

Branch
Membership

191

ROYAL AIR FORCES Association

The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT
BRANCH



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

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

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

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 2020

Vice President:- Dennis Dawson

Chairman:- W.O. Shaun Griffin

Vice Chairman:- Lisa Berry

Secretary:- Ken Needham

Assistant Secretary:- Marie Mahoney

Treasurer:- Ken Needham

Wings Appeal Officer:- Roy Newbury

Branch Welfare Officer: Mark Howell

Contact details :- Tel :-07874015229 email :- markhowell65@gmail.com

Membership Secretary:- Headley Parkins

Branch Padre:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew

Contact details :- Tel :- 01462742165

email :- lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

General Committee:

Dean Meek ; Donna Cook ; John Airey ; Lesley Starr ;

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

RAFAGEN Edited by Ken Needham

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

ALAN MILLARD

1944 - 2020



During the period of ‘Lock-down’ I am sorry to say that had to report the death of our new Vice Chairman - Alan Millard.

Alan was appointed to the post of Vice Chairman at the Annual General Meeting, held on the day before ‘Lock-down’ was confirmed.

Alan was born in 1944 in Letchworth, later moving to Walsworth, Hitchin.

I first came across Alan whilst I was a member of St Paul’s Amateur Dramatic Society. Alan would come along to our shows or rehearsals and take photos for the Letchworth Pictorial.

Alan joined the local newspaper in 1968, which was later taken over by “The Comet” and retired 40 years later. He did however, continue photographing local events after his retirement.

He gained a BA., through the Open Universally In 2006 he became interested in the local politics, and was elected to the North Herts District Council for Hitchin Walsworth Ward in 2007. During his time as a councillor he held the office of Chairman of the Council, known as Mayor in some councils) a position of which he was very proud.

He had many interests in North Herts, one of which was R.A.F.A. He was a member of the Royal Observer Corps, a position that made him eligible to serve as a member of the Association, being elected to the position of Vice Chairman, a post he was looking forward to.

Due to Covid-19 measures and the consequent lack of branch committee meetings he was never able to fulfil this position.

His wife, Maureen, is also a member of the branch as an associate member.

His funeral, was held under the Covid-19 regulations was attended by our Standard Bearer, Mark Howell.

It is the wish of Maureen, and the family that after the regulation on gatherings is lifted, it is intended to hold a memorial service for Alan at St Faith's church, Hitchin, in view of the many who wish to show their respect to a highly thought of community member.

Alan you will be sadly missed by all of your friends at R.A.F.A.

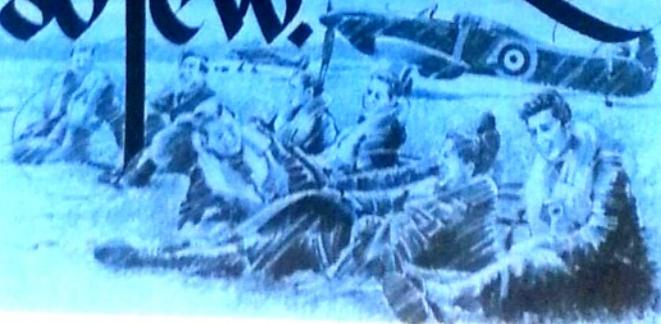
We will advise you of the Memorial Service date as soon as it is known



The gratitude of every home in our
Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout
the world, except in the abodes of
the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who,
undaunted by odds, unwearied in their
constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning
the tide of world war by their prowess
and by their devotion.

Never in
the field of
human conflict
was so much
owed by so many
to so few.

WINSTON
CHURCHILL



Our Chairman, Shaun, was passing the Letchworth War Memorial, and took this photo, and posted it on the Branch's FaceBook page, with the following notation.

The RAF Ensign proudly flying - to mark the hardest week in the Battle of Britain for the Few.





