

ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION
SHREWSBURY AND DISTRICT BRANCH (No 250)
2016 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member

1. Another year gone and Christmas is here again, and with it your Annual Branch Newsletter with a short run down of your Branches 2016 activities. Once again we have been fully involved in local events and with the wider Association; in addition we were successful in obtaining a grant of £3K from the Big Lottery Fund which enabled us to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Air Training Corps and the 80th Anniversary of our Branch in suitable style. We used the money to arrange a joint visit by the Branch, and cadets and staff from 1119 (Shrewsbury) Squadron ATC, the National Memorial Arboretum. We followed that with a joint lunch at the Lord Hill Hotel and later the Christmas Social, there was sufficient change to enable us to also purchase some more advertising equipment to enhance our Wings Appeal collection effort in the future.
2. On the ceremonial side we undertook the annual event at the war graves at the Shrewsbury Cemetery on the 1 April along with 1119 Sqn ATC who again provided an excellent bugler and a contingent of cadets as we honoured the fallen and commemorated the formation of the RAF. Our Standard and members attended the Mayor's Civic Service, the Shrewsbury Battle of Britain Parade and Service, the Shrewsbury Remembrance Day Parade and Service, and the Area Battle of Britain Parade and Service held at RAF Cosford.
3. We participated in wider Association activities, with a Branch delegate attending the Annual Conference in Blackpool, the Area Reunion and AGM in Cheltenham and the Area Welfare Seminar at Whittington Barracks. We were also present at the Association's Annual Service of Remembrance and Dedication of Memorials at the NMA Alrewas. Our outstanding Branch Standard Bearer, Shawn Marston, starred by winning the competition to become the Area Standard Bearer for 2016/17 at the Area Reunion; and subsequently at the Annual Conference winning the prestigious appointment of National Standard Bearer for the period 2016 – 2019; which means that he will be attending many high profile events, especially in 2018 when we will be marking the 100th anniversary of the formation of the RAF.
4. We continue to liaise closely with RAF Shawbury, and are grateful for the support of our RAFA Liaison Officers, Cpl Richie Dunse, and for a period at the beginning of the year, FS Lorna Donaldson. Our RAFALOs organized a Games Night in the Warrant Officer and Sergeants Mess in April where a good time was had by all. We also participated in the RAF Shawbury Families Day during the summer where we raised some funds and encouraged membership. Early in the year our Chairman visited the Station to present some equipment, funded by the Branch, for use in the Contact Houses.
5. Within the Branch we marked the passing of some stalwart members and our Standard Bearers and Members were visitors to Shrewsbury Crematorium on far too many occasions. The fantastic Rose Davies celebrated her 100th Birthday and was also presented with the Legion d' Honour by the French Government; and Mike Bradbury completed his biography of Eric Lock which was launched with much fanfare and a noisy fly-past! Mike is kindly donating the profits from his book to the Association so make sure that you buy a copy.
6. Finally please take a regular look at our website which Mike Farmer, our hard working web-master, keeps right up to date and where there are photographs of the various events mentioned above to admire.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

7. The Chairman writes:

Dear fellow Members of Shrewsbury & District Branch Royal Air Forces Association

This has been a special year for Shrewsbury RAFA Branch and our friends at 1119 (Shrewsbury) Sqn ATC. The Air Cadets Organisation was formed 75 years ago and our Branch has a slightly longer history having been formed in 1936 so we celebrated our 80th birthday! To mark these milestones we jointly planned some activities with the intent of strengthening the bonds that already exist between these 2 Shrewsbury based members of the Royal Air Force family. The generic name for this exercise was "Passing the Baton" and it was very successful. These activities were made considerably easier by a Lottery Grant arranged by our excellent Honourable Secretary, John Tisbury, who works tirelessly on our behalf throughout the year.

Our Social meetings continue to be the focus of our Branch activity and as many of you are aware we were forced to seek a new venue when the Reman Club was closed down last December. So it is that from January 2016 we have been holding our monthly meetings at The Harlescott Social Club (Roseway, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 4HW). I am delighted to report that our new venue has proved a success and we have been warmly welcomed by Graeme (the Club Steward) and his wife Julie who provides the catering at our meetings. The meetings continue to be well attended with regular talks (both funny and interesting) and we are grateful for the support from the Station Commander at RAF Shawbury and in particular the RAFALOs and the Padre from the Station.

