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Wales, Midland & South West
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Wales, Midland & South Western Area

SEPTEMBER 2015

Newsletter

ARE THERE ANY POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS ON YOUR PATCH AS WE REACH THE HEIGHT OF ACTIVITY WITH OUR BATTLE OF BRITAIN EVENTS

1. MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, AIR MARSHAL SIR DUSTY MILLER

I wanted to write to you about the tragedy at the Shoreham Airshow on 22 August. I start by sending condolences to the family and friends of those who sadly died or were injured as a result of the Hunter crashing onto the A27, including the family of the pilot who are also going through a most difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected in any way, and that includes our own volunteers and staff who were there on the day or are in some other way linked.

As a mark of respect to those involved in the incident, we will not publish the October issue of Air Mail. I hope that you will support me in this decision as we felt that it would be inappropriate to send our membership magazine out at this time. We will publish the January-March issue as usual in the new year when we hope to be able to provide an update on the incident.

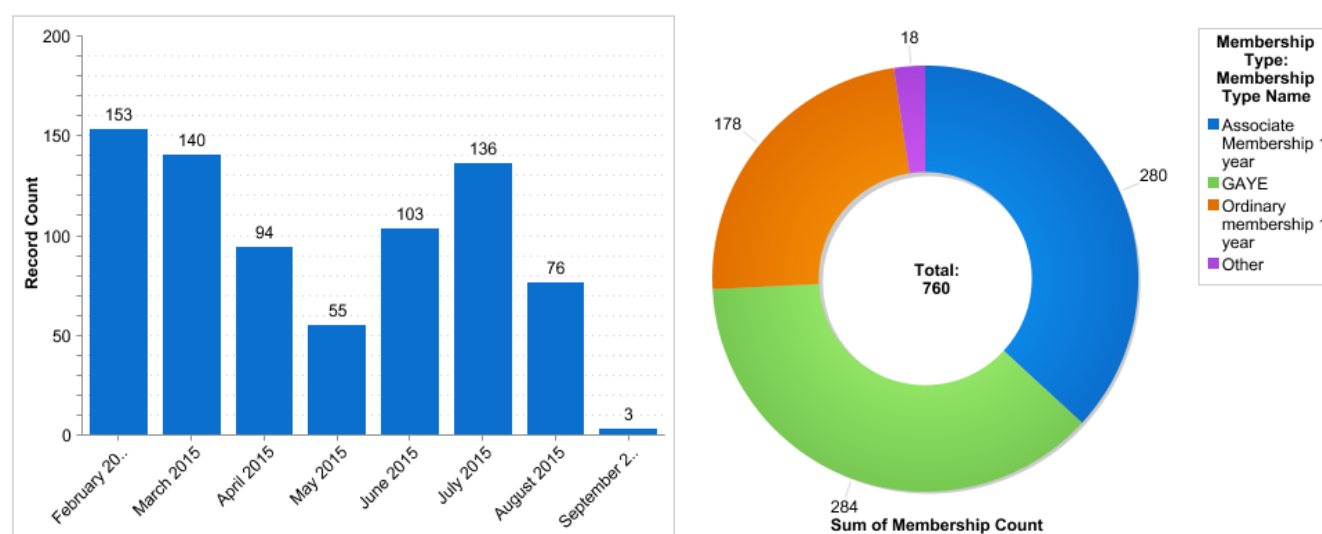
There are many videos and photographs available in the public domain and there has been much uninformed and very unhelpful speculation in the press as to the exact cause. In the fullness of time the Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) will deliver its final report, based on the evidence gathered from photographs, videos and, most importantly, forensic inspection of the wreckage. Until that time I encourage you to resist speculation yourselves, I ask you to discourage others from doing so and finally, please do not pay heed to anything you might see or hear in the press that purports to be fact prior to the official publication of the AAIB's findings.

I would like to conclude by saying how proud I am to be part of this Association and to express my heartfelt thanks at the way everyone, whether they're Branch members, airshow staff or volunteers, or Association staff, have pulled together at this difficult time. The messages of support and sympathy from within the charity have been passed on to those involved.



2. BATTLE OF BRITAIN MEMBERSHIP TARGET – UPDATE

The whole Association membership total has reached 60,486 as at 1 September 2015, which means our target by Battle of Britain Day on 15 September is still some 814 away. Everyone has been really focussed on driving up membership, none more so than in our own Area. Please continue to do all you can to bring new members to our wonderful Association and it will be highly likely that we shall have grown our membership for the first time in decades. Please take a membership application form with you when you visit friends or family or pop down the pub or on the golf course. Remember every new membership helps us to maintain and grow our levels of support to the RAF family. Thank you once again for your support. These charts represent new members to our Area.



3. VACANCY ON AREA COUNCIL

Following a recent resignation from Council our Area is looking to co-opt a member from any of its Midland Branches, or indeed a member from our WRAF Virtual Branch, who might live in the Midlands area. Does this interest you?

