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Wales, Midland & South Western Area

**NOVEMBER 2015**

# Newsletter

***HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR TICKETS FOR THE BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO? CALL DEBBIE ON 01392-462088 OPTION 4 AND YOU'LL ALSO BE HELPING OUR AREA WINGS APPEAL***

## **1. AIR VICE-MARSHAL SIR JOHN SEVERNE KCVO OBE AFC DL**

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Air Vice-Marshal Sir John Severne who died recently aged 90. He was President of the South West Area of the RAF Association in the late '80s and early '90s and the Mid-Somerset Branch President from 2002 until his passing. Sir John was a very active Area and Branch President and did much to strengthen relations between local ATC squadrons and the Association.

Sir John's career in the RAF ranged from post-war fighters and jet trainers to the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft. In addition to the 32 service aircraft types, he flew 39 different civilian light aircraft. He first flew the Mosquito night fighter with 264 Squadron for two years, before leaving for the Central Flying School (CFS). He trained as a flying instructor and spent the next few years teaching student pilots before returning to CFS to train instructors. Sir John became a Cold War fighter pilot with No 98 Squadron, flying Venom day fighter/ground attack aircraft based in northern Germany close to the Iron Curtain. During this time he was awarded the Air Force Cross for his gallantry in crash landing a burning Venom, to preserve the aircraft for crash investigators. After a year in the personnel department of the Air Ministry, Sir John was appointed to be Equerry to the Duke of Edinburgh. After a series of senior command posts in the RAF he was appointed Captain of the Queen's Flight. Sir John travelled worldwide with members of the Royal family and retired after seven years, at which point he was advanced to KCVO. Sir John's retirement to Somerset was almost as busy as his service life. As well as his work with the Association, he served as a Deputy Lieutenant of the County from 1991 to 2001 and was Honorary Air Commodore of No 3 Maritime Headquarters of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.



## 2. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Thank you all, once again, for helping to grow your Association. It is heartening to report an increased membership base across all categories.

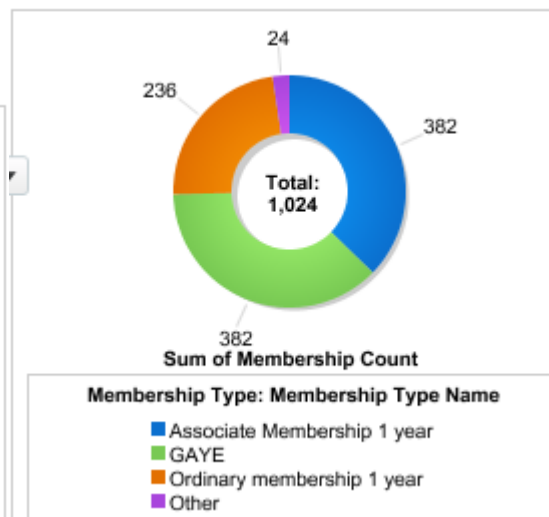
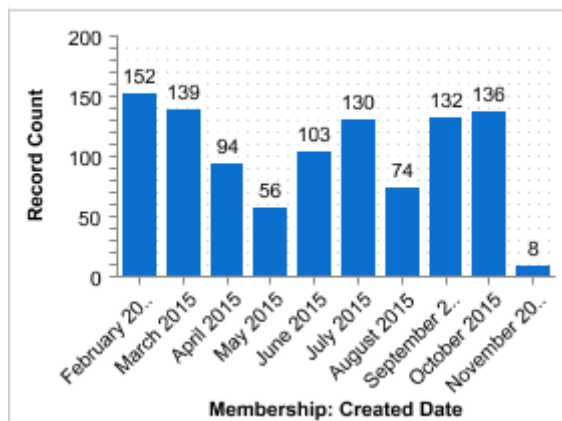
A message for those Branches that operate Clubs (whether they be Clubs that still operate under the Association's Standard Club Rules or independent trading under lease agreement). Is there anything more you can do to encourage all your local club goers to become fully paid up members of the Association? Get them signed up now and we can offer 14 months for the price of 12. Remember - £20.50 per year for ordinary members and £8.50 for full associates. We know that several of our Clubs have already taken this initiative.

