

Wales, Midland & South Western Area

Newsletter

Christmas 2014



THIS NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE DISPLAYED FOR THE USE OF ALL MEMBERS

1. MEMBERSHIP

Whole Area Membership figures as at 1 December 2014 were as follows:

Annual	Life	Full Associate	Total	New Ann/Ass 14	Losses Ann/Life/Ass 14
6650	5375	2587	14612	874	1182

As the year draws to a close it is hugely heartening to see your efforts in respect of our Area membership recruitment and retention, with another 88 people either joining for the first time or unlapsing in the last 4 weeks. Our minimum target at year-end now seems a little tricky – unless each Branch can find 2 new members during December!

- Area Membership as at 31 December 2013 – 15,168.
- Area Membership as at 1 December 2014 - 14,612.
- Minimum target by 31 December 2014 - 14,788.
- Still required to achieve minimum target - 176.

I do hope that by the time you read this Newsletter you have already taken some action to renew your annual membership and I would take this opportunity to remind you that all renewal action is now handled by our colleagues at CHQ. Please ensure you are communicating with Mr Rishi Sheth in the CHQ Membership Department. Rishi can be contacted as follows:

- Mr Rishi Sheth, Membership Administrator, RAF Association Central Headquarters, 117½ Loughborough Road, Leicester, LE4 5ND. Tel No: 0116-268-8785 or by e-mail rishi.sheth@rafa.org.uk.

We continue to strive to get as many members as possible onto direct debit, thereby easing the administration at year end.

2. MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS 2015/2016

The new membership subscriptions and Branch rebates for 2015/2016 based on the average RPI of 5.8% are highlighted below. This increase is in accordance with Resolution No 7/06 (this Resolution enshrined the mandate of Resolution 25/86 which required a review of subscriptions every second year).

Category	2013/14 Memb Fee	2015/16 Memb Fee	2015/16 Branch Rebate
Ordinary Member – 1 year	19.50	20.50	04.70
Ordinary Member – 4 year	73.50	78.00	
Associate Member – 1 year – Air Mail	13.50	14.50	
Associate Member – 1 year – No Air Mail	08.50	08.50	02.70
Associate Member – 4 year – Air Mail	52.50	55.50	
Associate Member – 4 year – No Air Mail	29.00	30.50	
Give As You Earn (GAYE) (gross payment before basic tax relief)	24.36	25.68	
RPI Dec 2011	239.40.		
RPI Dec 2013	253.40		
Increase	014.00	% Increase	05.80%

3. 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 20 – 22 March 2014, where a varied and lively programme awaits! This will hopefully give you an opportunity to catch up on Association business, to discuss our future challenges and, just as importantly, meet old friends and socialise. The Hotel is taking bookings - please call on 01803-400500.

4. 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. Please include e-mail addresses where possible as this helps greatly with accurate communications. If the size of the boxes causes you a problem then please use an attached sheet. We also ask that bank details are entered for checking purposes at Area HQ.

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 2014 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.

5. BRANCH AND BRANCH CLUB ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2014

Branches are reminded that in accordance with Standard Branch Regulation 32, Accounts as at 31 December 2014, 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 2015. 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!

A final point if I may. Please do your utmost to ensure that Branch and Club AGMs have properly constructed agendas and that you give your membership an opportunity to inspect annual accounts. Many thanks!



6. ACCESS TO CENTRAL AND AREA COUNCIL MINUTES

For those Branches that wish to have electronic access to both Central and Area Council Minutes, a new facility is now available through the website www.rafa.org.uk. This facility does not replace any existing service (for those Branches who do not have internet access) but is aimed at providing a more efficient and cost-effective option. In order to take advantage Branch Secretaries must register their membership on the website (front page – log in) before being given access to the Minutes. Once you are ‘logged on’ you will be taken to an area that members of the public cannot access – where you will see tabs marked Central Council and Area Council. Please give this service a go and let me know how you get on!

7. JUSTICE FOR WIDOWS - A SOLUTION

The following article has been provided by our War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme colleague, Chris Francis.

