 29 April 1945, to help thousands of Dutch citizens facing starvation during the hardest winter in decades (the Hongerwinter) and the Nazi blockade around the west of the Netherlands. RAF Bomber Command delivered nearly 7,000 tons of food in ten days, and helped save almost a million lives.

Anyone with memories, stories or artefacts — from aircrew, groundcrew, packers of the food sacks, food suppliers, transporters or recipients of the Op Manna food parcels — can email:

info@internationalbcc.co.uk or post information to International Bomber Command Centre, Canwick Avenue, Lincoln, LN4 2HQ.

Read more about the operation here: bit.ly/ibccMANNA



Above: Any memories or artefacts of Op Manna are welcome. © IBCC

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Census news

The English and Welsh census that took place on 21 March was the first in the nation's history to ask people if they are a veteran of the armed forces.

The question was posed to allow central and local government to better understand the numbers, locations and age ranges of our armed forces veterans. Government, NHS and military charities will now be able to target resources and expertise where they are needed most for former forces personnel. They will also be able to deliver more precisely and effectively on the Armed Forces Covenant.

Iain Bell, deputy national statistician at the Office for National Statistics, said: "A successful census will ensure everyone can put services and funding in the places where they are most needed. This could mean things like doctors' surgeries, schools and new transport routes."

The Northern Ireland census statisticians announced in July 2020 that they would not include the armed forces question in their questionnaire, which was also to be completed on 21 March 2021. The next census in Scotland will be in 2022.

cyfrifiad
census
2021

In all participating nations, Census 2021 was the first to be run predominantly online, with households receiving a letter with a unique access code in February or March,

allowing them to complete the questionnaire on their computers, phones or tablets. Paper questionnaires were also available on request. Statistical results will be available within 12 months, but personal records will be locked away for 100 years.

The census is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in the country. It has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

For more information, visit [census.gov.uk](https://www.census.gov.uk)

Annual Conference - save the date



Above: **The Association sincerely hopes that government guidance will allow RAF Association business at an 'in person' Annual Conference as in 2019, but will follow all rules that apply at the time of the event.** © Heidi Burton.

The Association Annual Conference 2021 is scheduled to take place from 15 to 17 October, in Birmingham. Director of Membership, Del Rowlands, says: "The wellbeing of members and employees remains uppermost, and the Annual Conference Committee continues to monitor the national situation concerning COVID-19 and the restrictions. Further details will be provided in late spring concerning the format of Conference and any contingencies where travel and gatherings in large numbers might not be possible." Council meets on 12 May to assess the latest government guidance.

Area Conferences

Del Rowlands continues: "Of course our Area Conferences that normally occur in the spring feed into the Association's Annual Conference. Consideration is currently underway on how to undertake these important events which, by necessity, will take place in a virtual format that will be developed in conjunction with the Area Councils. More details will be announced in due course."

Special bear beats the odds

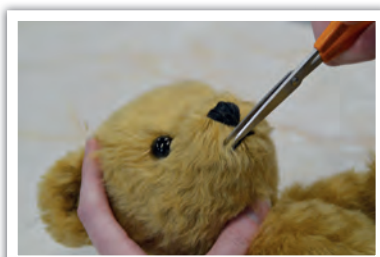
A limited-edition teddy bear made exclusively to raise funds for the RAF Association has overcome floods and a pandemic to arrive in the RAFATRAD shop.

Just 250 'RAF Bears' have been hand crafted for the edition by specialist teddy bear creators, Merrythought.

The Merrythought factory is based in Ironbridge, Shropshire. The town was flooded twice in 2020 when the River Severn burst its banks - despite the area deploying Environment Agency portable flood defences. Like all organisations, the company was also battling COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

The individually-numbered bears have now made it safely to Association HQ. They are available on rafa.org.uk/shop to help raise funds for the RAF Association's welfare work.

Each bear is created from pure mohair and has wool felt paws. It has a navy blue satin ribbon with the RAF logo on it and comes in a



luxury RAF-branded cotton bag. Its creator is the only UK teddy and toy manufacturer to still make its products in England.

Merrythought has been hand-making teddy bears since 1930. It has created limited edition ranges for Buckingham Palace, to commemorate the births of the most recent generation of royal princes and princesses, and for the London 2012 Olympics. The company also created Christopher Robin's Edward "Pooh" Bear for the Goodbye Christopher Robin film.



Above right: **Made it!** These limited edition, hand-made bears are now available from the RAFATRAD shop. © Merrythought

Left: **The hand-crafting of the bears also ensures their beards and moustaches are 'short and neatly trimmed' and can comply with the RAF's latest facial hair policy.** © Merrythought

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Christmas Roundup



Full circle

Personnel deployed with 83 Expeditionary Air Group in the Middle East linked up with the RAF Association last Christmas to write to 100 veterans in the UK. The gesture was made to remind those who served before that they were still in the RAF's thoughts and to help combat loneliness during the Christmas pandemic restrictions.

Squadron Leader Collette Preece, said: "Our personnel were keen to give back to the community and we're mindful that, whilst we're so many miles away, COVID continued to have an impact. We wanted to ensure that some of them get a few extra cards this year from personnel on operations. It shouldn't just be things being sent out to us during these challenging times."

As part of the charity's ongoing care for the RAF community, including those currently serving, the Association also distributed almost 1,000 gift hampers to RAF personnel who were working on Christmas and New Year's Day. Many of the hampers went to personnel at stations in the UK, and some went out to the Middle East – completing the circle with those writing Christmas cards for lonely members of the RAF community.

Above (top): 6.30am on Christmas Day 2020; 906 Expeditionary Air Wing did a Santa Run to raise funds for the Association while avoiding the heat of the Middle Eastern day. Among others, our thanks goes to Reverend Squadron Leader Rebekah Cannon and Flight Sergeant Ramm for their help organising the event. © MOD/Crown 2020

Above (bottom): Keeping those who served before in their thoughts; personnel of 83 Expeditionary Air Group writing cards to veterans in the UK. © MOD/Crown 2020

Lapland or bust

In early December Corporal Ash Oldroyd-Clarke from RAF Cranwell helped raise £2,000 through his 12 Days of Christmas virtual challenge. Encouraging people to run any distance that suited them, he got everyone to join together to record 2,037 miles run – the distance from Association HQ in Leicester to Lapland. The totals were logged on a Strava app and those who were so inclined also wore fancy dress and RAF Association t-shirts.

12 Days of Christmas

Responding to Corporal Oldroyd-Clarke's challenge, five personnel from RAF High Wycombe took part in the 12 Days of Christmas campaign and together raised £417 for the Association.

Sergeant James Fleming, Career Manager at the station said: "I set myself the task of completing 50 miles to support this event which in 12 days was quite a challenge. I like to keep fit but I usually run no more than a slow 5k. So to ensure I would get the miles completed I had to up this to 8K's."

"Running that distance every day took its toll and by day nine I was tired and a little fed up. But after an early night I got back out for day 10 and finished on day 12 outside the Aylesbury RAFA Club."

When asked why, Sergeant Fleming said: "It was partly the motivation to keep fit, especially in December when eating and drinking take over. The main reason; however, was to support RAFA especially for the welfare contact calls. This year has been especially lonely for a lot of people. I hoped that anything I could do to raise funds would support our people."

Right: Sergeant James Fleming, ran 50 miles in December to support the Association

© MOD/Crown



100th birthdays

Vic Bashford



Vic Bashford. © Family archive.

Vic joined the RAF in 1938, and completed his electrical training in November 1939. He was posted to 615 Squadron, joining it in France before being evacuated from the beaches near Dunkirk. Stationed at RAF Kenley, he then took part in the Battle of Britain.

In August 1941 Vic went to Russia for Operation Dervish, the first convoy taking Hurricanes, pilots and crew to assist the Russians against Luftwaffe attacks. His next posting was to Northern Ireland, where he assisted with patrols over the Atlantic to protect convoys after America's

entry into the war. In 1942 Vic was loaned to the USAAF to maintain and service their bomber aircraft before being posted to Kasfareet, Egypt, to manage a repair depot. He then established a link trainer and bombing teaching section for the whole of RAF Middle East, crossing the Sinai Desert more than 52 times.

Vic was demobbed in December 1945, and recently received a medal from the Russian government. He celebrated his 100th birthday on 28 December 2020.

Jeff Brereton

On 31 January 2021 Jeff Brereton celebrated his 100th birthday, and received a framed photograph of R4118 – the Hurricane he worked on as an aircraft mechanic during the Battle of Britain – as well as cards from

Her Majesty The Queen, the RAF Association and many other well-wishers. Air Mail interviewed Jeff about his experiences during the Battle of Britain in the July 2020 issue, and reported on his visit to IWM Duxford to be reunited with his old Hurricane in the October 2020 issue. His family will throw a party when circumstances allow, and intend to celebrate throughout Jeff's centenary year.



Jeff Brereton. © Family archives.

Jessie 'Jay' Finlay

Former WRAF member Jay Finlay celebrated her birthday in New Zealand on 31 January 2020. Soon after the outbreak of WWII Jay



Jay Finlay and family in New Zealand. © Family archive.

volunteered for the WRAF, and in 1941 was posted to Hednesford. She was then posted to the Operations Room at RAF Waddington (as part of Bomber Command) where in 1944 she met and later married Douglas Finlay. Returning to Douglas's hometown of Gosforth

upon demob, Jay ran the office for their painting and decorating company. Their son Richard was born in 1951, and joined the RAF in 1976. He and his wife emigrated to New Zealand in 1991 and Jay and Douglas joined them the following year. On her birthday the residents in her care home made banners and decorations and the whole family joined everyone for lunch. Later, Jay and her family enjoyed a walk to the beach in the sun.

Vera King

Vera King celebrated her 100th birthday on 3 January 2021. She enlisted in the WAAF in 1939 and served until 1945. Having exceptional shorthand, her services were much in demand. After D-Day Vera flew out to Ceylon, where she and a select few others were given exclusive use of the personal aircraft of Lord Louis Mountbatten, then Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia (SEA). Vera joined Lord Mountbatten's staff, taking dictation from him and the senior officers at the SEA Allied Forces Headquarters. Their duties included typing signals, reports and even some of his personal letters to King George VI. After the war, Vera got a job with an airline. Upon moving to Bognor Regis she joined the local Association branch and was a founder member of its WAAF's group. In 2017 Vera received a badge recognising her 60 years of membership of the RAF Association.



Vera King. © Simon King.

Peter Lemon

Peter Lemon joined the RAF in April 1941 and trained as a wireless operator and air gunner before going to the officer training unit at RAF Sillith near Carlisle. On successful completion of his training he was assigned to Coastal Command's 8 Squadron in Aden. Peter flew aboard Wellington bombers, escorting allied shipping. He returned to the UK in January 1945, having completed 50 sorties, and spent the remainder of his service on air traffic control duties at RAF Jurby, Isle of Man before demob in 1946. Following the war, Peter worked for the British Airports Authority (BAA) until his retirement in 1980. He was a founder member and the last president of the Biggin Hill wing of the Aircrew Association, and remains an active member of the RAF Association's Orpington Branch, where he has collected a substantial amount for the Wings Appeal. Peter celebrated his 100th birthday on 4 December 2020.



Peter Lemon. © Family archive.

Leslie Douglas Nower

Les Nower celebrated his centenary on 29 July 2020. During WWII, Les served with 216 Fighter Detection Unit, and was stationed aboard a ship off Omaha Beach from 06:30hrs on D-Day, then off Barfleur



Les Nower. © Family archive.

intercepting enemy night torpedo bombers and mine laying aircraft. On 7 July his vessel was sunk, and he was rescued by *HMS Burdock*. Later in life he was awarded the *Légion d'honneur*. Joining the Association in 1946, in 1948 Les helped form Sandwich and Deal Branch, and was its secretary for many years. He was subsequently appointed chairman in 1963, a post which he held for over fifty years. In 1952 he became

secretary of the East Kent Region, which he represented on the South East Area Council for thirty-five years, later serving on the Organisation, Finance and Club committees. He was awarded an Area Presidential Certificate in 1990, and a National Presidential Certificate in 2015.

William Shaw

William Shaw was born in Fife, and left his job at Bowhill Colliery to join the RAF in 1940, training as a medic. Posted overseas in 1941, he arrived at an airfield in the Western Desert as the only medic in the 100-strong unit. Before the Battle of El Alamein, Winston Churchill landed at the airstrip and spoke to all members of the unit. William also gave



William Shaw. © Family archive.

General Alexander a lift in his truck. Transferred to Greece in late 1944, William served on high-speed launches with Air Sea Rescue. In 1945 he returned to the UK, before being discharged in 1947. His first post-war job was as first-aid attendant back at Bowhill Colliery, where the skills acquired in the RAF were put to good use. William celebrated his 100th birthday at home on 14 January 2021.

Allan Stewart

Allan Stewart celebrated his 100th birthday on 2 December 2020 at home in South Queensferry. Allan was a Leading Aircraftman and served in the RAF from 1941 to 1946. While with 43 Squadron he was an airframe mechanic on Hurricane aircraft. He travelled to Algeria, Tunisia, Toronto, Calgary and New Brunswick during his RAF service, and met his wife at RAF Dumfries where he worked on Avro Anson aircraft. Allan remains a committed member of the RAF Association and is very proud of his time with the RAF.



Allan Stewart. © Family archive.

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Okay.

So if you really want to know - yeah - things are a bit tough at the moment. I'm a 27 year old mum, and sometimes I look at my friends whose partners come home every night, regular as clockwork, and I do feel a bit envious.

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

I just can't help how I feel sometimes.

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

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

Then I'll be fine.

Promise x

"No it's

+



really, "all good" too much!

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Riding the **Storm**

Op Granby 16 January to 28 February 1991

30 years on from Operation Granby, two former Tornado navigators are venturing on a tribute cycle ride to colleagues. It will take them the length of England and (in this pandemic) will also test their organisation skills to the limit. In tribute to all who lost their lives or took part in Operation Granby 30 years ago, we tell of the navigators' efforts to remember the fallen and of the Association's online commemoration service in February. We also bring personal stories of people who gave so much to serve the nation during the conflict, and speak to a government minister about support for veterans today.



Mal and Martin – their modern memorial

Two former RAF navigators, Mal Craghill and Martin Wintermeyer, are taking on a 670 mile cycle challenge in 2021: "because we want to remember the sacrifices of our fallen aircrew and families." They will commemorate the friends and colleagues they lost thirty years ago, prior to and in the conflict.

The operation was Mal's first: "I had only been on the Tornado squadron for a year. I was posted to RAF Laarbruch in Germany in January 1990, a few months after the Berlin Wall came down, and was in a Cold War air force.

Then in August Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and we were saying 'Where's Kuwait?'. We were deployed to the Middle East." Both men operated from Saudi Arabia, Martin in Dhahran and Mal in Tabuk.

Their 2021 commemorative challenge, 'The Tornado Tribute Tour of England', will see them cycling from Cornwall to Tyne and Wear, via the graves and memorials of 14 colleagues. It had been planned for February this year but COVID-19 has delayed the trip.

While lockdown restrictions have been in place, Mal and Martin have been marking significant dates in the conflict with virtual and local rides and have already raised more than £15,000 for the Association. When it's allowed, their outdoor ride will also take them to the

National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to pay their respects at the Gulf War Memorial and the Armed Forces Memorial. "The latter commemorates not just the seven Tornado aircrew killed on deployed operations, but also those lost in training accidents in the UK", says Martin. "We will also remember the two pilots from the RAF Jaguar force who were killed, one in the UK and one on deployed operations. In total we will be

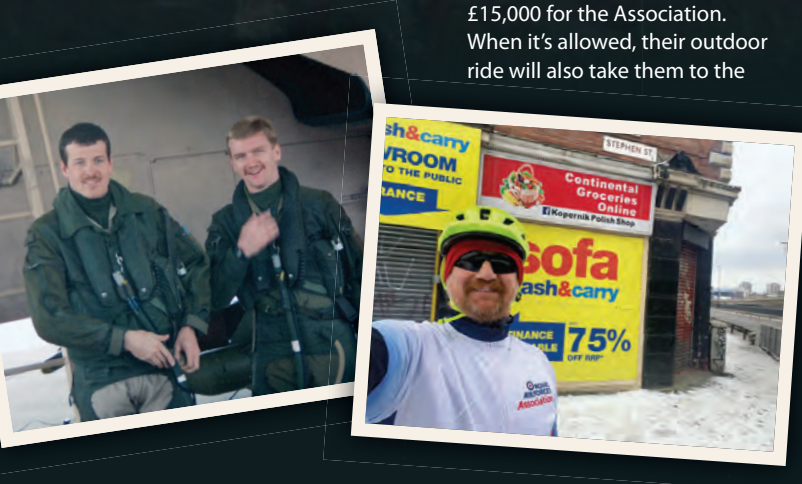
honouring the memory of 13 RAF and one USAF aircrew."