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

What a year 2020 has been, there is one thing you can say for certain, is that it will go down in history, and will never be forgotten. Another thing for certain and that is that there is not one of our 191 members it hasn't effected, some a lot more than others.

What has our branch been doing over these past few months, not sitting on our hands I can tell you. At the very start of 'Lock-down' we were sent a list of all branch members over the age of 70, and it was deemed by the Association that it was the branch responsibility to ensure that these members (and others if required) were to be contacted on a regular basis, to ensure that everything that could be done for them was being done. To begin with our Chairman called for volunteers to be the 'life lines' to the over 70's. In the end six were chosen to cover the 53 members. I am sorry to say that I fell into that vulnerable category so was unable to volunteer. I was allowed, however, to co ordinate the weekly reports that would come in from the volunteers for onward transmission. I could do this from the safety of my own home, and that is why I can relate all that was done by these volunteers during the next few months.

The very first problem we were to encounter, along with other branches

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

was the fact that the contact information that we had was not up to date. Members had moved, changed their telephone provider, or e mail address, and not advised RAFA Headquarters, or their branch. We suddenly realised how important it is to keep us informed of any changes.

In the main the weekly calls that were made turned into a friendly chat, but an appreciated one by our vulnerable members. Groceries were collected, prescriptions sorted, and without being prompted, social distancing visits were arranged, and even a socially distant birthday party.

All of our volunteers have done a sterling job, and are still doing it .albeit calls are less frequent in some cases. Other than the seven of us, they have remained just a numbers when I have been reporting, but now I think is the time to reveal who they are are.



Shaun Griffin



Lisa Berry



Mark Howell



Dean (Dixie) Meek



Donna Griffin



Donna Cook

Well done all of you. The branch appreciates all the work you have done.



Since our last issue, the committee have appointed a new Vice Chairman. We welcome back, Lisa Berry to replace Alan Millard, who sadly passed away during the 'lock-down'. Lisa until this year was our Branch Chairman, but decided to stand down when she found that her new job in civvy street, was more time consuming than she first thought. She is now settling in at work, and although still busy she feels that she can cope with the less tasking position of Vice Chairman.

What is happening to the future of the branch? Well to put it into one word, "LOTS"

The main thing that has happened during 'Lock-down' is that your branch has amalgamated with Stevenage branch., And we welcome all the members who have decided to join us. Introductory letters have already gone out to those members telling them all we get up to, and how we keep in touch, I hope they will excuse me if I don't repeat myself and fill up valuable pages of this newsletter, just to say "Welcome"

The Letchworth Rugby Club is open for business again., And we have had a meeting with the Club Steward to see how we can continue and keep within the Government Covid-19 guide lines.

As regards to our NAAFI BREAK, here we do not have the same good news. Those of you who have attended NAAFI BREAK in past past will know that the room we use is not as large as the Rugby Club and self distancing is a problem with the numbers that attend. I am in constant

discussions with Keith and Leslie, the owners of the Par 3 Golf Centre, as they are just as keen to have us back as we are to start up again..

During these Covid-19 days, we haven't been able to celebrate 75 years since the ending of the war involving Japan. I remember the day it was announced, but if my memory serves me well, it wasn't celebrated as much as the ending of the European war earlier. I suppose it hadn't had the same effect on the civilian population.

This photo is one from my military collection, showing a Japanese prisoner of war camp. Not many pictures were taken of this camp for security reasons.



I still can't believe people's survival instincts told them to grab toilet paper



A memory of the service days of Jim Box

When I was with 210 Squadron at Ballykelly in the 1960s, training trips on Shackletons were usually either called Operational Flying Exercises (OFE) of about 6 to 8 hours, or Long Range Operational Flying Exercises (LROFE) of 10 to 14 hours.

The crew I was with were scheduled for an OFE on a day in September 1962 which happened to be my birthday.

We had planned to do practice low level radar homings followed up by practice bombing and a sonar exercise. These exercises gave the electronics team and pilots a chance to hone their skills.