Latest - November 10, 2014

Tags: [Campaigning](#), [Justice for Widows](#), [Widows' pensions](#)

On 7 November the Government announced that it would change the rules which require some Armed Forces widows to forfeit their pensions on remarriage or cohabitation. From 1 April 2015 the rules of the various Armed Forces pension schemes will be harmonised so that all widows will be able to keep their pensions regardless of whether they remarry or not.

This announcement is excellent news. It effectively meets all the objectives of the Forces Pension Society Justice for Widows Campaign. *It means that all widows currently in receipt of a families pension under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 (AFPS 75) and all war widows receiving a pension under the War Pensions Scheme, and all those who may yet become widows will henceforth have the freedom of action which they all deserve, unfettered by artificial constraints which belong to another age. They will all be able to retain their Armed Forces pension for life.*

The Government has also acknowledged that the Armed Forces Covenant lay at the heart of this issue and in solving the problem has fulfilled its pledge to honour the Covenant. Michael Fallon, the Defence Secretary said:

“It’s vital that we do right by those who put their lives on the line for their country – that’s why this Government enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant in law. These changes reflect the huge commitment which service families make to our country. We recognise that the unique nature of service life has left widows, widowers and surviving civil partners of members of the Armed Forces at a disadvantage. I’m delighted as Defence Secretary to be able to put right an issue that has caused upset and disappointment for many years.”

The Society has in response issued a statement from the General Secretary Major General John Moore-Bick:

“We thank the Government for recognising the merits of our Justice for Forces Widows campaign and for putting right the unfair rules that were disadvantaging spouses and partners.”

This change will come into force in conjunction with the launch of the new Armed Forces Pension Scheme 15. The change will not however lead to the reinstatement of pensions for those who have already forfeited them. This is because this would have required retrospective action, the cost of which would have been both additional and difficult to quantify. Such action would also have breached a principle held dear by governments of all persuasions and one which has been a consistent sticking point over many years. The

Forces Pension Society has accepted this limitation and indeed campaigned transparently on the basis of harmonisation, rather than retrospection.

There is however some good news which will benefit many who have already lost their pensions:

- From 1 April 15 the means test used to decide whether AFPS '75 pensions will be restored will be abolished. So, if a second or subsequent relationship ends for a member who has given up his or her pension on remarriage or cohabitation, restoration will be made without means test. Over half of current applications are refused.
- For those members who have previously applied for restoration of their AFPS '75 pension and were refused under the means test (effectively going back to the commencement of the scheme), and who are not in a marriage or cohabiting on 1 April 15, if they reapply, Veterans UK will restore their pension on 1 April 15. This will probably benefit between 300 to 600 individuals.

What has been achieved is significant, with the potential to affect many thousands of people. Precisely how many is difficult to quantify, because the beneficiary population is subject to constant change. Currently there are some 65,000 Armed Forces widows who stand to benefit, but there are also thousands of "widows in waiting" who will also benefit in due course. The Government Actuary's department has stated that the "old" rules affected the "vast majority of Armed Forces widows". The old rules also affected about half of those personnel still serving in the Armed Forces and would have continued to bite for the next 40 or so years until the affected population died out. In all some 400,000 people stand to benefit from this change. Of course, not all widows or widowers find another permanent partner; available statistics suggests that only some 0.1% of the affected widows' population have done so annually, but the great change is that they all now have the freedom to seek happiness afresh with someone else, rather than shunning relationships for fear of the consequences. However – a word of warning if you are affected by the change in rules; the rule change only becomes effective on 1 April 2015. Whilst the authorities may be unlikely to enforce the rules vigorously in the interim, an unequivocal breach such as a marriage might be hard to ignore. So don't take a chance. The lifeboat has picked you up – don't throw yourself overboard before it has docked. The Forces Pensions Society thanks all those who have assisted our campaign for change over many years. We also thank the government and Prime Minister for being prepared to examine the matter against the Covenant in the light of the logic and fairness of the case and to decide accordingly.