Our Branch could not run without the hard work of our Committee and I am extremely grateful to all of them for their support throughout the year. We have also had some success in the wider field as our Branch Standard Bearer (Shawn Marston) was selected as the National Standard Bearer and has carried the Standard at a number of high profile events this year. Do not fear that our Branch Standard has lain in some dusty cupboard as when Shawn is unavailable our Deputy Standard Bearer, Eric Blackie, has ensured that it has been present at events in Shrewsbury.

In addition to the information contained in this newsletter detail of all our activities are listed on our Branch website that can be found at: www.rafashrewsbury.org.uk which I strongly urge you to view from time to time.

Finally, I wish you and yours a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Paul Sharp

DETAILS OF YOUR BRANCH COMMITTEE

8. Present Committee members are as follows:
 - a. President
Air Commodore (Ret'd) John J Burke BSc CEng DipEL FIET
 - b. Chairman
Paul Sharp
 - c. Vice Chairman
John Tisbury MBE
 - d. Secretary
John Tisbury MBE (Phone 01952 201902)
 - e. Treasurer
Pam Small

- f. Welfare Officer
Paul Martin
- g. Assistant Welfare Officer
Annette Holland
- h. Membership Secretary
Paul Martin
- i. Wings Appeal Organiser
Alex Madeley
- j. Assistant Wings Appeal Organiser
Roy Dolton
- k. Social Secretary
Mike Bradbury
- l. ATC Liaison Officer
Mike Bradbury
- l. Web Master
Mike Farmer
- m. RAF Shawbury RAFA Liaison Officer
Warrant Officer Steve Smith and Cpl Richie Dunse

The Branch Standard Bearer is Shawn Marston and his deputy is Eric Blackie.

9. The Branch also benefits from the wisdom of our Life Vice Presidents, Mr Jim Penny, Mr Brian Beattie, Mr Roger Fylde and Ms Rose Davies.

10. Please contact any of the above if you have any questions or concerns about the Association or your Branch.

DETAILS OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

11. The following events are programmed:

- 2017
- 9 January - New Year Meeting and Quiz with Pam Small**
 - 6 February - Photo Reconnaissance and Interpretation – Aldon Ferguson**
 - 6 March - Branch Annual General Meeting**
 - 17 to 19 March – Area AGM and Reunion
 - 3 April - The Aries Flight – Dai Lawrence**
 - 8 May - The Changing Face of British Agriculture**
 - 12 to 14 May - Annual Conference
 - 5 June - Taking Football to Africa – Wg Cdr Neil Hope**
 - 3 July - The History of Coleham Pumping Station – John MacLean**
 - 7 August - A Presentation of Pictures – John Edge**
 - 4 September - The Life of Flt Lt Eric Lock DSO DFC and Bar – Mike Bradbury**
 - 2 October - Hilary and Ian Templeton Talk and Film Show**
 - 6 November - TBC**
 - 4 December - Christmas Social**
- 2018
- 8 January - New Year Meeting**

Programme subject to change; however there will always be a talk or event at each meeting.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

12. Social meetings are held at the **Harlescott Social Club, Roseway, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 4HW** meetings are held on the first **Monday** of each month commencing at 1230 pm. (If the first Monday is a Bank Holiday, the Branch will meet on the 2nd Monday). One of the principle aims of the Association is comradeship, and we would like to welcome more of you to our meetings.

MEMBERSHIP

13. The Membership Secretary writes:

The membership of our Branch remains generally strong with over 200 members; made up from Life, Ordinary, Associate and Branch Associate Membership. We are fortunate to be so close to RAF Shawbury that we benefit from Serving Members stationed at there. However, our active membership is almost entirely made up from retired members, their spouses and friends. We are exceptionally grateful for the regular attendance of our RAFA Liaison Officers from RAF Shawbury who keep us in-touch with the news of RAF Shawbury and the wider Service in general.

