

Branch
Membership

227

As at 1-12-21

ROYAL AIR FORCES Association

The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER & MAGAZINE OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN &
DISTRICT BRANCH

WINTER 2021



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

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RAFAGEN

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

ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2021



Chairman:- W.O. Shaun Griffin

Vice Chairman:- Ken Needham

Secretary:- Marie Mahoney

(Contact:- secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk)

Treasurer:- Ken Needham

Wings Appeal Officer:- Ken Needham

Branch Welfare Officer: Vacant

Contact:-Branch Secretary email :-secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk

**Membership Secretaries:- Shaun Griffin &
Ken Needham**

Branch Padre:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew

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General Committee:

Roy Newbury: John Airey: Headley Parkin

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

RAFAGEN is compiled and edited by Ken Needham

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NAAFI BREAK is held at The Par 3 Golf Centre, Willian Way,
Letchworth Garden City SG6 2HJ on the last Wednesday of
each month 10.00 hrs 'til 12.00 hrs

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

FROM WARRANT OFFICER SHAUN GRIFFIN

Let me start by wishing you and your families a very joyous and peaceful Christmas and New Year. I hope that we can all enjoy the festivities this year, given the difficulties we all experienced this time last year.

Of course, Christmas always presents opportunities to bring families together and share warmth comfort and exchange gifts, especially if like me you have birthday that falls on 25th December.



I consider our Branch to be a family, perhaps not in the traditional sense but most definitely we are a group of friends who share a common sense of unity and identity and collectively foster and promote support for one another – I do hope that our Branch Members draw strength from being part of our group. In these modern times being part of a group isn't always in a physical sense, perhaps our website and Facebook pages help others who don't live local to Hertfordshire to feel part of our Branch and enjoy its comradeship, it's one of the main reasons we work hard to maintain those things, alongside and complimenting this excellent **RAFAGEN** newsletter.

Despite all the challenges we have faced as a Nation, an Association and as a R.A.F.A. Branch, we have managed to maintain some semblance of Branch functionality. Our NAAFI Break social event grows in numbers and purpose month on month, it's really been our outstanding success and must be credited to Ken Needham its driving force and Marie our secretary who supports it so very capably. We have reached out to our local communities in 2021 both in Letchworth on Armed Forces Day in the Summer and in Hitchin collecting for Wings Appeal in September. Our Branch membership has risen very recently to just short of 230 members, we have raised in excess of £600 for R.A.F.A. Wings Appeal in 2021.

So, finishing on a personal note – by the time you read this I will have started my last tour of duty in the Royal Air Force at R.A.F. Shawbury in Shropshire, having spent the last 4 years in Suffolk. This will bring to a close my R.A.F. career of 38 years, I will be moving to Grimsby or Hull in 2023 to settle in to being an Ex-Serviceman but wanted to assure you all that I remain committed to the Branch in the meantime. All that remains is for me to wish you all Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Shaun



DIMPLES Bar & Cafe. Willian Way, Letchworth Garden City.

Open Tuesday - Sunday

The home of the Branch NAAFI BREAK

Last Wednesday morning of each month 10.00 hrs til noon



NEWS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

During the two minutes silence at the recent Remembrance Day parade, my thoughts went back to a friend and colleague who passed away during my tour in Ceylon in 1957. His death was not due to enemy fire, but from Polio caught whilst on R.A.F. Police duties in Singapore. On the day of the funeral the whole of the off duty 'snowdrops' were kitted out in their smart tropical

uniforms with the white webbing highly polished by the 'room boys'. That is all except me. For some unknown reason I had been selected as a member of the Guard of Honour, and had to be dressed in number one tropical kit, and was given a rifle, something I had not used since basic training.



My lasting thought on that solemn day, was that although the temperature would have been in the high 30's, as we passed through the gates of the cemetery in the centre of Colombo, the temperature appeared to drop.

Fifty years later a few of the friends who had been on the island the same time as I, returned for a re union. During our stay some of us decided that we would visit the grave of our old friend and colleague. We arranged with the War Graves Commission for someone to point the grave out to us, for none of us could remember the location. In this cemetery there is a plot cared for by the War Graves Commission, but as our friend had not died during the war or in combat, he was not in this area, although his grave is cared for by the War Graves Commission.

As we left the taxi and walked through the gates of the cemetery, I had the same feeling as I did all those years ago, the air suddenly became cooler, or was that, in both cases just my imagination?.



