

Wales, Midland & South Western Area

Newsletter

AUGUST 2014

THIS NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE DISPLAYED FOR THE USE OF ALL MEMBERS

1. MEMBERSHIP

Whole Area Membership figures as at 29 July 2014 were as follows:

Annual	Life	Full Associate	Total	New Ann/Ass 14	Losses Ann/Life/Ass 14
6459	5447	2507	14413	615	1091

Whatever you are doing to bring new or lapsed members to the Association please keep doing it because it's working! We are now up to 95% retention and our target remains 97.5%. Is it possible for each Branch to increase their membership by just one individual per month until the end of the year? If you can achieve this whilst the Area team concentrate on initiatives with the serving RAF and Auxiliary Sqns, we should easily hit our target. Thank you for your hard work.

- Area Membership as at 31 December 2013 – 15,168.
- Area Membership as at 29 July 2014 - 14,413.
- Minimum target by 31 December 2014 - 14,788.
- Still required to achieve minimum target - 375.

2. RAF ASSOCIATION LIAISON OFFICER (RAFALO) UPDATE

From time to time we receive general information and updates on changes in the RAF from our hugely supportive team of RAFALOs and I thought the latest update might be useful to share. Please give me some feedback so I can gauge whether this type of information is of interest:

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS LIST

ACM the Lord Stirrup KG GCB AFC has been appointed Marshal of the Royal Air Force wef 13 June 2014. This is an honorary appointment.

Air Commodore R J Atkinson CBE to be Head of Joint Doctrine (Air & Space) at the DCDC in August 2014.

Air Commodore S A Richardson to be Head C4ISR, Joint Forces Command in September 2014 in succession to Air Commodore C Jones, who is leaving the Service.

Group Captain D P Manning to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Northolt in August 2015 in succession to Group Captain A D Bacon.

Group Captain R D Pratley to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Wittering in May 2015 in succession to Group Captain D R Alexander.

Group Captain P J Robinson OBE DFC to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Odiham in October 2015 in succession to Group Captain R C Maddison OBE.

Group Captain D J Rowland to be Officer Commanding 90 Signals Unit, Royal Air Force Leeming in May 2015 in succession to Group Captain C J Moore.

Wing Commander J L Appleton to be promoted Group Captain and to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Shawbury in September 2015 in succession to Group Captain A P T Smith.

GENERAL

Ministerial Appointments. The PM has announced the new Ministerial appointments as part of the Government reshuffle.



Left to right:

Secretary of State for Defence The Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP

Minister of State for the Armed Forces The Rt Hon Mark Francois MP

Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Anna Soubry MP



PUS of State & Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology Philip Dunne MP

PUS of State and Minister for Reserves Julian Brazier MP

PUS of State and the Lords spokesman on Defence Lord Astor of Hever

RAF Support to the Commemoration of Centenary of the First World War

Between 2014 and 2018 the Government will lead the nation in appropriate acts of remembrance and commemoration, and support key organisations in their activities to generate greater awareness of the First World War. During August, national activities are focused on commemorating the entry of the British Empire into the war. The RAF will support these activities by commemorating the deployment of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to France. The deployment of the RFC is of particular significance to the RAF as it was the first time in history that an Air arm flew to war – the world's first expeditionary air force.

Commemorations will be centred around church services on 4 Aug that mark the declaration of war, and the movement of 85 poppy wreaths to France (representing the 85 units of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that deployed in 1914).

The programme of events will include flypasts from Be-2c and Tornado GR4, from II(AC) Squadron, aircraft. In an act of reconciliation, pilots from II(AC) Sqn and the Luftwaffe will lay a broken propeller at a memorial.

EQUIPMENT AND MANPOWER

31 Squadron Deployment. The last Tornado GR4 squadron deploying to Afghanistan has completed its final pre-deployment training with the forthcoming deployment will be the fourth in recent years and remarkably will take place 95 years after the Sqn first arrived in the country. 31 Squadron first operated in the country in 1919 when British and Indian forces were called upon to carry out a land and air campaign when Afghan rebels declared war on the British.

By the end of 2014 there will be no British personnel in a combat role in Afghanistan where the Afghan National Security Forces now take the lead for security throughout the country. The squadron will replace fellow RAF Marham based IX(B) Squadron at Kandahar Airfield from where RAF Tornado GR4s provide vital protection to ISAF and Afghan forces across Afghanistan.