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

The second phase was the navigators turn with a navigational exercise. The annual Squadron photographic competition was taking place this particular month so we intended to find a subject to photograph for the competition.

During our final briefing the skipper, F/O Pat Patterson, asked me where I would like to go as it was my birthday. I suggested a trip to the seaside for an ice cream. Pat took me at my word and Blackpool was inserted into the navigation plan to take a photo of the tower.

The weather that day was perfect for a trawl around the coast and a visit to the seaside. Arriving at Blackpool I took position in the starboard beam seat, opened the window and prepared to take the photo with the hand held camera. Pat positioned the aircraft with a run along the shore at 300 feet which was our normal photo height for hand held cameras.

Turning on for a second run Pat said we were going for a close up. Looking through the viewfinder I found myself looking up at the just the top of the Tower. I told Pat that was a bit too close as the Tower is just over 500 feet high and we were about 400 yards out at very much less than 300 feet. We pulled up and away and completed our navex.

On returning to Ballykelly at our debrief, the Duty Operation Officer asked had we enjoyed Blackpool as an aircraft with the number 210 on the side had been reported for scaring the donkeys. A few days later the photos were back at the Squadron and the Tower picture worthy of entry to the competition. However, Pat

thought that it might “open a can of worms” and he would prefer not to have an interview with the CO with his SD cap on to explain the low level beat up of Blackpool beach, so the photo was never entered.

Nothing else was heard of our trip to the seaside and my birthday treat passed into crew history.



I couldn't find a Shackleton with the number 210 on the side, but my picture shows a Shakleton parked up at Ballykelly, number 269 - editor

Comment from the author :the photo of a 269 Shackleton is very appropriate for my story, as 269 was re-numbered 210 at Ballykelly about a year before I joined the squadron.



REQUIRE THE SERVICES OF OUR WELFARE OFFICER?

**Here are the contact details of the
branch Welfare Officer :-**

Tel :-07874015229

email :- markhowell65@gmail.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (& Emails)

Hi Ken,

Thanks for the 'Last' emergency RAFAGEN, we have found them entertaining and thank you for all your hard work.

I read the compilation of the Committee with interest, wondering who the new Vice Chairman was. Never heard of this chap 'Vancant' however reading on I find in fact it is a pseudonym for Lisa Berry, God Bless Her. She has been calling me regularly to ensure that we have everything we need and do not have any problems.

I know from her conversations she has recently started a more demanding job, so through your little publication would like to express my thanks to Lisa and all who have been keeping a watching eye on us 'Wrinklies'.

Changing the subject, I was very sad to hear the RAFA have taken the decision to permanently close Flowerdown and Rothbury Houses. I had

a similar letter last week from the RAFBF to say the decision had been taken to permanently close their home 'Princess Marina House' in Sussex.

It was obvious in the present situation the houses had to be closed during 'lockdown' because of social distancing, but it was an extra shock to see that they are all closing on a permanent basis.

My wife and I will certainly miss our stays at PMH, however we are reasonably able bodied, we feel especially sorry for those who would have attended as a period of 'Respite Care' and of course for all the wonderful caring staff. We have never stayed at the RAFA houses, but we know that the staff at PMH were exceptional in their care for all who visited.

Kind Regards,

Fred Maryon



A memorial to those who worked at Kayser Bondor Baldock and lost their lives during WWII. Recently placed in the Memorial Gardens at the Tesco Baldock store. The site of the old Kayser Bondor factory.

Opportunity for Hertfordshire Veterans to have their say about access to Healthcare

As members of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board, promoted locally as [Hertfordshire Heroes](#), we are launching a survey to better understand the healthcare needs and priorities of veterans in Hertfordshire.

The Board brings together business, military organisations, charities, the NHS and local authorities in a shared commitment, part of which is to ensure that no veteran faces a disadvantage when accessing public services.

Although it is not a garrisoned county, ONS data estimates that there are 36,000 veterans living in Hertfordshire. However, as in other parts of the country, there is relatively little data on specific issues or priorities of the Armed Forces community.

