

 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCES**

**SPECIAL  
ELECTRONIC  
EDITION**

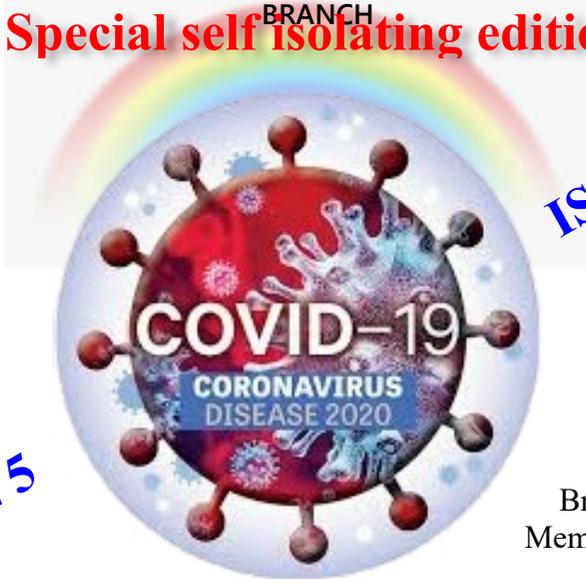
**Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

**RAFAGEN**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT

BRANCH  
**Special self isolating edition**



**ISSUE 5**

**ISSUE 5**

Branch  
Membership

**186**



**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:- Alan Millard*

*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*

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

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

*From*  
*The Red Arrows*



*To*  
*Letchworth, Hitchin & District Branch*  
*of*  
*The Royal Air Forces Association*

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

## Ken's comments



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](mailto:Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk)

During these days of Self Isolating, the video phoning has become very popular, with these modern phones and computers. But the other day I phoned, the old fashioned way, my friend and golfing partner, Roy Newbury., to make sure this 90+ year old is looking after himself. I got a bit of a surprise to hear that he is more organised than I am.

He has planned a route around his very large garden, and each day walks the route. At the start of the route, he has two boxes. One containing a number of golf balls, and box number two is empty. Once he has completed a circuit, he places one of the golf balls into box number two. When he has had enough walking for that day, he counts the number of balls which are now in box number two, to check what he has done. He says he usually finds about four. I think that is very good, but then I know the size of his



garden. I think I would have to walk around my garden about twelve times to Roy's one. Well done Roy.

Occasionally he has fish and chips from the local pub. He pops down the road to collect them, returns, and enjoys a nice meal at home. All this is done whilst conforming to the rules and regulations of Self Isolating. Orders have to be placed in advance, and a time arranged for collection. The order is collected from a window on the side of the pub, and payment is made by a contactless card. All very well organised. He has also had meals cooked for him by neighbours, and often enjoys a chat to them over the garden wall. He has a relation living not too far away, who shops for him when required. I have a feeling that Roy will be a little sorry when we are back to some sort of normality.

As many members know, each year Roy goes off to the town of Mailly-Le-Camp in France, to join the locals in remembering those of Bomber Command whose aircraft came down in the area and the crew

lost. (One such airmen was the subject of a talk at one of our social meetings). Also joining Roy on these pilgrimages are serving men and women from R.A.F. Brize Norton. This year, because of restrictions, Roy was not able to go. But Roy didn't forget those men.



He told me that he didn't have to be in France to say a few words in remembrance of those lost airman. So on VE-Day he found a union

flag, some bunting, and like so many others, decorated the front of his house. To add a little extra he flew the Standard of the Aircrew Association. He then proceeded to give a short dedication. Upon turning around he found that he had caused a crowd of about twenty local residents to gather, (all at the official distance apart). That was a high percentage of the population of the village in which he lives. When he saw the crowd, he told them why he was doing what he did, and explained about going off to France each year. The on lookers showed their appreciation. And so they should.

Thinking about Roy, Sir Major Tom and a number of our branch members, I think the old saying “Life begins at 40” will have to be changed to “Life begins at 90”.

### **3rd and 4th May 1944**

MAILLY-LE-CAMP 346 Lancasters and 14 Mosquitoes of 1 and 5 Groups and 2 Pathfinder Mosquitoes to bomb a German panzer training centre and military camp situated close to the French village of Mailly. 42 Lancasters were lost, 11.6 percent of the force.



