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Association

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RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH

AUTUMN 2019



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RAFAGEN

*The official newsletter of the Letchworth & District
Branch of the Royal Air Forces' Association*



ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCHWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2019

Vice President:- Dennis Dawson

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John Airey: Rev. Lindsay Dew: Marie Mahoney: Alan

Millard: Mark Howell: Deen Meek

Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin

All correspondences regarding the RAFAGEN to
Ken Needham, 68 Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3HJ.

Telephone: 01462 671534

E-mail Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk

Monthly Meetings are held at the Letchworth Rugby Club, Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City Herts (Behind the Letchworth Leisure Centre) on the 3rd Monday of each month at 19.45 hrs. Licensed Bar Ample Parking

NAAFI BREAK is held at The Par 3 Golf Centre, Willian Way, Letchworth Garden City on the 1st Tuesday of each month 10.00 hrs 'til 12.00 hrs



Ken's comments

If you are ever in a group of R.A.F. Veterans, and want to keep the conversation going, mention the word "Square Bashing". It was a time during our service life when we were all equal. We all had the same rank, and we had no trade qualifications to outshine anyone. Some of us had bad memories of those days, but most of us look back and laugh at the things that happened.

One of the biggest talking points will be "All that Bull, was it worth it?" In many cases perhaps the answer is "No", because as soon as Basic Training was behind us, the only time that the word "Bull" was used again was during A.O.C. or C.O. Inspections. That is, to most people except perhaps the R.A.F. Regiment and the R.A.F. Police. To prove a point, I recall an incident that occurred many years after one R.A.F. Policeman was demobbed after his long service.

I used to belong to a group of ex snowdrops, who each year held a reunion at a hotel close to an R.A.F. Station. After a good evening of wine and dining we would be the guests of the R.A.F. Police at that nearby station. In about 2005 our visit was to R.A.F. Cranwell. As usually happened on these occasions the Police section would arrange for us to have a tour of the station to see what went on at the station.

We arrived at one hanger to be told about all that the Flying Cadets had to do during this part of their training. Our guide at this point was a very smart junior officer. Amongst our team we had a 'Geordie' who always seemed to ask the right questions, and on this occasion it was no different.

All through the talk Geordie appeared to be looking towards the floor, and I thought that perhaps he is going to make some remark about the floor of the hanger, which by the way was spotless. Suddenly Geordie said "Excuse me Sir", (we still respect a commissioned officer although no longer in the force). "I was in the force as a Snowdrop for twenty-two years, and during that time I had to maintain a very high

standard of smartness as I never knew when I would be called upon to do some V.I.P. duties. My pride was my boots, and I thought they were perfect, that is until I saw yours". We all looked at the Officer's boots, The toe caps were like the door of number 10 Downing Street, they had that beautiful fine black gloss. "I know it's a bit late now" Geordie went on, "but are you willing to tell us your secret?" "Not at all", was the reply, "I paint them with a special paint we use on the aircraft here at Cranwell." PAINT!!!!!!!!!! He actually painted his boots and was proud of it. What about all that melted Cherry Blossom and the back of a spoon? Followed by a bit of spit and a dry soft cloth? But PAINT!!! That's not cricket.

I must admit if I am going out somewhere special my shoes get that "West Kirby" treatment. How about you?



Boots, looking as they should look. Not painted, pure spit and polish with a bit, no a lot of melted Cherry Blossom. I'll bet if you asked the owner of those boots to show the under-side of the boot you would see that the studs have been polished too. Did you ever own boots like that? I have to admit that I did.



CAPTION PLEASE

I came across this photo the other day when going through my album.

It was taken at the Royal Air Force Police Dog Trials held at R.A.F. Henlow a few years ago.

I thought that it could be ideal for a caption competition. What is the Air Dog saying to the Flight Sergeant, or the Flight Sergeant saying to the Air Dog.

Editor's suggestion Dog to Flt Sgt: -

"If I don't win , you will be minus

something at my mouth level"

Your suggestions to the Editor.

