



Wales, Midland & South Western Area

Newsletter

DEC 12/JAN 13

THIS NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE DISPLAYED FOR THE USE OF ALL MEMBERS

1. MEMBERSHIP

Whole Area Membership figures as at 27 November 2012 were as follows:

| Annual | Life | Full Associate | Total | New Ann/Ass 12 | Losses Ann/Life/Ass 12 |
|--------|------|----------------|-------|----------------|------------------------|
| 6622 | 5458 | 2479 | 14559 | 809 | 1233 |

When we compare these figures with the same period last year we can see an overall decline in Area membership of 2.9% which is a significant slowing in our rate of decline. Thank you to those Branches who have shown real determination and initiative to win back our lapsed colleagues.

I do hope that by the time you read this Newsletter you have already received (and actioned!) your Annual membership Renewal letter! Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require advice especially if you are considering a direct debit mandate. Your Association is alive and well and determined to be as relevant now as it has always been. Thank you for your continued support through membership.

2. AREA AGM AND REUNION - ANOTHER CALL TO BRANCHES

We very much hope that you will be able to join other guests and members for our next Area AGM and Reunion which is due to take place at the Derwent Hotel in Torquay over the weekend 8 – 10 March 2013, where a varied and lively programme awaits! Hotel bookings can be made direct with the Derwent on 01803-400500.

3. BRANCH AND CLUB AGMS – FORM 1056A/B

Enclosed for Branch Secretaries is a copy of F1056A and B for completion following AGMs. We would greatly appreciate your assistance in ensuring that full details of incumbents are entered on these forms, including the Membership Number please, so that we can ensure full and accurate recording on the database. You will see a subtle change in that we would be grateful for an e-mail address where appropriate. If the size of the boxes causes you a problem then please provide the information on an attached sheet. We also ask that bank details are entered for checking purposes here and at the Centre.

Secretaries will note that the F1056A has provision for full names to be entered. The Charity Commission insists on these details on the Branch Charity Trustee Form which is part of the Annual Update – these are not available to the public. These forms should be returned to us as soon as possible after your AGM, together with a copy of your Branch/Club Audited Accounts for 2012 please – see item 4 below. As well as being a requirement of the Association, the detail from these accounts is required when completing Charity Commission updates.

4. BRANCH AND BRANCH CLUB ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2012

Branches are reminded that in accordance with Standard Branch Regulation 32, Accounts as at 31 December 2012, including a Report from the Auditor or Independent Examiner, for both Branch and Branch Clubs are to be received at Area Headquarters by 31 March 2013. Would Treasurers please help us by preparing their accounts in the format contained in Chapter 8 (Branch) and 15 (Club) of the RAFA Admin Handbook, any other layout leads to confusion – many thanks. Your attention is also drawn to Byelaw 24(1) which states that a Branch shall be entitled to be represented at a Conference of the Association providing that its audited accounts for the preceding year have been submitted to the Area Director not less than 10 days before the first day of Conference. Please call if you have any questions!

5. A REMINDER TO BRANCHES – FIRST CONTACT WITH NEW SERVING MEMBERS

There is currently much debate centred round how to increase our membership recruitment and strengthen the branch-based network. The Association is working hard in this area, not least to recruit new serving RAF members at Cranwell, Halton and Honington (being the 3 current points of entry) and encourage new members into their local Branches. Recognising that Initial Officer and Recruit Training will be followed by further phases of training and relocation, personnel are tending to add themselves to the Area or HQ Roll. This does not necessarily support Branches, so we will continue to encourage serving personnel to become members of their 'home' Branch and in so doing ask them if we can approach their wider family members. Please, when you receive membership notifications, do all you can to make that first contact with the new serving RAF member a positive experience so that when they disappear back to the RAF they may encourage their wider family. As we pick up new serving members from the recruiting points we shall endeavour to notify the appropriate Branches.

6. BRANCH NEWSLETTER COMPETITION

Entries for this Competition must be received at CHQ no later than 31 January 2013. Entries must be printed or duplicated and state how many issues are produced during the year. These conditions must be met prior to consideration by the Judges. I hope that Branches will decide to enter themselves into this competition (I know there are some great examples out there!). Please submit entries via this office.

7. MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

To: All Members of the Association

Classification: The highest importance – Action required

You will all recall the Chairman of Council's open letter in the April 2012 edition of Air Mail in which he stressed the point that Membership should "pay for itself" but the reality was that income fell well short of expenditure. Many replies were received following that article and I thank you all for taking the time to write in with your views. Since then much discussion has taken place on how to reduce the annual deficit (currently circa £600k). I am sure that we all agree that Membership should, overall, "pay for itself" otherwise the cost of Membership is being subsidised by funds that could otherwise be used for welfare purposes which would be much more appropriate. So how do we close the gap? In simplistic terms there is no easy solution. We either reduce costs or increase income (and the only source of income is subscriptions) or, we opt for a combination of both. What is abundantly clear is that whatever course of action is chosen, it must be chosen by you – the Membership. As the Chairman mentioned in his article last April, the Secretary General has been reviewing administrative expenditure which will help drive down the cost of Membership. Reducing costs is a constant theme and every effort has and will continue to be made to make further cuts in any of the administrative procedures.

Membership subscriptions has always been a difficult subject and whether we like it or not, we may have to face the possibility that subscriptions will have to rise in future initially above inflation if we are serious about trying to reduce the gap.

This is where you, the Members, the very lifeblood of the Association come in! In our 70th year, difficult decisions have to be made, and you, the Membership, has to make them, that is enshrined in our rules. It is therefore proposed that the 'Cost of Membership' be the main topic for debate at our 70th Anniversary Annual Conference 2013 in Eastbourne on 11 May. During the debate it is envisaged that a range of proposals would be discussed in order to reach an acceptable solution. Such options could include:

- An electronic copy of Air Mail is made available on-line through the Members login area so that Members could opt out of receiving a hard copy.
- Membership cards are not distributed annually.
- Annual Members could pay higher subscription fees (and potentially pay by monthly direct debit to spread the cost over 12 equal payments).
- Associate Members could pay more in subscription fees.
- Life Members could be asked to contribute or, say for example, that in order to receive a hard copy Air Mail they would have to pay for it.
- ...or any combination of the above.

Whatever we choose we must not single out a particular group of people, this is a Membership wide issue and that means over 65,000 of you have a view and should take the opportunity to air it.

Following on from the debate it would be envisaged that Conference would agree an action or course of actions and from that a formal Resolution (or Resolutions) would be proposed to be voted upon to give an agreed mandate going forward.

Therefore, it is vital that your Branch sends a representative to our very special 70th Anniversary Annual Conference in order to make your views heard. Better still why not come along yourself, meet old friends, enjoy the entertainment and parade, and most importantly have your say – it's your Membership and your Conference.

If you wish to attend Conference please contact Margaret Duff, Conference Organiser – margaret.duff@rafa.org.uk (tel 01772 600211) or write to her at RAFA Conference, PO Box 316, Leyland PR25 9AX.

8. EILEEN YOUNGHUSBAND – A DOCUMENTARY

Ex- WAAF Officer Eileen Younghusband worked in the secret Filter Room of RAF Fighter Command. ITV Wales made a recent documentary of her job and it might be interesting for members to see. The following internet link shows the programme. www.onewomanswar.co.uk.

9. THE BLUE APPLE CHARITY

We were recently alerted to a charity called The Blue Apple Charity by a contact at the RBL <http://www.blueapplecharity.org.uk/> and felt this should be brought to your attention in case members are approached. They are not, as far as we can tell, an 'official' charity, they do not appear to have a charity number and the MoD is not aware of them. MoD are in the process of investigating them further, but their first line of action is to remove the MoD logo from their website.

10. ON A LIGHTER NOTE – WANTED!

Wanted urgently - 2 front buttons from a chip hat. Please contact Tich Taylor 01446 730894 linda.49taylor@tiscali.co.uk.

11. A CONCERT FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON

The Salon Orchestra of the Central Band of the Royal Air Force presents a Concert for the Festive Season at the Dalwood Village Hall on Friday 14 December 2012 commencing at 7.30pm. Tickets are £10 and include a free drink. Proceeds will go to the RAF Association and Great Ormond Street Hospital. For further details please contact Ray Bradley on 01404-881262, Kathy Laing on 01404-881601 or Sue Drew on 01404-831365. By the way – Dalwood is situated between Honiton and Axminster in deepest East Devon!