# From our own correspondent.

Dateline 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020. - Lincolnshire

Yesterday was the day that the MoD announced that the Red Arrows were to be garaged at RAF Waddington in two years time, but the flying space over Scampton will be theirs to practice in.

Waddington's AWAC's (airborne early warning and control aircraft) are retiring after 30 years, but the R.A.F. are leasing 4 American P15's which are the replacements to the old Boeings, however the Joint Services small Belfast Built Bombardier aircraft will continue on.

There are only three in service after the last Government cancelled the MR2, the Nimrods and the other five Bombardiers whose airframes were just about completed as were the Nimrods, in favour of the American deal.

The main camp at Scampton is subject to several speculative manoeuvres ,the local MP wants it to be built on with 40,000 houses.

The local West Lindsey Council need to have new HQ and Scampton was suggested.

Lincolnshire County Council want a new base for all their offices and equipment. At the moment they are in an old building in the centre of Lincoln. The the annual bill to the City Council is in excess of £1,000,000, just for car parking. .

So there are plenty of options, but whatever else happens the camp shuts in two years, **but** the airfield remains open for about ten more years.

That's all we are allowed to know at the moment.



# WE HAVE MAIL

(Or rather e-mail)



Dear Ken,

I was wondering if it would be possible to place this appeal in your next Letchworth and Hitchin RAFA newsletter, or circulate it by e mail on social media. Your help would be truly appreciated to enable this meaningful tribute to RAF Scampton to happen.

## **RAF Scampton Commemorative Stained Glass Window Appeal**

RAF Scampton is one of the oldest RAF stations in the UK. It is to be decommissioned 2022.

A project to create a stunning RAF stained glass window at Scampton Church has been launched. [www.scamptonchurch.org/raf-stained-glass-window](http://www.scamptonchurch.org/raf-stained-glass-window)

The window will create a lasting memory to all who served in squadrons at the station, both in peacetime, during the two world wars and the cold war.

Many events were organised this year to raise funds. All of which have now been cancelled. However, the projects 'Grand Aviation Raffle' is still on-going. Please help by purchasing a ticket.

Full details of the fantastic aviation prizes and a link to buy tickets online can be found at [www.scamptonchurch.org/aviationraffle](http://www.scamptonchurch.org/aviationraffle)

Also our 'dedicate a window pane' initiative is still running. For more information please e mail: [rafwindow@scamptonchurch.org](mailto:rafwindow@scamptonchurch.org).

In the meantime enjoy part of the Royal Air Force's heritage in RAF Scampton's Vulcans.

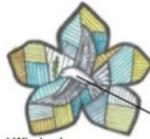


Sponsorship of panels:  
Suggested minimum donation £100  
for any numbered piece of glass

