

Letchworth, Hitchin & District
Branch

www.rafa-leitchworth.org.uk



CHRISTMAS
ISSUE
2015

**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**



The charity that supports the RAF family

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RAFAGEN

**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

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

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

President: Gordon Collinson

Chairman: Ernie Brown

Vice Chairman: Roy Newbury

Hon. Secretary: Ken Needham

Hon. Treasurer: Ken Needham

Committee:

John Airey, Dennis Dawson, Jemma Macfarlane

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

Welfare Officer: Tony Bearpark

Appleacre Park

London Road Fowlmere

Hertfordshire SG8 7RU

Telephone 01763 208354 E mail ajbearpark@aol.com

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

Telephone: 01462 671534

E-mail Secretary@RAFA-lechworth.org.uk

***Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at
the Conservative Club, Birds Hill, Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, at 20.00 hrs Guests are welcome***

Supporting something special



I have to inform all members that we no longer have a Flight Sergeant as our R.A.F.A.L.O. Shaun was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer in September. We wish him all the best in his new appointment, and trust that this will not mean that we are losing him to another posting.

oooOOOooo

The following membership subscriptions were agreed by the Central Council and are shown below. The increases are aligned to the RPI average of 5.8% for the two years from December 2011 to December 2013, in compliance with Resolution 7 of 2006.

Category **2015/16 Membership Fee**

Ordinary Member

1 year	£20.50
4 year	£78.00
Give as you earn (GAYE)	£25.68
(Gross payment before basic tax relief)	

Associate Member

1 year with AIRMAIL	£14.50
1 year without AIRMAIL	£8.50
4 year with AIRMAIL	£55.50
4 year without AIRMAIL	£30.50

oooOOOooo

It is that time of year when we remember old friends that we haven't seen for some time, and those of us who are not in the best of health and/or not able to attend meetings. A number of our members this year have not been able to attend our monthly meeting due to ill health or have reached that age when getting about

isn't as easy as it was. We try to keep in touch with these as well as the rest of of members through the pages of RAFAGEN, but we now have something new. For those who can't make Branch meetings, but would like to keep in touch, we will come to you and have a chat over a cup of tea. (Nothing stronger). This offer is of course only available to members who live in the area of the Branch. If you would like a chat please contact our Secretary - details on page 2.

oooOOOooo

Our visit to R.A.F. Scampton was a great success, and now our R.A.F.A.L.O. is well on the way to organising the next trip. Not so far this time, just down the road in fact. **Bentley Priory.** Bentley Priory Museum tells the fascinating story of the beautiful Grade II listed country house, focusing on its role as Headquarters Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. Where we can explore the important stories of 'The One' – Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, 'The Few' who took to the air to defend our skies and 'The Many' without whose tireless work on the ground victory would not have been possible and discover how technology, leadership and courage forged victory allowing Britain's darkest hour to also be her Finest Hour.

The date chosen for this trip is Thursday 21st April 2016. This trip is cost £25 to members and £27 to non members. A little high, but on top of the coach, there is an entrance fee and we will be having a cream tea. I understand that the Branch



Prince Charles in the Filter Room with veterans, during the official opening of the Museum in September 2013

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Treasurer is willing to take instalments. All seats must be confirmed and paid for by 11th February 2016, as up front payment has to be made to the museum. This Priority is certain worth a visit, and numbers are limited to 35 so book your place now by contacting the Branch Secretary.

AND THERE'S MORE



The Branch will be visiting the R.A.F. Museum at Hendon on Thursday 6th October 2016. Again we are limiting the numbers to 35, and on arrival at the museum the party will split into 3 groups for a full guided tour of the museum. Lunch is available but not included in the price of £15 for members and £17 for non members. I know it's a long time away, but why not put your name down now.

There will be more news on both of these trips and probably more visits in later issues. If you have any questions our RAFALO Shaun would be glad to answer them.



Further pictures of Bentley Priory taken from their web site





WINGS APPEAL 2015

REPORT BY
ROY NEWBURY - WINGS APPEAL
COORDINATOR

WINGS APPEAL 2015 had been planned well ahead with all Store collection dates confirmed, and 248 Sqn ATC Squadron participation agreed. For the month of September the branch organised the R.A.F. Ensign to be flown at Letchworth and Baldock War memorials, and at Hitchin Town Hall.

Fortunately Cyril Grey was well prepared for his stint at the Stotfold Co-operative despite this collection starting on a Bank Holiday Monday, and surviving a clash with Dogs for the Blind charity

Once again a well done Cyril, who must be by now our "ACE" collector with a total amounting to **£433.95**

Despite new document requirements created by Sainsbury's the collection for Sat 5th Sept. went very well.

Many thanks to the record numbers of members in attendance, for the **£611.44** collected.

A meeting with 1066 Sqn. Hitchin in early August highlighted their desire to collect for WINGS Appeal in Hitchin area. Enquiries at ASDA was NO ...only bag packing and the Poppy Appeal.

Managed to obtain a date for Salisbury's Hitchin via their P.R. Liaison member . Alas this was a non event due to the Salvation Army turning up having been given the same date as the R.A.F. Association.