REMEMBER NOVEMBER 10th



THE BAND OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT

BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE BOARD OF THE DEFENCE



CHARITY CONCERT

IN AID OF THE R.A.F BENEVOLENT FUND

AT THE CHAPEL HAILEYBURY

BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE MASTER

WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 2020

18.00 HRS FOR 19.30 HRS

TICKETS ADULT £25 CONCESSIONS £19

INCLUDING A GLASS OF WINE OR SOFT DRINK

NO REFUNDS NO RESERVED SEATING

**TICKET DETAILS FROM Alan Warman 72 Wheatsheaf Drive, Ware
Hertfordshire SG12 0XS**

**RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air
Forces Association**



LISA'S COLUMN

Thoughts from our Chairman
Lisa Berry

Controversial corner

I have one to start, the other day whilst in work I came across a topic titled "The Tampon Club". Initially I thought it was just a title to attract attention, but it wasn't. Departments within the MOD are starting a 'Tampon Club'. What is this I hear you say. It is exactly what the title says.

They are asking that departments have a stash of sanitation available for anyone within their team that may need it. Apparently, some Women are just too busy to be able to organise themselves to remember to purchase their own sanitation products and therefore, should be able to go and ask their manager (male or female) for a sanitary product.

They also want sanitary dispensers and sanitary bins in male toilets also! Why? Well, it's for those ladies going through a gender change so I do get that, but how do you feel about this Tampon Club? Would you be comfortable as a female to go and ask that great big burley mans man of a manager for a product? Or as a male manager yourself, would you be comfortable with this? Has the world gone mad? I mean it is normal for us ladies but would you be happy to let your team know your cycle?

May as well wear a badge saying "I have PMS and a gun, any questions?"

Editor's comments. Nothing like that in my days. They didn't even have a Condom dispenser in the men's toilets.

**Don't forget to check on this years'
CHRISTMAS BASH; details on the back
cover.**





PADRE'S HOUR FROM OUR BRANCH PADRE

CANON LINDSAY DEW



Hello again,

In November the nation will be holding Remembrance Sunday – the main day in the year for honouring the departed who lost their lives fighting for freedom from tyranny. It is amazing and heartening that in recent years the act of Remem-

brance has become more significant. I think back to the 60's and 70's when there seemed to be almost embarrassment about remembrance and people were accused of glorifying war.

My memory always goes back to my first few months in the RAF in 1970 when following my Passing Out Parade at RAF Swinderby I was 'volunteered' to be a member of the RAF Muster at the Royal Festival of Remembrance. We practised for ages to learn the technique for marching down the steps of the Royal Albert Hall – it was quite nerve wracking, but also incredibly moving to be a part of the 2 performances that day. Somewhere I've still got the programme for that year.

Remembering is very important for us both as individuals and as a nation. We recall the sacrifice of men and women who gave their lives in terrifying circumstances so that we in our day could enjoy freedom. But Remembering on its own has never been enough which is why in every Service of Remembrance, held on the nearest Sunday to November 11th,

there will also be an Act of Commitment which takes us from the solemnity of Remembering the Fallen to looking towards the future with hope and commitment to work for justice and reconciliation. In the service these words (or similar) are always included:

Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service.

Will you strive for all that makes for peace?

We will.

Will you seek to heal the wounds of war?

We will.

Will you work for a just future for all humanity?

We will.

Personal remembrance brings many memories of family and friends who have died in the cause of freedom. Our emotions include a deep sense of thankfulness for the freedom we enjoy today along with grief for those whom we love but see no longer. Remembrance also helps us as a country to recall the sacrifice made in huge numbers of many, known and unknown, who paid the ultimate price and gave their lives.

But we are also encouraged to look to the future with commitment to do what we can to strive for peace, to heal the wounds of war and to work for a just future for all humanity. How we respond to this commitment will depend on our personal circumstances. I'm sure that in our everyday lives there are always opportunities for striving to live and work for peace, in our homes and neighbourhoods, communities and the groups we belong to. As a country we have international obligations to work with others in seeking the ways of justice and peace, fairness and equality.