# RAF Scampton Window

## Sponsor a Glass Panel

May 2020



'Dove Window'  
Denise Parker

**'Roundel Window'**  
Moulds Fencing

**'Dove Window'**  
Denise Parker

95 The Witham Group

100 Sandra & Ken Allen

103 Jess Myers

114 Joe Bartrop

RAF Crest  
Bomber Command  
Memorial Trustees,  
Green Park London

'Commemorating those who  
served at RAF Scampton'  
The Jenkinson  
Family

'SW Mustering Areas'  
Lincolnshire Lancaster  
Association

158 Liz Harwood

159 - '57 & 630' Squadrons

160 Ian Jones

'Lancaster'  
The Lockwood  
Family

163 Neil & Sally Haire

174 Lincolnshire Lancaster  
Association

166 Verman Morgan

167 Dambusters 168 Dove's Daily  
Inn Bread

97 Shelagh  
Wright

100 Sibs &  
Betheridge

101

102

104

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

118

117

120

121

122

123

126

125

127

128

133

129

130

131

132

134

135

136

137

138 Ian  
Dale

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

151

152

153 Sue  
Wright

37 & 38  
(K8) C  
Squadron  
Assoc'n

12 & 17 Sue Deacon

10

11

15

16

13

14

20

21

22

25

18

19

24

30

27 & 29 Sue Deacon

33 Jill  
Owen

23

26

28

32

36

Red 3 - Stephen Edwardson  
& Heather Locking

Red1 - Hearing Star

Red5 - ITP Aero

Red6 - PING Europe

Red2 - Thermofax Ltd

Red 9 - Bernard & Edith Stirk

Red4 - John Egging Family

Red8 - Tiger Gin

Red7 - Ian Dale

50 Glynis Hunter

31

35

39

40

41

42

44

45

46

43

49

53

54

47

48

52

57

59

60

51

56

58

61

62

'Runway and Airfield'  
The RAF Historical Society

'Vulcan'  
Angela Woolford

66 Alf Britchford

65 David Viles

64 Martin Harold

'Dated Panel'  
Lindum Group

72

73

74

63

67

71

68

70

77 Wilco Krul

75

76

80

78

79

81

82

83

84

85

86

'RAF Scampton Badge'  
Sue Wright

87

88

90

91

92

94

89 Julie Shopfedge

93 Evelyn & Ruty Sanders/Theodore & Lola Edwards



## ***Project HELPLINE***

***Having no one to talk to can be incredibly isolating, particularly if you're used to sharing your home and time with others. We know that shielding and self-isolation due to COVID-19 is causing many people among our RAF community to feel very lonely. Something as simple as a friendly chat can make all the difference.***

***We are determined to ensure that no single member of our community is alone and struggling through these difficult times.***

***We are providing a freephone friendship line for anyone in our RAF community to call if you are feeling isolated, in need of more specific support, or simply want to chat with someone who understands.***

***We can also arrange for a dedicated friend from our amazing army of volunteers to make regular telephone contact.***

If you need someone to talk to, please call 0800 018 2361 or email [opconnect@rafa.org.uk](mailto:opconnect@rafa.org.uk).

To volunteer your services to our friendship helpline or to become a telephone befriender, please email [opconnect@rafa.org.uk](mailto:opconnect@rafa.org.uk).

We are here and will continue to be here for anyone that needs us. We are united, standing shoulder to shoulder with our RAF community in these times of crisis.

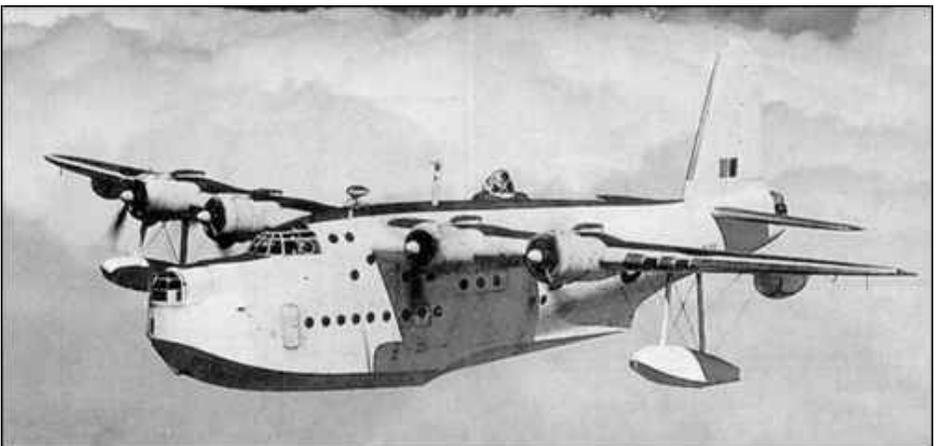
# SUNDAY NAVEX

By Member Fred Maryon

During my time on 230 Squadron at Pembroke Dock, in my capacity as a Flight Engineer on Sunderland's we continued with our various flight tasks. On a Sunday we were tasked to carry out a navigation exercise with the Royal Navy, to search for and liaise with HMS Cleopatra which was steaming through the Bay of Biscay.

The aircraft was kitted out with Primus stoves on which the engineer or signaller who was not on duty was cooking a meal for the crew. We located the cruiser and after our captain had exchanged pleasantries with the ship's captain, the aircraft set course for home, we were happy that we had completed our task.