8. A CHRISTMAS SCAM!

With Christmas fast approaching you may wish to know Royal Mail and Trading Standards are alerting people to the following scam:

A card is posted through your door from a company called PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) suggesting that they were unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to contact them on 0906 6611911 (a Premium rate number). If you call the number and you start to hear a recorded message you will already have been billed £315 for the phone call. If you do receive a card with these details, then please contact Royal Mail Fraud on 020 7239 6655. For more information, see the Crime Stoppers website:

<http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/crime-prevention/helping-prevent-crime/scams/postal-delivery-scam>

Please be aware that the premium rate number may change but nevertheless please do not call any number stated on a card from PDS.

9. FOR BRANCH MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES – NOTIFICATIONS OF ANY CHANGES

We really do need one functioning e-mail address for every Branch whether that is the Branch Secretary or in some cases the Branch Membership Secretary so that notifications regarding membership can be communicated quickly and efficiently. Debbie Byam at the Exeter Office will send notifications **only if there are changes** electronically to the Membership Secretary as her first option and then to the Branch Secretary. Please get in touch if you are a Branch Membership Secretary and we do not have your e-mail address - debbie.byam@rafa.org.uk.



10. RED ARROWS PRINTS FOR SALE

Repeat Article. In a collaboration between the RAF Association and the Red Arrows RAF Aerobatic Team a painting was commissioned to mark the Reds' fiftieth display season. Five hundred prints of the resulting painting are now available for sale, each signed by all 10 of the 2014 Red Arrows team.

It is hoped that sales of the print will raise £50,000 for the Association – a fitting amount for the Reds this year. The painting itself was presented to the RAF Club earlier this month. Facsimile copies were also presented to the Red Arrows, Nick Bunting and ICAP, which is sponsoring the painting. Nick said: "The Association is thrilled to be working with the Red Arrows, especially in this special anniversary season. They are an iconic team, one of several representing the excellence of the Royal Air Force in the UK and around the world. We are grateful that the Reds have chosen the Association as the beneficiary for this fundraising endeavour. They are part of the RAF family, helping to look after those who need us."

Sqn Ldr Ruth Shackleton, Red Arrows Team Manager, said: "Mike Rondot's magnificent painting not only captures the excitement of the Red Arrows brilliantly and celebrates the team's 50th display season, but it also provides a wonderful opportunity to raise vital funds for the Royal Air Forces Association. We hope the public will wish to purchase this unique limited edition print as a splendid reminder of the world's most famous display team."

The picture was painted by well-known aviation artist, Michael Rondot. He said: "Sqn Ldr Jim Turner, the team leader, knows my style of painting from the days we flew Jaguars together. When he suggested a painting of the Reds we were both keen to show what the team does, rather than a 'pretty' scene with a lovely blue sky with nine aircraft in perfect formation. I have painted an imagined situation showing the synchro pair in front of the other seven Hawks on a blustery, difficult flying day. The Reds turn out and display in all weathers and I wanted to capture that."

Prints are 700 x 500mm overall and cost £100 plus postage and packaging (£4:40 UK or £6:05 Europe). Framed prints are available for £200, which includes postage and packaging.

If you'd like to buy one, framed or otherwise, you can phone Rishi on 0116 268 8785 and he'll take payment. For more info, call Nicola on 0116 268 8790.



11. RAFA CONCERT BAND

As Peter Skellon recently put it – the Band are about to start their festive ‘dinging & donging’ with local performances that include their Annual Christmas Concert which will take place at the Blakehay Theatre in Weston-super-Mare at 3pm on Sunday 7 December. A busy time for the Band with other performances at MoD Abbey Wood on 10 December (Christmas Carols) followed by an Ensemble performance at Somerset Court Autistic Home, more Carols on 11 December at Court de Wyke School and the Band Christmas Draw on 13 December.



A huge ‘thank you’ from our Area to Peter and Pauline Skellon, to Pauline’s support team and, of course, all our fabulous musicians, for providing entertainment throughout the year for and on behalf of the Association! 2015 will present some great opportunities for the Band as we commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

12. RAFALO UPDATE – DEC 2014

The following update has been provided by senior RAFALOs and includes information on changes to the Service. We hope this will be of interest.