Using Litening or RAPTOR reconnaissance pods the aircraft has the ability to capture important data about insurgent activity. This capability, combined with the ability to strike important targets with precision when required, make the Tornado a formidable aircraft.

Chinook Mk 6. The first of the new Mk6 Chinooks, with improved handling qualities and stability, has been handed over on time to the RAF. This is the first of 14 new Chinooks with a new Digital Automatic

Flight Control System; all 14 will be operational by early 2017. SofS has also announced a new £115m agreement with Boeing to maintain the engines of the RAF's 60 Chinook fleet.

Reaper and Brimstone. Trials in the United States to integrate the Dual-Mode Seeker Brimstone missile onto Reaper have been successful. The trials demonstrated rapid integration of the missile onto the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted air system – safe carriage, safe release and system targeting – with a high success rate against static and high-speed manoeuvring targets. Both integrated semi-active laser and active millimetric-wave radar seeker were demonstrated, including working in tandem. This ensures the desired target is selected to minimise collateral damage before the missile switches to millimetric wave terminal guidance to hit manoeuvring targets.

3. FLOWERDOWN HOUSE – MODIFIED VEHICLE PROJECT

Branches will recall a letter from our Area Chairman seeking financial support to raise £30,000 for the purchase of a modified vehicle for use at Flowerdown House. I am pleased to report that in the space of just 2½ months we have reached our target figure. Your help has been immense and we shall now see this task through to its conclusion. Look out for photographs of the new purchase! Letters of thanks have been sent to those Branches who have made a contribution and each is hugely valued but I'd like to take this opportunity to single out two particular contributors. Our Branch at Dudley has committed funds vastly in excess of the average and we have also received a wonderful donation from the No 415 (Merthyr Tydfil) Squadron ATC which works closely with our Brecon Branch. What a super gesture from the ATC!

4. AREA WELFARE SEMINARS

Information has already gone out to Branch Secretaries regarding this year's commitment to our Area Welfare Seminars. If these Seminars are of interest then please make contact with your Branch Secretary to ensure you are included. As you know, our Area Council is committed to staging Seminars so as to give Branches and Members the opportunity to meet others within the Association and hear the latest information on developments in our core business, not least those aspects of our welfare delivery that make us an industry leader. This year we have chosen the following venues and dates:

- The Helicopter Museum, Locking Moor Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS24 8PP – Thursday 2 October 2014.
- RAF Cosford Sports Pavilion, RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton, WV7 3EX – Thursday 16 October 2014.

5. WALES, MIDLAND & SOUTH WESTERN AREA – CONFERENCE AND REUNION 2015 – REPEAT ARTICLE

Amazingly the time has come to start warming you to the idea of our 2015 Area Conference and Reunion which is to be held at the Derwent Hotel in Torquay over the weekend 20 to 22 March 2015. Attendance at our last several Conferences has been strong and I sincerely hope we can achieve similar results next year. Those of you who enjoy the weekend will know the Derwent Hotel extremely well. I have pleasure in advising the following prices:

- Twin/double room based on 2 sharing - £116.00 per person for 2 nights dinner, bed and breakfast, including Sunday lunch.
- Single rooms on a fill-up basis - £116.00 for 2 nights dinner, bed and breakfast, including Sunday lunch. Please note there is a £10 supplement for twins/doubles taken on single occupancy.
- Twin/double room based on 2 sharing for just the Saturday night including the formal Saturday evening Dinner, Sunday breakfast and lunch - £64.00 per person.

- Single rooms on a fill-up basis for just the Saturday night including the formal Saturday evening Dinner, Sunday breakfast and lunch - £64.00. Please note there is a £10 supplement for twins/doubles taken on single occupancy.
- You can now begin to make your accommodation bookings direct with the hotel by calling their Private Reservations Department on 01803-400-500 quoting the RAF Association Weekend. A 25% per person deposit will be requested which is non-refundable.

More information will come out in due course.

6. STANDARD BEARERS – WEARING OF UNOFFICIAL MEDALS

The RAF Association has recently received complaints about Standard Bearers wearing unofficial medals whilst on parade. Branches and Standard Bearers are reminded that when on parade, they are to follow the guidance laid down in Chapter 8 Para 8.3 of the Association's Admin Handbook, which states:

"When applicable, full sized medals should be worn on all parades and ceremonies. Standard Bearers should not wear commemorative or other unofficial medals. No insignia or badges should be worn except that of the Association."

7. LIGHTS OUT!

"The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time". Words spoken by Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary in August 1914, as Britain's ultimatum to Germany was about to expire.

LIGHTS OUT is an invitation to everyone in the UK to turn off their lights from 10pm until 11pm, leaving on a single light or candle for this shared moment of reflection.

In a dramatic nationwide event, the UK will plunge into darkness between 10pm and 11pm on 4th August 2014: upon this darkened canvas single lights will appear across the four nations, marking the hour that Britain entered World War 1 one hundred years ago. LIGHTS OUT is a headline project of the cultural programme 14-18 NOW and was initiated by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport; 14-18 NOW is a curated programme of new art works across the UK that forms part of the official commemorations of the Centenary of the First World War, and is hosted within Imperial War Museums. 14-18 NOW is funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Every member of every community in the UK is invited to respond to LIGHTS OUT, bringing their own personal thoughts and reflections to the occasion.

How will LIGHTS OUT be executed?

In the months before the public launch, LIGHTS OUT seeks the support and participation of Local Authorities, arts organisations, businesses and iconic buildings. LIGHTS OUT moments and affiliated events are uploaded on the LIGHTS OUT website. For public launch (early July, tbc), LIGHTS OUT invites members of the public to participate between 10pm and 11pm on 4th August. Moments and events are advertised on the LIGHTS OUT website and will be publicised regionally and nationally. Artists have been commissioned to produce large-scale outdoor artworks on 4th August in response to LIGHTS OUT. Each one will take place in a carefully selected location and members of the public will be invited to experience them in person. A digital artwork by Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller has been commissioned in response to LIGHTS OUT which will be free to download by all. LIGHTS OUT is working closely with the Royal British Legion who will organise local community events at war memorials and other public places for members of the public to attend. Working closely with the BBC and other media, LIGHTS OUT will be brought into people's homes and hands live on 4th August.

8. WRAFS ON TOUR



The following information may be of interest:

WRAFs on Tour are a group of over around 1000 former and serving WRAFs. We are undertaking a UK wide charity relay this year. Each lady is undertaking to cover as far as she is able by walking, cycling or running etc. Some are thinking of using horse power, literally. One lady is even planning to rollerblade. This relay is to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support and RAFA (Royal Air Forces Association).

We hope this is going to really capture the imagination and support of as many people as possible. So far it does seem to be. I first suggested the idea around 7 months ago and we now have more than 1000 women, of all ages (we have several ladies over 70) wishing to take part. 2014 is an important year, in terms of anniversaries, for women in the Royal Air Force - it will be 75 years since WAAF was formed; 65 years since the name changed to WRAF and 20 years since the 'W' officially disappeared under the complete merge with RAF. It will also be 100 years since the start of WWI; an important anniversary for all members of the armed forces. We are hoping to finish the relay at the National Arboretum where we will lay a floral tribute.

The relay starts on 28th June in Stranraer, Scotland, and works its way through most areas of the UK mainland, until it finishes in October. We have already raised over £2000 but obviously we want to raise as much as possible for our two charities. If you need more information you can contact Verena Smith, who is organising this event at wrafsontour@gmail.com

Twitter address: @wrafsontour14 (#charity relay)

web address: www.wrafsontour.com

just-giving site: www.justgiving.com/teams/WRAFontour

facebook (for participants only): <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wrafs-On-Tour-Charity-Relay/1397744353796305?fref=ts>

9. AN INTERESTING POINT

One of our Branch members was recently asked to look for the name of a Veteran on The Armed Forces Memorial. They knew he had a Military headstone with Service Number, Rank, Name and date of Death but he could not be found in that year column. Upon asking the NMA Staff, they were informed that only those killed on operations, by terrorism, or on training exercises are included on the Memorial. All others who have died in RAF Service are recorded in the Books of Remembrance held at the RAF Church St Clements Danes London. An interesting point!

10. STORYBOOK WINGS LATEST NEWSLETTER

The latest update from our Storybook Wings initiative is enclosed.

11. FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO RECOGNISE D-DAY VETERANS WITH COUNTRY'S HIGHEST HONOUR

The Government of France has told the UK Ministry of Defence that it wishes to recognise the selfless acts of heroism and determination displayed by all surviving veterans of the Normandy landings, and of the wider campaigns to liberate France in 1944, by awarding them with the Legion d'Honneur. This recognition extends beyond the troops who actually landed on and fought their way up the beaches 70 years ago, and will include Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel who operated in support of the landings. Nick Bunting, the RAF Association's Secretary General, said: "The RAF Association

welcomes this recognition of the heroism of so many Air Force personnel. We will be circulating details among our members to encourage those eligible for the honour to apply." Requests for the award should be made using the application form enclosed to below and will be processed by the Ministry of Defence, who will forward the details to the French authorities. The French authorities will then make all the final decisions on the awards. Any veterans wishing to apply for the award, or anyone enquiring on their behalf, should either send the form to:

Personnel and Training – Defence Services Secretary – Commemorations
Floor 6 Zone C
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
LONDON
SW1A 2HB

Or email it to PersTrg-DSSec-CommemAug1@mod.uk

The French government will be reviewing the applications, so MOD is unable to give any guidance on timings or the arrangements for the presentation of the awards. Awards will not be given posthumously, and any further questions should be directed to the French.

12. RAFA YOUTH UPDATE

August is shaping up to be a busy month for our rafa YOUTH membership scheme with the Cyprus Awards being made for participants from all over the country. One slot for each ATC Region, 2 from the CCF, one from GVCAC and one from the Air Explorer Scouts are all up for grabs. Prizes this month include 2 slots in the chipmunk simulator for under 16s, 2 tandem skydives for over 16s and the flying prize draw which is an award of £300 to 2 winning members towards any type of flying activity. Membership continues to grow with 1,225 currently on board. Branches are encouraged to support this initiative by sponsoring membership of their local Sqn through legitimate use of Branch funds.



13. CENOTAPH CEREMONY – LONDON – 9 NOVEMBER 2014 – REPEAT ARTICLE

The Royal British Legion, on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, will be organizing the ex-Service contingents attending the Parade and Service at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, on Remembrance Day, Sunday 9 November 2014. Civilians are not permitted to parade in the Ex-Service columns.

A representative of the South East & Eastern Area will lay the Association's wreath; Stewards will also be positioned at the Cenotaph to lay wreaths on behalf of the detachments as they march past. Contingents will assemble and disperse at Horse Guards Parade. Due to the number of personnel on parade the

overall length of the march past has increased and I would ask you to ensure that your members are aware of the physical demands of standing in Whitehall for at least 1 hour and then marching for a distance of 1.5 miles, possibly in inclement weather. We have been asked to remind all on parade to help to ensure that behaviour and dress standards match the dignity of the occasion. There have been a few rather regrettable lapses that have offended the majority of those marching and the general public. In view of the current security arrangements, only holders of admission tickets will be allowed to join the parade. All participants are liable to a security search on the day.

The South East Office will be administering the ticket allocation for the event this year. Naz Angha would therefore be grateful to receive applications for tickets at your earliest convenience. Contact details: Naz Angha, RAFA South East Office, 3-5 Old Bridge Street, Hampton Wick, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 4BU
Tel: 020 8286 6667 E-mail: naz.angha@rafa.org.uk

The closing date for receipt of applications for tickets at the South East Office is Tuesday 26th August

14. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

North Wales Region Meeting at Wrexham Branch HQ (2pm) – 9 August 2014.
East Glamorgan & Gwent Region Meeting at Llandaff & Ely Branch HQ (2pm) – 23 August 2014.
RAF Cosford Battle of Britain Parade and Service (1130am) – 7 September 2014.
MoD St Athan Battle of Britain Parade and Service – 7 September 2014.
North Cornwall Branch - Battle of Britain Parade & Service, Kilkhampton Church (11am) - 7 September 2014.
Falmouth Branch Battle of Britain Service, Falmouth Parish Church of King Charles The Martyr (1030am) - 7 September 2014.
Bodmin Branch – Annual Wreath Laying Service at Sea, departing Padstow Harbour at 4pm – 21 September 2014.
Area Welfare Seminar – The Helicopter Museum – 2 October 2014.
Area Welfare Seminar – RAF Cosford – 16 October 2014.
Mid Wales Region Meeting at Llanidloes (2pm) – 18 October 2014.
Devon Region Meeting at Plymouth Branch HQ (2.30pm) – 25 October 2014.
Cornwall Region Meeting at the Kernow Club, Truro (2pm) – 8 November 2014.
North Wales Region Meeting at Llangollen Branch HQ (2pm) – 29 November 2014.
Devon Region AGM at Dawlish RAFA Club (2.30pm) – 7 February 2015.

Paul Baker - Area Director

If God wanted me to touch my toes, he'd have put them on my knees.

Enclosure:

1. Storybook Wings Update.
2. Application for the Award of the Legion d'Honneur. (Contact the Secretary for details).