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

newsletter

March 2017

Don't forget to return your Revised 2017 Branch & Club F1056

WITH GREAT SADNESS – We Will Remember

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Ron Draper, our senior Area Life Vice President. Ron celebrated his 100th birthday last April, having served as an RAF Aircraft Mechanic in WWII before founding the Swansea Branch in 1946. Ron went on to serve on Council and was a life-long supporter of our Association. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this time.

The Trowbridge and West Wilts Branch recently had the honour to attend the funeral of Squadron Leader David Sames, ex-120 Squadron, based at RAF Lossiemouth. The funeral was held at Semington Crematorium and the local branch was asked by 120 Squadron Association to assist. Initial contact was from the Chairman of 120 Squadron Association, Wing Commander Dave Allen, via our Exeter office, asking if a local branch could attend. The funeral was organised by Squadron Leader Sames' son, Mike, who attended with David's widow and Mike's wife and sister, also present were many relatives and friends. Squadron Leader Sames had lived at Colerne with his wife and his sister lives nearby at Thickwood. The late David Sames was a highly qualified engineer and pilot and was instrumental in bringing the Nimrod into RAF service. He was the Nimrod display pilot for 120 Squadron and also the chief pilot for the conversion of other pilots to Nimrods. The Vice-Chairman of 120 Squadron, Squadron Leader David Higgins, also attended. There was a large contingent of RAF Association members from the Trowbridge and West Wilts Branch and Melksham Branch, with standard bearers from each on parade.

LAST CALL FOR AREA CONFERENCE – TORQUAY – 17-19 MARCH 2017

The Derwent Hotel, Torquay is now fully booked for the Area Conference, if you still wish to attend you might like to consider the hotel next door, The Victoria. If you are staying at The Victoria Hotel or elsewhere and you wish to take dinner at The Derwent on Friday and Saturday evenings this can be reserved and paid for at The Derwent Hotel reception on arrival at a very reasonable price of £15.95 p.p. per night.

Importantly, the Branch Support Officers (BSOs) will be running a Branch Workshop on the Friday afternoon at 1445hrs for around one hour, so please do all you can to join in, hear the messages, swap good practice and take it all back to your branch.

It's great to see that as many as 48 branches will be represented (in some form or another!) at our reunion, so thank you for your ever present support and dedication. It's not too late for other branches to jump on board and declare a delegate (it just means the Exeter staff have to run about a bit more!). We hope you



all have a great weekend. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns by contacting Debbie Byam on 01392-462088 option 4 or emailing debbie.byam@rafa.org.uk.

RAF ASSOCIATION PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE 2017

Enclosed is this year's insurance for your records when making arrangements for Wings Appeal 2017. Any queries or further assistance with regard to insurance please call Exeter Office – 01392-462088 option 4 and speak with Debbie.

THE HELICOPTER MUSEUM – ‘WORLD AT WAR’ WEEKEND – 8-9 APRIL 2017

Building on the success of the museum's WWII Living History Day last April, the Helicopter Museum at Weston-super-Mare are planning a larger event this year inviting a variety of military societies and associations from all military branches. Their aim is to put on an event spanning various time periods and conflicts for the public to enjoy whether that be through living history, vehicles, attending veterans or charity information stands. Weston Airport's original control tower and pilot's block is soon to be open to the public.

The Helicopter Museum is a registered charity and home to the world's largest collection of rotorcraft including two of the Queen's Royal Flight, the speed record holder G-Lynx and the Vietnam Veterans. Their chosen military charity for this year's event is SSAFA – the Armed Forces Charity. They have invited SSAFA to organise a signing lounge during the weekend with all proceeds of this going to their charity. They will, of course, welcome all attending charities to promote their cause and collect their own donations from their pitch.

It is shaping up to be a fantastic weekend with various military vehicles, living-history groups and associations set to take part and they would love for you to be involved. Please let them know if your organisation would be interested in attending so that we can discuss your involvement further. Similarly if you are part of any other related organisation do feel free to pass along this invitation.

Please contact Peter Michallat, Marketing Assistant, via helimuseum@btconnect.com should you have any questions, or feel free to call the museum on 01934 635227 Wednesday to Sunday.

CONGRATULATIONS POOLE BRANCH – 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF FORMATION

In December 2016 Poole Branch celebrated the 70th Anniversary of their formation with a combined Anniversary/Christmas lunch.



Guest of honour at this special occasion was the National President, Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, KBE. Following the Dedication by Chairman Mike Davis, and the Grace from the Rev Lucy Holt, Rector of the Parish Church of St James in Poole Old Town, 70 diners sat down to an excellent three course lunch at the Ocean Beach Hotel on the cliff top in Bournemouth.

