

Letchworth, Hitchin & District
Branch

www.rafa-leitchworth.org.uk



RAFAGEN 'E'

SUMMER
2015

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**



The charity that supports the RAF family

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RAFAGEN

**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
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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

Welfare Officer: Tony Bearepark

Committee:

John Airey, Dennis Dawson, Jemma Macfarlane

Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Flt Sgt Shaun Griffin

RAFGEN Edited by Ken Needham

All correspondence regarding the RAFAGEN to
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Hertfordshire, SG6 3HJ.

Telephone: 01462 671534

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***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

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT



Good bit of news came our way the other day when we learnt that the 'E' version of your RAFAGEN is up and running sooner than expected. If you would like to sign up to receiving your copy via e mail, simply send an e mail to secretary@rafa-letchworth.org.uk, showing your wish to sign up, and the Autumn edition will arrive in this new format. Would the members used in the trial also confirm that they wish to continue receiving RAFAGEN E. All of the guinea pigs we used during the trial said they enjoyed seeing it in full colour. If, after receiving your 'E' edition you find that you prefer the printed version best, all you need to do is send an e mail to the secretary cancelling your 'E' copy and we will revert to sending you the printed version. If you receive an 'E' copy we would like to have your reaction.

Notice anything different to the front cover? The Association have redesigned their logo. It tells everyone more simply what we are about. *"THE CHARITY THAT SUPPORTS THE RAF FAMILY"*

The Branch certainly has moved into the 21st Century. Read all about it on page 5 and let us have your comments on what you think.

Your Committee has started to look at arranging the Christmas Bash for this year. Have you any ideas on what you would like to see at the event this year? Please drop us a line. I don't want to be like the TV and keep telling you how to get hold of us. You know where to look for our address.

Keep up to date by visiting our web site, www.rafa-letchworth.org.uk



LETTERS PAGE



Hi Ken,

Yesterday's visit to R.A.F. Halton was wonderful and Shaun made a great job of looking after us.

Pauline & Gordon (*via e mail*)

Editor's note. It appears that everyone enjoyed this visit to R.A.F. Halton, and Shaun says that he is willing to organise more for interested members. If you would like to put your name forward, please contact the Branch Secretary.

ROYAL AIR FORCE POLICE MOVE THEIR HEADQUARTERS OUT OF HENLOW



Hundreds of R.A.F. Police have moved from R.A.F. Henlow into their new headquarters at a former air base at Honington in Suffolk.

The service's police took over their new base at R.A.F. Honnington a few weeks ago, but most of them are deployed across the world, protecting R.A.F. Bases and aircraft from threats such as espionage, organised crime and terrorism. They also investigate crime, drug offences and advise on legal issues.

They also, as members who attended our May meeting know, have a very active dog section. Today's police dog is not only trained for security, but also in searching for drugs, explosives and weapons.

Source - local news item

Your editor has learnt that not all the police have left Henlow. A specialist team have remained for the time being

WE HAVE REALLY AND TRULY MOVED INTO THE 21st CENTURY

We have had our web site for quite a few months now, and our web master reports that our June 2015 number of hits was 6,442. An increase of 3,534 since January 2015. That is nearly a 55% increase in 6 months.

Your RAFAGEN has now an “E” edition. Which can be sent to your personnel e mail address. Also since the end of June this is now available on the Web site for all to read, and much to the editor’s surprise is also available to read on Facebook.

We have been on Facebook since the end of June. This is enabling members (if they so wish) to be kept right up to date with events at the Branch before waiting for the next RAFAGEN issue. Those who cannot attend meetings for any reason, but want to stay abreast with what is happening, The web Site and Facebook is ideal. That is of course if they have a computer or means of getting on line.

Your editor is now nervous when compiling your RAFAGEN, knowing that it can be viewed all over the world, but assures you that the contents will remain local to your Branch. I understand that to have our own TV channel has been rejected by the Committee as the Chairman says that he always goes shy in front of a camera.

All this modern technology is certainly putting the Branch on the map, along with other Branches in R.A.F.A., as they are all going on Facebook. Only time will tell if it is making us more noticeable to attracting more members, but how do you feel about “getting with it”? RAFAGEN would like to hear from you about the way your Branch is changing. Any correspondence received on this subject will be dealt with as the newspapers with letters. If you do not want your name published just say so and it won’t be, but we must have your name for reference, or we won’t even read it.