A bitter disappointment for the cadets of 1066 sqn ATC of Hitchin.

The Store manager agreeing to the Salvation Army whilst I had gone through the new channels by getting confirmation of the date from the PR for Charity Collections assigned to the above a member of staff.

Letchworth Garden Square Shopping Centre collection was eventually cancelled due to insufficient members available to man the stall, also it clashed with a WINGS

collection by R.A.F. Henlow in Hitchin Market place which we supported. The charity benefited from the £xx.xx collected.

Battle of Britain Day commemoration service took place at the Letchworth W.M. Our thanks to members and 248 ATC Squadron Letchworth for their participation. This was repeated in the afternoon at 1500 hrs at the Hitchin W.M. with 1066 ATC Squadron in attendance. This year was the first for me to stand in for the late John Stoddard to provide the Battle of Britain Eulogy.

Morrison's of Letchworth two day collection was cancelled by the company admin in Mid September on instructions from their Head office. So 248 ATC Letchworth squadron were denied the chance to emulate their yearly contribution.

The R.A.F. Association H.Q. have mailed Morrison's re this country wide cancellation.

In fact Morrison's early in September declared Sept 15th Battle of Britain day in their stores country wide.

I personally enquired on the 16th Sept at the Letchworth store how their day had gone, only to met blank stares as they been given no instructions from their management.

Events supported by the branch members attendance during the year include:-

Armed Forces Day	£ 436.95
Lions Fun Day	£ 104.35
Nostalgia Day	£ 108.74
VJ Day 15 Aug.	£ 9.10
Donations to the Branch	£ 7.00

Cox's Fish shop monthly collection amounted to £32.92, a good reason why this counter mounted collecting box is provided with a secured anchor point behind the counter

The Letchworth Par 3 Golf Club collected £106.81

This figure will go forward the H.Q. As the Branch contribution to the Wings Appeal for 2015 was £1863.37 plus the £366.15 collected by R.A.F. Henlow which will also be attributed to us.

Alas the B.o.B Lunch @ RAF Henlow was cancelled, but I managed to attend the B.o,B Service at St Paul's cathedral.

THE BRANCH GOES TO R.A.F. SCAMPTON

We went to visit the Scampton Heritage Museum and the Fire museum, but as an added attraction we witnessed the RED ARROWS on a training day.



On Thursday 15th October, the branch visited R.A.F. Scampton - We were able to see a huge collection of Fire Trucks part of a private collection included in the R.A.F. Fire museum. Lunch was taken in the combined Mess Hall with a walk around the oil paintings in the Officers Mess Ante Room. The afternoon was spent around the R.A.F. Scampton Heritage Centre where the focus was 617 Sqn The Dambusters. Branch members were able sit at Wg Cdr Guy Gibson's desk in his actual office when he was Officer Commanding. To top off a superb day the Red Arrows Aerobatic Display Team were practicing all day outside the hangar and in the air.

There was also an excellent collection of historic firefighting equipment and memorabilia. The staff are really interested in the exhibit and clearly express their enthusiasm and knowledge during the tour, as were the guides in the Heritage



Yes that is Guy Gibson's desk, and underneath is Guy's pet dog. Members are being given a conducted tour of the famous Dambuster's office over looking the airfield

Museum. It was an Interesting collection of fire engines including ex RAF Queens flight tender. The surprising fact was that the fire museum was one man's collection, owner and founder of the Museum, WO Steve Shirley MBE.

Our problem was that there was so much to see , and time was not on our side, so not all the exhibits were seen. Nevertheless, a good time was had by all.

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Member Carole Wingoss seeing if she would like to be a RED ARROWS pilot.



Member Denis Mahoney sits at Guy Gibson's desk. Watch your feet Denis there is a dog underneath the desk. I think he used to belong to Guy Gibson



DEDICATION SERVICE

STOTFOLD CEMETERY WAR MEMORIAL ON 29TH OCTOBER 2015 TO MARK THE ADDITION OF R.A.F. FLIGHT SERGEANT THOMAS W. CHELLEW GM NAME TO THE WAR MEMORIAL

After 69 years of campaigning by the Chellew family to have his name on the War Memorial, the campaign was taken up by the Stotfold & Arlesey Branch of the Royal British Legion at the request of Mr David Chellew, son, on behalf of the family.

Flight Sergeant Chellew died, whilst in service, shortly after the end of the WW2, having served in the Far East where he contracted a disease which resulted in his death in a UK military hospital.

He was buried in Stotfold Cemetery in a CWGC grave as a casualty of War within the designated 'time frame'.



Roy Newbury with the Branch Standard - 6th from the left.
Roy attended along with other members of the Branch

The RBL Branch established documentation evidence that the name qualified to be placed on the Memorial. The Stotfold Town Council, being the War Memorial Trustees, accepted the evidence presented by the Branch to warrant his name being added.