Finding out more about veterans and their experience is vital for our work to ensure the Armed Forces community face no disadvantage in accessing services.

To find out more, [watch this video from the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board's Chairman, Cllr Terry Douris.](#)

The Veteran Healthcare Access survey, which is funded by Hertfordshire Public Health and conducted by Healthwatch Hertfordshire, will be available on the Healthwatch Hertfordshire website until the 27th of September 2020.

If you are someone who has served in the Armed Forces and is accessing health services in Hertfordshire, we would like to hear from you. Please share your views and experiences by following this link: www.hertfordshireheroes.org/veteranhealthsurvey

If you would like more information about this project, or would like to request the survey in a different format, please contact Annabel on 01707 275978 or info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk



COMMITTEE NEWS

We had the call from the Letchworth Rugby Club that they would be re-opening at the beginning of August. Shaun, your chairman, decided that it would be best if the first gathering we had would be a committee meeting. This way we could resolve any queries that had occurred since the A.G.M., and ensure that we were sure that any future social evening would be safe for our members.

We sat around a table at the Letchworth Rugby Club at a social distance. Shaun, our Chairman, was unable to join us at the last minute, so our new Vice Chairman, Lisa, took the chair.

Lisa welcomed us all after so long apart, and gave a tribute to Alan Millard, who sadly passed away a few weeks earlier. The meeting began with the usual branch business, and came on to the part on the agenda marked, 'the future of the branch'.

We agreed that our monthly evenings would re-commence as from Monday 21st September 2020, but we would have to meet the Government guidelines relating to Covid-19. Self distancing, plenty of hand sanitising, and common sense. As this was the first meeting after the break, it was decided to be a social evening with the theme of The Battle of Britain. The meeting and all future meetings would start at the earlier time of 19.00 hrs.

Due to the regulations we would have to abide by, it was agreed that there would be no buffet, as at previous meetings. The bar, of course, will be open.

It was agreed that the meeting would be a little different than in the past, but we would be giving our members the opportunity to get out and meet people, all be it at arms length.

The news on NAAFI Break was not so good. The lounge that we use at the Par 3 Golf Centre is much smaller, than the Rugby Club, and it would be impossible to hold a meeting under the current regulations. As soon as the regulations are eased to allow larger gathering, we will be back with NAAFI Break.

The final item on the agenda was the Christmas Bash. It was agreed that should one be held at the Rugby Club on our usual December club night. No other decision on the subject was made until we are clearer on the Covid-19 regulations.

There being no further business we all went home.

FORGET IT!

DUE THE NEW GOVERNMENT GUIDE-LINES, AND THE NEED TO MAKE SURE OUR MEMBERS ARE SAFE, THE COMMITTEE HAVE RELUCTANTLY DECIDED TO CANCEL THE MEETING ON 21st September.

AS THE NUMBERS OF COVID-19 CONTACTS ARE ON THE INCREASE IN SOME AREAS, AND WE DO NOT WANT TO PUT OUR MEMBERS AT RISK IN ANY WAY, OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS WILL REMAIN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.



PADRE'S PAGE

A few words from our branch Padre,
Reverend Canon Lindsay Dew

Hello again,

Lockdown was a very strange experience for all of us. Life changed overnight and the world we knew became something in 'the past' as we embraced the new way of life.

Our three sons came back to live at home so we had a houseful. It's been strange but fun and we really appreciated how nice it is to sit around the table at meal times eating and talking. The two younger sons turned out to be pretty good at cooking which was much appreciated especially as my wife continued to work based at home.

