

Branch Membership

178
'E'

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCES**
Association

The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH

SUMMER 2019

**IT IS WITH DEEPEST REGRET WE HAVE TO ANNOUNCE THE DEATH OF OUR
BRANCH PRESIDENT**



MR GORDON COLLINSON

1923 - 2019

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Registered Charity: 226686 (England & Wales) SC037673 (Scotland)

1071536 (Branch)



RAFAGEN

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



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

Life President:- Gordon Collinson

Vice President:- Dennis Dawson

Chairman:- Lisa Berry

Vice Chairman:- Roy Newbury

Secretary:- Ken Needham

Treasurer:- Ken Needham

Wings Appeal Coordinator:- Roy Newbury

General Committee:

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, William Way, Letchworth Garden City on the 1st Tuesday of each month 10.00 hrs 'til 12.00 hrs



Ken's comments

It is with deepest regret that we have to announce the death of our Branch President, Mr Gordon Collinson.. Based on some notes given to me by Gordon and conversations we had, I put together a few words of this very popular man.

LIFE PRESIDENT GORDON COLLINSON

1923 TO 2019

While on leave in 1944, Gordon decided to have a pint in the Rose & Crown in Whitehorse Street, Baldock. There he got into conversation with Ted Rogers, who had served in the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War. During the conversation Ted mentioned the Royal Air Forces Association charity which had been formed a year earlier. So impressed was Gordon with what he was told that he decided to join as a life member. That cost him £5, which in those days was a lot of money.

Two years later, in the summer of 1946, Ted suggested that they meet Gerald Boak. Gerald was at that time Secretary at the Head Quarters of R.A.F.A. This time the venue chosen was The White Lion in Baldock High Street. The result of the meeting was the formation of a R.A.F.A. Branch in Baldock. I think Mr Boak was doing the rounds as a branch in Letchworth was formed around the same time.

The Baldock branch started with Gordon as Chairman, and branch meeting were held at the Rose & Crown, Whitehorse Street..

Gordon told me that he still had his membership card from that era, signed by secretary Eileen Bassett (nee Searson), a friend of his who lived in Letchworth.

During the Baldock branch was very successful, but members had dwindled by the end of the decade, and it became difficult to continue in such a small town with very few ex R.A.F. Inhabitants. It was decided that the Baldock branch should merge with Letchworth. So on 30th April 1962, the Letchworth branch became the Letchworth, Hitchin and District branch. The Hitchin part of the name being the merging of The Old Comrades Association of Hitchin into the Letchworth branch. This latter group was made up mainly of R.A.F. Henlow personnel.

Gordon was, during this time the Officer Commanding ATC 248 Squadron Letchworth, which after his appointment finished he still went along to give talks to the cadets, along with Gordon Overton.

In 2003 Gordon was elected as the branch Life President, for his service to the branch over the 31 years with Letchworth, and in 2012 Gordon was the recipient of the R.A.F.A President's Certificate Award for devoted service to the Association. This was the first of two such awards presented to members of the branch.

Until recently when health caused him to slow down, he attended most of the branch meetings. If Gordon wasn't at a meeting it usually meant that he and Pauline was away on holiday.

I have referred to Gordon and his association with R.A.F.A., But I know that he had many stories of his time in the Royal Air Force, which he has related to members from time to time.

Speaking of Gordon, he was to me my childhood picture of a wartime pilot. That moustache was what I expected all R.A.F. Officers to have, but it was that quiet, and helpful manner. When I first held the position of secretary, it was Gordon who gave me guidance based on his experience. but never forced his suggestions on to me.

Gordon was highly thought of at the Letchworth Rugby Club, where we now hold our meetings. His name appears on several the 'Role of Honour' boards situated around the room we use. He may not be with us in person, but his name will always be with us.

MEMORIES OF GORDON



Speaking to the cadets at 248 squadron



Something Gordon was very good at, making sure the VIP'S were entertained. Here a conversation with the RAF Henlow CO during one of our Wings Appeal concerts



Enjoying himself at one of our 2008 Christmas party



Thanking the Leader of the RAF Cromwell band after a performance in Letchworth for our Wings Appeal





THE LOCAL BRANCH OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION HAVE INVITED US TO JOIN THEM ON A TRIP TO GREAT YARMOUTH

Saturday 7th September 2019

£20.00

A £10 non refundable deposit

Pick-up point 08.00hrs from the Plinston Hall

There will be a raffle prior to leaving in the early evening. £1 per strip

INTERESTED

Please contact one of the following

Ken Needham - RAFA

01462 671534

Nigel Kenworthy (RBL)