His name has recently been added and this Dedication Service gives witness to this in the presence of representatives from R.A.F. Henlow (where he was stationed before WW2), local Branches of the Royal Air Forces Association, Royal Naval Association, Royal Anglian Regiment and Branches of the RBL Bedfordshire County.

Stotfold Mayor, Alan Cooper and RBL Bedfordshire County Chairman, Eric Robinson also joined Mr David Chellew and his family.

The service of Dedication was conducted by the Revd. Bill Britt of the Stotfold St. Mary's Church. During the service, John Street of the Stotfold Salvation Army played The Last Post and the Reveille after the silence, followed by Wreath Laying by R.A.F Henlow and the RBL Stotfold & Arlesey Branch.

The Service was well attended by the local Community.

Article written by David Langridge, Branch Secretary, Stotfold & Arlesey Branch of the Royal British Legion.



OUR SPEAKERS (1)



Josh Tidy, the LGCHF museum curator and local historian was the first in this quarter to give a talk at the Branch meeting. The subject chosen was the history of the Spirella Company, from its formation until it finally closed as a corset factory. A very interesting talk with many archive photos of the history. At one of the factory's celebrations, the local bakery, (Notts the Baker), produced a cake in the shape of the Spirells Building. I am sure that if The Great British Bake Off had been around in those days, it would have won star baker.

Josh will be back again in January to speak on The Garden City.

OUR SPEAKERS (2)



Sgt Sarah Ward of 248 Squadron Letchworth Air Training Corps, gave us a very good insight into the working of the Air Training Corps in general and the Letchworth Squadron in particular. She was a fantastic ambassador for the movement, and although she said that she was nervous as she was the first time she had done this sort of talking, it didn't show, and her presentation was first class.

One of the many points we did learn was that the Squadron would very much like to increase the number of cadets they have on their books.

A number of our members have been involved with 248 Squadron, and was already aware of what goes on, but found Sarah's talk very interesting. I wish I had been a member of the ATC before joining the full time service, it might have made 'Square Bashing' that little bit easier.

Best short Christmas jokes and funny Christmas one liners

I bought my son a fridge for Christmas. I can't wait to see his face light up when he opens it.

We were so poor when I was a child that at Christmas we exchanged glances.

What do you call a naughty child who doesn't believe in Santa? --- A rebel without a Claus.

What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations? --- Tinselitis.

I've bought my kids a pack of batteries for Christmas with a note saying: 'Toys not included'.

The Three Wise Men sound very generous but you've got to remember those gifts were joint Christmas and birthday presents.

We couldn't afford a turkey for Christmas so we gave the budgie chest expanders.

We've invited the mother-in-law round for Christmas for the last eight years. This year, we might even let her in.

What do you call Santa's little helpers? --- Subordinate clauses.

Why was Santa's little helper depressed? --- He had low elf esteem.

Ant puts up Christmas decorations in the living room. Dec, the halls.

Appropriately enough, an anagram of 'Season's Greetings' is 'Tense Aggressions'.





2016 2016

January

14th Branch Meeting - Speaker Josh Tidy, a talk about WWII and the impact on Letchworth Garden City.

February

11th Branch Meeting Arthur Creighton (Former R.A.F. "V Force" pilot and an old friend of the Branch on "The Polish Pilot")

March

10th Annual General Meeting - Followed by a talk by our R.A.F.A.L.O. Shaun Griffin on The R.A.F. Regiment and recent operations.

April

14th Branch Meeting - Sqn Ldr Kevin Dalley R.A.F. (Rtd) on The History of the Pathfinder Force 1942 to 1945.

21st Visit to Bentley Priory Full details from Shaun (RAFALO) or the Secretary. For more details go to www.bentleypriorymuseum.org.uk

May

12th Branch Meeting - Speaker David Taylor on The "Dam Busters myth buster" David has spoken to us on two occasions previously.

June

9th Branch Meeting - Speaker Simon Jones on "5 ways to attract new birds into your garden" (Sorry gents, they are of the feathered variety)

July

14th Branch Meeting - Clare Mulley on The Spy who loved me. Clare Margaret Mulley is a British biographer, known for documenting the life of Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of Save the Children, and has received the Daily Mail Biographers'

Club Prize for The Woman. Her books include : The Spy Who Loved: The Secrets and Lives of Christine Granville

August

11th Branch Meeting - Air Vice Marshall Alan Merriman back again to talk to us this time on The Design and Development of the English Electric Lightening.

September

8th Branch Meeting - Warrant Officer Pete Hall - R.A.F. Medic - on Medics and the Great War

October

6th Visit to the R.A.F. Museum at Hendon. Full details from Shaun (RAFALO) or the Secretary. More details on www.rafmuseum.org.uk

13th Branch Meeting Major David Squibb of the Salvation Army with a talk entitled “I was only putting out the chamber pot” - David’s experiences in the Salvation Army. David’s father served in the R.A.F.

November

10th Branch Meeting To be confirmed

December

8th Branch Meeting - Christmas Bash. Details nearer the date, but it’s one not to be missed.





**Merry Christmas and Happy New
Year To All of our
Members
Wherever they are**