My main jobs in the day have been to work with Harry in the garden and we have re-lined the pond, constructed a third raised bed (potatoes were planted and have now been harvested), planted vegetables in the other raised beds (not as successful as the potatoes), installed a second water butt and connected it to the first – thankfully it rained to prove that it all worked, planted herb pots, weeding (although you wouldn't notice!), cutting the grass, and made up netting frames to go over the beds. We've enjoyed the hopeful robins that came to join us in the garden. We also went on daily walks around the village and on Royston Heath. On a Sunday morning Melanie, Harry and I join the Zoom service from Ashwell Parish Church - I try to join in the hymns but my voice is so croaky in the morning!

Melanie and I have become fans of 'Ride upon the Storm' a Danish series about a Danish Priest and his family. It's on All 4 ([Ride Upon the Storm](#))

If you try it out don't expect The Vicar of Dibley! Swearing is frequent (what even priests?) as is sex (well it is Continental!) but the story of this family is compelling. A mix of every day life, theology, ministry, power, dominance, death and grief. If that doesn't attract you to dip into it I don't what will!

I was delighted in July when the Barbers were open again and felt like a new man once I'd had a hair cut.

I also had time to do a bit of research into my time in the RAF. I knew it would be 50 years ago in September this year that I joined up and arrived at RAF Swinderby for square bashing. My Attestation date was Sept 15th and it took place in Swindon. The next day I was on the train bound for 6 happy weeks at Swinderby.



Most of you will have had similar stories of the changes you've had to make over the past few months. Like me you will have depended on family and friends to help out and to offer support and care. It will have been a struggle for some and thankfully there have been excellent volunteers from our Branch who have been able to be a listening ear and a ready willingness to do some shopping or run errands. We have much to be thankful for even though it may have been tough. The Church very quickly provided prayers and one that I used often reads:

Lord God, we entrust to you the families and communities affected by Coronavirus, wherever they may be.

We pray especially for health care workers, that you may guide and protect them.

We pray that your Spirit might inspire those researching new medicines and treatments.

And in the midst of this, keep us strong in faith, hope and love. Grant us the courage and perseverance to be good neighbours.

May the words of your Son Jesus Christ in the Our Father,

be our prayer as we entrust ourselves and all of us who are affected

to your infinite power and love. Amen.

I look forward to seeing those who are able to attend at the next Branch meeting.

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. You can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

Kind regards & blessings

Lindsay

Revd Canon Lindsay Dew



COVID-19 MUSINGS



At my local store there is a big ‘X’ by the till for me to stand on.....I’ve seen too many Road Runner cartoons to fall for that one.

The worst thing I bought in 2019 was a 2020 planner

The buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other.

I never thought to comment “I wouldn’t touch him/her with a six foot pole” would become national policy, but here we are!

They said a mask and gloves were enough to go to the grocery store

They lied, everybody else had clothes on.

I’m going to stay up on New Year’s Eve this year. Not to see the New Year in, but to make sure this one leaves.



The Battle of Britain began in the summer of 1940 just a few months after Winston Churchill first became Prime Minister. It was fully expected that the Battle was a prelude of Adolf Hitler's invasion of the British Isles (Operation Sea Lion). The Battle was fought entirely by air with the German Luftwaffe eventually being successfully fought off by Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF).

Nearly a month before the Battle of Britain began, Winston Churchill gave one of his most famous speeches. In the House of Commons on 18 June 1940 Churchill gave his famous 'Finest Hour' speech.

On the 20th of August 1940, as the battle raged on, Winston Churchill give another of his famous rousing speeches. Paying tribute to the fortitude of the Royal Air Force, he coined one of his most famous lines, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."



KEN'S COVID THOUGHTS

During the lock-down I have had a lot of time to ponder over a few things that have worried me for some time. For example.

- What if my dog only brings back the ball because he thinks I like throwing it?
- If poison is past its expiry date, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
- Which letter is silent in the word "Scent", the S or the C?
- Do twins ever realise that one of them is unplanned?
- Why is the letter W, in English, called double u? Shouldn't it be called double v?
- May oxygen is slowly killing you and it just takes 75 - 100 years to work fully.
- Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.

Answers on a postcard please, but do not send them to me. I am too busy worrying.