With the coming of the New Year comes the task of preparing for the Branch Annual General Meeting in March. The Officers of the Committee will be preparing to gather all the information of the past year ready for the Annual Report.



We will also be looking for members to form a Committee for 2022. All the members of the present Committee as mentioned on page 2 of this issue, will be up for re-election, should they wish to continue, and we hope they will, but we would like new names to be put forward as well. There is room on the Committee for more.

If you would like to join us, please contact Marie, our secretary and pass on your name and the position you would like to be considered for. If you want to know more of what the committee do, just ask one of the present members,

THERE WILL BE NO DECEMBER NAAFI BREAK

Your membership helps change lives

Our case workers and **Connections for Life** volunteers make over

100,000

outreach calls to people in need in an average year.



Our specialist online services, **Finding It Tough?** and **Navigating Dementia**, help nearly

4,500

people get through the most difficult times of their lives.



Our four retirement accommodation complexes around the UK enable

150 PEOPLE

to retain their independence.



More than

430 CHILDREN

of serving personnel receive childcare at our **RAFA Kidz nurseries** – an essential service for so many RAF families.



A bond that lasts a lifetime

You share a special connection with everyone in the RAF community. Your membership means we can continue to transform lives, helping exceptional men, women and their families in their darkest days.

You're also part of a thriving community, where you can get together with friends at your local branch, hear fascinating talks, and meet new people who share the bond of history, service and comradeship.

If you have any questions about membership, please call us on **0800 018 2361**, Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1700.

Or you can email us at membership@rafa.org.uk



Stay connected with our Air Mail magazine

ROYAL AIR FORCES Association
The charity that supports the RAF family





Padre 's Hour

Revd. Cannon Lindsay Dew

Hello again,

I was thinking back to last year – maybe it's a year we want to forget – the pandemic was raging and taking its toll with many deaths recorded (maybe our friends and loved ones) and just before December 2020 the talk was of a further lock down and restrictions over the Christmas season. All of us will have been effected in one way or another with plans and preparations having to be cancelled or postponed – family gatherings couldn't take place and the usual festivities with friends had to be avoided. There was some talk of Christmas being cancelled. Maybe those who warned of such things were right but only in one way - the usual Christmas trappings were cancelled or at the very least curtailed and postponed – but the heart of Christmas and it's meaning, the story that started it all, this could never be cancelled. There was a lot of disappointment and a national feeling of hopelessness as we faced a very uncertain future. The essential story of Christmas with the birth of a fragile and vulnerable baby occurred against the same backdrop of disappointment and hopelessness.

Thankfully churches were not closed last year – although many people who might have attended stayed at home and shared in the services via Zoom or Facebook – they could even listen on the phone. Numbers were down and it was a very strange experience to take service in almost empty churches. But Christmas wasn't cancelled. The story of that first Christmas was heard again, the carols were sung (or at least as far as were able to sing), worship was offered, and God's blessing was sought not just for ourselves but for His world, the world He loved so much that his gave His Son, Jesus. A world facing disruption, fear, heartache and sadness.

It was into this same kind of world that Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago - a world of uncertainty, a world of sorrow and sadness, a world with the normal mix of human failure and success. The message that Jesus came to live and to show was the message of God's love. His presence with us in our joys and in our sorrows and to love us so much that He would draw us back to a living experience of the His love which makes all the difference.

As we look back we have much to be thankful for not least for the development of the vaccine now being rolled out for all to be protected. Life is now easing slowly back to a sense of normality and a few months ago we started to run our own NAAFI Break again. Many Branch members helped in the lock down by phoning and offering support to members who had no other contact. Thank you to everyone for your work and friendship.

So as you prepare for Christmas 2021 do remember to hear the story again and to say 'thank you' for all the good things we have received not least health and wellbeing, remembering too those who have lost their lives, or have been very poorly.

As we prepare, with all haste towards Christmas, I hope that all of us might be encouraged to spend some time in opening of lives to the wonder of God's love in the birth of His Son.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a joyful, peaceful New Year.

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, and the NAAFI Break, as well as serving on the Committee. You can ring me on 07545878082 or email me on lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com

Cheers & blessings

Lindsay

Revd Canon Lindsay Dew



A Message From Your Former Welfare Officer & Standard Bearer

It has been my pleasure and honour over the past couple of years to be your Welfare Officer and your friend. During lock down I had some extremely interesting conversations with those who were unfortunate enough to have me as their befriender. I make no apologies as I enjoyed those conversations immensely.