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon and we felt relaxed on the return journey. After perhaps 30 minutes, peace was broken as the captain ordered "*Dinghy dinghy prepare for ditching!*" We were often subjected to these drills to prepare us for the eventuality of problems such as loss of engine power and having to land on the sea.



The open sea is generally too rough to expect to land a Sunderland on without it being damaged. We were certain that this was just a practice but true to our training and discipline we went through the motions as we had been taught. Suddenly I noticed smoke rising from the galley, (the engineers position was on the flight deck directly above the galley). I thought, S—t! Perhaps, it isn't a practice after all, and instantly took a lot more interest and took my position braced for the impending impact.

However, some minutes later the Captain confirmed that it had been a practice. The smoke that I had seen was rising from the Primus stoves which had just been extinguished.

The captain however had forgotten to advise the signaller that it was a practice drill, so he had been following procedure and sending out '*Mayday*' calls on his radio.

The comforting thing was that HMS Cleopatra had turned in our direction to come to our rescue, and the rescue organisation in Scotland HQ 18 Group at Petrevice Castle had received the message and had alerted all shipping in our area. Coastal Command Shackletons had been scrambled to search for us.

*Similar stories required for your branch, award winning newsletter. Your stories bring back memories to our older members, and our younger members like them too, as they learn what it was like in days gone by.*

*It also proves that the Royal Air Force wasn't formed yesterday.*



Fred, standing on the fuselage of a Sunderland.

## **REQUIRE THE SERVICES OF OUR NEW WELFARE OFFICER?**

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

**Mark Howell**

*Tel :-07874015229*

*email :- markhowell65@gmail.com*

If you need to contact Mark urgently and he is not available, contact the branch secretary, Ken Needham



### **LETCWORTH COVID-19 VOLUNTEERS**

**A group of volunteers from the Letchworth, Hitchin & District branch of R.A.F.A.**

A message from Lisa Berry, one of our volunteers looking after the branch members who are over 70.

“I have loads of flour (plain) if you need flour or if you fancy some homemade scones then I’m your girl. Let me know. You can get my details through Ken”.



**Cpl Needham K.**

## **INVESTIGATION UPDATES**

These investigations are closing until we can get back to normal and get the stories out to more members.

# MODERN MEMORIES

By Ken Needham

A few years ago I, along with other branch members were helping man a RAFA stall with R.A.F. Henlow on Hitchin Market Place.

During the morning a gentleman, about the same age as me, came up to me and said those words we all like to hear when on this kind of duty, “I was in the Royal Air Force”. This means that you, or one of your colleagues is going to wander off down memory lane. In this case, it was my turn.

“What trade?” I asked, always hoping it is the same trade as me. “D.I.” was the answer. In my days of the Air Force, the trade D.I. was most hated by new recruits. For those of you who don’t know the letters D.I. they mean Drill Instructor. It was the duty of these men, and I use the word ‘men’ loosely, was to ‘get raw recruits’ into some sort of shape for their future in the Air Force.

Treading lightly I then asked “What Basic Training station were you at?” as there was more than one in my day. Remember National Service was still going. “West Kirby, 1956” he proudly answered. I went cold, when thinking of my hatred for D.I’s. “Same station and same year as me” I squeaked, trying to see if I recognised his face, for you never forget the face of your D.I. “I was in Smutts Flight” I added. “I wasn’t” he answered without saying which flight he was in.



How your locker looked before inspection.

After realising only the camp and year was the only thing we had in common, our conversation went to talk about the things that the D.I.'s used to get up to. Like throwing ones kit from one end of the billet to the other, because in their view it was dirty. Tipping your bed over because your bed-pack wasn't level. Cancelling leisure time because he couldn't see his face in the floor. When this happened, you could almost hear everyone saying under their breath, "If I had a face like yours, I wouldn't want to see my face in the floor".

And we went on swapping anecdotes for quite some time, until his wife came to join us. "He can enthuse on his R.A.F days for hours, and we have shopping to do." We said our 'goodbye', and he followed his wife into the market. How times have changed, I thought. He would have never have taken instructions from anyone in 1956.