Members of the Christchurch, Shaftesbury and Weymouth RAF Association branches, the Wool Branch of the Aircrew Association

and representatives from the local Air Training Corps Squadrons joined us for the occasion. To help the party go with a swing, diners were serenaded by local vintage singer, Miss Annie, with a selection of nostalgic songs. Following a convivial lunch, Sir Dusty Miller ceremoniously cut the special celebration cake and then addressed the assembled guests with a short speech giving an overview of the Association today.



This was followed by the raffle and the distribution of slices of cake to all attendees, before guests began to depart in a happy mood.

BRANCH AND CLUB AGMS – FORM 1056/A

Please don't forget we need your 'Revised' Branch F1056/Club F1056A as soon as possible following your respective AGMs, copies of which have been sent out to all Branch Secretaries. It's vital we are holding the correct information on who is doing what including those filling extended branch and club roles.

PORTIVO LOUNGE, GLOUCESTER QUAYS – HOME OF OUR GLOUCESTER BRANCH



The Portivo Lounge at Gloucester Quays is the regular meeting place for members of the Gloucester Branch. Signage from the old club building adorns the walls of the cafe giving it an old club feel.

Every year the 'Portivo' hold a month long charity event and this year the charity of choice is the Gloucester Branch Wings Appeal.

In front centre of this photograph, Lorraine, the Branch Wings Appeal organiser, is enjoying a coffee and chat with members.

Portivo coffee mornings are being held on 7 March, 4 April, 2 May, 6 June, 4 July, 1st August, 5 September, 3 October and 7 November 2017.

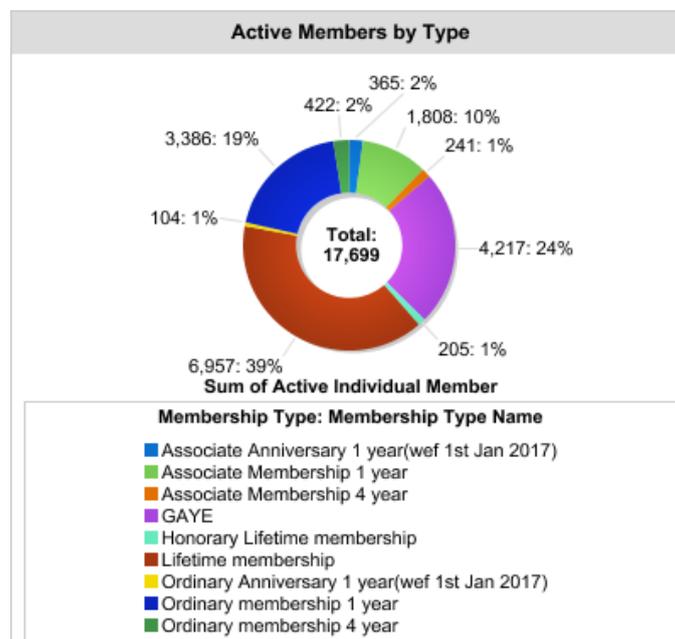
BEFRIENDING IN YOUR LOCAL AREA

Branch members who enjoy visiting others might wish to become a befriender. If you wish to consider, please send an email to your local area welfare officer directly: -

- South West: Dr Glenford Bishop email: glenford.bishop@rafa.org.uk.
- Wales: Barbara Howells email: barbara.howells@rafa.org.uk
- Midland: Tracey Khan email: tracey.khan@rafa.org.uk.

AREA MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We've had a cracking start to 2017 in respect of area membership growth, due largely to strong renewals and recovering members. Please think about your branch strategy to engage with any new or lapsed members and the Exeter office will continue to send branch notifications (if there are any) on a monthly basis.



VOLUNTEERING

There are over 3,500 people volunteering for the Association throughout the UK and the world – selflessly giving up their time to assist members of the RAF family. Much of the work our volunteers undertake involves providing welfare to our beneficiaries, directly or indirectly.

The need for volunteers is greater than ever and we are actively seeking Caseworkers and Befrienders to fulfil our desire to provide support whenever and wherever it is required. The locations we require them can be found on our website at www.rafa.org.uk/volunteer/search.

In addition, we are assisting branches in their recruitment of volunteers in a variety of roles. If your branch is in need of support from a volunteer, please contact me, Graeme Russell, the Area Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Wales, Midland and South West Area for a branch volunteer vacancy details form.

As a charity we depend on the continued support our members provide, as well as other volunteers and the general public to help us raise funds to support our vital work. To this end, we need additional fundraising volunteers throughout the country. Branches do a great job in fundraising, however, there are further opportunities in locations where there are no branches to undertake collections.