It is sad for me to be leaving the branch as I have made some very good friends whom I admire for their stalwart work and support for the branch.

As Standard Bearer for the Branch I have had, I think, one of the most honourable and privileged positions that I could ever dream of. To represent the Letchworth, Hitchin and District branch of RAFA at remembrance services and to honour those that have passed at their funeral services fills me with a great sense of pride.



It is my intention to join a branch in the area I am moving to, and hopefully be able to continue to be off help and support to our veterans and their families.

I wish all of you all the best for the future.

Per Ardua Ad Astra

Mark Howell

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

FROM YOUR COMMITTEE



SHAUN GRIFFIN



KEN NEEDHAM



LINDSAY DEW



MARIE MAHONEY



JOHN AIREY



ROY NEWBURY



HEADLEY PARKINS



- Shaun *"Wishing you and your families a very joyous and peaceful Christmas and New Year"*
- Ken *"Best wishes for Christmas, and have a great New Year"*
- Marie *"My sincere best wishes to all RAFA members and their families for a Merry Christmas and a much better 2022".*
- Lindsay *"I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a joyful, peaceful New Year"*
- John *"Merry Christmas to all, and a Happy New Year".*
- Roy *"Wishing you all a Merry Christmas".*
- Headley *"Merry Christmas to all our members".*

Keep yourself and others well

Follow these steps to help stop the spread of germs.

Helpful hints to protect you and your family



Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly **with soap and warm water**, it's the best way to stop germs spreading and can help prevent **colds, flu, sickness** and **diarrhoea**.



Try to stay away from others **for 48 hours** if you have had **sickness** or an **upset stomach**.



Use **tissues** to catch your cough or sneeze and then **throw them in the bin**.



Keep surfaces like **door handles** and **toilet flushes** clean with **anti-bacterial cleaner**.



Don't touch your **eyes, nose or mouth** with unwashed hands.



NAAFI BREAK GALLERY



OCTOBER & NOVEMBER



The Last Post

A chance to pause for a moment in quiet contemplation for our friends and colleagues who have passed away

Mr Peter Deary
of Letchworth Garden City



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mr James Day of Biggleswade

Miss Maddie Elton of Chicksands

Mr Grayhome Orlebar of Broadway Glos.

Mr Chris Nicholl of Hitchin

Mr Liam Osbiston of Letchworth

Ms Denise Poynter of Letchworth

Mrs Audrey Poynter of Letchworth

Mr Steven Wall of Stevenage

Mr Willem Hepson of Welwyn

HITCHIN

WINGS APPEAL COLLECTION

To celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Britain, we held a stall in the Hitchin High Street. All the money collected was for our Wings Appeal 2021, money collected from donations of people of Hitchin, and through the sales of RAFA merchandise or just donations from passes-by.

Our Chairman, Shaun, offered a completion to all volunteers on the day. The volunteer who guessed the amount of cash collected on the day, or nearest to that figure, would receive a good bottle of wine.

The total amount collected was £401.36, and the winner was member Brenda Box. Brenda was only a few pounds out of being spot on.

The presentation of the bottle of wine was made at the October NAAFI BREAK by the Branch Secretary, Marie Mahoney.



Make sure that you are a volunteer at our next event. It could be you winning the bottle of wine.



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



2021

It has been a difficult year for the Royal British Legion in North Herts to ensure that we had the Remembrance Sunday, as we have in the past. Problems arose when the NHDC told the Royal British Legion's local branches that they were unable to allow the parades to go ahead.

In the end, and after many meetings between the local RBL and the Council, the parades went ahead, being that some were amended in order that they didn't break the law.

The biggest problem was the Letchworth service, as this caused the biggest disruption. At one time it was suggested that a smaller service be held on Broadway Gardens, but in the end the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation came to the rescue and made arrangements for the event to go ahead as it had in the past.

As our Branch now covers Stevenage, these problems did not involve Stevenage.

Wreaths were laid at memorials in the area on behalf of the Royal Air Forces Association. In Baldock by Pauline Collinson; in Letchworth Garden City by Marie Mahoney; in Hitchin by John Airey and in Stevenage by Brian Kemp.