I hope that wherever we find ourselves this Remembrance Sunday we will take the opportunity to join with others in remembering and in committing ourselves and pledge to work for peace, to heal the wounds of war and to work for a just future.

In many church services the following Collect will be included:

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ




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 • Serving Armed Forces • Reserve Forces • Spouses/Partners of serving personnel
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 • War/Service Widow(er)s • Cadet Forces (over 16) • NATO Personnel in the UK

your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

May our Remembrance lead us to a deeper sense of thanksgiving and commitment.

Whether you are someone with a faith or not, I am more than happy to be contacted if you think I can offer support and friendship, help or advice. I will usually be at the monthly Branch meetings, and the NAAFI Break, as well as serving on the Committee. You can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

Kind regards & blessings

Lindsay

Revd Canon Lindsay Dew

NAAFI BREAK

During the October NAAFI Break Derick Larkins passed around the group a black and white photograph of a smart young airman in uniform with the question “What was wrong with the photo? There were lots of mystified looks as the picture went on it’s rounds. Many of those present thought that there was something wrong with the Forage Cap, as many of us were into berets, and therefore were not too sure if it was being worn correctly. Nothing wrong with the hat confirmed Derrick, it is the buttons on the uniform, they are black and not brass. Derrick explained that he was issued with the uniform in this state, and it had not been brought to his attention for quite a few months into his service life. When he was posted to a station of Royal Air Force Regiment personnel things changed.

An eagle-eyed N.C.O. Spotted him and accused him of sewing his own buttons onto his tunic, not believing that it was issued like that. As N.C.O.’S are always right, he was made to go the Stores, get a set of brass buttons and sew them on, reporting back to show that he had done the job properly.

This story brought another clothing tale from new member Mick Parrish. Mick was issued with a Great Coat of which he was very proud, as it was extra warm on those cold nights, for it had a fleecy lining. Mick thought, that as the coat was issued like this, his coat was no different to any other Great Coat. That was until another eagle-eyed N.C.O. spotted the lining. “That is not official issue” was the statement, and like Derrick he told the N.C.O. That he had been issued with the coat in this state. Nevertheless Mick was told to go to stores and get it changed. This time he was not told to report back, so when Mick pleaded with the stores clerk, he was allowed to keep the coat, as it had been issued to him.

Two good stories that came up at our NAAFI Break, and I am sure that there lots more to come out at future meetings. Come along and have a chat over a cup of coffee and a biscuit, and bring your stories with you. We meet at the Par 3 Golf Centre in Willian Way Letchworth Garden City on the first Tuesday of each month. 10.00 hrs to 12.00 hrs.

If you are unable to attend our get-together and have a similar story, I am sure the editor would like to hear it in inclusion in this magazine.

Ken Needham

NAAFI Break Host.



Get your diaries out, because our R.A.F.A.L.O. W/O Shaun Griffin has been busy ensuring that our Branch Social evenings are entertaining.

Please note that speakers may change at short notice due to circumstances, especially those speakers who are serving members of the Armed Forces.

21 Oct - Jim Box - The Westland Lysander.

18 Nov - Ian Waller - Family history and genealogy.

16 Dec - **Branch Christmas Bash - see back page**

2020

20 Jan - Sgt Sarah Ward - Letchworth ATC Sqn update.

17 Feb - Jim Box - The Avro Shackleton.

16 Mar - **Branch AGM & social evening.**

20 Apr - Martin Johnson - Herts Wildlife

18 May - William Marsterson - Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust

Just been advised by Leicester that the following have recently joined our Branch, or transferred from other Branches. Welcome to all of you.

FRANK TURNER of Letchworth

ALLYSON BEST of Henlow

MICHAEL PARRISH of Letchworth

MICHAEL WEEKS of Baldock

UNVEILING AND DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL TO PILOT OFFICER PETER MILDREN



Branch Standard Bearer, Roy Newbury (Right) at the unveiling and dedication of a memorial to Pilot Officer Peter Mildren in church of St. Mary the Virgin at Westmill, Hertfordshire.