12. THEY WERE THE FEW – A NEW SONG ABOUT THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Just once in a while a new song comes along and this is called 'They Were The Few'. It was conceived and written by Barry Turner and Tim Kent and originally recorded on a CD in 2004. This year a musical director re-arranged the song to be sung with either a Brass or Wind/Concert Band. You might like to check this you tube clip of its first airing www.youtube.com/timofhatmusic. Tim Kent has invited feedback at tim@hatmusic.co.uk.

13. NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL TROPHY COMPETITIONS – REPEAT ARTICLE

I should be pleased to receive nominations, by 11 January 2013, for the Trophy Competitions mentioned below. Full details are given in Chapter 10 of the Association Admin Handbook, and the awards will be made at Annual Conference 2013. These trophies are an important mechanism for us to recognise the efforts of our RAFALOs, serving units and GVCAC.

- **Wally Marriott RAFALO Trophy.** Awarded to the RAFALO judged to have made the most outstanding contribution to the Association.
- **Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy.** Awarded to the RAF Unit which has made the most exceptional contribution in support of the Association.
- **The Andrew Humphrey Trophy.** Awarded to the Girls Venture Corps Air Cadets Unit making the greatest sustained effort and overall contribution to Wings Appeal.

14. PROJECT PATHFINDER – REPEAT ARTICLE

Annual Conference recently approved, subject to the completion of due diligence by Central Council, the formation of a new category of 'junior' Membership of the Association for young people between the ages of 13 and 17. A dedicated Project Officer, Group Captain Nicky Loveday Retd, has been identified to undertake the necessary work to enable a detailed proposal and recommendations to be submitted to the RAFA Central Council and subject to agreement, it is hoped to launch a youth membership scheme in 2013. To date, the Project Officer has had discussions with the Youth Leadership teams from the Air Cadet Organisation, the Girls Venture Corps Air Cadets and the Air Scouts and has completed a series of Focus Groups with young people aged 13-17 years old to help design the proposed Youth Membership scheme and ensure that any proposal remains interesting and affordable to the young audience whom we hope to attract to the Association. If any Branches are interested in helping to finance the setup and administration costs or sponsor a benefit, competition prize or award for the Youth Membership scheme, please contact Bob Hounslow, Director of Membership and Areas, on 0116-2688759.

15. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RAFA Concert Band Annual Christmas Concert at the Blakehay Theatre, Weston-super-Mare (3pm) – 2 December 2012.

West Glamorgan Region Meeting at Neath RAFA Club (7pm) – 7 January 2013.

Devon Region Meeting AGM at the Dawlish Branch Club (2.30pm) – 9 February 2013.

Area Council Meeting – venue to be confirmed – 13 February 2013.

RAFA Concert Band performing at the Armstrong Hall in Thornbury – 23 February 2013.

Northern Region (Midlands) AGM at MOD Stafford – 27 February 2013.

East Glamorgan & Gwent Region Meeting at Treorchy Branch (2pm) – 2 March 2013.

Wiltshire Region Meeting at Swindon RAFA Club (1pm) – 2 March 2013.

Area Conference and Reunion at the Derwent Hotel in Torquay – 8 to 10 March 2013.
Mid Wales Region Meeting at Llanidloes Branch (2pm) – 23 March 2013.
Official RAF Association 70th Anniversary – 1 April 2013.
Area Council Meeting – venue to be confirmed – 10 April 2013.
North Wales Region Meeting at RAF Valley (2pm) – 13 April 2013.
Association Annual Conference at Eastbourne – 10 to 12 May 2013.
Area Council Meeting – venue to be confirmed – 21 August 2013.
Area Council Meeting – venue to be confirmed – 13 November 2013.

Paul Baker - Area Director

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas? – A Mince Spy.

At this time of year try to give more than you can and take less than you need.

The Staff at Exeter, Moseley and Newbridge wish you all a very peaceful holiday.

Enclosures:

1. Branch and Club AGMs – F1056A/B.