ARMED FORCES DAY LETCHWORTH



ARMED FORCES DAY
27 JUNE 2015

WEATHER PERFECT



We asked Mick Larkan for two Gazebos, and he obliged, together with his colourful van full of goodies, himself and five uniformed personnel from R.A.F. Henlow. Mick and the team from R.A.F. Henlow have done this before, and were putting us amateurs to shame. The result was a whopping £436.64. (Plus 1 dud coin). A good result for the Branch, but we had a feeling that the professionals thought we could have done better. This has set a precedent and our Treasurer has told Roy (our Wing Appeal coordinator) that he is looking for at least this much from all the other

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events we are yet to hold. I believe there is a beer on it if he succeeds. In answer to this challenge , Roy was his usual calm self, making us think that it was going to be a piece of cake.



Flight Sergeant Shaun Griffin (our RAFALO), all dressed up in his smart 'Best Blue' uniform, was the event's Master of Ceremonies. And a brilliant job he did. He took everything in his stride, quietly and coolly., Even to settling an argument between the event organisers. Last minute changes to the programme. No problem for Shaun, he just had a couple word with those who matters and problem solved. He was heard to say as we were closing down that he was the subject of numerous 'selfies', It's the uni-

form it always gets the girls going.



The pale blue was certainly the most eye catching gazebo on the site. Oddly the ducks didn't go so well this year. Perhaps because we didn't get the rain as last year. Our thanks to Mick and the boys and girl from R.A.F. Henlow.



July

9th Branch Meeting - Speaker David Taylor on The Avro Lancaster.

18th Letchworth & Baldock Lions Fun Day. Broadway Gardens Letchworth. 10.00 hrs until 16.00 hrs. Your Branch will be in attendance.

29th R.A.F. Henlow Fun Day. 11,00 hrs to 17.00 hrs Fun Day with a VE Day Theme. Drill Displays and Flying Displays. 17.00 hrs to 19.00 hrs The Big Band sound from live music. Admission

details via the Branch Secretary.

29th R.A.F. Henlow - Hanger Dance. 19.00 hrs to 23.59 hrs Theme 1950's with jive and costumes of the period. Jive lessons will be given to the younger members. At the time of going to press the admission price had not been confirmed, but will be between £10 - £15 per person. Admission details via the Branch Secretary.

NOTE :- THE PROFITS FROM THE R.A.F. HENLOW FUN DAY WILL BE EQUALLY DIVIDED BETWEEN - RAFA - Keech Cottage Hospice - Help the Heroes.

August

13th Branch Meeting - Speaker David Taylor on Women's roles and achievements in aviation.

15th Town Street Party, Leys Avenue, Letchworth Garden City

31st Wings Appeal Collection at Stotfold Co-Operative Store

31st Raising of the R.A.F. Ensign to denote the beginning of Battle of Britain month
09.30 hrs Letchworth War Memorial - 10.00 hrs Baldock War Memorial.

September

1st to 4th Wings Appeal Collection at Stotfold Co-Operative Store

5th Wings Appeal Collection at Sainsbury's of Letchworth

10th Branch Meeting - Air Vice Marshall Alan Merriman A Battle of Britain Special

13th 11.00hrs. Battle of Britain Parade - Letchworth War Memorial:

13th 15.00 hrs Battle of Britain Parade - Hitchin War Memorial.

17th Battle of Britain "Top Table" lunch. R.A.F. Henlow Sergeant's Mess. Numbers will be limited so names to the Branch Secretary as soon as possible. Cost TBA

19th Wings Appeal Collection at Letchworth Town Centre. Marshalling point in the Garden Square.

26th & 27th Wings Appeal Collection at Morrisons of Letchworth

28th Lowering of the R.A.F. Ensign to denote the end of Battle of Britain month
09.30 hrs Letchworth War Memorial - 10.00 hrs Baldock War Memorial.

October

8th Branch Meeting - Speaker Josh Tidy (Curator of the Letchworth Heritage Museum) on The History of the Spirella Building.

15th Visit to R.A.F. Scampton and the R.A.F. Fire Service museum. More details later, but if you are interested please pass your name on to the secretary

November

11th Remembrance Day Service Baldock War Memorial: 11.00 hrs

11th Remembrance Day Service Hitchin War Memorial 15.00 hrs.

11th Remembrance Service Letchworth War Memorial 11.00 hrs

12th Branch Meeting - Speaker Squadron Leader Alan Huyton from R.A.F. Henlow on "Open Sky's"

December

10th Branch Meeting Annual Christmas Bash



January

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

Events in italics are for your information only and the Branch will not be taking part.

RAFALO UPDATE – MAY 2015

This is the latest edition of the RAFALO Update, which includes information on changes to the Service. If you have anything you wish me to cover, please advise in the usual way via Adrian.morris941@mod.uk

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS LIST

Air Vice-Marshal J A Young CB OBE was appointed Director Helicopters in the Defence Equipment & Support Organisation with effect from 2 February 2015, in succession to Mr A D Baguley.