They added: "We chose to support the RAF Association as it's a cause close to our hearts.

With over 50 years' service between the two of us, we have seen how much of a difference the Association has made to the lives of many members of the RAF family."

The pair have many supporters planning to ride alongside them, including Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, who says: "When invited →

"We want to remember our fallen comrades"



Main image: composite of Tornado and burning Kuwaiti oilfields © Everett Collection Historical/Alamy Stock Photo. Far left: Martin Wintermeyer, Tornado navigator, with pilot Gordon Harwell in Dhahran, 1991. Right: Martin cycling down Stephen Street on 14 February 2021 to remember Steve Hicks of XV Squadron. © both Martin Wintermeyer.

to take part, I felt compelled to do my bit to raise awareness of the lives lost. We should not forget there were 47 British lives lost in Operation Granby, including the crew members of the Tornado aircraft.

"I was incredibly touched by the admirable dedication of Mal and Martin. You develop a strong bond with your fellow personnel on operations, and it is heart-warming to hear of their unwavering sense of loyalty. I am ready to take part in the challenge of a 670-mile bike ride and look forward to proudly cycling alongside them later this year."

You can help Martin and Mal raise funds by visiting justgiving.com/fundraising/TTTE. And you can follow the challenge and join them for virtual rides on Facebook and Twitter. Look for: @TTTE1991.

The Association – a commemoration for families and colleagues

On 29 February, exactly 30 years after the end of the war, the RAF Association invited people to join together from wherever they were in the world to pay tribute to all who were involved in the conflict. It broadcast a virtual remembrance service; ten readings, by spouses and children of the fallen and personnel who served, formed the major part of the event. 'No cold war', a poem composed by Mal Craghill was read and prayers were led by an RAF padre and an RAF world faith leader. A prelude was spoken by Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Sir Mike Wigston and an epitaph by Air Chief Marshal Sir Glenn Torpy, Officer Commanding XIII Squadron during Operation Granby. You can still watch the service at:

bit.ly/OpGranbyRemembrance

The Peters - a family in the middle

John – the pilot and the POW
"How on earth were we meant to evade capture?" asks former Tornado pilot John Peters. "We were in the desert. It was completely flat for 50km in any direction. There was no-one who liked us within a thousand miles, and half

Right: Pilot John Peters (bottom) and navigator John Nichol in Iraq with their 'desert pink' Typhoon GR-1 © John Peters' family collection.

a mile behind us was our burning Tornado, sending a plume of smoke up to eight thousand feet."

It was 17 January 1991, on the first day and the second sortie of Op Granby, John and his navigator John Nichol were XV Squadron. While acting as number two to Squadron Leader Paul "Pablo" Mason, their Panavia Tornado GR1 was flying at fifty feet when it was hit by a shoulder-launched SAM SA-14.

A few hours after ejecting they were captured, hooded and taken into captivity where they were put into solitary confinement and beaten.

The conflict was the first in the world to be covered round-the-clock by media. 24-hour television was just starting in the UK and was well-established in the United States. A few days after capture, both men – bruised and beaten - were paraded on Iraqi television and the pictures were relayed on news bulletins around the world. The interrogators tried to force John Peters, at gunpoint, to read a statement denouncing the war. But he avoided doing so by playing punch drunk, the image of which went global.

John was 29 years old. "You don't expect death, or to go to war. And once you are in captivity you have to find ways to hold on to your identity and your self." John can still describe the horrors of the starvation and torture he faced for seven weeks, but says it was worse hearing it happen to other prisoners of war and colleagues incarcerated nearby. Held in Iraqi military installations and state buildings, they were also bombed regularly by the coalition forces. Their humour didn't completely desert them. Peters heard Nichol's voice shortly after one attack and shouted under the



"My RAF life was better than I dreamed it would be like as a kid"

cell door, 'I bet you're not such a fat bastard anymore!' Nichol apparently agreed.

After hostilities ceased both were released: "It's absurd. The men who were hurting you were suddenly knocking on the door offering food and blankets and saying "If there is anything my staff can do for you, just ask!"

Once back in the UK, John says: "It was hard to live up to the attributes people

believed I had. I was overwhelmed by affection and pride: being hugged by strangers in the street or receiving a standing ovation when I just went to the pub for a pint. He returned to the force and served for a further

ten years, some of it with Nichol as his navigator again. He says: "Everyone I met in the RAF, I was impressed by."

"My experience in Iraq didn't change me. But because of those beatings, I returned to 25,000 letters from the public and to mass media attention. I thought the story would have stopped

after 30 years, but the story is bigger than me. I can't escape those images, but I've fulfilled a childhood dream and my RAF life was better than I dreamed it would be like as a kid."

See John's full hour and a half interview for the RAF Association online at:

bit.ly/John_P_in_Op_Granby
John Peters is a Royal Air Forces Association Ambassador.

Helen – holding the home together

"The Monday began as a normal day. The conflict had started the night before. I went to a gym class in the morning, the kids went to the nursery. As I walked back into the house the telephone rang. It was Maggie Broadbent, the squadron boss's wife. She asked to pop round. I don't know why, but I thought 'if Maggie comes round on her bike, it's sort of OK. If she's not on her bike, that might be something different'. When I opened the door, I didn't even notice who was standing there. I just saw the station commander's car, with the flag on it; that meant official business. It was Maggie and Neil Buckland, the RAF Laarbruch station commander. Then I knew it was serious. I remember Maggie saying 'It's OK. It's OK, but John's plane did not



return." Then they came in.

Helen Peters had met her husband John at university in 1980. They married in 1985 and by 1989 had moved to RAF Laarbruch where he was serving as a Tornado pilot. When he was deployed to the Gulf, their son Guy was nearly two and daughter Toni was a few weeks old. Talking about when John was made a prisoner of war and seeing him paraded on Iraqi television, Helen acknowledges how strange it sounds to say: "For me, it was

Below: Helen Peters and the children welcome John home on a spring evening in 1991, after John had served in Iraq and been as a prisoner of war for seven weeks. © IWM

Below right: Helen and John Peters met at university in the 1980s.

© Helen and John Peters' family collection

good and positive to see him. It was the first proof I had that he had survived being shot down. I knew then that – at least when it was filmed – he was alive!"

"For the first three or four days after he was captured, I was never alone," she recalls. "My friends and neighbours rallied round and stayed overnight. They fielded the phone calls and checked if I wanted to speak to people."

Operation Granby was the first conflict to be broadcast 24 hours-a-day by the media "if you were sitting in the UK with full access to the BBC and other rolling news channels," says Helen. "But in Germany we only

"There is this whole other aspect for the wives, husbands, mums, dads, kids – the standing and the waiting"

had BFBS television. We got news a couple of times a day. The rest of the time for me it was Fireman Sam, Bob the Builder or videos being played. Suddenly I'd get a telephone call from someone in the UK, with the very best intentions, saying 'Helen, have you seen this has happened?' Invariably she hadn't.

"The neighbours, who were friends, were incredible. But I

have to say that the station and Neil Buckland, were exemplary. Neil started daily briefings for whole station. And that meant everybody: officers, junior ranks, families. He wanted everyone to get the same information and be given the same respect."

"I one hundred per cent relied on the station commander and Dave Woosey, our intelligence officer. I never bought a newspaper or watched any reports, because 90 per cent of it was rubbish. If anything did filter through to me, I checked with Dave or Neil.

The service and the sacrifice of serving families is sometimes overlooked by the general public. Helen says: "The focus, correctly, has to be on the RAF person 'doing the doing'. But there is this whole other aspect for the wives, husbands, mums, dads, kids – the standing and the waiting.

"Ironically, having the children made it easier not harder. Any family will know that the first priority every morning is the children – feeding them, dressing them, keeping them in their routine. With two under three you are kept pretty busy and have little time to yourself to worry about what's happening in Iraq. You can't just sit there, watching what you could watch, calling the UK all the time and driving yourself crackers.

"Having the RAF community around me was amazing. But they were also the ones thinking 'Is my husband the next one?' And they →



have to keep their families and children safe too. It reminded me of what it must have been like when our parents talk about the war times and how villages used to come together.

"We're the lucky ones; John came back. On behalf of 15 Squadron, I'd like to send out my love to Lynne Hicks because her husband Steve was not one of the ones to come home.

See Helen's full one hour interview online at: bit.ly/Helen_in_Op_Granby

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans - looking back

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Johnny Mercer MP says: "Operation Granby was a momentous conflict and was the largest single deployment of British personnel since the Second World War. Historically, it is a conflict that should never be



Below: **Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans**
© MOD/Crown



forgotten.

"While conflicts can bring victories, they also bring sacrifices. Commemorating anniversaries brings to light the sacrifices personnel tirelessly make and allows us to remember those who give their lives to defend and protect others," he continues. "Even though commemorations will look a little different this year, it is vital our Armed Forces can proudly pay their respects and give veterans the honour they deserve.

"It's a good point that often the public think of veterans being those from earlier generations or those who served a long time ago. I think the key point for us is making the case that veterans, of all ages, make a fantastic contribution to society, using skills learnt from their service.

"It is important that we think about veterans from more modern conflicts. These personnel will be younger and therefore have different needs to those veterans from the Second World War generation," the minister continued. His Office for Veterans' Affairs at the Cabinet Office is very aware of this difference and is committed to supporting veterans from modern conflicts after they've made the

decision to transition to civilian life. They ensure that the Government addresses veterans' issues, so that when people leave the Armed Forces they get the support they deserve. The minister adds: "We already have a comprehensive transition service, which helps individuals with career advice, support for adjusting to civilian life and any healthcare needs. We're taking our work in veterans' healthcare further by studying the effects on personnel and ensuring that we learn what support needs to be provided.

"For some veterans

The war in a nutshell

2 August 1990: Iraq's President Saddam Hussein ordered his troops to invade Kuwait. The United Nations immediately condemned his actions and sanctions were imposed on Iraq to pressure them into withdrawing.

Operation Desert Shield: United States President George H W Bush ordered the build-up of forces in the region.

16 January 1991: When diplomacy failed, Operation Granby/Operation Desert Storm started.

39 countries: The coalition against Iraq was made up of 39 countries. 28 of them supplied 670,000 troops. It included: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and United Arab Emirates.

Lasted: 43 days

Air power: The coalition flew 2,300 aircraft. The British contribution to the strike force was Tornados,

Jaguars and Buccaneers. Operation Granby also involved tankers, transports, maritime reconnaissance assets and helicopters. Eight RAF Tornados were lost - five during operations and three during sorties before the air offensive.

British troops involved: 53,000

In first 24 hours: more than 1,000 sorties were flown.

30,000: Iraqi soldiers were believed to be in Kuwaiti territory.

28 February 1991: The war ended when Iraq pulled out of Kuwait.

6 April 1991: Iraq formally accepted cease-fire terms.

Iraqi casualties: The Imperial War Museum estimates between 20,000 and 35,000 Iraqi soldiers died during the ground war. Civilian deaths resulting from the conflict are estimated at between 100,000 and 200,000.

Coalition casualties: 250 people from the armed forces of the 39 nations that formed the coalition died in the conflict. A total of 47 British personnel were killed during the operation, including five during the air campaign.

and their families, the transition to civilian life can be daunting. Thanks to organisations like the RAF Association, the support system and sense of community that comes from serving in the Armed Forces lasts a lifetime. Your commitment to aiding personnel and veterans with war pensions, Armed Forces compensation, welfare grants and assisting veterans or widows and widowers with supported housing is so important to ensuring members of the community feel valued.

The minister comes from a Navy family but chose to join the Army

and is: "well aware of how much the three services rely on each other despite the rivalry." He says: "The RAF was essential to the success of the operations I served on, including in Afghanistan. In my role, I was always impressed by the standards and commitment of my RAF brothers and sisters. I also have fond memories of my time in the mess at RAF Brize Norton during my jumps course, but the less said about my behaviour the better; I would hate to provoke memories for others!" AM

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Cobras, control towers and communal living: a national service odyssey



A medic patching-up crash 'victims' during the exercise Alan Birch was sent to photograph. © Alan Birch.

During the mid-20th century, an entire generation found themselves swept up into national service. From deaths in the desert to stalking submarines, Association members describe vivid memories of their time spent serving the nation.

In June 1949, Ron Cave left home for the first time and headed for RAF Cardington. "From that moment I embarked upon the transition to communal living," remembers Ron. "We exchanged our civilian clothing for a blue and somewhat itchy uniform, and our names for numbers".

Ron was lured into signing on for five years by the extra pay and the possibility of an overseas posting. His six weeks of initial training, learning to live alongside 20 young men of various backgrounds, was a demanding exercise, and inevitably conflict would arise.

"I have no idea what started it," says Ron, "but Norman Godley and I crashed all over the iron bedsteads and almost demolished the coke stove. We pretty well fought ourselves to a standstill with no clear winner, and subsequently became the best of friends."

David Burt was informed at the beginning of his initial training in 1953 that the rest of his supposedly 100-strong cohort had been delayed. Told to wait, he wandered about the camp feeling "very isolated and not a little fearful." The following afternoon several coaches arrived and ninety-nine Glaswegians stepped off. "I kept very quiet," recalls David, "mainly as I couldn't understand a single word

they were saying."

After a week David noticed that the man in the adjacent bed was only looking at – not reading – a letter from home. "Do you want me to read your letter?" David asked furtively. After a moment's silence, the piece of paper was handed over without comment. "I don't remember what the few lines from his mother said, but I read them out," recalls David. "After that I was looked upon as probably the only acceptable Englishman on the site, which made my 'square-bashing' experience much easier".

"We exchanged our civilian clothes for a blue and somewhat itchy uniform"

Away from home

For many, national service was the first time they had been away from home. And while most men spent their service on home soil, a significant minority found themselves sent to parts of the world they may never have even heard of. Sailing to Egypt in

1951, Ron Cave captured the thoughts of many servicemen experiencing a world beyond their home towns for the first time: "The journey was a mixture of new experiences for me. The wide open space at sea was mind-blowing."

Dropping anchor at Valletta, Ron's ship was besieged by small trading boats selling everything from watermelons, bananas and oranges to leather bags, music boxes



Above: Alan Birch, RAF Photographer and national serviceman, 1958. © Alan Birch.

and t-shirts. "They quickly threw up ropes with baskets attached," says Ron. "These were threaded round the ship's rails; goods would come up and money would travel back down. Probably decades of trading had been done that way".

Many servicemen also found themselves in places they would never have got to see in their civilian lives. Photographer Alan Birch was at RAF Episkopi between 1957 and 1960. While most of his time was spent in a darkroom, he would on occasion be loaned out to photograph official events.

"Once, I was flown down to RAF El Adem in Libya to photograph a medical parachute drop exercise, before being driven about twenty miles into the desert to spend the night in a small tent," remembers Alan. "Next morning I was taken to the remains of a crashed aircraft, where we left various airmen made-up with supposed injuries. I was then driven two miles away to a drop zone to await the arrival of an aircraft. It was quite scary being left on my own out in the desert." The aircraft did arrive, eventually – much to Alan's relief.

With medical staff landing around him Alan began photographing the exercise, but was soon interrupted by a loud "That'll show 'em!" followed by the unexpected embrace of a Group Captain. "As far as I can remember," says Alan, "the Group Captain wasn't supposed to be on the drop, but had taken bets that he would dare to drop with the team. I think he was quite pleased to still be alive." The entire group then set off across the desert towards the crash site to patch up the 'injured' airmen. →



RAF national servicemen on disciplinary gardening duty, or 'jankers!' © IWM HU 51423.

Over 1,000 miles to the south, squadron medic David Mitchell was also learning that national service could place you in unanticipated situations, far from home. As part of a small detachment from 230 Squadron, David was sent to Mubi, Nigeria, in 1960 to help the authorities maintain order during forthcoming elections.

"Our temporary home consisted of a group of mud huts with thatched roofs," he says. "As medic, my first duty was to set up a sterilizer to ensure a continuous supply of safe drinking water, and paraffin-powered fridges in which to store it along with a respectable supply of beer and a quantity of snake bite serum."

Life could be made especially interesting by the local fauna, with laughing hyenas disturbing their sleep and nighttime encounters with leopards not uncommon. "Snakes weren't too much of a problem," remembers David, "but care had to be taken to avoid spitting cobras in the trees, which could cause blindness if not treated immediately".

Local customs also had to be navigated, with David encountering witch doctors dressed in leopard skins and feathers, who warned a pilot of impending bad luck. The next day, the pilot's aircraft upended in a freak gust of wind.