That isn't the end of my story, for standing at the side of me listening to our conversation was a serving S.A.C. from the camp. "You know", he said thoughtfully, "I have heard those sort of tales about the D.I.'s before, but I never thought they were true". They were true, airman, they certainly were true.



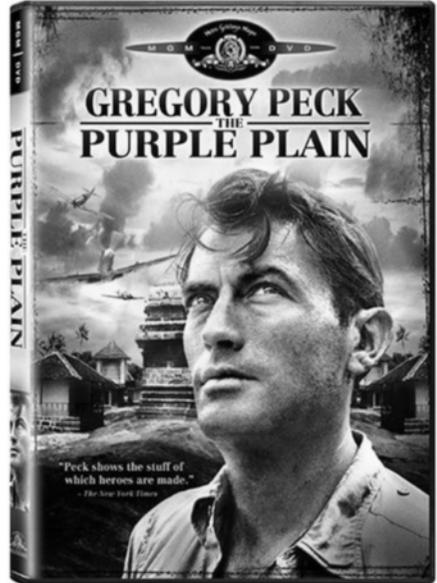
We didn't worry about the D.I.'S all of the time at Square Bashing. We used to get that pot-bellied stove, glowing red. There was no Health & Safety in those days.

*As we appear to be getting bombarded with films from the past on the Television at the moment, I thought you might like to hear about film when R.A.F. Personnel have been asked to be extras.*

*I have several from my days in Ceylon, but do you have any stories, or suggestions?*

## **FILMS IN WHICH R.A.F. PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN EXTRAS.**

*The Purple Plain* was a British Rank Company medium budget production of a post-war H E Bates novel directed by Robert Parrish in 1954. It was shot on site in Ceylon and the actor Gregory Peck played the part of Bill Forrester a pilot in the R.A.F serving in far off Burma in the closing months of World War II, who had gone 'around the bend' after losing his new wife in the Blitz. After hearing the news he becomes self destructive, wanting to end it all in combat but instead he just kept getting medals. He then falls in love with Anna a small, slim, pretty teacher, played



by Burmese actress Win Min Than, and his life begins to turn around. The depiction of the native Burmese was respectful without being condescending; for instance, the love between Bill and Anna was portrayed in a very reserved manner, as it would have been between a Westerner and an Asian woman in real life. However, during a routine flight, Bill and two others go down in a very remote desert area of Burma's central (purple) plain and from there on in, the film turns into a struggle for survival. During filming at Sigaria Rock however, the R.A.F Police from R.A.F Colombo had apparently been sent to the film set to investigate the theft of some property and it was during subsequent enquiries, that

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

R.A.F Police Corporal Roy D Buswell had been introduced, by one of the R.A.F personnel who was one of the film extras, to Gregory Peck early one morning. Indeed, he recalled that the actor had been a perfect gentleman, who had invited him to take breakfast with him. During his visit to the film set, Corporal Buswell had been astounded by the amount of detail that went into the making of the film, and more importantly the amount of responsibility taken on by Jean, the continuity girl.



A number of the locations used in the making of The Purple Plain was later used in the making of The Bridge on the River Kwai..

I have a lot more personal details on the making of The Bridge on the River Kwai, as they had just finished filming when I arrived on the island. So I had first hand stories of the production, as most of the camp has been the prisoners, with one or two having speaking parts.



Too well fed for Japanese prisoners of war

They should have gone on short rations for the period of the making of the film

# TELEPHONE NUMBERS YOU NEED TO KNOW - JUST IN CASE

## LOCALLY

MARK HOWELL WELFARE OFFICER

**0787 401 5229**

E MAIL [markhowell65@gmail.com](mailto:markhowell65@gmail.com)

REV. CANON LINDSAY DEW - BRANCH PADRE

**0754 587 8082**

E MAIL [lindsay.dew@btinternet.com](mailto:lindsay.dew@btinternet.com)

KEN NEEDHAM - ACTING BRANCH COORDINATOR

**01462 671 534**

EMAIL [secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk)

## NATIONALLY

R.A.F.A. HEAD QUARTERS -

**0800 018 2361**

**Or**

**0116 266 5224.**