Acting Air Vice-Marshal M F Neal OBE was promoted Air Vice-Marshal on 16 December 2014 and remains in post as Director Service Design, Information Services and Systems in Joint Forces Command.

Air Commodore G D A Parker OBE to be promoted Air Vice-Marshal and to be Air Officer Commanding No 2 Group, Headquarters Air Command in July 2015 in succession to Air Vice-Marshal S K P Reynolds CBE DFC whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Air Commodore D J F Lee to be Assistant Chief of Staff for Capability Delivery Air Mobility & Air Enablers, Headquarters Air Command with effect from 17 July 2015, in succession to Air Commodore J N Ager who is leaving the Service.

Air Commodore G M Mayhew to be appointed to the Strategic Defence and Security Review Team in the Cabinet Office in April 2015. This is a new post.

Group Captain D R Alexander to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Head Defence Logistic Policy in the Ministry of Defence in September 2015 in succession to Brigadier J R Brittain.

Group Captain M Byford to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Head Strategy & Integration, Headquarters Surgeon General in March 2015 in succession to Air Vice-Marshal The Honourable R J M Broadbridge QHS.

Group Captain S F Lushington CBE to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Air Mobility Force Commander & Air Officer Air Mobility, Royal Air Force Brize Norton in August 2015 in succession to Air Commodore D J F Lee.

Group Captain I D Gale MBE to be promoted Acting Air Commodore and to be Assistant Chief of Staff Capability Development C2ISR, Headquarters Air Command in August 2015. This is a new post.

Group Captain A J Seymour to be promoted Acting Air Commodore and to be Commandant Air Warfare Centre, Royal Air Force Waddington in December 2015 in succession to Air Commodore B H Hedley MBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain H Smyth OBE DFC to be promoted Acting Air Commodore and to be Tornado Force Commander Royal Air Force Marham in May 2015 in succession to Air Commodore D J Waddington who is leaving the Service.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT AND MANPOWER

A400M Support Contract. The first support contract for A400M Atlas has been announced. The £175 million contract was awarded to Airbus Defence and Space (ADS). The news comes as Rolls-Royce has announced an £18 million investment in Bristol to support the TP400 engine. The money will fund facilities for maintenance, repair and overhaul of the engines, training for employees, and conversion of an existing test bed to be capable of running the engine while on the ground.

Typhoon and Paveway IV. The RAF will release up to 20 Paveway IV weapons this month when they deploy to the USA for exercises. This comes after successful release of live Paveway IV bombs over the Cape Wrath training area as part of the latest Typhoon upgrade P1Eb. The predominantly air-to-ground capability upgrade provides enhancements to the Litening III Laser Designator Pod and a helmet-mounted sight. The pod can now be used seamlessly with the sight to visually identify air tracks at long range, as well as identifying, tracking and targeting points on the ground.

Brimstone 2. The first 20 production standard Brimstone 2 missiles have been delivered. Brimstone 2 will bring a range of operational performance and logistical benefits that will provide advantages in operational use and stockpile management. These come from the missile being classified as an insensitive munition due to the new warhead and rocket motor design as well as improvements in the seeker, guidance and greater air carry hours.

As ever, if there is anything you would like information on, please e-mail me or send your correspondence via the Area Director or BSO.

Yours, In friendship Ady Morris



OUR SPEAKERS (1)

The Branch speaker for April was Ann Wise, who spoke about World War One, but not the battle fields as most media are reporting at the moment, but what it was like on the Home Front. How the war was affecting those left behind. We all know what it was like during the second world war (some of us even part of it), but we know very little of the home front of the first war.



Ann explained how rationing came into being, a thing that had not been heard of before. How the women had to turn their hands to doing a man's job. On the farming front, and many other tasks, women turned to wearing trousers to undertake their manly tasks, a thing that was frowned upon, and even legislation was passed to ensure that the ladies did not demure themselves whilst wearing these male garments.

Yes, it all happened again 24 years later, but during the 1914 - 1918 war, it was all new to those left behind on the 'Home Front'.

OUR SPEAKERS (2)

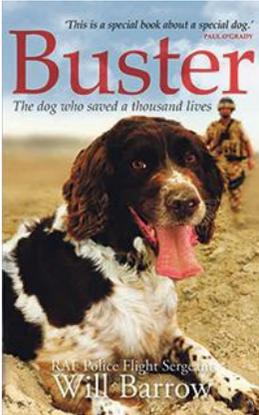


We had R.A.F. Air Dog Buster come along to our May Branch meeting to have a chat with us. His handler Flt Sgt Will Burrow came along as well, but as Will admitted, it was Buster that was the star attraction. Buster was not shy to go around the room meeting all members, before Will started the evening by telling members of his career in the Royal Air Force.