**What can you do to help the Association grow?** We have found that just by asking people directly to join the Association we are getting great results! If all of us were out there getting just one Member, we would double in size; it is as simple as that. So please take a look at your Christmas card list this year (sending RAFA Christmas cards of course) and ask ex and serving RAF friends and family to join. In your email contacts you can send your friends a link to join online – just paste it in from the <https://www.rafa.org.uk/members/become-a-member> page. And if you use Facebook please ask your RAF and other friends to join AND also get them to ask THEIR friends. Make it easy for them by including the link to the joining page on the website.

What a cracking October – our 3<sup>rd</sup> best month of the year with 136 new members. Here's how we are looking as an Area.

### New Members

#### New Members by Month



## 3. CAKE AT OUR SWINDON BRANCH!

Squadron Leader Stu Patton, President of our Swindon Branch, accompanied by the Branch Vice-Chairman Hughie Thompson, cutting a specially baked cake for the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Stu is currently serving at RAF Brize Norton as the Executive Officer of No 70 Sqn, operating the A400M aircraft.



#### 4. RAF ASSOCIATION DAWLISH BRANCH CLUB – WELL WORTH A VISIT

If you are ever in the area then why not check out our Club at Dawlish (the main rail line is well and truly fixed!). The Club Committee offer the following words of welcome.

Dawlish is a small holiday town and as such we are lucky to experience the company of local colourful characters, many of which frequent our club. This in turn gives us our unique environment enjoyed by both young and the more mature. Dave and Marie have successfully run the Dawlish Rafa Club for many years, backed by a committee dedicated to the success of the club. Added to which we are lucky enough to be supported by our members whose commitment has enabled the completion of our recent total refurbishment of the ground floor bar area. We have recently signed up to BT Sport, have a small function room, which is used for Bingo and hired out to local groups, and are supported by local Darts Teams and a Golf Society. We offer a warm welcome to all who wish to benefit from a relaxed atmosphere in which to enjoy a good selection of liquid refreshments, so when in Dawlish please pay us a visit; our opening hours are 4pm till 11pm (ish) Monday to Friday and 12.00 noon till late Saturday and Sunday. Dawlish RAFA Club, 20 Park Road, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9HE, Tel No: 01626-863042.



#### 5. UPDATE FROM VOLUNTEERING TEAM AT CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS

##### Befriending Scheme

At the start of next month, the will be launching the Scheme. This scheme alleviating loneliness and ages of adulthood.

Someone that needs a (a beneficiary) could be a spouse of deployed to a person who is isolated use of social media; to an that has increasingly become isolated over time. will equally be from all ages

and will meet with a beneficiary to listen to what they need and help to identify ways to connect them to others to promote friendship groups. In addition, Befrienders could also help to provide some practical assistance or just a listening ear themselves.



Association Befriending focuses on spans all

Befriender anyone from personnel; through the older person lonely and Befrienders and groups

The Association is formalising this scheme, recognising much of this wonderful work is happening already within Branch and Club welfare teams. One of the benefits to Branches and Clubs will be a one day training course to provide practice updates and expectations of the role, information about the different

age groups that may need support, guidance on how to establish the need of someone and how to achieve the outcome they are looking for and additional resources and help for volunteers already doing this.

Why Befriending now? The Association is responding to research published by the Royal British Legion in 2014 which stated that isolation and loneliness is particularly acute amongst the ex- service community with one in six reporting some relationship/isolation difficulty, this being the equivalent to around 770,000 people. The research suggests that this is particularly prevalent in areas of transition into civilian life and older veterans.

On the other side of the spectrum Young Minds carried out a survey in 2014, and their findings can be summarised in the following quote “talking to hundreds of people on social networks is not like having a real relationship and when they are using these sites they are often alone in their bedrooms”. Because of this research, Community Support, on stations, is keen to get involved with Befriending and support the Association’s Scheme – they also recognise the benefits that volunteering will bring to those doing it. We will be launching the scheme initially to serving personnel, and then rolling it out to the wider RAF family and the public, next year.