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS LIST

Air Vice-Marshal R Paterson CB OBE to be Air Officer Scotland with effect from 17 November 2014 in succession to Air Commodore G M D Mayhew. Air Vice-Marshal Paterson will relinquish his Regular Commission on 19 April 2015 and continue to exercise his responsibilities as Air Officer Scotland as a member of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Acting Air Commodore A K Gillespie was promoted Air Commodore on 16 October 2014 and is appointed Air Officer Battle Management and Head Defence Airspace & Air Traffic Management, Headquarters Air Command with effect from 4 May 2015 in succession to Air Commodore W J Millington whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain P R Sanger-Davies to be Group Captain Recruiting & Selection, Royal Air Force College Cranwell in July 2015 in succession to Group Captain C Coton.

Group Captain A E Stewart to be Director Defence Geospatial Intelligence Fusion Centre, Royal Air Force Wyton in August 2015 in succession to Group Captain J Rolf.

Group Captain T D Neal-Hopes to be Commander Joint Service Signals Organisation, Royal Air Force Digby in September 2015 in succession to Colonel D Worden.

Group Captain R A Davies to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Marham in November 2015 in succession to Group Captain H Smyth OBE DFC ADC.

Group Captain P A Godfrey to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Lossiemouth in November 2015 in succession to Group Captain M W J Chappell.

Group Captain B R Braid to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Valley in December 2015 in succession to Group Captain P N Cracroft.

Group Captain J D Milne DFC to be Officer Commanding No 3 Flying Training School, Royal Air Force Cranwell in January 2016 in succession to Group Captain A Coope OBE.

Group Captain A P Marshall OBE to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Waddington in March 2016 in succession to Group Captain R P Barrow.

Group Captain J F Monahan OBE DFC to be Commandant Central Flying School, Royal Air Force Cranwell in March 2016 in succession to Group Captain J H Hunter.

Establishment of 54 Signals Unit - RAF Digby The Air Electronic Surveillance (ES) Pillar was established in 2011 under the subordination of Commandant Air Warfare Centre. The Unit operates from RAF Digby, providing mission support and ground Processing, Exploitation, and Dissemination (PED) of all UK air-derived ES data and material from partner nations, in coordination with the Joint Electronic Surveillance Centre (JESC). The change in subordination is intended to align with other ISTAR PED elements but will not affect day-to-day operation and outputs.

The re-designation to 54 SU will ensure a strong Unit identity and acknowledges the maintenance of historic links to RAF Digby. 54 SU was originally formed at RAF Selatar in 1964 in response to the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation (1962-1966). It was moved to RAF Digby in 1969 where the Unit saw regular deployments to Germany, Cyprus, British Honduras (Belize) and UK sites. In 1977, 54 SU was once again redeployed to Celle in Germany, where it stayed until disbandment in October 1992. With its rich operational heritage and ties to RAF Digby, it is deemed appropriate that the 54 SU number plate and badge should be re-established for use in an active intelligence unit supporting strategic operations around the world.

Goodbye Bastion

As British troops leave Camp Bastion, marking the end of UK combat operations in Helmand, it is a time to reflect on the military effort over the last 8 years in Helmand. Camp Bastion was just a patch of sand with a few tents in 2005 and the thought of air conditioning was a distant dream. In 2006, construction began at the camp in order to support the changing role of UK operations in Afghanistan. Designed by Royal Engineers and built by them using a team of military engineers and contractors. By 2007, engineering construction of the runway and hospital was underway. As operations in Afghanistan evolved, so did the camp. It developed almost organically and the camp grew to meet the needs of the troops. From relatively humble beginnings, Bastion grew into a very large joint base which has been vital for sustaining, protecting and enabling combat operations in Helmand and beyond. The RAF has been at the heart of this endeavour and Deputy Commander Operations recently paid tribute to the all personnel who served there.