Even when stationed in the UK, servicemen could be posted to locations they'd never heard of. "When posted to North Foreland I spent

some time checking the map trying to find it in Scotland," recalls David Burt, "until it was pointed out that the underground base was actually off the Kent coast."

The sharp end

With post-war Britain having so many overseas interests and commitments, its national servicemen could easily find themselves sent to places where the local population was less than pleased to see them.

In 1951, opposition to the continuing occupation by British

troops of the Suez Canal Zone was evident to Ron Cave when he arrived in the area. "We were driven in a convoy of open trucks and very soon were rudely reminded that we had entered a new way of life. Passing through a small village, one of our fellow travellers was shot in the arm, presumably by a sniper who could have been concealed anywhere in the throng of locals."

Having finally made his way to RAF Ismailia, Ron's vision of trips to Cairo, the pyramids and sailing the Nile were quickly dashed. "Less than eight weeks after our arrival, anti-British activity began to get out of hand," he recalls. "British families living in Ismailia were being terrorised. Egyptian and foreign nationals working for the British were being beaten and murdered. Riots were a daily occurrence." The British army was soon called in to take control.

Despite the tense atmosphere, life went on for Ron and his comrades. "Apart from being a wireless fitter, I was employed at a remote receiver centre as an operator. I had to go 3km out into the desert every day. The whole area was fully fenced and the building protected by a sloping concrete blast wall. It was surrounded by 100-foot high aerial masts tuned to communication centres around the world. My job was to maintain the equipment and periodically retune the receivers."

Local hostility necessitated that everyone perform guard duty around the camp perimeter at least once a week. "Close by was the Suez Canal," explains Ron, "and beyond the canal was a clutter of a hundred or so buildings and two or three minarets. There was always a threat of snipers while we were walking that stretch, so we would sweep the area with searchlights. They were very powerful and seemed almost to blast their way through the thick walls of the houses.

The inhabitants didn't like them at all and understandably yelled abuse at us from across the water.

"Outside the camp at Ismailia hostile activity was happening regularly, particularly against those who worked for the British," says Ron. When a soldier was shot while on patrol, Ron's name was picked at random with five others to form a guard of honour. "It was the first time I had attended any sort of funeral".

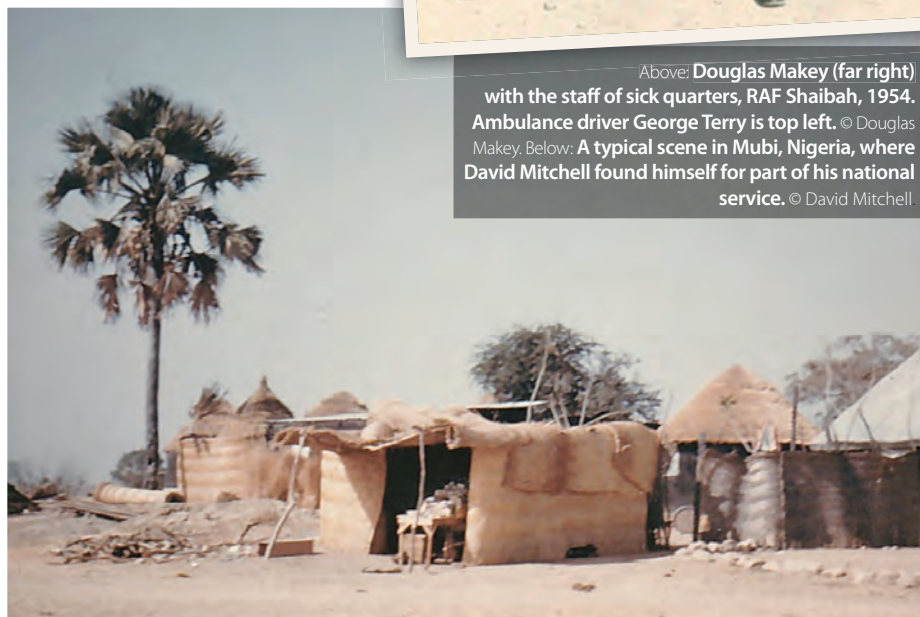
Late one evening, local resentment resulted in a very close call. "I was walking past a heavy timber structure when there was a thud behind me, followed rapidly by the sound of a rifle crack," remembers Ron. "I moved swiftly on!"

Medic David Mitchell also remembers an incident in an area of Nigeria where local resentment against the French was especially prevalent: "Some of our lads inadvertently

"Care had to be taken to avoid spitting cobras in the trees"



Above: Douglas Makey (far right) with the staff of sick quarters, RAF Shaibah, 1954. Ambulance driver George Terry is top left. © Douglas Makey. Below: A typical scene in Mubi, Nigeria, where David Mitchell found himself for part of his national service. © David Mitchell.





Above: **Ron Cave (rear) and his friend Terry in Egypt.** © Ron Cave.

strayed into the fringes of French territory, and came across a small party of French soldiers in a Jeep being stoned by local villagers."

For RAF medic, Douglas Makey, an incident which unfolded over 13 hours in the heat of Baghdad is seared onto his memory.

On 5 July 1954, while waiting at Baghdad's YMCA building for another party to join their convoy, Douglas and his colleague George Terry decided to spend the day exploring the city. Arriving back at 4pm, they were confronted by a semi-conscious RAF corporal from the newly-arrived party, which had travelled for two hours in an open truck during the heat of the day. As the only medic among the group, Douglas set to work.

"Touching the hot dry skin of the corporal, I realised he was suffering from heat exhaustion," says Douglas. "I was then told that he hadn't been taking his salt tablets." As Douglas and a few others lifted the now unconscious man into the back of a truck, George took the wheel and made for the nearest hospital.

On arrival they were informed that it was closed, but that a newly-built hospital nearby would assist them instead. George again set off at speed, while Douglas attempted to stabilise the patient. Arriving at the second hospital 15 minutes later they were again refused entry, this time on the grounds that the hospital was not yet fully equipped. "It was now an hour since I had first seen him," says Douglas, "and I was very concerned about his condition."

Pushing past the doctor, the group laid the

man down on the first empty bed they could find, whereupon the doctor finally agreed to examine him. He was by now in an advanced state of dehydration, with a temperature of 104 degrees Celsius. The Iraqi doctor set up an intravenous saline drip while Douglas placed ice-packs around the patient.

"In spite of the saline and the ice packs, he passed away at 5am," says Douglas, "13 hours after I first saw him." Checking his pockets, Douglas found documents containing the man's name and date of birth: 6 July, that very day. "If only I had remained at the YMCA, the story may have had a different ending," laments Douglas. "If only."

Even when physically out of harm's way, national servicemen nonetheless found themselves undertaking tasks of vital importance, where any error of judgement could have catastrophic consequences.

In 1953 David Burt was billeted at the United States Air Force (USAF) base at Manston as part of a team operating the underground Radar Observation Unit at North Foreland. "The unit was manned on seven-day twenty-four-hour shifts, and was guarded by military police dogs," recalls David. "We monitored Russian military vessels, including submarines moving up and down the English Channel, and in particular any shadowing US or UK military vessels."

As a senior radar technician used to working with USAF servicemen, and having previously flown on an American B47 bomber to the Azores on a navigation run, David was to spend the final few months in service at an emergency posting to RAF Gloucester during the height of the Cold War.

"Upon arrival, the officer explained that

the new airport at Heathrow had just been completed," says David. "However, the unit which should have controlled the flight management of civil airliners on routes which had to cross with military flights from the USA was not yet in place. The USAF flew using radio beacons, but as no such network was available in the UK or Europe, they had to be guided by radio communication."

As the first of the emergency team to be drafted in, 19-year-old David was installed as the group leader. "The American pilots, many young and inexperienced, found it difficult to say 'Gloucester'," David recalls, "and so variations of the phrase: 'Glottchester? Gloodchester? Glouccster? Oh what the...?' were commonly heard over the radio."

Memories

Despite the disruption to their lives, and the possible dangers they could be placed in, national service could offer unique experiences unavailable in civilian life.

In June 1953, David Burt was selected to be in Her Majesty The Queen's ceremonial guard for a coronation visit: "I can recall the pride I felt marching behind the open top Rolls-Royce, standing directly behind the Queen as she listened to the Mayor's welcome and thinking what a small person she was."

Electrical Mechanic John Matthews remembers having to contact Winston Churchill's physician to ask the safest altitude at which to fly him, in light of his recent heart attack. "On his return that evening Sir Winston gave me a gratuity of ten shillings [approx. £12 today]," recalls John. "It's a memory I shall never forget."

While some experiences are recalled with fondness and pride, others evoke different reactions. As a medic, David Mitchell once

Upended aircraft - a disaster foretold by a local Nigerian witch doctor. © David Mitchell.



accompanied a doctor to a bush hospital to assist with an operation. After a long trek on unmade roads, he found that the hospital was a collection of mudbrick buildings with, as David describes: "A number of injured 'terrorists' shackled to the end of their beds with ankle irons".

Having survived Ismailia and the sniper's bullet, one of Ron Cave's final memories of national service is hardly joyous. On 28 March 1954, Ron and his friend Frank were heading home from Egypt aboard the *Empire Windrush*. Awoken by the sound of klaxons and thinking it was another drill, they nonetheless headed to the mustering point.

"We stood and watched the activity and awaited the 'all clear'", says Ron. "Crew members seemed to be running about, and there was a certain amount of shouting. "They're taking this a bit seriously," we thought. Then we noticed somebody hacking away with an axe at one end of a lifeboat, which seemed a bit strange". Smoke was then seen coming up through

Photographing a king (in this instance King Hussein of Jordan on a 1959 visit to RAF Akrotiri) was one of the many unusual tasks national service could require of its servicemen.

© Alan Birch.



the decking, and rope ladders began to be lowered over the side as the order to abandon ship was given.

Ron remembers the scene: "The rear funnel by now was well alight and eventually crashed back onto the deck, releasing dense clouds of black smoke. With mothers and children first, boats were filled and steadily lowered to the water. Furniture was thrown over the side ready for the less lucky ones to hang on to."

Ron managed to board a life boat, and two

hours later was picked up by the P&O cargo ship *SS Socotra*. The rescuing flotilla headed for Algiers: "My last view of the *Empire Windrush* showed her still well alight, listing and dipping markedly towards the stern."

Homecoming

Whatever their experience during national service, eventually each man's time was up, and he found himself having to transition back to civilian life. Demobbed after surviving the sinking of the *Empire Windrush*, Ron Cave recalls the journey home:

"From the carriage window the undulating terrain, green fields and clean fat cattle were all very picture-postcard. It was suddenly difficult to relate to our two-and-a-half year experience of brown land, bony oxen and the dust and flies of Egypt. And how could the elderly lady sitting opposite me know that just two days ago I was bobbing about in a lifeboat 40 miles off the Algerian coast?"

As well as leaving the military, returning servicemen often also had to part from good friends. "Frank and I were still together," remembers Ron, "but not saying much on that journey to Paddington. When we got there we knew we had to go our separate ways, but we both knew we weren't really looking forward to it. We had gone through a lot together over the last five years. Neither of us said as much, but it was an emotional time."

Prolonging the moment, both Ron and Frank took the tube to Barnet. Frank went on to Tottenham and Ron caught the bus to St Albans. "I got off in the centre of town and decided to walk the last mile home," says Ron. "There was no counselling in those days. Not that we thought we needed it, I'm sure".

Arriving home, there were hugs from his parents, cups of tea and even cake. His room was exactly as he had left it. "I remember sitting on the edge of the bed for a long time," says Ron. "I was 23. I'm not sure if I cried, but I wouldn't be surprised." AM

"There was a thud behind me, followed by the sound of a rifle crack"



The *Empire Windrush* ablaze and sinking, March 1954.

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Reflecting the RAF

The modern-day image of the RAF is firmly in the hands of its photographers. These creative, intrepid people — who never seem to sleep — always capture a perfect image to show RAF personnel and technology in service for the nation. Each year they submit their own favourites to the RAF Photographic Competition. Here are the winners from 2020.

All images © MOD/Crown 2020

More than 900 images were submitted to the RAF Photographic Competition's three categories for 2020. The best nine were chosen by three photographic industry judges. The "Peoples' Choice" was chosen by the general public casting 16,000 votes on the RAF's official Facebook page. The categories, reduced from 13 to four because of the pandemic, were: Personnel, Current RAF Equipment, RAF Operations and Exercises and the Peoples' Choice.



Personnel

Sponsored by Fujifilm



1st Place: 'NVG' (left) by Mr Ian Forshaw, RAF Shawbury. Ian Forshaw's winning photo shows a trainee and an instructor at No.1 Flying Training School preparing for a night flying sortie in a H135 Juno Helicopter using Night Vision Devices.

Since Ian's win, the photo has featured in the national press including The Guardian, Daily Express and the Daily Telegraph.

Speaking about his success, Ian said: "My motto is you're only as good as your last photo, so to win this award and be recognised by my peers is fantastic."

Ian has been the Station Photographer at RAF Shawbury since 1980. He was originally posted there as a corporal in the photographic trade. After six years he left the RAF but has continued as the station photographer, as a contractor. He has previously come first in numerous categories in the

competition, and he won the RAF Photographer of the Year Award in 2016.

"Even after 40 years of working in the photographic trade I still enjoy trying new things and coming up with something different," he said. "I look forward to seeing what opportunities arise throughout the year and choosing an entry for next year's competition."



2nd Place (above): 'Can't take my eyes off of you' by Corporal Ben Tritta, RAF Brize Norton.



3rd Place (above): 'Passion' by Corporal Rob Travis, 77th Brigade.



Highly Commended (above): 'Retired' by Senior Aircraftwoman Kim Waterson, RAF Wittering.

"A stunning visual showcase of the work of the RAF over the last year"
Judge Jim Hedge, Picture Editor, The Guardian

Current RAF Equipment

Sponsored by Canon



1st Place (above): 'Astra' by Sergeant Andy Holmes, RAF Benson.

"The Falkland Islands and low light pollution provides a unique opportunity for star gazing," says Sergeant Holmes.

"The shot was taken at Mount Pleasant Complex. The Typhoon from 1435 Flight was lit by floodlights so getting a shot with the relatively bright aircraft and dark sky correctly exposed was quite a challenge. I had limited time. Moments after this image →



RAF Photographic Competition

was taken the stars disappeared behind the clouds. Astro photography isn't something we do every day as RAF Photographers, I really enjoyed the challenge of taking the photo, I hope people enjoy viewing it."

"I joined the RAF as a photographer in 2003 straight from school. I have had a varied career which has included postings to Waddington, High Wycombe, Kinloss, Northolt, Marham, Honington and Benson. The highlight of being an RAF photographer is that you don't know what you will be doing from one day to the

next. I have travelled the world with my camera, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Cyprus, America, UAE, Oman, all over Europe and the Falkland Islands. From documenting historic sites in Iraq with world leading archaeologists to photographing from the back seat of a Tornado and everything in between. I am currently based at RAF Benson, where we provide engineering photography and media support to the Support Helicopter Force.

Sergeant Holmes also won the Operations and Exercises Category.



2nd Place (above): 'The Gunslinger' by Corporal Rob Travis, 77th Brigade.



3rd Place (above): 'Face Off' by Sergeant Paul Oldfield, RAF Coningsby.



Highly Commended (left): 'Pot of Gold' by Corporal Tim Laurence, RAF Odiham.

RAF Operations and Exercises

Sponsored by Wex Photo Video

1st Place: (below): 'Ground Zero' by Sergeant Andy Holmes, RAF Benson.

An Airbus Defence AirTanker Voyager being prepped for a sortie on dispersals in British Forces South Atlantic Islands.

Speaking about Sergeant Holmes' second winning photo,

competition judge Martin Keene of the Press Association said: "The picture stands out as aviators, ground crew and kit battle against the elements a long way from home. It's a picture that would not be out of place on the big screen – and is pure photographic brilliance."

2nd Place (right): 'See Off' by Senior Aircraftwoman Hazel Reader, RAF Coningsby.



3rd Place (See People's Choice, far right, p37): 'Helping Hand' Corporal Phil Dye, RAF Akrotiri.

Highly Commended (right): 'Approaching the Dam' by Corporal Rob Travis, 77th Brigade.





who voted for my image. There was some fantastic quality on display as always from my fellow photogs. I feel very honoured to have been in the mix with them. Congratulations to the other winners too."

"I was brought up in a small village called Brotton in East Cleveland and always had ambitions of

joining the RAF. After finishing my degree at Teesside University, I travelled extensively and developed a keen interest for photography. Little did I know that my two interests were about to cross paths. I stepped into the Middlesbrough Career Office in 2011 and began my process of joining up as an RAF photographer.