He had joined the R.A.F at 18, specialising as a Drug Detection Dog Handler and an Arms and Explosive Search Dog Handler, serving in the Falklands, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. In fairness it was Buster's story we all wanted to hear.

Buster is an English springer spaniel. He has earned many military tributes and has served in three separate wars in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, an achievement unparalleled by any

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other service dog. He won the Crufts Friends for Life Award in 2012 and also nominated for a prestigious Sun Military Award in 2009. Buster is the official lifetime mascot of the Royal Air Force Police. He retired a military hero in 2011.

Buster, (with a little help of Will Burrow) has written a book entitled “Buster, the dog who saved a thousand lives”.

The book is available from Amazon. For information neither Will nor Buster make any profit out of the publishing of the book.

OUR SPEAKERS (3)

Ann Wise returned to our June Branch meeting to talk to us about how to date old family photographs. Ann told those present that one of the main ways to date old photographs was by the type of dress being worn by the subject.

She also explained about the history of portrait photography, and how the subjects would still for up to 20 minutes for the correct exposure. This meant that many



subjects were propped with unseen pillars or props. Very few early subjects smiled as this could not be maintained for such a long time. In the early days cameras were not very portable so the subjects attended studios, unless of course you were very rich.

In the studio the photographer was able to use props to ease the burden of the wait such as a balustrade to lean on or the back of a chair.

The photographer liked to advertise so some photographs have the name of the photographer printed or embossed on the photograph, some even put the date, which makes life easier for dating.

As the cameras improved so did the taking of the portrait photograph. Speed time became faster, so more children appeared as subjects, and then pets. Now we can take picture in a fraction of a second.



R.A.F. HALTON VISIT



A few members of our Branch visited R.A.F. Halton and the Graduation Parade of Campion intake in June. During the visit they were hosted by the Branch RAFALO Flight Sergeant Shaun Griffin.

They were shown round the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre and given a guided tour of the Trenchard Museum. This was followed by lunch in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess hosted by SNCOs of 22 Groups Training Transformation Team.

The Graduation Parade capped off a wonderful day out for the branch. Branch President 90 year old WWII pilot Gordon Collinson summed up his day "It was marvellous to see the young men and women of today's R.A.F., it brought back great memories of my service.





HOTPOINT PRIVILEGE CLUB

Association members can now buy household appliances from the Hotpoint Privilege Purchase Club and get up to **30 per cent off** high street prices.

David Prowse, Association Director of Membership & Operations, said: “This is great new benefit for our members, offering money off the full range of Hotpoint and Indesit appliances, from kettles, toasters and coffee makers to vacuum cleaners, fridges and washing machines. To take advantage of this discount you just need to follow the link below to the Hotpoint site.”

www.privilegepurchaseclub.co.uk/logon/RAFA001

Sergio Hutson, Affiliate Account Manager for Hotpoint said: “It is a great honour to be supporting the R.A.F. Association. Hotpoint is committed to providing the families of this community with first class kitchen appliances and service, at genuinely discounted prices.”

Hotpoint has a distinct military history. During the First World War the company’s Peterborough factory was commissioned to produce flax for uniforms. The Peterborough factory was commissioned again during the Second World War, this time for the manufacture and assembly of Lancaster Bomber engines.

Today Hotpoint works with the UK’s leading military charities, providing kitchen appliances for beneficiaries for those that have served, and now provides Association members with exclusive Hotpoint



**A CHANCE TO PAUSE A MINUTE IN QUIET
CONTEMPLATION FOR OUR FRIENDS AND
COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE RECENTLY PASSED
AWAY**

Mr D.J. Jones of Hitchin

£££ RECENT DONATIONS RECEIVED BY THE BRANCH £££

The following donations have been received by the Treasurer for use as indicated

Mr. A, Nonymous £100 For General Branch Funds

Mr. A, Nonymous £100 For General Branch Funds

Mr. A, Nonymous £100 towards the cost of producing RAFAGEN

The above donations are from different members and we most grateful to the three of them for their kind generosity. Their donations help to keep the Branch running and improve.



As many of you know, each year, our Vice Chairman, Roy Newbury, goes off to France each year to represent the Aircrew Association and our Association in remembering those members of Bomber Command who lost their lives over the Mailyly area. I have asked Roy to tell us who the men are that he goes over to remember.