At the forefront has been the constant and sometimes heavy drumbeat of air operations, both strategic and tactical, and the Force Protection force elements that have ensured the security of the Base; however, ATC, Fire, Logistics Support, Movers, Medics and a host of others from every branch and trade across the Whole Force have made Bastion both a safe and an effective hub from which to launch and recover combat operations and personnel.

During this time, there were 600 fixed and rotary wing movements a day and newspapers reported it as being the fifth busiest UK operated airfield. Camp Bastion had 3 huge dining facilities each capable of feeding around 7,000 diners. It also had a Pizza Hut, KFC and even its own water bottling plant sucking up water from 300 feet below the Helmand desert, tapping into water that once fell as snow on the Hindu Kush mountain range. It became so huge some newspapers compared its size to the size of Reading. Many RAF personnel have served or travelled through Bastion, which is now firmly enshrined in the RAF's history.



Size of Camp Bastion at its peak (2011-2012)



Number of vehicles and equipment redeployed to the UK

F-35 Lightning II Purchase. Defence Secretary Michael Fallon has announced that the Ministry of Defence has reached an agreement in principle on an order for the first production batch of four Lightning II stealth combat aircraft. The aircraft will operate from both the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers



It is expected that a formal contract for the F-35B aircraft will be in place within weeks. The contract will form part of the MOD's investment in Lightning II over the next 5 years to procure an initial 14 of these multi-role fifth generation aircraft, together with the necessary support arrangements and infrastructure.

The UK has already taken delivery of three Lightning II aircraft, with another one due to be delivered in 2016. These are being used for testing and evaluation and are currently in the US. The UK's first operational Squadron in the UK will be based at RAF Marham in Norfolk in 2018, which will become their Main Operating Base.

An F-35 Lightning II aircraft at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

MOD contract to update and sustain military air traffic management - AQUILA, a joint venture between Thales and NATS, has been awarded the £1.5 billion contract, which is expected to save the taxpayer up to £1 billion over the next 22 years. This includes a £400 million investment in advanced surveillance radars and a wide range of sophisticated equipment such as navigation aids and radios.

RAF Lossiemouth Accommodation and Support Facilities. Turner Estate Solutions has taken on a £23million contract to build new accommodation and support facilities at RAF Lossiemouth to help enable Typhoon fast jets to operate from the base. The contract has been awarded by the DIO. Turner will

undertake the work in around 14 months, building on £17 million of works already in progress. Earlier this year two squadrons from RAF Leuchars – Nos 1 and 6 – relocated to RAF Lossiemouth. They will be joined by 2 Squadron next April.

Advanced Short-Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM). A £40m contract has been signed with MBDA, who designed and manufactured the ASRAAM, which will provide support infrastructure and maintenance for the weapon for the next five years. The deal will sustain missile technicians, logistic specialists, field and design engineers and procurement specialists at the company's factories at Lostock in Greater Manchester, Stevenage in Hertfordshire and in Bedfordshire.

All our RAFALOs wish the Membership a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

13. AREA OFFICES – CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR CLOSURE

Please note the following office closures over the festive period::

- Exeter Office – closed for the period 25 December to 1 January 2015 – re-opening on 2 January.
- Midland Office – closed for the period 24 December to 4 January 2015 – re-opening on 5 January.
- Newbridge Office – closed for the period 25 December to 1 January – re-opening on 2 January.

14. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Devon Region AGM at Dawlish RAFA Club (2.30pm) – 7 February 2015.

Northern (Midland) Region AGM followed by a General Meeting at the County Council Club, Stafford (1215pm) - 25th February 2015.

East Glamorgan & Gwent Region Meeting at Treorchy Branch (2pm) – 28 February 2015.

Area Conference and Reunion at the Derwent Hotel, Torquay – 20/22 March 2015.

Cornwall County Armed Forces Day Thanckes Park (The Lawn) Torpoint – 20 June 2015.

Paul Baker – Area Director

Enclosures:

1. Branch and Branch Club F1056A and B.



From all in the Area Team