"I have had postings at RAF Marham, RAF Leeming, RAF

Winner (far right and front cover): 'Helping Hand' by Corporal Phil Dye, RAF Akrotiri.

The shot of an 84 Squadron winchman reaching out while hanging from one of the squadron's Griffin helicopters was taken at the end of a sortie from RAF Akrotiri.

Corporal Dye said afterwards, "A photo can only be as good as its subject. Thank you to everyone

Peoples' Choice

Sponsored by Wex Photo Video

Akrotiri, Cyprus and am currently on deployment at Mount Pleasant Complex, Falkland Islands. I have flown countless hours in many forms of aircraft and spent many memorable moments in the company of all branches of our armed forces, capturing their fantastic work.

"My career goal is to continue being the best airman I can be, gaining respect for my trade and recognition from my peer group, and eventually finish my time by instructing and passing on my knowledge and passion for photography to the future generation of airmen and women." AM



Others that caught our eye



Below left: 'One Point Perspective' by Senior Aircraftman Connor Tierney, RAF Lossiemouth

Below right: 'The dark side' by Sergeant Rachel Malthouse, RAF Benson

Far Bottom: 'California Dreaming' by Senior Aircraftwoman Rose Buchanan, RAF Scampton





Charles Chabot over France, 1915, taken by his observer, Riddley, just as Chabot spots a German aircraft chasing them. Riddley had removed the Lewis gun to take the picture. © RAF Association

Winging it

At the dawn of aerial combat in WWI, the Royal Flying Corps was operating at the edge of the envelope. Many RFC airmen later joined the Royal Air Forces Association - and told truly hair-raising tales of how they served the nation.

“Just do the best you can,” was the only instruction given to Ted Street as he climbed into the observer’s seat on the second day of the war. With guns not yet fitted to aircraft, Street – formerly an award-winning marksman with the Coldstream Guards – sat with a .303 rifle across his knees, 10 rounds of ammunition and two rifle grenades.

Hearing the stories of pilots in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) during the early part of WWI can often evoke images of the old Wild West. The technology was unproven, and the role aircraft were to play was uncertain. 6,000 feet over Mons, Street spotted a German aircraft and instructed his pilot to engage with it.

Poking his rifle through a hole in the fuselage, Street found himself looking directly down the barrel of a rifle held by a German airman attempting the very same thing. Shots were exchanged, though when Street tried a rifle grenade he was nearly knocked out by the recoil.

One bullet hit the target however, and the German spiralled out of control and crashed in a field. This was Britain’s first ever air-to-air victory, for which Ted Street was awarded the French *Medaille Militaire*.

Brian Baker found himself as much thwarted by the rudimentary technology of air-to-air combat as by the enemy themselves.

“I had a Smith-Wesson revolver in the pilot’s

seat, and the observer, who sat in front, had a rifle across his knee,” remembered Baker. “That was the total armament against the [Germans’] machine gun... and if we carried bombs we had to leave the observer behind!”

RFC aircraft were eventually provided with machine guns, though their placement and use could be cumbersome.

“The main problem when shooting forward was not to shoot off your own propeller,” Baker continued. “If he [the observer] wanted to have a go at something on our tail he put the tripod on top of the fuselage behind him. This meant the pilot, sitting behind, was virtually staring down the barrel. Fortunately it was about a foot above his head. Even so, the concussion of the bullets firing was rather like somebody tapping you on the head with a hammer.”

A week after Ted Street’s exploits with the .303 rifle, Eric Bentley Beauman was likewise expected to do the best he could when charged with being London’s sole defence against air attack.

As a qualified pilot, at the war’s outset he was

called-up and sent to Eastchurch, reporting to the commanding officer upon his arrival.

"Can you fly a Caudron?" the CO asked.

"No sir," Beauman replied.

"Do you know your way to Hendon?"

"No sir."

"Very well," the CO concluded. "At dawn tomorrow you will fly a Caudron to Hendon."

Having made it to Hendon with only one forced landing along the way, Beauman again reported to the officer in charge:

"You are now the defence of London from air attack," the officer said.

"But I haven't any observer or armament. What can I do if a Zeppelin *does* come over?" Beauman asked.

"I leave that to you," was the reply.

Aerial combat

Perhaps the most famous character of the 1914-18 air war was the German Manfred von Richthofen, better known as the 'Red Baron'. Richthofen's aircraft was a distinctive pillar-box red, and the aircraft under his command – all flown by picked airmen and painted according to their fancy – became known as the 'flying circus'. It wasn't only the colouring that lent the circus its name. Richthofen's unit regularly travelled to wherever the fighting was fiercest, spending a few days or weeks in one sector before decamping to the next. It is therefore not surprising that so many RFC pilots

experienced first-hand how devastating an encounter with the flying circus could be.

After his first combat tour, Brian Baker was sent back to the UK as an instructor. He would not be there for long:

"Early in 1917 I was sent back into active service in a batch of replacements."

recalled Baker. "Many of our pilots had fallen victim to the Richthofen 'circus'...

by then his exploits had made him a household name in Britain... On a number of occasions I was what was known as 'bait' for [fighter ace William Avery] Bishop...

That meant going out early in the morning to attract the Richthofen circus. Bishop would sit up in the sun waiting and watching and, when they turned

up to have a go at me, he pounced. I must admit I always prayed he'd pounce quickly enough, because the circus were pretty hot." →

"I heard the roar of flames, smelled petrol, and knew I was on fire"

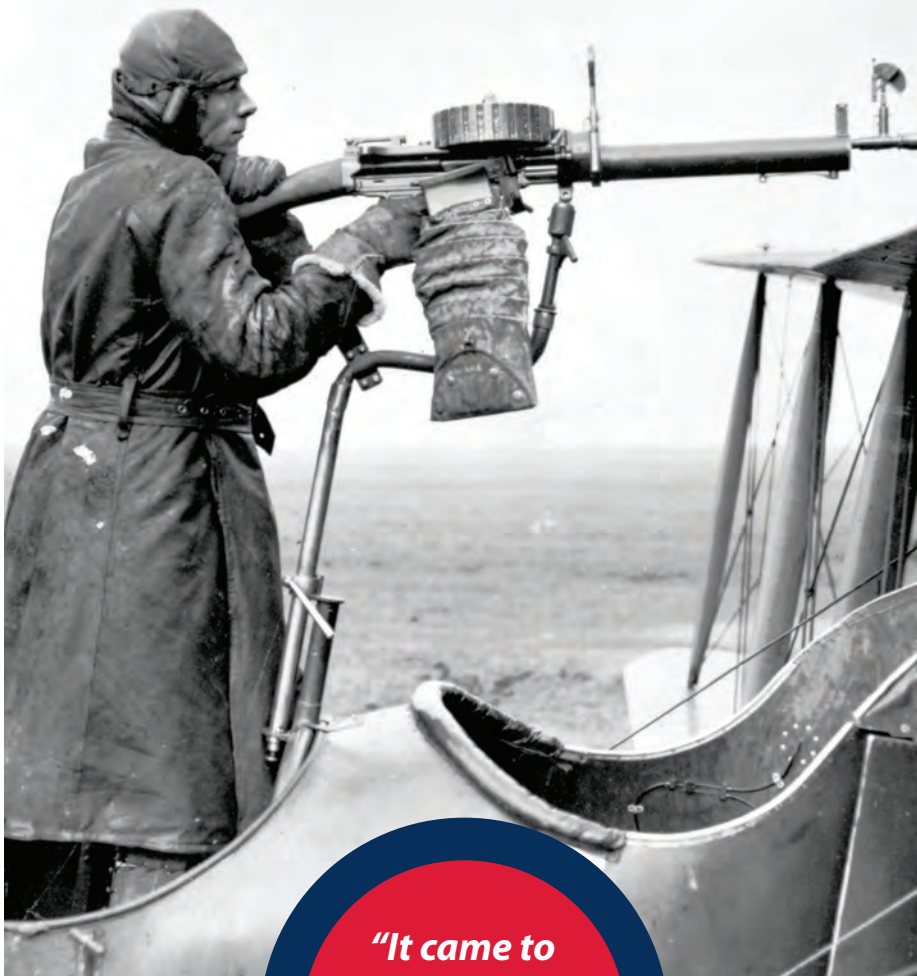


Ted Street during WWI – complete with handlebar moustache. © RAF Association.

Right: **Tommy Lewis** beside his aircraft, named 'Rhodesia' for the place of his birth. © RAF Association.
Below: **RFC airmen** present the squadron mascot – a puppy. © RAF Museum.



Lewis Gun mounted on an FE2d aircraft. This precarious mounting allowed for forward firing over the top of the aircraft's propeller arc. © RAF Museum.



"It came to an abrupt end when one of the propellers flew off"

With 79 victories to his name, on 20 April 1918 Richthofen once again led his flying circus against a flight of RFC aircraft, singling out the machine of Rhodesia-born David 'Tommy' Lewis:

"We met head-on, firing our Vickers and Spandau machine-guns at one another," recalled Lewis. "A real dog-fight developed... A few seconds later I saw Major Barker's plane explode." Another aircraft passed below Lewis, and he opened fire. "As I was firing I heard the staccato of machine-gun bullets striking behind me. I turned to look into the blue goggles of Richthofen." Lewis then attempted evasive action, but to no avail. "Struts were splintering wildly on my plane, the compass shattered and the liquid poured over me. My goggles went over the side, the elastic cut by a bullet where it joined the frame. I had a bullet through my right sleeve and one through my trouser at the knee. I heard the roar of flames, smelled petrol, and knew I was on fire."

Lewis survived the subsequent crash-landing with only minor burns. "Before flying off, the Red

Baron waved", he said.

"I was taken prisoner." The next morning the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, was himself shot down and killed.

Tommy Lewis had been his final victim.

Of course, the flying circus were not the only aircraft the German air force could call on, and every encounter with an enemy aiming for your destruction was potentially fatal.

"The closest call I had was when a bullet from a rear gunner zipped across the top of my head and dug a groove in my leather flying helmet," stated Brian Baker. "I felt as if someone had hit me with a brick and, in fact, I blacked out. Fortunately I must have come round within seconds... I don't think my observer even realised what had happened."

Surviving the odds

Though dogfighting aircraft may be the primary image conjured up when thinking of the dangers of flight during WWI, the threat from the ground was equally real.

Having served on the Western Front with the army, survived Vimy Ridge, the Somme and the attack which breached the Hindenburg Line, Leslie Pargeter was determined to escape the trenches and "see the end of the war or the end of the world with the RFC."

In August 1918, Pargeter's aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire, which tore a large hole in the fuel tank on the top wing. With petrol spilling out onto the engine, he climbed out of the observer's seat, along the bottom wing, and stuffed his glove into the hole. He stayed in that precarious position until only moments before the aircraft finally touched down at the airfield.

Three weeks later, while strafing troops at low-level, machine-gun bullets tore into his aircraft and again punctured the petrol tank. Pargeter once more climbed out onto the wing, took off his gloves and plugged as many holes as possible with his fingers. Though covered in aviation fuel, he managed to save just enough for the aircraft to get home, with the engine cutting out only seconds before landing. These two actions saw him become one of the first airmen to be awarded the DFC.

Flying at high altitude with rudimentary (if any) oxygen masks could also pose grave risks. While on aerial photography flights, Brian Baker remembered the problems of working at 20,000 feet:

"Breathing wasn't such a problem for the pilot because he didn't have to move around using up energy. But the poor photographer was up and down all the time removing exposed plates and reloading the camera. It wasn't unusual to glance round and find him crumpled in an unconscious heap. The only remedy was to dive as fast as possible to around 10,000 feet, when he usually regained consciousness. It could be a bit frightening."

Below: Leslie Pargeter – once again in uniform in 1948. © RAF Association.





Charles Chabot's BE2c with Lewis gun platform. Only four of the five guns were mounted at the time this photograph was taken. © RAF Association.

The weather also took its toll, especially in open cockpits. During one flight in December 1914, Ted Street was caught in extreme bad weather. His face was temporarily paralysed by frost which permanently damaged his hearing. Unfit for further flying, he became a ground instructor.

Finally, the aircraft themselves could fail, as Brian Baker discovered during one memorable flight. Using a captured German bomber, Baker would fly over allied searchlights and listening posts to give them practice with enemy twin-engine aircraft.

"I was flying it one day with some lads in the back, ostensibly showing them the ropes," said Baker. "It was dreadfully boring for them and, unknown to me they had started a game of rummy to pass the time. It came to an abrupt end when one of the propellers flew off."

The hasty crash-landing in a nearby field resulted – miraculously – in no casualties.

Evening the odds

Taking stock of the equipment they had to work with, and determined to learn from the lessons that the air war had so far taught them, it is unsurprising that some airmen set about evening the odds.

In 1916, at a time when only one machine-gun was the norm, Charles Chabot set about constructing a multi-gun platform for his aircraft while stationed in Mesopotamia.

"The only thing to do was make the perishing device myself," concluded Chabot when official interest was found to be lacking. After salvaging the required parts, his BE2c aircraft – weighed down with five Lewis guns mounted between the wheels – took to the sky. Though sluggish, it was manoeuvrable, so Chabot tried a short burst of the guns.

"The result was absolutely glorious," he recalled. "There was no sudden stalling of the machine, as gloomy mess-mates had predicted, and no guns fell off. There was just the most heartening noise one could possibly imagine and a very useful-looking [strike] pattern on the surface of the river.

"I emptied my five drums in a lovely long

burst of all-hell-let-loose such as had never come out of the sky before," he said. "This was undoubtedly one of the biggest moments of my young life. I felt it was epoch-making and it was certainly all my own work, every nut and bolt of it."

Landing back at the aerodrome, the fanfare Chabot had imagined for his return was in reality one very irate CO. As bad luck would have it, at the exact time he had been blasting the River Tigris with ear-shattering bursts of gunfire the army's cavalry contingent had been on their way to water their horses. The noise had caused a stampede, and resulted in the entire campaign being temporarily without cavalry. The Officer Commanding RFC Mesopotamia had also received an enormous dressing-down from Army HQ.

Needless to say, the gun platform was dismantled and returned to the armoury. "I've never seen a CO so angry!" Chabot said.

While those pushing the limits of the possible in today's RAF are the heirs to this pioneering spirit, the experiences of those who served

Brian Baker committed his memories to paper for *Air Mail* in 1972/3, and was by then known as Air Marshal Sir Brian Baker DSO MC AFC. He was an RAF Association life member and served on the Scottish Area Council.

Eric Bentley Beaman gave his story to *Air Mail* in 1975, while a member of the Association's City of Westminster Branch.

Charles Chabot served in Britain, France and Mesopotamia, and survived several crashes before becoming a life member of the Association at the age of 80.

D G 'Tommy' Lewis was president of Salisbury Branch in 1972 when his experience with the Red Baron was published in *Air Mail*.

Leslie Pargeter began working for the Association in 1957. The exploits of this modest and unassuming man finally came to light in 1959, when his story was published in *Air Mail*. He retired from his job at the Association in 1972 after 15 years of service, though he remained an active member of the Richmond (Surrey) Branch.

Ted Street featured in *Air Mail* in 1958 while vice-president of the Association's Brighton and Hove Branch.

at the dawn of aerial warfare are unique in aviation history. In 1950, Ted Street took to the skies for the first time since his wartime exploits. His verdict on the flight? "Pretty tame compared with those early ones." ^{AM}



The first effective aerial camera was designed in 1915, though the exertions required to operate it at altitude could be dangerous.

© RAF Museum.

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Catching up with Carrickfergus Branch



Keeping in the public eye — fundraising trophies and announcements at Carrickfergus Castle.

“We have quite a big catchment,” says Branch Chairman Wing Commander Noel Williams. “From Whitehead in the east through Carrickfergus itself, Greenisland, Newtownabbey to Glengormley on the outskirts of Belfast. But we also have members in England, Wales, Scotland or overseas who joined the Association when they were stationed at the then RAF Aldergrove.” (Now Air Station Aldergrove.)

“Membership is now around 70 and our meetings are held at Carrickfergus Golf Club,” says Noel, a former RAF aircraft technician, pilot and air traffic controller. “It’s about having good fun. We try to only allow formal business to take around 45 minutes, then we retire to the bar for a light libation or two.”

Zoom has temporarily taken over from meeting in person and up to 14 of the branch regulars use it to keep in touch. “Some of the 20 or so who normally attend don’t have internet,” Noel says,

The people of Mid and East Antrim in Northern Ireland have high levels of happiness and wellbeing. In 2016 the council area was ranked the happiest place in the United Kingdom according to the Office for National Statistics’ annual Personal and Wellbeing Survey. Gracing the County Antrim coast is Carrickfergus with its 12th century Norman castle, and the RAF Association’s Carrickfergus Branch.