01462 622561

Joan Langford (RBL)

01462 627736

If you contact either Joan or Nigel please tell them that you are RAFA



LISA'S COLUMN

Thoughts from our Chairman
Lisa Berry

Goodness, it's RAFAGEN time again! Initially I had writers block, so I had to sit with a cup of tea and a rich tea (or two, four or five) and ponder. It has been quite busy thinking about it, I also felt great sadness to remember we lost a great friend earlier this year, Gordon Overton, he will be missed terribly. On a lighter note, we have now settled in to our new venue, we've had some fantastic speakers and I think everyone has enjoyed the buffet that has been lovingly put together by Marie and me – I have never made so many butties in all my life!!

We have enjoyed a visit to R.A.F. Cosford museum, the weather was perfect and it was a fantastic day thanks to the amazing team on the committee organising this trip. We also had a stall on the Stotfold steam fair in May, it was good fun and we raised a bob or two for R.A.F.A. Dixie did an amazing job at selling bandanas to dog owners, he even sold one for a balloon dinosaur!!!

I have started a new job and this involves a great deal of travelling round. I have been to some of my old units and even bumped in to some of my old work colleagues who took great delight in telling my new boss on how much



Lisa's obligatory training photograph. I think that is Lisa in the centre front row

of a git I was. One story that came up was how I had dealt with one of the girls who spent ages in the shower in the mornings. Lucy would be in the shower for seemed to be hours while we'd all be queuing in our towels waiting to get showered before work. I got fed up of this and asked her what on earth took so long, her reply was that it was the conditioning of her hair that took so long – it had to be in for 10 minutes to create beautiful soft shiny locks. Now, my little horns popped out and the devil in me took over, I went in to the shower, located Lucy's conditioner and emptied a full tube of immac into it, gave it a good shake and left it. I don't think I need say anymore and I don't think I will be keeping my new job for much longer as my boss looked less than impressed!!

Quickly moving on.....we have a good year ahead, Armed Forces day 29th June, Wings appeal in September (please volunteer to help shake a can) a trip to Yarmouth with the R.B.L. in September also and a good selection of topics delivered by speakers at the branch meetings AND don't forget we have the NAAFI Breaks too! If you have any ideas or would like to see changes then please do come and speak to your committee members and it is you as our R.A.F.A. members that we are here for, we want you to enjoy our together's, we want you to feel part of the family and we can only do this if we get lots of feedback, fresh ideas, volunteers and good attendance so invite your family and friends who may enjoy our company, everyone is welcome!

JUST IN - ARMED FORCES DAY 2019



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



PADRE'S HOUR FROM OUR BRANCH PADRE

CANON LINDSAY DEW



Hello again.

I hope you are as well as possible and enjoying better weather than I am as I write this in the second week in June. What weather we've been having – rain, much needed of course, but I often think it would be lovely if it could rain when I'm asleep at night, and then be bright and warm in the day.

I want to tell you a secret – I sometimes wish I could have had a faith experience a bit like some of those I met in my R.A.F. life who suddenly came into a deep and profound experience of God's love for them and found it to be totally life changing. Of course you may have met a person who became someone who was commonly called a 'Bible Thumper'. If you served in the Forces and lived in the billet blocks you will have met them at some point. I must admit to being a bit embarrassed by them myself. Those of us, who were 'normal' people of faith and in a very English way, didn't speak about it openly, were often embarrassed by those who did, especially as they often seemed to have kissed their brains goodbye and began to believe all sorts of things about faith and how one lives it and expresses it in our daily lives. My father said to me 'Religion is good, but you must never take it too seriously'. I think I know what he meant – and he was speaking as a man of deep faith, a weekly church goer, as well as someone who trusted in God's love shown in Jesus Christ.