BALDOCK



LETCHWORTH



STEVENAGE



HITCHIN

LOCKDOWN PASTIMES FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR

FROM THE FILES OF THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

If you're getting fed up with the Coronavirus lockdown, spare a thought for those at home during the Second World War. Air raids, separation from loved ones and food rationing put the population under great stress. People could still go out, of course, but the range of entertainment available at home was very limited. How did people cope and occupy their time indoors, or when confined in shelters?



This wholesome image of a wartime family enjoying some 'downtime' is typical of those used by the Ministry of Information for public information and propaganda campaigns.

Dad reads the newspaper, mum darns some tights ('Make Do and Mend'...) and the children play quietly or broaden their minds with suitable reading material. This photo was taken in 1942 and captures the Chillingworth

family in front of the fire in the living room of their suburban London home.

There was no Wi-Fi in those days but you could still go 'wireless', listening to your favourite radio programs as other members of the family read the newspaper or knitted.



This family was pictured in Taunton, Somerset, on a Sunday afternoon in 1942. The BBC was the main vehicle for official announcements, and played a vital role helping to support public morale. Comedy was its most important weapon – for example, ITMA (‘It’s That Man Again’) was a hugely popular show, with almost 40 percent of the population tuning in every week.



There were more active ways of passing the time. Parlour games were a popular distraction, as shown in the above image, taken in April 1944. It features Lance Bombardier Jack Grundy of the Royal Artillery, on leave at the family home in Irby, Cheshire. Here, Jack and his friend Bob Milliron from the US Army transfer dried peas between plates by means of sucking through a straw. Jack’s wife Dorothy is the umpire, and other members of the family are avid spectators.

In this thrilling game featured in the image on the right, participants have to pass a matchbox to one another, using only their nose. This image was snapped by Lt. Tenner in April 1944.

The IWM has examples of more traditional board and card games with which wartime families could while away the time.

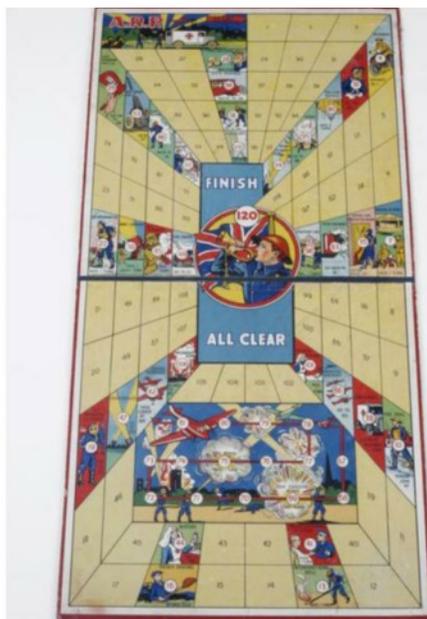
‘Vacuation’, described modestly by its makers Pepys Games as ‘the most amusing ever card game’, was based on the government evacuation scheme for children. The cards featured humorous caricatures of children,

teachers and householders and the aim was to get rid of all your cards as soon as possible.

‘War Planes’ was a standard deck of cards, but each featured a silhouette of an RAF or German aircraft, making it educational for members of the armed forces, the Observer Corps and amateur plane-spotters everywhere.



I remember having a pack of these War Planes cards, as a child during the war. - Editor



And if all else failed... unlike the Lock-Down of today, the pubs were still open. Alcohol was not rationed but only beer was readily available, and its supply and strength varied considerably as a result of shortages. Here labourer Price Evans sinks a pint in the 'Wynnstay Arms' in the village of Ruabon in Denbighshire, Wales, 1944.



ALL OF THE ABOVE STORIES ARE FROM THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM WEB SITE

The RAFAGEN is produced every quarter and sent to members of the Letchworth, Hitchin & District branch of the Royal Air Forces Association.

If you would like to tell your story in RAFAGEN or have any comments about the magazine, the branch or the Association, we would like to hear from you. It can either be by hard copy through the mail, (any photographs will be returned immediately) to Ken Needham 68 Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 3HJ, or via email to kwn056@btinternet.com

The next issue will be published in February 2022

NAAFI BREAKS for the next few months are as follows :-

There will be no December meeting,

Wednesday 26th January 2022

Wednesday 23rd February 2022

Wednesday 30th March 2022

Should you wish not to receive the regular issues of RAFAGEN, would you please advise the branch secretary on secretary@rafa-letchworth.org.uk, who will arrange for your address to be deleted from our list.