“but we post the minutes to them and phone to make sure they are OK during the pandemic”.

The branch was formed in 1946 — 2021 is its 75th anniversary year — and stayed strong through the 1970s, 80s and 90s largely under the guidance of Life Vice President, Kevin McRandle MBE. It originally had a small meeting house in the town, which closed in the 1970s. Noel says they don’t really need a club anyway and he wouldn’t recommend re-opening one even if they had the opportunity, as they get all they need from the golf club.

These days the branch has a national reputation for fundraising. Winner of both the Lord Stirrup and Lord Craig trophies for the last 12 years it constantly manages to fight off other branches for the top recognition — for branches that don’t benefit from an airshow to boost their fundraising. In 2018, the RAF’s centenary, it registered its most successful year: a grand total of just over £50,000, and the highest net collection at almost £700 per member. The branch managed to raise £20,000 in 2020, despite COVID-19.

Noel is generous in sharing how the team achieves this. “When I became the Wings Appeal Organiser we stopped the normal week-long street collections each year,” he says. “For a long time now, our Wings Appeal has run from mid-July to mid-October. We have a big launch for it, with the Mayor, Lord Lieutenant or other dignitary, somewhere impressive like Carrickfergus Castle, and we send out press releases to the local media.

“We have other events throughout each year; from a Dining-In-Night in February where our President, Maureen Irwin MBE, hosts our principal guests, to quizzes with a raffle where the usual first prize is a 22-inch screen television donated by Brypol, a local electrical company.

“We book local collections in two-week blocks. So we’ll be in the De Courcy Centre for two weeks in July, in Tesco for two weeks in August, Sainsbury’s for a fortnight in September and into the Tesco mall in Glengormley for a final two weeks in October. We are in the east of Northern Ireland



The branch celebrates raising £30,000 in 2019.

where there is strong support for ex-military charities, with lots of people with military backgrounds. Members of the public often donate to us in Tesco and see us again two weeks later in Sainsbury's and put another fiver in the bucket."

So how does the dedicated small core of branch members sustain such intense fundraising? "We produce rosters that aren't too testing but generally have been held together by, among others, Rosie Corr and two retired stalwarts, George Smith and Dan McCormick, who generally break the back of it. Then we fill in around them," says Noel. "We are also well supported by 1919 (Newtownabbey) Squadron and 2062 (Carrickfergus) Squadron RAF Air Cadets.

"We have a stall brimming with Association merchandise. Members wear their RAFA blazers, ties and medals where possible and occasionally a RAFA branded shirt. But woe betide if I catch anyone in jeans or in scruff order," says Noel with a smile. "They often stay longer after the handover times to chat to each other, and they get to talk with members of the public. We have got several new members from passers by who say, 'I was in the RAF'."

The branch also has around 100 collecting tins in pubs, shops, garages and other venues. "They have to be checked every fortnight or thereabouts and that keeps a steady stream of income year round" says Noel. "The branch also has a splendid relationship with local churches, schools and businesses who are more than generous with donations and collections. We take advantage of bidding for local pots of money." The branch even uses the Northern Ireland RAF Association van to pick up furniture donations: "If 'Auntie' is downsizing we are often

Below: **Linking up with the Lord Lieutenant and the Mayor for events, fundraising and dinners throughout the year – here at the Battle of Britain annual Act of Remembrance**

2021 is Carrickfergus Branch's 75th anniversary year



Good relationships with local supermarkets and air cadet squadrons.

offered first look and take the good pieces to sell on Gumtree, with the funds going into the Wings Appeal," says Noel.

"We don't do airshows. The two main Northern Ireland displays are in other branches' patches. But we are very happy to lend a hand if asked," says Noel. And when the East Belfast branch was closed Carrickfergus took up the offer to cover their supermarket collecting slots.

The welfare set-up at the branch is also strong, with a Branch Welfare Officer, Joe Corr, and a deputy, Mandy Morrison, who lead an active team of welfare supporters.

This year, the branch recorded a virtual Act of Remembrance service in August and broadcast it through the Church Facebook and YouTube in September, on Battle of Britain Sunday. It has had an Annual Battle of Britain Parade for as long as they can remember but had to stop that four or five years ago as it was getting a bit much for the more frail members. It still has the annual service of Remembrance at Joymount Presbyterian

Church, under the guidance of the Rev Richard Graham - an event of 20 years' standing that is supported by air cadets, sea cadets, reservists, veterans and serving personnel as well as other armed forces groups.

Looking forward, the branch is delighted to have a new, woven standard and displays it regularly at events and "unfortunately too often" at funerals. It is working on its new website and has an eye on Armed Forces Day 2021 in Northern Ireland - which is scheduled for 19th June in Carrickfergus, "But we'll just have to see if that goes ahead," says Noel. And there's always the fundraising: "We've had a healthy start to 2021, and we're aiming for £20,000 again. If COVID goes away, we'll aim for more." *AM*

Carrickfergus Branch meets at 8pm on the first Tuesday of every month, on Zoom or at Carrickfergus Golf Club, as restrictions allow. Everyone is welcome. Look at rafa.org.uk/branches or call 0800 018 2361 to get further contact details.





Tunbridge Wells Branch.



Basingstoke Branch's Pip Iles BEM parading the branch Standard with new tassel.



Formby Branch.

Armourers' Branch

With the branch unable to assemble at the London Cenotaph for Remembrance Sunday last November, branch members were invited to send photos of themselves during their personal act of remembrance instead. A video montage of members paying their respects was then produced. A ticker-tape was also added to show the list of those Armourers whose passing had been added to the branch's roll of honour since the previous Remembrance Sunday.

Barnstaple and North Devon Branch

In 2018 the branch presented the RAF Air Cadets with a centenary trophy to be awarded annually to a squadron in North Devon. In 2020 it was presented to 722 (Chivenor) Squadron RAFAC. The branch were also represented at Remembrance services in Barnstaple, Braunton, South Molton, Bideford, Fremington and Torrington.

Basingstoke Branch

Formed in 1945, last year marked the branch's 75th anniversary. To commemorate this, the branch was awarded the RAF Association's special tassel in gold and silver to affix to its standard.

Bognor Regis Branch

New Year's Eve saw the branch's annual pantomime take place online. The panto was again written by Branch Chairman Cliff Mewett, and saw the usual branch thespians provide an evening of entertainment. Located in an enviable position on the seafront, once restrictions are lifted the branch looks forward to welcoming back members and guests to enjoy the varied daily entertainment programme and updated menu in the newly refurbished restaurant.

Bridport and Lyme Regis RMG

A small wreath laying ceremony was undertaken at St Mary's Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, which was held in lieu of a full parade due to COVID restrictions. In attendance were Bob Bickers and Bill Davies. Branch members, along with members from the RNA, also held a socially distanced 90th birthday celebration for the branch's Dickie Webster.

Carrickfergus Branch

In 2020 the branch raised more than £20,000 for the Wings Appeal for the 12th year in a row. "The incredibly generous people throughout our catchment area have, yet again, come out to support us in what has been a real year of need," said Wing Commander Noel Williams, the branch's chairman and Wings Appeal organiser. "Looking ahead, it is my fervent hope that next year will again see us at our usual outlets during the 2021 Wings Appeal campaign".

Caduceus Branch

Members continue to work on the front line in the fight against COVID-19, both as veterans in the medical profession and as serving personnel across the UK. At the same time, branch membership has increased across all the medical trades. The welfare support the branch has offered has been well received, and RAF Air Cadets have benefitted from online talks from experts such as Warrant Officer James – a branch member – who also received a DCom Ops Commendation in the New Year's Honours List. The branch congratulate him, as well as all other medical personnel honoured.

Formby Branch

A poppy wreath was laid by the branch's Alan Smith (secretary) and Graham Bridge (member) at the roundel in the botanical gardens in Churchtown, Southport, where volunteers led by David and Ann Cobham and their team tend to the planting of the park and its gardens. The roundel itself is also sponsored by the branch. A two minute silence was observed by the 14 veterans who attended the socially distanced event.

Fraserburgh Branch

In November 2020, with the church parade cancelled, branch president Stanley Green MBE embarked with former chairman Duncan McIntosh (in the capacity of Standard Bearer) on an act of remembrance. The standard was positioned and the wreath arranged on the town's memorial. The remembrance was then observed.

Haverfordwest Branch

The branch was represented at the county Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, with the wreath laid by Welfare Officer Ron Ansell. On Armistice Day the branch was also represented at St David's Church in Haverfordwest, alongside members of the RBL and RNA.

Leigh Branch

The branch continues to reestablish itself within the community, and has supported several funerals of both members and non-members, including a WAAF WWII veteran. Relationships with local RAF Air Cadet squadrons have also been strengthened through monthly online talks. These have been extremely popular with the cadets.

Overseas

Overseas member Peter Martin attended the funeral of WWII veteran Freddie Brown in Finland in January, where he also read the eulogy. Freddie Brown was an air gunner who flew in Wellingtons and Lancasters from 1944-1945, completing 30 operations. Armed forces veterans and the Defence Attaché, Wing Commander Steve Boyle, acted as pallbearers. The coffin was adorned



Ryedale Branch.



Weymouth and Portland Branch.

with the union flag, Freddie's service cap and medals. The Last Post was played by a bugler from the Finnish Guards Band, and Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston also sent his personal condolences.

Ryedale Branch

Mike Baker laid a wreath at the RAF Bomb Disposal Memorial at Eden Camp Modern History Theme Museum, Malton, in a private ceremony prior to Armistice Day. Other members took part in remembrance events as and when possible. Welfare support by telephone, email and Zoom is ongoing, and arrangements are being made for a virtual AGM. Branch Standard Bearer Mo Taylor has stepped down from the role and Chairman Andy Sollitt paid tribute to her loyal service over several years. Jonathan Fawcett and Allan Jones will share the role when events resume.

Sud-Ouest Branch

Branch members were invited to the inauguration of the latest memorial dedicated to 'Operation Frankton', a WWII raid by the Royal Marines colloquially known by the British as the 'Cockleshell Heroes'. The Marines were delivered to the mouth of the Gironde in south-west France by submarine, and kayaked their way to Bordeaux to place mines on German shipping in the port. Though successful, only two Marines survived the raid. Unveiled just before Christmas near Royan, the memorial overlooks the coast where the raid began.

Trowbridge and West Wiltshire Branch

Branch member Henry Morris has been presented with the Area Presidential Certificate for meritorious service by Area President Air Vice-Marshal Martin Clark CB. COVID-19 restrictions caused the presentation to take place outside Henry's home in December. Henry became a member of the branch in 2006, and has assisted with the branch's stall at the Wiltshire Armed Forces and Veterans Weekend over many years. He is also a regular member of the Wings Appeal team, and has worked as part of the branch's social team, organising lunches and coffee mornings.

Tunbridge Wells Branch

On Remembrance Sunday the branch held a socially distanced wreath laying ceremony at the RAF Memorial in Tunbridge Wells Cemetery. Wreaths were laid by President Maurice Verrall on behalf of Tunbridge Wells Branch, the Deputy Lieutenant of Kent and Friends of the Cemetery. Wreaths were also laid by Mayor and Councillor Joy Podbury, the Royal British Legion and 129 (Tunbridge Wells) Squadron RAF Air Cadets. Branch Chairman Keith Russell gave the exhortation, and prayers were led by Gareth Jones, the air cadet squadron's chaplain.

West Bromwich Branch

The branch has supported an annual act of remembrance in a local cemetery ever since a long-forgotten war memorial was found and

re-erected a dozen years ago. The usual organisers were unable to be involved due to the pandemic, so the branch stepped in and conducted a simple ceremony at the 11th hour on 11 November. Recordings of 'Nimrod', 'Flowers of the Forest' and the national anthem echoed round the cemetery. In attendance were the branch's Standard Bearer John McHard, Chairman Bill Bennett and President/Treasurer Dr Christopher Morris.

Weymouth and Portland Branch

In September 2020 the branch unveiled a new memorial dedicated to the 544 brave young men who paid the ultimate sacrifice during the Battle of Britain. The Southwest Battle of Britain Memorial at Bowleaze cove in Weymouth is the only such memorial in the south west of England.

Wittering and District Branch

Following good feedback from the branch's VE Day gift bags, a successful parcel drop to 60 vulnerable members of the branch was carried out in the run-up to Christmas. The festive food bags included savoury snacks, candles, fresh fruit, sweets and a small bottle of Wittering and District Branch wine. A personalised Christmas card and an informative and fun newsletter also accompanied the bags. This Christmas surprise was hugely appreciated by all 60 recipients, with some becoming quite emotional to have been thought of through these difficult times.

York Branch

The main focus of the branch has been on welfare support to members, and regular essential inspections of the branch club. On 31 December, the last page-turning ceremony for 2020 was carried out in York Minster. The ceremony was limited to only one York Branch member due to COVID-19 restrictions. Long-serving member Fred Ullathorne turned the page of remembrance at noon, thereby ensuring that the tradition was not broken. As the event nearly didn't happen, the branch is very grateful to all involved that it could go ahead.

*We welcome all submissions for Branch News, preferably by email to BranchNews@rafa.org.uk. Word count should be **no more than 100 words**. You may submit one accompanying photograph. **Please abide by all social distancing regulations active at the time when taking photographs, as failure to do so will prevent publication**. If sent via email, please attach as a separate image file and at a size of at least 1MB and 300dpi. Send postal submissions to the address on the inside front cover. Unfortunately photographs sent by post cannot be returned. Low quality pictures may not be published. Submission does not guarantee inclusion and where there are too many reports for an issue, the editor reserves the right to edit. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication. **The deadline for inclusion in the next Branch News is 7 May 2021.***

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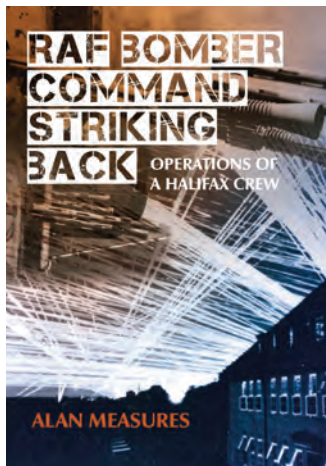
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Culture Vultures



“RAF Bomber Command Striking Back: Operations of a Halifax Crew”

by Alan Measures
 Publisher: Whittles Publishing
 RRP £18.99

The airmen of Halifax ‘Q’ for Queenie’ formed a truly international crew, each one with an interesting back story that had led to their being together. This book tells the individual stories of these six crewmen, drawn from different corners of the world. It contains detailed research into events on 102 Squadron, including listings of targets, call signs, routes flown and bomb loads for each operation, and is liberally illustrated with 44 maps and 41 black and white photographs.

RAF Bomber Command Striking Back offers an incisive look at the RAF’s bombing campaign during 1941/42 – including the ‘thousand bomber’ raids – through the prism of a crew which faced mounting risks from an increasingly organised and integrated German air defence.

RAF Association members can get 20% off this title by visiting bit.ly/AlanMeasures or calling +44(0) 1593 731333 and using the code **RAFA20**. Offer valid until 30 June, 2021.



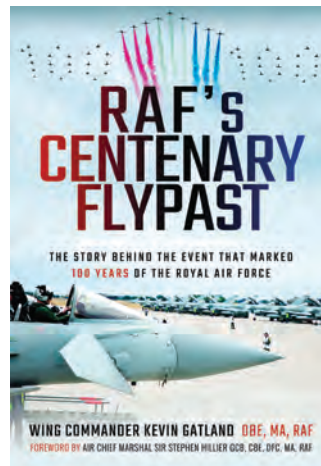
“Forty-Seven Years Aloft: From Cold War Fighters and Flying the PM to Commercial Jets”

by Brian Burdett
 Publisher: Pen & Sword Books
 RRP £25.00

Association member Brian Burdett had only one career objective – to be a pilot. By the time he touched down on his last flight, he had flown more than twenty-five different types of aircraft, logging 22,500 hours for the RAF and a variety of commercial airlines.

This memoir covers Brian’s years at school, his involvement with the Air Training Corps, entry to the RAF and his careers in both the RAF and in civil aviation. His adventures are legion: intercepting Soviet intruders in the dark days of the Cold War; a double engine failure on take-off; losing control in cloud and levelling off feet from the ground; a mid-air near miss with an American aircraft; visiting Woomera and Christmas Island nuclear testing sites; ferrying prime Ministers; and spotting a strange object that remains unidentified to this day.

RAF Association members can get 25% off this title by calling 01226 734222 or visiting bit.ly/BrianBurdett and using the code **RAFA25**. Offer valid until 30 June, 2021.