Please note your membership fee for 2017 will be due for renewal on 31 December 2016. Paying by Direct Debit automatically renews your membership, alternatively, please pay by sending a cheque directly to RAFA (it saves a significant amount of duplication of effort in accounting). If this is not practical, please give your subscription to Paul Martin or Pam Small, our Treasurer, who will forward it to RAFA HQ. We are encouraging Branch Associate Members to upgrade to (full) Associate Membership as this can have significant advantages over Branch Membership.

We are very pleased that so many of us manage to get to our monthly meetings at the Harlescott Social Club. Our Monday lunch-time meetings are a most enjoyable way of spending time with friends over a light meal and a drink in a warm and pleasant environment. The meetings include a raffle and an interesting talk by a guest speaker. If you have not already joined us there, or have not attended for some time, please do make the effort to come to at least one of the meetings where you are assured a warm welcome. If you are unable to attend the monthly meetings regularly, please remember that your Branch is always here to help so please keep in touch with your RAFA.

Paul Martin

WINGS APPEAL

14. The Wings Appeal Organiser writes:

Last year's Battle of Britain commemorations helped enormously to boost public awareness of our Wings collections and our final income reflected that. This year, we have experienced a considerable but not unexpected drop. The total will be approximately £3,500.

As usual, the greatest proportion of our collection comes from the main stores in our area which this year included Morrison's, Asda, Tesco and our local Co-Ops. We are always grateful for their interest and help.

We are also fortunate to retain the support of RAF Shawbury, several local independent businesses and local events whose combined tin collections amounted to approximately 15% of this year's total. Such contributions are becoming increasingly important as some major stores have changed the way they allocate collection time to charities and we have found ourselves with even fewer collecting opportunities than in previous years.

As with most RAFA branches countrywide, we are experiencing the sad loss or infirmity of many members whose active support we have come to rely on. This has been particularly noticeable this year. However, several members of the branch committee have, again, given generous time to volunteer as collectors and without their support, we would have been unable to fill even the reduced number of slots given to us. The branch is applying to HQ's scheme to raise volunteers from without and we look forward to this

development in the hope of filling and possibly extending future collecting opportunities.

Alex Madeley
Wings Appeal Organiser

WELFARE

15. The Welfare Officer writes:

Our Branch's welfare work has been progressing quietly throughout the year. Your Welfare officer is responsible for helping all members of the "RAF Family", in the local area, in need of practical assistance to improve their lives. Please note that your Branch Welfare Officer is permitted to help only those who personally ask for assistance.

One aspect of your RAFA's welfare work is "Befriending". Befriending is a recent scheme which encourages people who would like to visit members of the "RAF Family" who may be lonely and in need of social contact, possibly in their home, hospital or nursing home. Unfortunately, your Branch Welfare Officer does not have the resources to act as the Branch's Befriender as well as all his other commitments. In practice, this means that if we know of a member of the "RAF Family" who may feel isolated and lonely it is up to all of us to take the initiative to take the first steps to re-include them in to society.

Our Branch needs a Branch Befriender who will be able to take on the overall responsibility of helping members of the RAF Family, socially, in the local area. A new Befriender would expect to undertake a one-day training course, not only to give some ideas about how to approach befriending but also, and possibly more importantly, how to keep one's self safe whilst working as a Befriender. If you are able to help and would like more information about Befriending, please contact Paul Martin or any member of your Committee. We are looking for lady as well as gentlemen Befrienders; we have some ladies who live by themselves who are only comfortable when visited by another lady.

Paul Martin

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

16. ***The Annual general Meeting of the Shrewsbury and District Branch will be held in the Harlescott Social Club on Monday 6 March 2017 commencing at 1230 pm.***

NOMINATION FORM FOR BRANCH OFFICERS

17. Attached to this News Letter is a nomination form for Branch Officers. Branch Officers, who are nominated and elected at the Annual General Meeting in March, organise the various events, and manage the assets of the Branch. Your Committee would be pleased to welcome new members to the Committee.

CONCLUSION

18. In conclusion, and on behalf of your Committee, may I take this opportunity to wish you a very Happy Christmas, and all the best for the New Year. We do hope that you will find time to attend our monthly meetings during 2017.

In Friendship One to Another

John Tisbury

Keep up to date with your Branch by visiting our website at www.rafashrewsbury.org.uk

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