Well, I've not had an experience like those I've mentioned, but I have experienced a life-time of faith – sometimes wonderfully strong, sometimes weak and ineffective. I can't remember a time in my life when faith was not known or lived out by regular church attendance (or in my childhood, by chapel attendance). Sunday School morning and afternoon, week by week, in the old Primitive Methodist Chapel was hardly ever missed and I think back now and give thanks for the faithfulness of those who taught me. I can't remember what they said but what I do remember and give thanks for is their faithfulness in preparing their lessons and leading their class. I wasn't a paragon of virtue – I must have really tried their patience and disrupted their class. I'm pretty sure they didn't tell my parents or my mum would have walloped me! A) for wasting their time and B) for embarrassing her! So faith for me was experienced through the faithfulness of my parents and Chapel people, and it was experienced though regular attendance at Sunday School as well as services in the Chapel. But there comes a time

when any one of us brought up in that way has to decide whether it will be an integral part of our lives or we relegate it to the stuff of childish stories and fanciful ideas. So in my journey of faith there have always been times when God's presence and love became real and tangible and that experience led me deeper into faith. These periods seem to make faith easy. More frequently though, there have been periods of simply trying to work out what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the ordinariness of life. Faith is a gift and for me, it involves hard work and commitment as I try to work out what it means to be a follower of Jesus in today's world and how I can show God's love in my words and deeds.

I have discovered that you can never know for certain where faith will lead.

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 as well as serving on the Committee or you can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

Kind regards & blessings

Lindsay

Memories of 1950's style square bashing in pictures



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



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.

19 Aug - David Davis - Letchworth Garden City cottages.

16 Sep - **Battle of Britain Dinner - details to follow.**

21 Oct - Jim Box - The Westland Lysander.

24 Oct - **Branch visit - Bletchley Park.**

18 Nov - Ian Waller - Family history and genealogy.

16 Dec - **Branch Christmas Bash - tbc.**

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

DON'T FORGET THAT DURING THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER WE WILL BE COLLECTING FOR WINGS AT VARIOUS SUPERMARKETS IN THE DISTRICT AND WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY HELP YOU CAN GIVE. DETAILS OF DATES FROM THE BRANCH SECRETARY.



STOTFOLD STEAM FAIR

Our cover pictures shows our stall neighbours getting steamed up.



There were a lot of dogs walking around the show, wearing a union flag bandanna, purchased from the Branch stall, in aid of Branch funds.



How many men does it take to roll up the sides of a gazebo? This picture appeared on Facebook with the above caption. There were a number of answers posted. What would yours have been?

Those involved in 'getting the air out' are, working on his own, Dixie Meek whilst Shaun Griffin and Ken Needham tackle one together, supervised by Lynda Needham. Lisa Berry was behind the camera. What a team

DAY TRIP TO COSFORD

A SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN ON THE DAY



That's not an aircraft. I'll bet that one was taken by RAF Regiment Warrant Office Shaun Griffin

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

NAAFI BREAK is proving to be popular amongst veteran Royal Air Force personnel. Designed to get R.A.F. Vets out of their homes for a couple of hours per month and we are doing just that. In the first two months we have increased attendance by 28%. Coffee is the most popular beverage, but other drinks are available, at the special price of £1, that includes biscuits. Conversation varies, but is mainly about experiences of time in the Royal Air Force.



If you are interested in coming along and joining us, we meet at the Par 3 Golf Centre in William Way, Letchworth on the first



TOP BRANCH OFFICIALS

SINCE THE BRANCH WAS FORMED IN 1946

Yes your branch is 73 years old this year, which must make us one of the oldest (active) branches in the Association. - Unless of course you know differently.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION

LETCHWORTH HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH

PRESIDENTS

1956 TO 1957 GROUP CAPTAIN W.S. REED

1957 TO 1959 AIR COMMODORE T.U.C. SHIRLEY CBE

1959 TO 1961 VACANT

1961 TO 1961 N.G.S. RUTTER CBE

1961 TO 1963 J.C. POPE CBE

1963 TO 1965 AIR VICE MARSHALL E.M.T.HOWELL CBE

1965 TO 1966 GROUP CAPTAIN P.E. HARMAN DFC AFC

1966 TO 1969 GROUP CAPTAIN N.F. CURTIS

1969 TO 1971 GROUP CAPTAIN R.F. HITCHCOCK MBE AFC

1971 TO 1973 GROUP CAPTAIN A.W. RINGER MVO AFC

1973 TO 1975 GROUP CAPTAIN R.G. CHURCHER DSO MVO DFC

1975 TO 1977 GROUP CAPTAIN A.G.L. HUTCHISON

1977 TO 1979 GROUP CAPTAIN R.J. HITCHINGS

1979 TO 1980 GROUP CAPTAIN M.J. RAYSON MVO

1980 TO 1983 GROUP CAPTAIN A.S. GOODWIN

1983 TO 1985 GROUP CAPTAIN B.J. HUNTER OBE

1985 TO 1987 GROUP CAPTAIN R.A. GILL

1987 TO 1989 GROUP CAPTAIN B. McCANDLESS OBE

1989 TO 1891 GROUP CAPTAIN P.C. AYEE

1991 TO 1993 AIR COMMODORE P.J. MILLER

1993 TO 1996 AIR COMMODORE P.C. AYEE CBE
1996 TO 1999 AIR COMMODORE G. JONES MBE
1999 TO 2001 AIR COMMODORE C.M.DAVIDSON BSc
2001 TO 2003 VACANT
2003 TO DATE G. COLLINSON