“RAF’s Centenary Flypast”

by Kevin Gatland
 Publisher: Pen & Sword Books
 RRP £25.00

On 10 July 2018, exactly 100 years and 100 days after the formation of the world’s first independent air force, 103 aircraft of 24 types from 25 squadrons flew over London in the largest formation of military aircraft seen over the UK capital in nearly thirty years.

This book reveals how the flypast was conceived and examines the detailed planning involved in the event, written by someone who would know – the project manager and coordinator.

Illustrated with in-flight colour photographs of the aircraft of the current RAF, as well as the briefing and planning session, this book demonstrates the enormous range of factors that had to be taken into consideration to produce the amazing spectacle witnessed by Her Majesty The Queen, the thousands gathered in The Mall and a nationwide television audience.

RAF Association members can get 25% off this title by visiting bit.ly/KevinGatland or calling 01226 734222 and using the code **RAFA25**. Offer valid until 30 June 2021.



The FlyPast Podcast

Producer: Key.Aero

Launched just before Christmas 2020, the FlyPast Podcast is half an hour of historic aviation chat, released every Friday. Whether discussing their favourite aircraft, or speaking to authors and people within the historic scene, the team – including FlyPast magazine’s editor Chris Clifford – talk with passion and authority about the aeroplanes they love and the heroes who flew them.

Recent episodes have covered topics such as the Spitfire’s 85th anniversary, historic aviation in films, Chuck Yeager, the team’s favourite museums, and commercial aviation.

They also bring you stories that you’ve never heard, such as the couple who’ve just spent eight painstaking years restoring one of only two Nimrod simulators ever made.

If you’re looking for more historic aviation in your life, the FlyPast Podcast is just the job.

Available to listen to at key.aero, as well as many other places including Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts.



The first programme. © RIAT archives.

Genesis

of the world's biggest airshow

Despite the Royal International Air Tattoo 2021 being cancelled due to COVID-19, it is still celebrating an illustrious 50 years and publishing a book about its history. We turned the pages all the way back to late May 1971 and the first airshow.

Tim Prince, colleagues of theirs from Boscombe Down, fellow aviation enthusiasts and some of Paul's old school friends — but it worked.

Marking the show's 25th anniversary, Paul Bowen looked back on the Air Tattoo's genesis for *Aircraft Illustrated* magazine: "Having it at North Weald, given its historical roots in the Battle of Britain and so on, meant that many saw it as a great opportunity to come back. So, the Dutch came, the French came, and the

"Boy, we're out of our depth!" That's what Tim Prince remembers thinking during Air Tattoo 71, when a new team of enthusiastic volunteers came together at North Weald, Essex, to breathe new life into the Royal Air Forces Association's South Eastern Area's annual air display.

Hindsight shows us that Air Tattoo 71, the one that started it all, was among the most significant events in the more-than-century-long history of air displays. For Tim Prince, "just getting through the week safely was the key", but he acknowledges that his late colleague Paul Bowen may have thought differently. "Paul saw it as a great opportunity to do something special in life."

It was through Paul's father Pat Bowen that the two friends — who went on to become the Air Tattoo's co-directors — first got involved. "Paul and I had joined the Board of Trade as air traffic control cadets and were posted to Boscombe Down", recalls Tim. "Paul's father, who was a member of the South Eastern Area of the RAF Association, asked for some help

in the staging of this event at North Weald. They'd been running a show there, and they wanted a bit more help in general".

A key figure in enabling [the changes] was Squadron Leader Jack Currie DFC, a wartime Bomber Command veteran. In 1970 he was "rather bored". When he spotted an advertisement for the post of area secretary for the RAF Association's South Eastern Area he decided to apply, and was successful. Currie went along to the 1970 event at North Weald as an observer. He decided on a radical change of approach.

This was to involve putting together a volunteer team to run all aspects of the show that did not require professional expertise. The enthusiasm of these volunteers would, he felt, be key to transforming the North Weald display's fortunes.

Under Currie's leadership as organising secretary, meetings of the first group of volunteers started to put together the 1971 show. It was perhaps an unlikely combination, bringing together — amongst others — the RAF Association team from Epping, Paul Bowen,



Above (top): The distinctive twin tails of the French Nord Noratlas © Peter R March

Above (bottom): Peter Bramley and his 'Follow Me' Landrover © RIAT archives

Norwegians with their F-5s. This was quite something, because when we invited them, perhaps without having the right authority to do so, they just turned up."

North Weald was still in Ministry of Defence ownership, but had been kept in care and maintenance status for six years before the RAF moved out in 1964. The site had fallen into increasing disuse by that inaugural Air Tattoo. "Being run by a volunteer group on a disused airfield was pretty much... pioneering," Tim reflects.

Sponsored by the Daily Express, Air Tattoo 71 opened its gates at 10.00hrs on the late May Bank Holiday Monday.

The first act was a Seventies favourite, the opening round of a four-race season of



Jack Currie (in white jacket) with the original organising committee on the control tower at North Weald © RIAT archives.



Squadron Leader Jack Currie, organising secretary (second from right) with colleagues © RIAT archives.

Formula One air racing.

The RAF provided solo appearances by a Lightning F1A, Nimrod MR1, Andover C1, Belfast C1, Britannia C1 and Comet C4, together with a four-strong Phantom FGR2 flypast and an air-to-air refuelling demonstration by a Victor K2 and two Lightning F6s. Two of the service's then current Jet Provost T5 teams, the Gemini Pair from No 3 Flying Training School at RAF Leeming and the four-ship Blades of No 1 FTS at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, were on the bill, as were the Falcons parachute team (jumping from an Argosy C1) and the Historic Aircraft Flight with Hurricane IIc LF363 and Spitfire PRXIX PM631. Their own routine aside, the Gemini Pair's 'JPs' took part in a ground attack demonstration alongside members of the Royal Anglian Regiment, supported by the Royal Armoured Corps Parachute Squadron.

Another British military display team in the programme was the Army Air Corps' Blue Eagles with six Sioux AH1s. A second Spitfire provided perhaps the day's most spectacular individual display, this being LFIX MH434 flown by former Red Arrows leader Ray Hanna. The New Zealander was then relatively new

to Spitfire display flying, having begun his association with MH434 during 1970, but his show-closing aerobatic performance — many 'daisy-cutting' low passes included — was already setting the standard. Personal Plane Services' Fokker E.III replica represented the fighting machines of the previous world war, while the Old Warden-based Shuttleworth Collection offered some 1930s nostalgia with its Avro Tutor and Gloster Gladiator.

Overseas participation included a pair of Royal Norwegian Air Force F-5s (a single-seater for the flying and a two-seater on static display), a Royal Netherlands Air Force NF-5A, four Royal Danish Air Force A 35XD Drakens (one of which flew for the first time at a British

event) with their support C-47 Skytrain, and the French Air Force Patrouille de France with its CM170 Magisters. US Air Force support, a central feature of the Air Tattoo's future, came courtesy of a four-ship F-4D Phantom flypast from the 81st Tactical Fighter Wing at RAF Bentwaters. Surpassing them all for rarity value, however, was the Austrian Air Force's first visit to a British display, with a Sikorsky S-65OE transport helicopter. "They [the Austrians] came over out of novelty, I think," says Tim. "We made some very good friendships. The nice thing was it was all very small, so there were barbecues, there was drinking, and we were all pioneering together."

What lessons did Tim learn from that first Air Tattoo? "Get sleep when you can...[and] be ready to catch whatever fast ball came your way. There was [only] one aircraft start unit and as the show finished, the battery went flat before the last F-5 got out. So the biggest lesson to me out of all of that was to never make enemies because you never know when you might need to pick up the 'phone and say, 'Hey, OC Engineering Wing at Wattisham, can I borrow an aircraft start unit? I'll come and pick it up in my Ford Escort', or whatever."

Air Tattoo 71 had been a learning experience for everyone, and a very positive one. Best of all, perhaps, it generated a net profit of £10,413 for the RAF Association, a new record for the North Weald display. In its annual report, the South Eastern Area branch said it had been "the most successful" show in its history. In many ways, the die had been cast and the groundwork laid for the growth of the Air Tattoo. [AM](#)

This feature has been edited from the first chapter of *Air Tattoo 50 – The Story of the World's Greatest Airshow*. The book captures the complete history of the Royal International Air Tattoo, from its birth in 1971 to the present day. Written by renowned aviation journalist Ben Dunnell, it features hundreds of photos, many taken by some of the world's leading aircraft photographers. On sale from airtattoo.com/shop

As Air Mail went to press, RAF Charitable Trust Enterprises announced the cancellation of RIAT 2021 because of COVID-19 uncertainties. They hope to build on the success of the Virtual Air Tattoo of 2020 and to bounce back with a full airshow in 2022.



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Serving in secret

The RAF Museum's **Nina Hadaway** looks at the Special Operations Executive (SOE), whose members endured some of the greatest dangers of WWII.

Within the RAF Museum's collection are objects which cast light upon the secret war waged against the enemy during WWII.

The secret services of Great Britain operated outside the regular armed forces but worked closely with them; often recruiting from their ranks. The SOE was one such strand. Established in 1940, the aim of this independent civilian organisation was to support and stimulate resistance against enemy occupation.

Personnel from the RAF and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) were involved with its work in a variety of ways, including administration, transport, research, training, communications and operations – both in the UK and abroad.

The spearhead of the SOE was its team of agents who served unheralded in hostile environments, facing unknown dangers and great personal risk. Their tools were those of the saboteur and spy, such as wireless sets hidden inside attaché cases



The Lysander undergoing conservation at RAF Museum Cosford. © RAF Museum.

Special Duties (SD) Westland Lysander Mk III

Providing vital support to SOE missions was the Westland Lysander. With its short range of 600-700 miles, the Lysander flew between the UK and occupied Europe on moonlit nights at low-level; literally under the radar. Its fixed undercarriage allowed the aircraft's lone pilot to take off and land on grass, requiring only a small area of open land to do so. On board would have been supplies, often weapons or sabotage materials, or agents being flown into or out of danger. The last surviving genuine example of a Special Duties Lysander (pictured above) is at the RAF Museum, Cosford. R9125 served at RAF Tempsford with 161 Squadron (one of the two RAF Special Duty squadrons) from 1944. Following a three-year conservation programme involving the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre team and volunteers, the aircraft has been restored. It now displays the original paint scheme and codes it would have worn with the unit.

and secret documents in cigarette lighters.

Volunteers were recruited from diverse social backgrounds, nationalities and faiths, but all were united in placing the fight against Nazism above their own safety. Between 400 and 500 agents were sent to France during the war; around 50 were women. All displayed courage and bravery, with several female agents

receiving official awards, including the George Cross, for their service and sacrifice. Honorary commissions within the services were given to some of the women in the hope that if captured they would be treated as POWs in accordance

with the Geneva Convention. Unfortunately, of the 15 female agents uncovered and sent to concentration camps, 12 did not return.

One such agent was Noor Inayat Khan. Noor's family were living in Paris when WWII broke out. With German forces approaching the city, they escaped to England. Joining the WAAF, Noor trained as a wireless operator before being recruited by the SOE who were looking for fluent French speakers. After training, she was flown by Lysander to a field near Angers on 16 June 1943. From there she made her way to Paris. Though unknown at the time, the SOE group she was assigned to was firmly in the Gestapo's sights.

After months of dangerous work, and with arrests being made all around her, arrangements were made to fetch Noor out of harm's way. However, two days before her

departure date she was arrested and interrogated but refused to give any information.

Shackled in solitary confinement for more than 10 months, Noor was finally sent to Dachau concentration camp where, on 13 September 1944, she was killed. She is commemorated on Runnymede Air Forces Memorial and in 2012 a statue of her was unveiled in Gordon Square, London.

The work of the RAF Museum, and objects such as the Lysander R9125, enables the stories of brave individuals like Noor, who fought a dangerous yet secret war against the axis powers, to finally be told. [AM](#)

Left top: **Noor Inayat Khan**. © IWM HU 74868. Left bottom: **Lysander pilot Frank Rymills' log book, recording his landing of Noor at Angers on 16 June**. © RAF Museum.



NEWS FROM THE RAF

A roundup
by Mike Curtis

The Ministry of Defence has signed a number of contracts in recent months which will take the Royal Air Force way into the future. They include projects covering uncrewed fighter aircraft, new surface attack missiles and on-going maintenance of front line aircraft.

Finance and contracts

The UK's first fleet of uncrewed fighter aircraft is one step closer to reality following a £30-million contract to design and manufacture a prototype in a three-year deal. These aircraft will be designed to fly at high speed alongside RAF fighter jets and will be armed with missiles, surveillance and electronic warfare technology. Known as a 'loyal wingman', each aircraft will be able to shoot down enemy aircraft and survive against surface to air missiles.

In a boost for Northern Ireland's defence industry, Spirit

AeroSystems of Belfast have been selected to lead what is called Team Mosquito in the next phase of the project. Team Mosquito, which also includes Northrop Grumman UK, will mature the designs and manufacture a technology demonstrator to generate evidence for a follow-on programme known as LANCA - Lightweight Affordable Novel Combat Aircraft.

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, said: "We're taking a revolutionary approach, looking at a game-changing mix of swarming drones and uncrewed fighter aircraft like Mosquito, alongside piloted fighters like Tempest, that will transform the combat battlespace in a way not seen since the advent of the jet age."

The government says a £550 million contract for new surface attack missiles will secure hundreds of jobs and "provide

unrivalled lethality" for the UK's F-35B Lightning force. Known as SPEAR3, the next generation missile has a range of more than 140 kilometres at high-subsonic speed and can be deployed over land and sea during day or night. Over the next decade, it will become the prime air to ground weapon for the F-35.

A £76 million aircraft support contract has also been signed to maximise the availability and capability of the F-35 Lightning force, ensuring they are ready for combat operations across the globe. Based at RAF Marham in Norfolk, the Lightning Airsystem National Capability Enterprise (LANCE) will provide additional expertise on aircraft maintenance, bespoke UK training for pilots, groundcrew and engineers, and logistical and technical support for the F-35 squadrons. Most of the work will be carried out by BAE Systems.

Increasing maintenance support is behind another contract relating to the RAF's fleet of C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft. The £2.6 million contract will create 25 jobs at RAF Brize Norton and will help improve the overall availability of the eight Globemasters, which are used worldwide in support of military, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

Austere runways

The RAF has been exploiting

the capability of its C-17s by operating from an austere runway in Louisiana in the United States. The Globemaster has been in RAF service since 2001 but has only operated from paved runways. However the aircraft are certified to operate from austere and tactical locations which are not normally accessible to an aircraft of such size.

A crew from 99 Squadron took part in the exercise to develop what is called Semi Prepared Runway Operations (SPRO). They experienced the complexities of operating in such an environment and learnt how to prepare the aircraft and personnel.

Stations, exercises and operations

It has been announced that the RAF's new Boeing 737 Wedgetails are to be based at RAF Lossiemouth. They will operate alongside the new Boeing P-8 Poseidon squadrons at the Scottish base. There had been speculation that the airborne early warning and control Wedgetails would go to RAF Waddington, home to the E-3D Sentry aircraft which they are to replace.

The RAF continues to operate alongside its allies in Europe and the Middle East. Two Voyager air refuelling tankers were used in a joint operation to get four Mirage 2000s of the French Air Force from their base in France to an air base in Djibouti on the African east coast.



Paveway IV laser guided bomb. © MOD/Crown 2014.

The Mirages were in the middle of a 4,000 mile journey when they were joined by the tankers. British and French militaries are part of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), which was recently declared fully operational.

"It was great to see French Mirage aircraft taking fuel from an RAF Voyager as they flew from France to a French air base in Africa," said Air Commodore Tim Below, Defence Attaché in Paris. He added that the mission had "validated" procedures and that both militaries were "ready to act" under the CJEF.

Six Typhoons flown by the joint RAF and Qatar Emiri Air Force Typhoon squadron at RAF Coningsby flew out to the Gulf to take part in an exercise codenamed Exercise Epic Skies IV. 12 Squadron crews operated with integrated QEAF personnel as a joint squadron in Qatar for the first time, completing over 60 successful missions.

The Typhoon FGR4s were flown in both air-to-air and air-to-surface missions, integrating with Qatari Joint Terminal Attack Controllers on the ground simulating Close Air Support, as well as flying challenging dogfighting scenarios alongside and against Qatari Rafales and Mirage 2000s. Qatar has ordered 24 Typhoons, nine Hawk trainers, and a package of support and training for its pilots and technicians worth £6 billion.