Branches will continue to support their communities with the visits they currently do, keeping people involved in the RAF family, however, more support will be provided for them as well as new members of the team, helping those welfare officers and caseworkers who do not have enough time to regularly visit everyone they meet. Look out for more information on the RAF Association website, from 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## **6. FINAL WINGS RETURN FOR 2015**

Please have your Branch’s final Wings monies returned to the Wings Appeal team at Leicester by **Friday 13 November 2015**. This will enable them to process all 2015 income and close your Branch’s Wings account for the year in preparation for producing the Branch’s annual Wings statement.

You can return Wings monies either through the Wings Portal or by using the Wings Returns (WR) packs. Instructions on both of these methods are below with the WR packs having been sent to your Branch Wings Appeal Organiser in their September Newsletter.

### **Wings Portal**

We are pleased to announce that the Wings Portal is complete and ready to use. It will enable Branch committees to complete their Wings Appeal returns online, saving time and getting the Branch welfare rebate back quicker.

The Wings Portal works as follows:

- One committee member populates the portal with the details of the Branch’s Wings Appeal return and states whether the Branch wishes to claim any expenses or welfare rebate from the monies being submitted.
- The portal then automatically emails another member of the Branch committee who logs into the system to check the submission. If the second committee member agrees with the details then they simply click ‘Authorise’.
- A Direct Debit authorisation is built into the system so the monies the Branch are submitting for the Wings Appeal are collected automatically from the Branch bank account. Any requests for expenses or welfare rebate are paid back to the Branch via electronic transfer within 28 days of the submission, with receipts being sent to the Branch officials.
- Full instructions on the use of the system are available on the portal itself in the form of a video tutorial.

We encourage all Branches to register on the portal to start benefiting from the following:

- The ability to fill out Wings returns from home on your PC, Mac or tablet device at a time convenient to you.
- A simpler process with the portal validating and checking your figures as you input them.

- Save on paperwork and postage as no cheques or paper forms are needed.
- It helps with Branch finances as it allows Branches to claim for expenses or welfare rebates when submitting Wings monies, rather than waiting until the end of the year.
- Better visibility of the Branch's Wings Appeal returns as the system allows you to view previous submissions from the current or previous Wings years.

Please relay this information to your Branch committee at your earliest opportunity, especially to those involved in the completion of Wings returns. Any members of your Branch committee can register with the portal, but the system does require a minimum of two committee members per Branch. It is easy to access and register with the Wings Portal. Simply log in to the members area of the RAF Association website [www.rafa.org.uk/Account/logon](http://www.rafa.org.uk/Account/logon) , select 'Member resources' from right hand menu and scroll down to 'Wings Portal'.

### **Wings Appeal paper returns**

Not all Branch committees will want to submit their Wings returns online. Therefore, the Branch Wings Appeal Organiser received a Wings Returns (WR) pack in their September Wings newsletter. This pack will replace the old Wings Appeal forms which were coded WA1 – WA5. Please do not continue to use these previous 'WA' forms.

The Wings Returns (WR) pack captures the same information as the previous format but is laid out differently to mirror the layout of the Wings Portal. Instructions on how to fill in the forms are included in the pack. Please relay this information to the branch committee at your earliest opportunity, especially to those involved in the completion of Wings returns.

### **7. TACTICAL SUPPLY WING (TSW) STAFFORD RAFA COMMITTEE BY CPL GAV PROCTER**

The TSW RAFA Committee consists of 12 Committee members which is also supported by personnel from the wider Wing assisting in fundraising events, and providing support to Stafford, Stone, Cannock, Leek and Newcastle-Under-Lyme RAFA branches. The committee over the past 6 months has been actively involved with our local branches to ensure our relationship and communication continues to strengthen.

2015 has been a great year for raising money and awareness for RAFA with TSW helping to raise over £6000 by conducting local collections at supermarkets, stores, county shows and organising a cake sale, with the majority being taken at Stafford. Some of our personnel also conduct fundraising events with their local Cadets in support of RAFA. I am always amazed at the generosity of the local communities and the support they show towards the RAF and RAFA. TSW continue to support local fundraising events and identify fundraising opportunities, which although at times proves quite challenging alongside our existing commitments, our dedicated personnel nevertheless pull out all the stops to ensure maximum support is provided to RAFA.