In the Wales, Midland and South West Area, nine such locations have been identified by the Fundraising team. These were identified using some detailed analysis which involved finding areas close to either current RAF units or where units closed in the last 30 years. This means there is a greater probability that families of personnel may have settled in the area. The analysis also took into account population size – the larger a place the more supermarkets, businesses shopping areas there will be to arrange collections – as well as a sense check on whether they think personnel and their families would have lived in the area.

Area Directors were consulted on each location to inform the Fundraising team whether or not there are any active branches already collecting in the areas and so the final list does not include any of these places. The list includes: Bath, Hereford, Newport, Cirencester, Barnstaple, Bournemouth, Great Malvern, Minehead and Burton on Trent. We will be actively recruiting people to join volunteering groups in these locations and we will keep you updated on our progress and any collections we are running.

To those who currently volunteer for the Association, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your fantastic support and being there for the RAF family when you are needed. To those who are interested, or know of someone who may be interested in a volunteering role, please visit our website at www.rafa.org.uk/volunteer where you can see the full list of opportunities in your area. Alternatively Graeme can be contacted on 07775 959376 or on email using graeme.russell@rafa.org.uk

A full list of volunteering vacancies are enclosed with this newsletter.

LATEST UPDATE FROM THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

For those among you who enjoy snippets of information on today's RAF, here's the latest RAF Association Liaison Officer (RAFALO) contribution:

Equipment and Manpower - The F-35 (Lightning) Program Office has selected the UK as a global repair hub. This will generate millions of pounds and support thousands of high tech jobs in North Wales, where components for hundreds of European-based F-35 aircraft will be serviced and maintained. Over its lifetime, the programme has a potential to unlock more than £2 billion of future F-35 support revenue. The work will involve maintenance and repair of systems for the F-35 aircraft, including electronic and electrical components, fuel, mechanical and hydraulic systems, and ejection seats. It will be centred at the UK Government-owned Defence Electronics & Components Agency (DECA), based at MOD Sealand, in North East Wales. It will be undertaken by an innovative partnership enterprise alongside BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman, supported by key F-35 Original Equipment Manufacturers. The new global avionics and aircraft component repair service is expected to be operational from early 2018. The Air Launched Anti-Radar Missile (ALARM) has completed its Disposal phase with all missiles being safely disposed, marking the end of an era for the unique capability. Previously carried by Tornado GR4 and designed to target Enemy Air Defence Systems, it was introduced during the Gulf War in 1990 and extensively used in Op Granby and Op Telic in Iraq. The missile had been due for disposal in 2013 but Air Command had requested it be retained on a short term basis. Disposal was completed in September.

New Fixed Wing training Aircraft - The first pair of Grob 'Prefect' next generation aircraft, which will train newly recruited military pilots, have landed in the UK. The aircraft flew into the home of Elementary Flying Training, RAF College Cranwell, then continued on to RAF Barkston Heath. They will now undergo some modification before they begin providing the first stage flying training to Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force pilots. The aircraft are being delivered by Affinity through the MOD's £1.1 billion contract with Ascent Flight Training to deliver the Fixed Wing element of the UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS). The Prefect aircraft, which have turbo prop engines, fully digital cockpits and retractable undercarriage, will be used to prepare the next generation of military student pilots for front line operations.

The Merlin Life Sustainment Programme - (MLSP) has achieved another significant milestone with the first flight of a Merlin Mk4. This is the first of type which now enters a significant flight test and qualification programme covering 25 Merlin aircraft, 19 Mk3 and 6 MK3a, aiming to deliver capability with the required clearances in early 2018. The endorsed requirements cover obsolescence removal, upgrade and ship optimisation of the former RAF operated assets to provide the capability required by the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF). The fitting of a folding main rotor head, modification to the undercarriage, inclusion of a new radio and fast roping beam all formed part of this interim package allowing the aircraft to operate from ships.

WRAF BRANCH UPDATE

On Saturday 25 February, the WRAF Branch held its fifth AGM at Carlisle Castle and were very honoured to have Sir Dusty Miller in attendance to oversee proceedings.



This year, everyone from the 2016 committee remains in post for a further year, but in addition, we are very pleased to welcome Tracy Watson as our RAFALO and Patricia Welsh as our Branch Historian.

One item that stood out for most of us, was when Jeni Ives spoke about her experience of the "Befriending Scheme" her training and the relationship she is building up with the gentleman she is befriending. We were all very moved by her story, especially Sir Dusty and hopefully more of our members will be inspired to give a worthwhile scheme a go.