Daesh

RAF Typhoons have carried out airstrikes against Daesh-held cave systems in Iraq using Paveway IV precision guided bombs. The strikes occurred after a coalition surveillance aircraft located a number of Daesh fighters in two caves ten miles north of Bayji in late January. Two Typhoons successfully struck their targets, eliminating the terrorist threat, after first conducting a careful check of the area around the caves, which were a mile and a half apart, for any signs of civilians who might be at risk.

Radar developments

A new state-of-the-art long range air defence radar has been delivered to the UK. The Indra Lanza Long Tactical Range-25 radar can be deployed around the world or be used to cover gaps

in UK coverage. Due to its small number of components, it can be moved by current military vehicles and transport aircraft such as the C-130 Hercules. The radar is also able to mitigate the effect of wind farms and can rotate at two different speeds, providing an Air Traffic Radar Service mode long desired by the RAF.

A radar system that tracks bird activity up to 10 kilometres away and up to a height of 700 metres has been installed at RAF Lossiemouth. The Robin 3D Max radar is being used to counter the danger of bird strikes at the increasingly busy air base.

Squadron Leader Doug Timms said: "RAF Lossiemouth has a unique bird strike risk due to being a coastal airfield surrounded by farmland containing a large number of pig farms. There are high numbers of corvids and seagulls in the vicinity of the RAF base and every winter around 10,000 geese arrive in Findhorn Bay."

38 Group disbanded

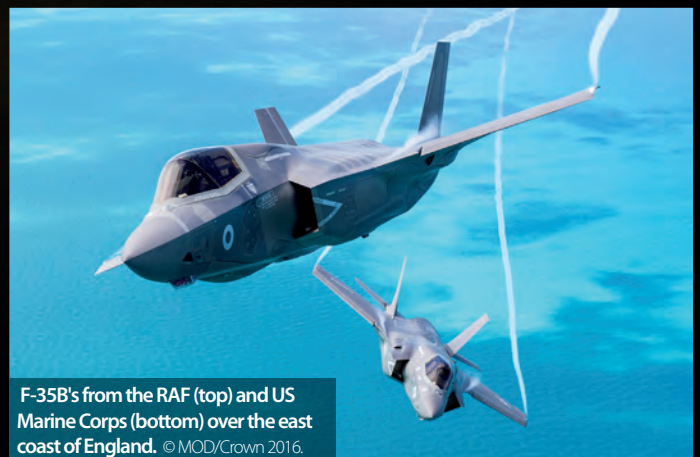
The RAF has disbanded No 38 Group. Originally formed mid-way through the Second World War as part of Fighter Command, the Group's motto is '*Par Nobile Fratrum*', or 'A Noble Pair of Brothers', reflecting the interoperability between the newly formed group and airborne forces that endured throughout its early years.

The group has played a significant role in global operations from its origins in the 1940s to the 21st century. Over its history it has commanded rotary, fast-jet and transport aircraft including the Stirling, Halifax, Hunter, Javelin, Harrier, Hercules, Jaguar, VC10, and also Chinook and Puma helicopters. The wings, squadrons and individuals that made up 38 Group now come under the command of other RAF Groups and business areas including the recently formed integrated Support Force. AM



Main image: C17 Globemaster transport aircraft in the early morning mist at RAF Brize Norton. Maintenance support jobs are to be increased. © MOD/Crown 2017

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



F-35B's from the RAF (top) and US Marine Corps (bottom) over the east coast of England. © MOD/Crown 2016.

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Signal Strength

from the best-selling
RAF Association Puzzle Book

To help you get through what we hope is the last of the lockdowns, we have the third of our brain teasers from the RAF Association Puzzle Book.

If one page isn't enough, you can wait for your next issue of Air Mail, or buy a copy of the 256-page book online at bit.ly/RAFApuzzle or by calling 0800 018 2361.

Briefing

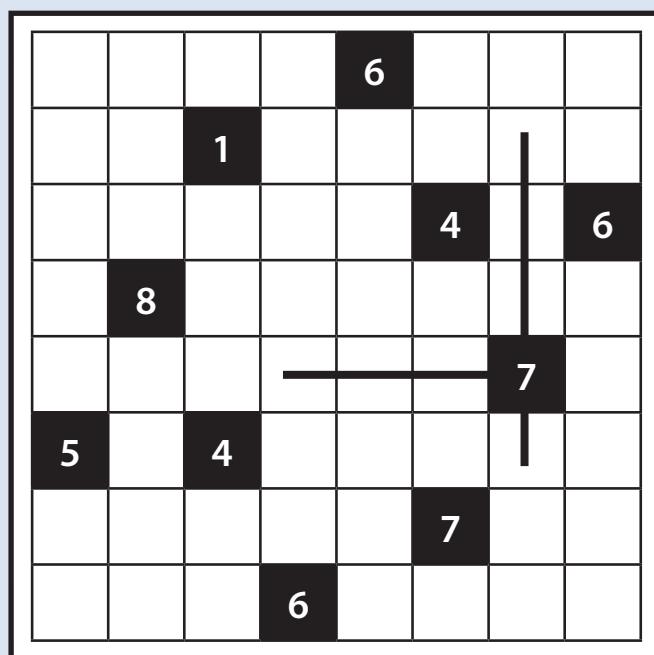
Find the area covered by the signal broadcast from each of the shaded beacons. Each beacon transmits horizontally and/or vertically in the same row and/or column to the given number of squares. No more than one beacon can broadcast to a single square. One clue is solved already, to show how it works.



Solutions to the below are on page 65.

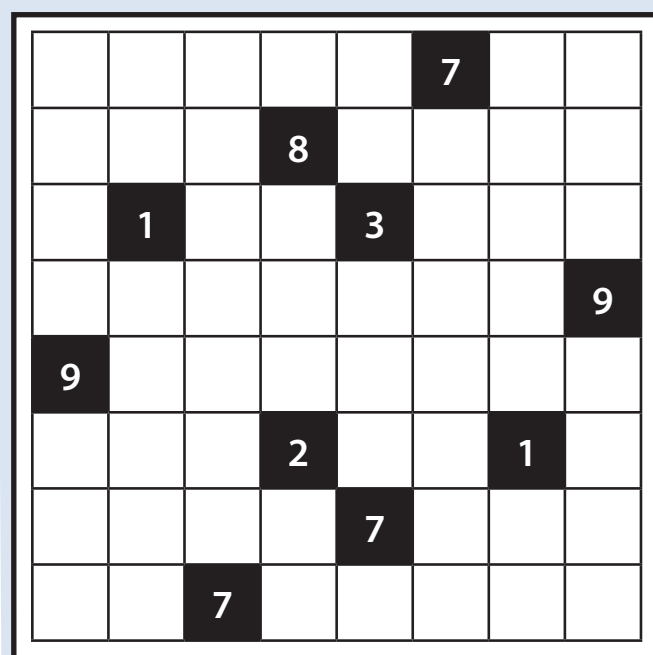
Signal Strength 1

Mission 1: Identify the areas covered by each beacon



Signal Strength 2

Mission 2: Identify the areas covered by each beacon



About the author: Described as "The king of puzzles" Dr Gareth Moore has produced more than 100 puzzle and brain-training books for children and adults, including *The Mindfulness Puzzle Book*, *The Mammoth Book of New Sudoku* and *The Ordnance Survey Puzzle Book*. He is also the creator of the daily brain-training website *BrainedUp.com*, and runs popular puzzle site *PuzzleMix.com*. Find him online at DrGarethMoore.com.

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While the individual is celebrated, the whole School unites for parades. Since its inception, students have marched and there has always been Pipes and Drums. Dressed in their Blues the students parade around eight times a year and the school is the only one in the country permitted to march along Whitehall – an annual tradition in remembrance of General Gordon.

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is home to some 900 students offering Day Boarding (from £2,078 per term) and Residential (weekly and termly) Boarding from only £5,789 per term.

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AD ASTRA

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

Mr G Adams	Worthing	Mr W S Brown	Leek
Mrs M Adkin	Erewash	Mrs B M Brown	Haywards Heath
Mr D Alcock	Coventry	Mrs M Brown	Scarborough
Mr J D Allen	Dudley	Mr W Burdon OBE	Porthcawl and Kenfig
Mr K Alwyn Wetherell	Shoreham-by-Sea	Mr P Callaghan	Headquarters
Mr M Annett	Chelmsford	Mr V Carpenter	Plymouth
Mr P Ashmore	Dudley	Mrs T Carpenter	Kings Lynn and District
Mr G Asplin	Thornton Cleveleys	Mr D C Catchpole	Keyworth
Mr F Asselebergs	Amsterdam	Mr J Chapman	Weston-super-Mare
Mr M Atkins	Beccles and Southwold Area	Mr A Charles	Mid-Somerset
Mr D Atkinson	Castleford	Mr A Chy-Quene	City and Central London
Mr D Atwell	Cosford and District	Mr S D Clarke	Headquarters
Mr W Bailey	Birmingham Moseley	Mr P Clarke	Kings Lynn and District
Mr J Baker	Southampton and Eastleigh	Mr T Coker	Clacton-on-Sea
Mr J Balmer-Howieson	Crook and District	Mr F Colenso	Farnborough and Aldershot RMG
Mr R Baynham	Ramsgate and Broadstairs	Mr N Collinge	Yeadon
Mr E Beale	Boston	Mr R J Coombes	Leamington and Warwick
Mr G Beer	Global	Mr E Coull	Thurrock
Mr G Benford	Isle of Wight	Mr C Couston	Reading
Mr S Beresford	Sheffield	Mr G Couzens	Thornton Cleveleys
Mr J Best	Tamworth	Mr M Cove	Fareham
Mr H Bird	Barnstaple and North Devon	Mr G Crossland	Sturminster Newton and Gillingham
Mr P Bisby	Rotherham and District	Mr K Cumpson	Peterborough
Mr J S Blackburn	Bedale and RAF Leeming	Mr J Cuthill DFC	Fleet
Mr G Boakes	Harrow District	Mr A Davies	Bognor Regis
Wing Commander G Booker	High Wycombe	Mr D Dawson	Letchworth and Hitchin
Mr A Borg	Malta GC	Mr P Day	Stevenage
Reverend A W Bowles	Great Yarmouth and District	Mr J Dinnage	Shoreham-by-Sea
Mr A Bradbury	Sheffield	Mr B Dixon	Bromsgrove and Redditch
Mr W Bridges	Rugby and District	Mr B Doherty	Horsham and Storrington RMG
Mrs M Brittain	Rothbury	Mr J Doley	Rhyl and Abergele
Mr D Brookes	Cwmbran	Mr R Dowling	Maidstone
Mr T Broughton	Cranbrook and Hawk RMG	Mr F Doyle	Headquarters
Mr F Brown	Overseas	Mr W A Duffell	Torquay
		Mrs H Duncan	Newcastle-under-Lyme
		Mr J Eccles	Guernsey
		Mr W Edge	Thornton Cleveleys
		Mr J Eskdale	Leyland and District

Mr B Evenboer	Amsterdam	Mr B Hill	Trowbridge and West Wiltshire
Mr C Farrow	Batley and Birstall	Mr S Hill	Wittering and District
Mr R Faulkner	Armagh	Mr P Hipkiss	Gloucester
Mr P Figes	Weymouth and Portland	Mr K Holt	Waddington
Mrs F Finch-van der Velde	Amsterdam	Mr W Honeybone	Walton, Weybridge and District
Mr C Fogarty	Headquarters	Mr P S Howard	Warminster RMG
Mr K H Foster	Poole	Mr H G F Howells	Penarth
Mr J W Fransen	Amsterdam	Mr R Hoy	Haverfordwest
Mr J French	Barnstaple and North Devon	Mr T Hughes	Hartlepool
Mr G Gallagher	Bognor Regis	Mr W Hughes	Scunthorpe
Mr D Gash	Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District	Mr S Hullock	Newcastle and Gateshead
Mr T Geoghegan	Hythe and Romney Marsh	Mr J Humphreys	Barry
Squadron Leader J Giblen	Sheringham and District	Mr W Hurlow-Jones	Corsham and Chippenham
Mr D Godden	Hinckley and District	Mr J S Hyslop	Headquarters
Mr J W Godridge MBE	Coventry	Group Captain P G Hyson	Poole
Mr G Gooch	Woodbridge	Mr A James	Newcastle and Gateshead
Squadron Leader H J Goodinson	Sud-Ouest	Mr C Jarvis	Shoreham-by-Sea
Mr R Goodman	Headquarters	Mr M M Jeffery MBE	Gloucester
Mr A Gordon	Woking	Mr N Jeynes	Dudley
Mr E Gudgeon	Barry	Mr G W Johnson	Stone and District
Mr K R Hand	City of Bristol	Mr D Jones	Cwmbran
Mr D Hanigan	City and Central London	Mr R Jones	Kings Lynn and District
Mr T T Hanley	Preston	Mrs S Jones	Porthcawl and Kenfig
Mr R Hawkins	St Albans	Mr P Kay	Letchworth and Hitchin
Mrs L G Hendrikx	Amsterdam	Mr G Kellagher	Headquarters
Wing Commander D Herriot	Keyworth	Mr A Kilner	Castleford
Mr R Herriott	Wrekin and Wellington	Mr E King	Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District
Mr G P Heskins	Exmouth	Mrs P Larke	Hull
Mrs P Higginbotham	Headquarters	Mr V Laut	Thurrock
		Mrs M Lawton	1066
		Mrs A Leedham	Southampton and Eastleigh
		Mr G Leftwich	Romford
		Mr D M Lodge	Ripon and District
		Mr D Long	Burtonwood and Warrington
		Mr R Lydall	Brecon
		Mrs R MacDonald	Beccles and Southwold Area
		Mr W A MacGregor	Woodbridge
		Mr A MacInnes	Melksham
		Squadron Leader E A T Mack MBE	St Neots
		Mrs I Mann	1066
		Mr D Mansfield	Northampton and District
		Squadron Leader N J Mapp	Barnstaple and North Devon
		Mr W R Marsh	Great Yarmouth and District
		Mr J G W Martin	Aylesford and Malling
		Mr W E Martin	Burtonwood and Warrington
		Mr P Mason	Bromsgrove and Redditch
		Mr R Mawdsley	Melton Mowbray
		Mr M Mayes	Southampton and Eastleigh
		Mr J McLachlan	South Shields
		Mr M Meager	Costa Blanca
		Mr G Medcalf MBE	Republic of Ireland
		Mr N Molyneux	Headquarters
		Mr K V Moorcroft	Coventry
		Mr I K Morgan	Morecambe and Lancaster
		Mr E Muir	Rothbury
		Mr R Murdy	Leicester
		Mr J W Murray	Headquarters
		Mr G Newbold	Christchurch
		Mr P Newbold	Romford
		Mr F Nield	Kenley and Caterham
		Mr J Norris	Sale and Wythenshawe
		Mr K F H Notting	Wokingham Woodley
		Mr N Ogdan	Rhyl and Abergele
		Mr L S Ogilvie	1066
		Mr F J O'Rourke	Kenley and Caterham
		Mrs J Osborne	Clacton-on-Sea





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- | | |
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| Mr J Palfrey | Exmouth |
| Wing Commander R D Parkin | Dover and District |
| Mr S Patel | Harrow District |
| Mrs M P E Payne | Headquarters |
| Mr G Pearce | Bletchley (M K) |
| Mr A Pemberton-Sheen | Preston |
| Mr A Penfold | Headquarters |
| Air Commodore G Pengelly | St Neots |
| Reverend R Perry | Chingford |
| Mr R Pickering | Silloth |
| Mr J Piper | Coningsby and District |
| Mr R E Plunkett | Wymondham |
| Mr V C Porteous | Carterton and Brize |
| Mr T Powell | Headquarters |
| Mr J Pratt | Enfield |
| Mr B Pratt | Shrewsbury |
| Mr R Pritchard | Blackhall |
| Mr J Randle | Tamworth |
| Mr S Ranson | Gloucester |
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| Mr J R Register | Downham Market |
| Mr J P Rennison | Scunthorpe |
| Mr J Richards | Alresford and District |
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| Mr P Roberts | Downham Market |
| Mr J Roberts | Wokingham Woodley |
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| Mr T Robinson | Biggin Hill RMG |
| Mr J Robinson | Gloucester |
| Mr K Rowland | Barnstaple and North Devon |
| Mr G Russell | Ely |
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| Mrs P Sharpe | Newmarket RMG |
| Mr J Sheader | Scarborough |
| Mr K Shepherd | Towyn and Aberdovey |
| Mr J A Short | Headquarters |
| Doctor A Simpson | Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders |
| Mr R Simpson | Bedford |
| Mr J Sinclair | Ayr and Prestwick |
| Mr G Slater | Dudley |
| Mr R Smart | Coventry |
| Mr R Smith | Balderton |