Dear Ken

On behalf of all of us that were involved in the project to create the memorial to Peter Mildren, I'd like to say thank you for attending on Saturday with your members from RAFA Letchworth and Hitchin to help make the unveiling and service of dedication for Westmill's new war memorial such a moving occasion for us all.

I am so happy that you were able to attend. You were the first group that I contacted back in February when it finally looked like we might actually get the faculty and might be able to proceed. It was simply wonderful therefore, to have the biggest single contingent from any RAFA or RBL branch come from your members and for you to be able to join us for what a guest representing Felsted School described to me as "probably the biggest party there has ever been for Peter!". I hope that you thought that it was a fitting occasion and enjoyed the day as much as I did.

Thank you too for the loan of your Standard Bearer Roy!! I have written to Roy separately to thank him for all his help but I wanted to put it on record that he rather took me under his wing and helped enormously. I

think he was a little worried at the outset (probably given his vast experience and my apparent lack of it!) but I think we worked well together and it was a privilege to spend so much time with him on the Friday for final rehearsals and again on Saturday when he took the lead with your Standard – just as I had hoped he would. It transpires that he probably served with my Father in Palestine. Dad was 4 PARA and Roy said that the location he was based was also the base for 6 Airborne Div.

Could you also please pass on my thanks to Brian Kemp for attending with the Standard. (Stevenage Bearer) Unfortunately I don't appear to have direct contact details for Brian else I would send him a personal message of thanks directly.

I must confess to being completely overwhelmed when the Spitfire arrived. I'd been trying for so long to try and arrange a flypast and all the time and they could only say they would 'try their best' and caveated it so heavily I wondered if we might all just be standing there looking at an empty sky! Ever the masters of understatement, the Aircraft Restoration Company at Duxford called me on Saturday afternoon and simply asked "Was it OK?"

It's probably worth reiterating (as a member of the Bishops Stortford RBL asked me) that the reason we chose 31st August for the unveiling was entirely down to the possible availability of an Spitfire. It was entirely coincidence (or was it fate?) that the additional research provided to me just last week revealed the dates of Peter's service and they aligned perfectly.

I spent Sunday morning talking to the BBC and an article has been published on the Regional part of the BBC News website (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-49541472>). .

Many thanks again to you all for making the time to join us. It will be a day that lives long in the memory!

With thanks and best wishes *Nigel Leaney*

Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre

THE HOME OF THE BRANCH NAAFI BREAK

- Enjoy a round of golf with family or friends
- Play the traditional French game of pétanque
- Cafe offering wide range of coffees, teas, cakes and hot / cold food
- Fully licensed bar with wide range of beers, ciders, spirits and soft drinks
- Ample parking and free wi-fi
- Everyone welcome

We support the R.A.F. Association and Wings Appeal

Cafe open from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm
Late nights on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre
Willian Way, Letchworth SG6 2HJ
01462 483863
www.letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk

NAAFI BREAK

The main ideas behind the Branch NAAFI Break is to get veteran Airmen and women in our area, out of their four walls for a couple of hours each month, and meet like-minded veterans and have a chat over a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit.

Those attending can join in, or just sit back and listen to others, although nobody is left out for long, the quiet ones soon find their voice and join in.

We are all one rank, that of 'Veteran'. All you will be asked is "your Trade" "The stations that had the pleasure of serving on" There are not many times you will find that you will not have anything in common with others present.

You do NOT have to be a member of the Royal Air Forces Association to join us at a NAAFI Break, just a veteran, and we look forward to meeting you.

All we ask is a donation of £1 to cover the cost of your drink and a few biscuits.

We are at the Par 3 Golf Centre, (See opposite page for details). There is ample space for parking, and the club house is disability friendly. We start at 10.00hrs and pack up about noon. You can't forget the date, FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH.