CHAIRMAN

1946 TO 1948 S.R. THOMPSON
1948 TO 1949 R. KNIGHT
1949 TO 1950 A.J. STEVENS
1950 TO 1951 D. SUTHERLAND
1951 TO 1952 R. PYMAN
1952 TO 1954 D. SUTHERLAND
1954 TO 1955 R. PYMAN
1955 TO 1956 H.W. FOUNTAIN
1956 TO 1959 D. SUTHERLAND
1959 TO 1962 R. SAUNDERS
1962 TO 1964 R. KNIGHT
1964 TO 1973 D SUTHERLAND
1973 TO 1981 G. COLLINSON
1981 TO 1983 D.A.JORDAN
1983 TO 1990 MRS P. BROCK
1990 TO 2000 H.C. SMITH
2000 TO 2002 R.O'BRIEN & R. STACPOOLE-RYDING
2002 TO 2006 R.J. CHANNELL
2006 TO 2018 E. BROWN JP
2018 TO DATE MRS L. BERRY



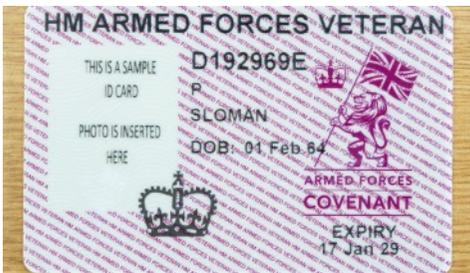
UK Veteran ID Cards: Up date

Everything you need to know about it and when you can get yours

Veterans ID cards for former UK Armed Forces' service leavers are expected to be made available by the end of 2019 – but what is known so far about how to apply and the requirements for an application?

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced last year that the new Veterans ID cards would be issued to service leavers - that process has now started.

Cards will also be available to other veterans towards the end of 2019 – however, an exact date has yet to be confirmed by the MoD.



What is the Veterans ID for?

Until plans for the Veterans ID card were made, there was no way for veterans to easily prove the fact that they had served. Previously, personnel were required to hand back their ID card (RAF 1250) upon being discharged.

The new Veteran ID card is to have two functions: to provide a memento of service, to maintain a tangible link to the Armed Forces, and to allow Veterans to easily verify their service to the NHS, their local authority, and charities, enabling them to access support and services where needed.

How will it be phased in? Delivery of the new UK Veteran ID Card will be rolled out in two tranches:

Phase 1: The Veterans ID Card has already been provided to all Service Leavers as part of the discharge process with effect from 18th February 2019, and retrospectively to those who left on or after 17 December 2018.

Phase 2: Applications from the wider Veteran Community will be encouraged once the process has been agreed.

Can older veterans apply? The application process has yet to be agreed and will be made available by the end of 2019. However, veterans who have

already left the Armed Forces can register for the Defence Discount Service card, if they have haven't already.

While the Veteran ID card will act as proof of service and Veteran status, the Defence Discount card is recognised online and in high street shops to obtain Armed Forces discounts on a wide range of offers from things such as holidays, cars, days out, fashion, gifts, insurance, phones and many other items.

The website is free to sign up to and to use the online discounts. To get your card, you can apply for it at

www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/newuser.php

and also find the list of companies which accept the discount card.

Your RAFAGEN will keep you up to date as more news about when the Veterans card is available and how to apply

Apply for a veterans badge

You can get an armed forces veterans badge if you've served in any of the UK armed forces - there's no fee.

How to apply

Download and fill in the application for an armed forces veterans badge from .

www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-veterans-badge-application-form

You'll need to give as much information as possible, such as:

the force you served in, service number, period of service

Send the form by post to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Medal Office - the address is on the form.

You'll usually get your veterans badge within 6 to 8 weeks of applying.

Apply for one and wear it proudly





An early copy of RAFAGEN from December 1957, when the Branch was just Letchworth. This picture was taken from the collection of early RAFAGENS and papers from the branch of that time, held by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation museum.

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