TSW collecting with the Stafford branch for the Wings Appeal's last big push of the year and managed to raise £767.

During the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain TSW provided representatives at Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Leek and Stone who took part in the wreath laying ceremonies and a meet and greet afterwards. The main effort was concentrated at Stafford, with a flight of Airmen taking part in the main parade through the Town centre alongside the Royal British Legion, cadets, RAFA members and other community members.

TSW are committed to supporting RAFA events outside our local area with volunteers attending the RAFA event at Wells Cathedral and a collection at Birmingham New St railway station.

## **8. BRANCH NEWS – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2015**

As Branch News is such a popular part of Air Mail, the news that was submitted for inclusion in the October issue has been put into the enclosed Branch News Area newsletter 'supplement'. The deadline for the January issue is 25 November and your photographs and 100 word submissions should be sent to [BranchNews@rafatrad.co.uk](mailto:BranchNews@rafatrad.co.uk).

## **9. NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTION TO RAF ASSOCIATION TRUSTEE BODY, CENTRAL COUNCIL AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE**

For all Branch Secretaries – please bring this to the attention of your Branch Committee.

Central Council. Nominations are invited for suitably qualified members to fill the eight elected places on the Royal Air Forces Association's Trustee body, the Central Council.

Annual Conference Committee. Nominations are also invited for suitability qualified members to fill the three elected places on the Annual Conference Committee (ACC). The Annual Conference is the Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and an important focus for networking, social events and discussion.

Please note the closing date for all nominations is 18 November 2015. Paperwork is enclosed with this Newsletter.

## **10. AREA CONFERENCE AND REUNION WEEKEND – 4 TO 6 MARCH 2016**

Repeat Article. How time passes! Did you know that next year's Area Annual Conference and Reunion Weekend will take place at the Cheltenham Chase Hotel in Brockworth, Gloucestershire, over the weekend 4 to 6 March 2016. You do now.....

We've negotiated a super deal and now invite you to make a direct booking with the hotel by calling the central reservations team on 0845-074-0060 or go direct to the hotel on 01452-519988. **This bit is important.** When making your booking please be sure to say **RAF Association** (there is an RAF Reunion taking place later in the year and we'd hate to find you booked into the wrong event!).

The deal:

- Based on a double or twin room for double occupancy, 2 nights dinner, bed and breakfast, 3-course dinner on Friday and Saturday evening - £125 per person per weekend.
- Single occupancy supplement - £30 per room per night.
- Saturday only – 1 night stay, 3-course Saturday evening dinner and breakfast - £77.50 per person.
- Dinner only on Saturday evening - £35 per person.

We hope to offer a full and informative programme over the Weekend and Area Council is considering the content. One initiative we are hoping to take forward is the scrapping of the Pooled Fare Scheme – a rather cumbersome and out-dated approach. Instead we hope to cover the full costs of one delegate per Branch so that Branches do not have to pay. Although participation at Area Conference is relatively strong, we want to encourage as many Branches as possible. We'll come out for delegate details in due course. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you struggle with your accommodation booking.

## 11. RAF ASSOCIATION CONCERT BAND – ARMISTICE DAY CONCERT – WED 11 NOVEMBER

Here's a superb opportunity to enjoy another performance by our Association Concert Band as they take part in this world-wide wave to mark the music of the Great War. Please see the enclosed flyer.

Our Concert Band has been busy as ever with recent performances at the Bristol Airport in support of the Somerset Poppy Appeal Launch, at our Weymouth and Portland Branch Club as they celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and, of course, Wells Cathedral.



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

### Repeat Article.

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 75<sup>th</sup> 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.



## 13. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Northern (Midland) Region Meetings at the County Council Club Eastgate Street, Stafford (1215pm) – 25 November.
- 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.
- Devon Region AGM at the Dawlish RAFA Club on Sat 13 February 2016 – 2.30pm.
- Area Conference and Reunion, The Cheltenham Chase Hotel, Brockworth, 4-6 March 2016.

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***

***As I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind – every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder. John Glenn.***

Enclosures:

1. Branch News Supplement.
2. Nominations for Election to RAF Association Trustee Body, Central Council and Annual Conference Committee.
3. RAF Association Concert Band – Music of the Great War.