As you may know, the purpose of Area Council is to oversee the activities of the Association in its area. In our case that stretches from the Staffordshire Moorlands to Lands End and all of Wales and half way across the UK, a huge geographical area. Area Council elects a Representative from its number to sit on Central Council to pass on its views and to contribute to debate over the Association's direction of travel, and to report back on the rationale and background to decisions. The Representative is a Trustee of the Association; the remainder of Area Council are not. Each Branch within the Area has a nominated Area Councillor who feeds into Area Council meetings the views of his or her Branches. Area Council, having determined what they would like to see happen in their Area, then either task their Representative to raise the issue with Central Council; or tasks the Area Director and his staff to make things happen.

Our Area Council is made up of 9 elected members, with 3 representing each constituent part of Wales, Midland and South West. Election to Area Council takes place on a 2 yearly cycle and will be contested again at the 2017 Area Annual General Meeting.

Please contact Paul Baker, Area Director, if you wish to understand more about the role of an Area Councillor and would like to represent the Association in the Midlands. Paul is contactable in the Exeter Office at 01392-462088 option 5 or paul.baker@rafa.org.uk. Thank you.

4. STORYBOOK WINGS – A TIMELY REMINDER!



Storybook Wings is the RAF Association's initiative for serving RAF parents who have to spend time away from their children – whether they are away on deployment or working away during the week. Sound effects and music are added to create a really special keepsake.

Storybook Wings has been an outstanding success with over 2,300 families using this free service that helps bring Mums and Dads "home" for at least a little while to read a story at a time that can be confusing and upsetting for their children.

Here's some really great feedback, recently received by the team:

Hello Lisa and the Storybook Wings team, just a quick email to say thank you so much for the cd. My son Sean received it yesterday and it was lovely. He was so happy listening to his dad reading him a story, really beautiful to see him smile at his dad's voice. It came at the perfect time. We are at the mid-point of my husband's deployment and my son is starting to struggle. He is only 3 and struggling to understand about his dad's deployment. Why his dad has to go away? Why it is so long? How long left etc? We talk about it and I'm encouraging him to talk about his feelings and how it's ok to be sad/angry/upset or to want to sit quietly. He's learning how to express and deal with big emotions. So thank you to you and your team for the brilliant cd.

5. FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE – WESTMINSTER ABBEY GARDENS – 5 NOVEMBER 2015

We have once again been asked to participate in the above ceremony by the Royal British Legion (RBL). Branches are therefore asked to give this special occasion their best possible support by ordering crosses to be planted by their representatives wherever possible.

Entrance to the Field will involve passing through Police Security checks. Everyone must bring two forms of ID of which one must include a photograph (e.g. passport). Sight of these may be required by the police or security officers. The South East & Eastern Area will be pleased to arrange for crosses to be planted on behalf of Branches not represented. Please be advised that all crosses must be planted by 09.30hrs on the day. Gates will open at 0845hrs and close at 10.00 hrs. All participants must be in position by 10.00hrs. Staff from the South East and Eastern Area, will be in attendance along with the National Standard Bearer on the day.

A Badge Cross will cost £10.30 and a Leaf Cross (suitable for use by Branches) will cost £6.28

Orders, together with the appropriate remittance, should be sent to 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 by no later than Monday 28th September.

Admission to the service will be for ticket holders only.

Members requesting tickets to attend the service should apply in writing to the South East Office no later than 11 September.

6. CROSS DECK – CAREERS AND TRAINING FAIR EXETER – 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

This is slightly South West-centric, but maybe of interest to our ex-RAF community. Cross-Deck, the leading Training and Careers portal for former military personnel and their families, is hosting a training and careers event on 9 September at the Exeter Castle. The enclosed leaflet maybe of interest.

7. WREKIN WELLINGTON BRANCH ON THEIR BIG PADDLE FOR WINGS!

Huge congratulations to the Wrekin Wellington Branch for successfully navigating their Canadian canoe paddle from Ironbridge to Bridgnorth on the river Severn, paddling for nearly 3 hours and very quickly raising £500 for Wings Appeal. Our intrepid paddlers are pictured, Bob and Sally-Anne Rayment together with Darrold Jones. Well done team!



8. RAFALO UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2015

From time to time we receive some very interesting updates on the business of today's Royal Air Force. Squadron Leader Ady Morris, RAFALO, has provided his latest update which is enclosed with this Newsletter.

9. HEMSBY CHALETS – A SUPERB LOCATION FOR A WONDEFUL BREAK



The RAF Association has several available weeks at our Hemsby Chalets in Norfolk:

- Weeks commencing – 14 September, 21 September, 28 September and 5 October 2015.

If you are interested then please contact Vicky Ford on 0116 268 8788.