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mr P Squibbs | Exmouth |
| Mrs L K Standish | Bletchley (M K) |
| Mr P Stansfield | Llangollen |
| Mr N Sterling | Hartlepool |
| Squadron Leader D R Stone | Chepstow and District RMG |
| Mr M Sullivan | Republic of Ireland |
| Mr C J Sunnuck | Maidstone |
| Mr E E Syder | RAF St Mawgan |
| Mr L J Talliss | Birmingham Moseley |
| Mr A Taylor | Huntingdon and District |
| Mr C Taylor | Mid-Somerset |
| Squadron Leader P Thomas AFC | Rutland |
| Mr D Thomson | Headquarters |
| Mrs J Tolley | Birstall (Leics) |
| Mr R Townsend | Headquarters |
| Mr A L Turner | Bromsgrove and Redditch |
| Mr W Urquhart | Inverurie |
| Mr A J van Soest | Amsterdam |
| Mr J T A Waddington | Exmouth |
| Mr D J N Wakeling | Bexleyheath and District |
| Mr J M Warner | Sheringham and District |
| Mr B Warwick | Melksham |
| Mr R Welbelove MBE RVM | RAF St Mawgan |
| Mr C West | Cambridge |
| Mr R White | Stafford |
| Mr D Whymark | Gosport |
| Mr C Wiggins | Dunstable |
| Mr D Wilkins | Diss |
| Mr C P Wilkins | Headquarters |
| Mr D Williams | Porthcawl and Kenfig |
| Mr A Wingate | Nazeing |
| Air Commodore J Witts | Dartford |
| Mr R Wood | Harrow District |
| Mr J J Woodley | Chelmsford |
| Mr R J Worswick | Huntingdon and District |
| Mr D Wykes | Tamworth |
| Mrs A M Yates | Melksham |
| Mr J Yellop | Tunbridge Wells |
| Mr D Yeomans | Wokingham Woodley |
| Mr R Young | Clacton-on-Sea |

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

K M Dodds	Weston-super-Mare
Mrs M Harley	Alresford and District
Mr E Haynes	Torquay
Group Captain C Herold MBE	Moray
Mr R I Hurley	Huyton with Roby and Liverpool
Miss R I Knight	Torquay
Mr C North	Romford
Mr S Pascoe	Sydney Metropolitan

To notify the RAF Association of the death of an RAF Association member, please contact their branch, email membership@rafa.org.uk or telephone our contact team on **0800 018 2361**. The Air Mail office regrets that we cannot directly accept notifications of a member's passing.

Honouring those who have departed

Bill Eames

D-Day veteran and President of the Association's County Fermanagh Branch, Bill Eames was one of the last remaining pilots to have taken part in the D-Day airborne operations. Early on 6 June 1944 he helped tow gliders to Normandy, with the troops onboard going on to secure Pegasus Bridge. Later, Bill took part in Operation Market Garden, dropping glider-borne soldiers into Arnhem in the Netherlands, but, on the third day, was badly injured when his aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Despite his injuries, Bill helped the other crew members to bring their aircraft home.

After a long period in hospital, he returned to active duty with 196 Squadron, flying Short Stirling bombers. His final wartime operations included helping to transport allied troops to Norway and Denmark to oversee the disarmament of German forces.

In 2016, the French Government awarded Bill the *Légion d'honneur* for his service during the D-Day landings. He also recently received the British Empire Medal for services to the RAF and for his community work in County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. Bill, who was one of the longest-serving members of County Fermanagh Branch, passed away in November 2020, aged 97.

Charles Gallagher DFC

Born in Nottingham in 1924, Charles enlisted in the RAF in 1942. After navigator/bomb aiming training he 'crewed up' with navigator Jim Portwood, and pilot 'Mac' Macfarlane, who would become a friend for life. They then found the other four members of the crew, which stayed together through the first 20 of the 29 operations they completed. Assigned to 76 Squadron, the crew flew

Halifaxes from RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor. When asked how they got through the war, Charles would answer, "Comradeship, the crew and, most of all, by having a sense of humour". Following the end of the war in Europe, 76 Squadron converted to Dakotas and Mac and Charles went together as a crew to the Far East, supplying allied forces and repatriating allied prisoners of war. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in November 1945.

Charles was married to Mary, in 1951, by his father, the Reverend William Gallagher. Charles and Mac met for the last time at the end of 2019 in the RAF Association's Sussexdown Care Home in Storrington where Mac lived. There they shared memories of lives well spent and a few laughs about their extraordinary adventures. Charles Gallagher passed away on Christmas Eve 2020.

Nevil Derrick Jeynes

Nevil's family were farmers living in the Malvern area. He moved to Enville, a village in South Staffordshire, when he was eight. He left the village school in his early teens with no formal qualifications, entering service as a stable lad. In 1941 he joined the RAF and trained as a wireless operator, which changed his life forever. Nevil saw overseas service in Sierra Leone from July 1942 to December 1943. On being demobbed in July 1946, Nevil's Commanding Officer wrote:

"Corporal Jeynes has served with the Royal Air Force for approximately 4 ¾ years in the trade of Tela II. This NCO has been specially selected for instructors' duties and he has proved himself to be keen, energetic and methodical. He is thoroughly reliable and trustworthy and well able to accept responsibility. He requires no supervision in work and possesses the ability to get the best



Nevil Jeynes. © Family archive

out of those placed in his charge."

Declining to remain in the RAF as a technical instructor, Nevil took up a career in industry. His experiences in the RAF were never forgotten and were a source of many anecdotes. Though Nevil may have left the RAF, the RAF never left him. Nevil Jeynes passed away in January 2021, aged 99.

Geoffrey Medcalf MBE

Soon after joining RAF Coastal Command in 1941 as an Aircraft Mechanic, Geoffrey was posted to Iceland to help service aircraft supporting the allied Arctic convoys.

Between August 1941 and May 1945, 78 convoys involving around 1,400 merchant ships transported essential supplies from the UK, Iceland and North America to northern ports in the Soviet Union. Geoffrey was subsequently awarded medals by the Russian government for his involvement in these operations.

After the war, he returned home to County Dublin, Ireland, where he secured employment with a cake company. Geoffrey joined the RAF Association and the Royal British Legion, and became involved with the Veterans' Support Group at Leopardstown Park Hospital, Dublin. He was made an MBE in recognition of his commitment to supporting veterans through these organisations.

Geoffrey Medcalf passed away in January 2021, aged 99.

All members are entitled to be listed in the Ad Astra pages. For longer obituaries, the RAF Association has a policy approved by Council that guides how and where members' lives and notables from within the RAF can be commemorated. Please check with the Association before writing up and submitting any commemoration, as employees at HQ are obliged to follow that policy.



Charles Gallagher DFC.
© Gallagher family archive.



Bill Eames.
© Headhunters Museum, Enniskellen.

Notices

OLD COLLEAGUES

Are you in this photograph? Geoff 'Titch' Dunn would like to get in touch with any Instrument Mechanics from the **RAF Locking 1st entry post-war boy entrants, 1947**. (Geoff is second row from the bottom, third from the right). If so, you can contact Geoff at: dunnadastra@aol.com.

Does anyone have news of the possible whereabouts of **Ken P Clarke**? He was at Liverpool University Air Squadron 1957 to 1959 with Mike George, Graham Hayes, 'Taff' Fitzgerald and myself, Derek Bryant. Ken joined the RAF in General Duties (possibly as an engineer) in late 1959 and served, partly in education, until leaving in 1979. He joined RAFVR(T) from 1979 to 1982. Any info please contact derek.bryant1@ntlworld.com.

Does anyone know what became of **Brian 'Lofty' Savage**, who I (then Julie Simpson) and my friend Dawn Pankhurst knew at RAF Wittering in the early 1960s? He was a lovely chap, but was posted to Aden in 1961. I wrote to him for a while, and he may remember the 21st birthday gift that I had delivered by special messenger – a V-bomber! I'd love to hear news of him; he would be 80 now. Please email Juliet.sellars@eze4.me or call 01903 954362.

Des Fiske would like to contact his old buddy **John F Ibberson**, who in 1963 was attached to the USAF 20th Tactical Fighter Wing at RAF Wethersfield. John's home address at that time was Pennsylvania, USA. Des can be contacted on 01954 253329.

Tom Wright would like to contact some of his old **badminton** partners from when he represented **NEAF Command** in Cyprus (1961-64) and **Coastal Command** (1964-66). If you remember Tom, please contact him at wright_t@ymail.com or on 01642 317240.

Does anyone remember a trip to **Kuwait** from RAF Khormaksar as part of an **Air Movements Team in July 1961**? I was in a group that travelled aboard a Beverley which overnights in Bahrain. The following day we boarded a Britannia and headed to Kuwait. Upon arrival we were billeted in an aircraft hangar, and spent two weeks dealing with Britannias from Lyneham and Bahrain. Two days before returning to Khormaksar we visited the English Club in Kuwait to use their swimming pool and bar. If you were also part of this venture, please contact John Doran at suedoran12@btinternet.com.

Were you in **Fontainebleau, France**, with Allied Air Forces Central Europe from **1956-1958**? Albert Hayhurst would like to reconnect with anyone who knew him from the military hospital there, which aided English and Canadian forces and their families. Please contact Albert on 01302 459324.

While basic training with **D Squadron in 1958 at RAF Bridgnorth**, some of us were chosen to provide a guard of honour at the unveiling of a nearby village's war memorial. We were in dress uniform, full whites, and even our 303 rifles had white shoulder straps. At 82, I can't remember the name or location of the village, and have not been able to turn up anything about the ceremony. Can anyone in our RAF family help me find details of a proud time in my service, or details of any other member of the 1958 D squadron? Please contact John 'Jock' Smith at Smithjmelbourne@icloud.com or on 07483 249479."



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Does anyone know of **Pete Mascury** and his partner Yolka? When last contacted he was a steward at RAF Odiham in 1967, but may have settled near Betchwood in Surrey. Also, are any ex-members of **48(F) Tigercat Squadron RAF Regiment** surprised to find the missiles and trailer in Yorkshire Air Museum? If yes to either, please get in touch with Chris Attlesley on 01262 675577 or at sculptchrisart@gmail.com.

I would like to contact **Roy Railton**, originally from Derby, who I served with alongside Tom Donnelly at RAF Tengah, Singapore, from 1961-62. Roy and Tom were posted to RAAF Butterworth, Malaya, in 1962. I later met Roy in Shrewsbury while I was on a course at RAF Shawbury, and while I kept in touch with Tom, I lost touch with Roy. If you're reading this Roy, or if you have any information on his whereabouts, please contact Dick Brooks on 01323 648 716.

REUNIONS

225 entry RAF Cosford's 50th anniversary reunion will be held on 2 November 2021 (restrictions permitting) at RAF Cosford. For further details visit our Facebook page '225 apprentice entry RAF Cosford anniversary reunion', or contact Mark Rahaman at marahaman@aol.com or on 07983 336796.

OTHER

While in the RAF, I – James 'Jim' Martin – drew **cartoons for numerous station magazines**. As I did not keep a record of these, does anybody have old copies they could send to me? An example of my style can be seen on page 5 of this issue. Stations served at are: 1962-64 RAF Ballykelly; 64-65 RAF Muharraq; 65-72 RAF St. Athan; 72-73 RAF Coltishall; 73-75 RAF Kinloss; 75-76 RAF Akrotiri; 76-80 RAF Wyton and 80-84 RAFASUPU Wittering. RAF Wyton was where I drew cartoons on a more regular basis. If you have any copies of my work, please email jamartin743@gmail.com.

Were you connected with the **1953 London to Christchurch New Zealand Air Race**, or do you know anyone who was? Pat Lelliott is jointly researching the race, and would like any information anyone may have. He can be contacted at lelliottp@yahoo.co.uk or on 0208 337 0368.

IX(B) Squadron Association wishes to advise that anyone currently serving on or ex-IX(B) Squadron, or particularly interested in the history of the oldest dedicated bomber squadron in the world, would be welcomed as members of the Association. Please visit 9sqn.co.uk or contact the Association Secretary at association.sec@9sqn.co.uk.

RAF Locking Apprentices Association welcomes all former No 1 Radio School Apprentices who trained at RAF Locking and Cranwell and wish

to rekindle friendship and fond memories of the past. Further details of the Association can be found at www.raflaa.org.uk or by calling 07747 464122.

RAF Catering Warrant Officers and Seniors Association. Serving and retired Catering Warrant Officers and Flight Sergeants plus former Catering Officers are welcome to full membership. For further information and an application form please contact Eddie Jones at janedjones6@btinternet.com, on 01480 823480 or via the Facebook page: 'RAF CWO&SA'.

Congratulations. The members of Fareham Branch would like to congratulate their chair **Melissa Young**, and wish her success for the future and continuation at the branch's helm. Melissa reached an important milestone on 12 January 2021 when she retired from a career in the RAF spanning 32 years. This latterly included full-time reserve service at RAF(U) Swanwick, where she rose to the rank of Warrant Officer. Melissa also received AOC 2 Group Commendation in the RAF's New Year's Honours List 2021.

Thank you. East Grinstead Branch would like to recognise Squadron Leader **Graeme Stagg** (chairman) and **Brian Murphy** (secretary), who took up their posts just as the branch was about to close. Now the branch is able to collect for the Wings Appeal, give aid to members in need and carry the standard on Remembrance Sunday. Almost entirely through their efforts, the branch has triumphed over adversity, and for this their fellow members would like to thank them.

Submit your notices – free for all members

Notices is a free member benefit to help you keep connected with people and places from your time in the RAF or the RAF Association, or to announce news of births, marriages, christenings, engagements, and more. For inclusion in the next issue, email your text to notices@rafa.org.uk, post it to the address on the inside front cover or call **0800 018 2361** by **7 May 2021**. Make sure to include an email address and/or telephone number within your message so readers can contact you. This is a service for members only.

STORY APPEAL

Each issue of Air Mail has a theme, and we are always exploring options for future issues. With members' extraordinarily broad range of experiences, we believe that two themes we are now researching could greatly benefit from readers' input:

International cooperation

We're looking for members' stories of serving alongside air forces of other nations of the Commonwealth and the world. In war or during peace-time, if you have an interesting tale to tell about international cooperation, we'd like to hear it.

The Royal family

We're also looking for members' stories of serving alongside a member of the Royal family, being involved in notable RAF events alongside them, etc.



HM Queen Elizabeth II with HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. © Public domain.

The best way to contact us is via email at airmail@rafa.org.uk or you can send a letter to the address on the inside front cover of this issue, for the attention of Air Mail. Please make sure to write 'FOR PUBLICATION' on anything you submit. (Due to the volume of incoming mail, we regret that only items submitted by email can be acknowledged before publication).

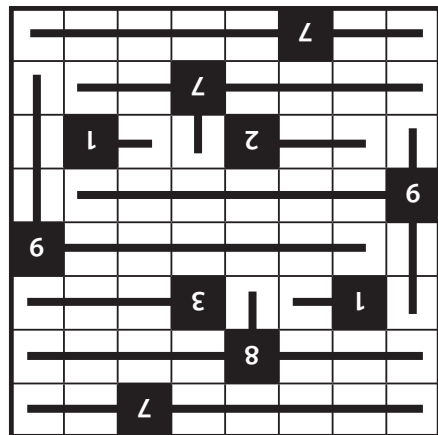


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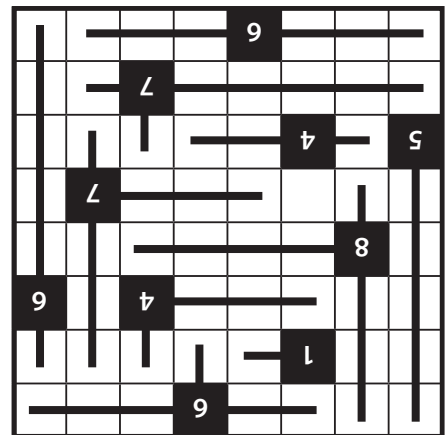
SOLUTION: SPRING 2021 CROSSWORD

- Across:**
 1 Easter; 5 Radiator;
 9 Term-time; 10 Let off;
 11 Ignition; 12 Hairless;
 13 Showers; 16 Brevets;
 20 Vocals; 22 Rehearse;
 23 Commit; 24 Ardent;
 25 Latitude; 26 Reside.
Down:
 2 Agenda; 3 Tomorrow;
 4 Reindeer; 5 Re-exists;
 6 Inedible; 7 Two-piece;
 8 Refinement; 12 Historical;
 14 On the mat; 15 Escapist;
 17 Recorder; 18 Vallants;
 19 Average; 21 Sailed.

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