WANTED – STORIES FROM THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

A documentary film company would like to hear from anyone with a story to tell about the Berlin Airlift. This is for a scripted feature film and they are in the very early stages of researching. If you have a story you think they might be interested in, please contact Association Media and PR Manager Annie O'Brian in the first instance and she can give you a bit more information on what may be asked of you, then put you in touch with the production company. You can email Annie O'Brian at annie.obrian@rafa.org.uk or call 0116 268 8760.

WINGS APPEAL WORKSHOPS

To further support branches with their tremendous fundraising efforts, the Wings Appeal team are continuing last year's series of Wings Appeal Workshops across the area this April. If you did not attend one of the events in 2016, they would like to invite you or a representative from your branch to come and join the discussion, share ideas and help inspire other organisers. These sessions will cover a variety of topics and give the Wings Appeal Organisers from different branches the chance to receive updates on the newest initiatives while feeding back and making suggestions on how the central team can improve the support you receive. The workshops will be taking place at the following locations:

- Tues 25 April - RAF St Mawgan.
- Weds 26 April - Llandaff and Ely Branch Club.

The days will run from 1000hrs until 1400hrs with refreshments being provided during the day. Last year's workshops proved a great success with those attending saying they found the sessions enjoyable and informative. The session will also reaffirm what you and your branch already do and how to approach fundraising in the best possible way to make your campaigns even more successful.

Confirmation of attendance is required by Thursday 13 April to ensure we have capacity and that the day is set up correctly to cater for all needs. Full details will be sent to all Branch Wings Appeal Organisers but if you have any questions or would like to confirm attendance please email wings@rafa.org.uk or call Ian Wright in the Wings Appeal office on 0116 268 8758.

WINGS APPEAL COLLECTIONS AT SAINSBURY'S

Repeat Article. Any Wings Appeal collections at Sainsbury's should not take place if the store insisted on counting the collection and taking a percentage for their own charitable purpose – unless the latter was agreed with the branch prior to the collection and the split of donations (including exact percentage) was made clear to the public during the collection.

PUBLIC UNVEILING AND DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL TO THE CREW OF LIBERATOR FK242

There will be a public unveiling and dedication of a memorial to the crew of Liberator FK242 that crashed by Plaster Down, Dartmoor on 30 October 1942. The service will be at 1100hrs on Saturday 8 April with wreath laying by Wing Commander Derek Straw RAF and Wing Commander Lisa D'Olivera RNZAF. RAF Association members are cordially invited to attend. For more information please contact Rob Jones at robjones42@btinternet.com.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Area Conference and reunion, Derwent Hotel, Torquay – 17 to 19 March 2017.
- Memorial Service for the St Nazaire Raid will be held on the Prince of Wales Pier, Falmouth at 1100hrs on 19 March 2017.
- RAF Association Sherborne Branch and Slessor Club AGMs. Wednesday, 22 March, at 2000hrs in the Slessor Club, Long Street, Sherborne. Tel 01935 812621.
- Northern Counties (Wales) Region – Llangollen Branch Club - Saturday, 8 April 2017.
- Devon Region Meeting at the Torquay Club – Saturday 22 April at 1430hrs.
- Wings Workshop - Tuesday 25 April at 10.00hrs until 1430hrs - RAF St Mawgan.
- Wings Workshop - Wednesday 26 April at 1000hrs until 1430hrs - Llandaff and Ely Branch Club.
- East Glamorgan and Gwent Region are holding their spring dance at Cwmbran RAF Association Club (Greenhill Road, Forgehammer, Cwmbran, NP44 3DQ) on Friday 28 April 2017 starting at 1930hrs. All are welcome. Branch Secretary, Sue Lloyd, is the organiser on 07825 214583, to advise on choice of meal during the evening.
- Trebah Military Day - Trebah Gardens, Mawnan Smith, Saturday 27 May, gates open at 1000hrs.
- East Glamorgan and Gwent Regional meeting in Aberdare RAF Association Club (Bethel Street, Aberdare, postcode: CF44 7EP) on Saturday 3 June 2017, starting at 1400hrs.
- Royal Cornwall Show, Wadebridge, Thursday 8 to Saturday 10 June.
- RAF and Allied Air Forces Monument Service, Plymouth Hoe Saturday 24 June.
- Devon Region Meeting at the Exmouth Club – Saturday 15 July at 1430hrs.
- Red Arrows Display, Falmouth, Wednesday 9 August.
- Bodmin Branch will set sail for the annual Wreath Laying at Sea from Padstow Harbour – 1430hrs on Sunday 17 September.
- Devon Region Meeting at the Plymouth Club – Saturday 21 October at 1430hrs.

Debbie Byam – Area Administrator

Where there is Unity there is always Victory...

Enclosures:

1. RAF Association Insurance - Public Liability Insurance 2017.
2. Volunteering Vacancies list.