This year's event took place on the 5th May 2015 at the French Military Camp to commemorate the Bomber Command strike at this target some 4 weeks before D Day 6th Jun 1940. Mailyly was the base for all French mechanized forces from early 1900's with vast workshops etc. Resistance intelligence had informed their UK receptors that The Hohensteufen Panzer Division being refitted was on the point of departure.

With bright moonlight and clear skies the orbiting Lancaster circled there Holding point flare's pattern for some 18 minutes awaiting the command to strike. Due to a breakdown in radio communication this was not audible until back-up raid

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Commanders took over as both No 1 and No 5 Group bombers were now in circuit with inevitable collisions.

Meanwhile the nearby Luftwaffe night fighter stations at Laon, Rheims and St Dizier had dispatched there deadly shragermuzic equipped fighters, which resulted in a loss of 42 Lancaster, one Mosquito and one Halifax on counter radio interference on the fighter 's radio wavelength

Damage to the camp was indeed considered a success with an indeterminate number of German casualties. Unfortunately slave labour corps stationed on site also suffered casualties.

Unfortunately the panzer division entrained was some 1.5 kilometres from the camp area and escaped the attention of the orbiting Lancasters. Although the RAF had suffered heavier losses than those incurred at Mailly, its casualties were in a more confine radius some 80 miles due east of Paris.

A Mailly Commemoration society was started when a retired army officer went looking for his brother's grave in the village of Voue. Seen by the local mayor, subsequent correspondence developed into the ¾ Mai Mailly Association with a local history group compiled a dossier of all the RAF participants and subsequent casualties, locations of crash site and CWGC plots in local churchyards. The RAF memorial is now located in the centre of Mailly Camp. Over the past years raid veterans and next of kin have paid homage by travelling out to Mailly hosted by the Mailly Garrison. RAF personnel (ex 101 Sqn.) from Brize Norton also attend. ATC cadets and band from the Humber region have also attended. Apart from the main ceremony the yearly visits extends to a selection of the many crash sites especially if next of kin are attending.

For my visit on behalf of the Aircrew Association and RAF Assoc. to enact commemorations for:-

Royal Australian Air Force Sqn 460

Royal Air Force Sqn 161 (out of Tempsford)

Royal Air Force Sqn 49 11th July 1944 (target Revigny)

Royal Air Force Sqn 101

Royal Air Force Sqn 169

Royal Air Force Sqn 207

Royal Air Force Sqn 92

Anyone who would like to know more about the above squadrons, and the memorials put up by the French in recognition of our pilots, please contact the Editor, who will pass on your name to Roy.

NEW MEMBERS FOR 2015

Below are the new members who have joined us since January 1st
2015

Our current Branch membership is **101**



Our membership drive seems to have come to a sharp halt. I haven't heard anything from the Membership Department at Leicester since the end of March. I have checked and they haven't been closed down, so let us give them some work to do, or they may be.

Sqn Ldr A. Bell of Lower Stondon
Miss D.A. Browne of Hitchin
Mr S. Daubney of Biggleswade
Mrs D. Griffin of Letchworth Garden City
Mr. S. Leach of Henlow
Rev N Pnematicatos of Hitchin
W/O. S. Tuckwell of Biggleswade
Flt Sgt S. Griffin of Letchworth Garden City

We need this list to be at the bottom of the page by the end of the year

Membership forms can always be obtained from the Branch Secretary, or from our stall at local events. Failing that you can go on line to the official Royal Air Forces Association web site (www.rafa.org.uk) follow the link to membership and fill a form in on line. What could be easier?

Hurricane and the Red Arrows practice over Scampton



More News From Scampton

This will be the last flying year for the Vulcan. The final flight being at the Royal International Air Tattoo this summer. It is hoped that R.A.F. Scampton will be it's final resting place when the time comes, as R.A.F Scampton was ithe Vulcan's home when part of 617 squadron. (1958 to 1981) The problem is that there are other sites that would like to house this great aircraft, and at the end of the day - money usually wins.





Commemorating the

75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain
with a

RIDE FOR THE FEW

Sunday 6th September 2015

ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?



9 Battle of Britain Airfields
510 km, One Day

£5 Rider Registration Fee + Personal Sponsorship
for the **RAFA WINGS APPEAL**



Please support this worthwhile cause whether you choose to ride some, or all of the route, or just donate

To take part - please contact Shaun Griffin:

Email 22 TrgGp-T3 Proj Ldr 12@mod.uk Tel: 95237 Ext 6177

To donate - please use the link

<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com.t>