Located only a few hundred yards from a beautiful sandy beach, near to Great Yarmouth, the chalets are available for members, serving and ex-RAF personnel to book. The chalets make the perfect base, whether you want to explore the scenic Norfolk countryside, take advantage of entertainment for all ages

or simply relax. Each fully-equipped chalet can accommodate a maximum of four people. Our six chalets each include:

- Two bedrooms – double and twin.
- Lounge/dining area.
- Well equipped kitchenette with electric oven and hob.
- Bathroom with electric shower.
- Lights, hot water and cooking facilities powered by electricity (included in the chalet fee).
- Cot, highchair and pushchair available on request.
- Electric scooter and push wheelchair can be booked by prior arrangement.
- Friendly chalet reception team to assist you as required.
- All chalets are non-smoking and pets are not permitted in the chalets.

10. A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR RAF ASSOCIATION CONCERT BAND

With the iconic backdrop that is Wells Cathedral, our Association Concert Band led by Peter Skellon, provided a fabulous evening with stirring music in aid of Wings Appeal and gave us another opportunity to lead the Nation's thanks as we commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. In the presence of Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller and the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, the Concert Band gave a varied performance with accompaniment from the Cheddar Male Choir. Adding even more colour to the evening, we would wish to thank all the RAFALOs who gave up their Friday evening in support of this event.

11. BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO – SATURDAY 28 AND SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2015

The RAF Association will be taking centre stage at this year's Birmingham International Tattoo which will take place in the Barclaycard Arena (formerly the NIA) on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November 2015. Working together with RAF Music Services and our own Concert Band, the Tattoo will offer a final opportunity to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Our Area is leading again on this event and the team will be making contact with as many Standard Bearers as possible so that we have a very colourful and fitting presence.

DON'T FORGET

You have a fabulous opportunity to purchase tickets for the Tattoo through the Exeter Area Office. Priced at £15 per ticket on a first come, first served basis, every ticket sold will attract a 50% donation to Wings Appeal. A 'win-win' for our members and our Wings Appeal! If you wish to purchase tickets we will accept debit/credit card transactions as well as cheques and will dispatch your tickets forthwith. Please call on 01392-462088 options 3 or 4.



12. AREA WELFARE SEMINARS – DID YOU GET TO SEE THE DETAIL?

In July we pushed out information regarding this year's Area welfare seminars. You may have missed it! If so we've enclosed the detail with this Newsletter. Please join us – you will be very welcome, either at the Llandaff & Ely Branch Club on Thursday 8 October or RAF Shawbury on Thursday 29 October. You'll get to meet our new Head of Welfare, Sophie Witkowski and hear presentations from external speakers on debt and benefit issues as well as Age UK. These seminars will also provide an excellent opportunity

to discuss more general Branch topics with the Branch Support Officers and the very latest on our befriending scheme. Please co-ordinate your attendance with your Branch Secretary and/or HWO.

13. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Falmouth Branch will be holding a Battle of Britain 75th Anniversary Service at the Falmouth Parish Church of King Charles the Martyr at 1030am on the 6th of September 2015, followed by an unveiling Ceremony at the Falmouth Water Sports Centre of a Monument dedicated to the RAF 1102 Marine Craft Unit and Coastal Command Flying Boat Squadrons 209 & 240.
- Wreath Laying at Sea. Bodmin Branch will be holding their annual Wreath Laying ceremony at sea on the 6 September 2015, assembling on the Quay at Padstow at 1315hrs for sailing at 1345 hrs. For further details contact Parade Co-ordinator Peter Marlow at whippet258@btinternet.com or 01208 76373.
- RAF Cosford Battle of Britain Parade and Service at 1100hrs – Sunday 6 September 2015.
- Ellesmere Branch Garden Party and BBQ in aid of Wings Appeal at Nesscliffe Three Pigeons Hotel/Pub – (1.30pm to 6pm) 12 September.
- Truro Cathedral Service of Commemoration – 2pm on Sunday 13 September 2015 – by invitation only.
- St Paul's Cathedral, London, Service of Commemoration at 11am on Tue 15 September 2015 – by invitation only.
- Barnstaple & North Devon Branch and North Cornwall Branch Battle of Britain, VE and VJ Parade at Kilkhampston Church on 20 September 2015. Muster Parade 10.30 March to a Church Service at 11.00 hrs.
- Weston-super-Mare Branch Battle of Britain Church Service – St John's Baptist Church, Lower Road – 10am on 20 September 2015.
- Northern (Midland) Region Meetings at the County Council Club Eastgate Street, Stafford (1215pm) – 30 September, 28 October, 25 November.
- Area Welfare Seminars on 8 October at Llandaff & Ely Branch and RAF Shawbury on 29 October.
- Mid Wales Region Meetings at Brecon on 14 November, Tywyn on 26 March 2016 all starting at 2pm.
- North Wales Region Meeting at Wrexham RAFA Branch HQ on 21 November and Llangollen RAFA Club on 9 April 2016 – all starting at 2pm.

Please contact the Exeter Office if there are significant events/dates you would like promulgated that maybe of interest to the wider membership. Many thanks.

Paul Baker – Area Director

The best cure for sea sickness is to sit under a tree.

Enclosures:

1. Cross Deck Careers and Training Fair – Exeter – 9 September 2015.
2. RAFALO Update – September 2015.
3. Area Welfare Seminars.