Want to know more? Contact Ken Needham on 01462 671354.

A NAAFI Break at R.A.F. Halton These lads are from the 203rd Craft Apprentice Entry. After the last of the original Aircraft Apprentices graduated in December 1966



The Official Guide To Saluting In The Military

In answer to a query raised during NAAFI Break



Why do people salute?

When serving personnel salute an officer, they are acknowledging Her Majesty the Queen as Head of State and saluting the rank the officer holds (the Queen's commission) rather than the individual themselves. When an officer returns a salute, it is done so on behalf of the Queen.

When did it start?

One theory is that in medieval Europe, knights used to raise their visors by hand to show they were friendly forces but it's more likely to have originated from the custom of lifting a hat to a superior.

Saluting terminology

'Throwing one up', 'paying respects' or 'paying compliments'.

Did you know?

Non-commissioned ranks do not salute each other, only those who hold the Queen's Commission (officers).

Tradition, however, (not regulations) dictates that anyone who has been awarded a Victoria Cross should also be saluted. This is out of respect for them as holders of the most prestigious award of the British honours system.

Standards, Guidons and Colours, the coffin in funeral processions, the Cenotaph and members of the Royal Family (or Governors/Ministers to whom they delegate authority) are also saluted by the Armed Forces.

The person of lower rank should initiate the salute and maintain it until the superior has responded in kind (unless the superior officer is riding a bicycle).

It is thought that the Navy use the 'shortest way up and down' method because space was restricted on board.

Armed Forces personnel only salute when wearing regimental headdress.

Head and eyes should both be directed towards the person at who the salute is directed.

If someone is saluted and are not wearing headdress, they must come to attention instead of returning salute.

If you are carrying equipment in your right hand when passing someone who would normally expect you to salute them, it is generally deemed acceptable to 'brace up' or come to attention and acknowledge them verbally.

It is thought the Royal Navy salute was adapted so as not to show dirty palms when saluting. Sailors used to climb the rigging and cover their hands in tar and it was deemed disrespectful to let officers see unwashed hands.

Royal Navy

Raise the right hand quickly to your head by the shortest route (to the front of your body).

Hand is kept at an angle so that the palm is facing down so that neither the palm or back of hand is visible from the front.

Bring to a position in front of the eye.

Bicep should remain parallel to the ground.

Hand is lowered again quickly, by the shortest route.

Navy regulations state:

' All Officers and ratings are to salute when coming on board or leaving one of Her Majesty's ships'.

' Female ratings are generally excused removing headgear when their male counterparts would be expected to do so (religious services or when ordinary courtesy makes it desirable)'.

British Army

Raise the right hand to your head by the longest route (to the right of your trunk).

Fingers and thumb aligned, palm facing outwards.

Bring to a position where the index finger is an inch above the right eye with fingertips almost touching the beret or other head dress.

Biceps should remain parallel to the ground.

Snatch the arm back down the front of the body (the shortest way).

Royal Air Force

The RAF salute is similar to that of the Army except that it is to be held an inch above and behind the right eye.

RAF regulations dictate that personnel should salute:

' At any time when they recognise officers who are dressed in plain clothes'.

' When wearing plain-clothes personnel are to pay and return compliments by raising the hat'.

Regulations for both the Army and RAF dictate that:

' Personnel are to salute with the right hand unless physically unable to do so, in which case they are to salute with the left hand'.

Taken from an article in forcesnews@bfbs.com an Internet newspaper for military minded people.



**KEEP CALM
ITS
CHRISTMAS
PARTY
TIME**

**16TH DECEMBER 2019 - WILDWOOD, EASTCHEAP,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY - 19.00HRS TO
22.00HRS - 3 COURSE MEAL - £12.50 MEMBERS
- £19.50 NON MEMBERS. INTERESTED?? ASK FOR
A MEMU FROM KEN NEEDHAM. NUMBERS ARE
LIMITED TO 20 SO BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW**