

**RANC
MEMBERSHIP**

200

Association

The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER & MAGAZINE OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN &
DISTRICT BRANCH (including Stevenage)

WINTER 2025



Branch Registered Charity No. 1071536

Association Registered Charity No. England 226686 Scotland SC37673

Patron His Majesty King Charles III

RAFAGEN

The official newsletter and magazine of the
ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION
LETCWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT
BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2025/6



Hon. President Viscount Lord Trenchard

Chairman:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew

Vice Chairman:- Jim Box

Secretary:- Marie Mahoney

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

Treasurer:- Ken Needham

Wings Appeal Officer:- Vacant

Membership Secretary:- Ken Needham

Branch Padre:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew

Contact details :- Tel :- 07545 878082

Email :- lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com

General Committee:

John Airey: John Tunesi: Elliot Needham:

Bernard Drummond: Umesh Sachania (co-opted)

Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Vacant

For Welfare Contact:-Branch Secretary

Email :-secretary@rafa-lethworth.org.uk

Or direct to RAFA Head Quarters

RAFAGEN is compiled and edited by Ken Needham

(email kwn056@btinternet.com Telephone 07564 947308)



**VISIT OUR
WEBSITE**

rafa-lethworth.org.uk



A suggestion was made to me the other week for an idea for RAFAGEN, which I will trial this issue.

Simply we will show a photo of a NAAFI BREAKER in uniform from days gone by to see if you can recognise them. We will give the answer in the following issue. No prizes, just a bit of fun.

If you would like to take part and have a photo taken in uniform, either send it by email to me or I can scan it, and return it to you.

I was looking through my album to see if I could find a suitable photo in uniform. Two problems. As I was mostly in the tropics most of my photos show me wearing shorts and a tee shirt, and those in uniform would give the game away straight away with the white webbing.

See how good you are with our first photo on page 5.



As this is the last RAFAGEN of 2025 may I take the opportunity to wish you and yours all the best for the Christmas Season. I pass

on my wishes to the Management and staff of Dimples, for letter us disrupt the cafe for our monthly NAAFI BREAK.

As you are aware there is no December meeting as many of us have Christmas parties to attend during the month, and for us we have the Christmas lunch at R.A.F. Henlow.

Our seasonal lunch is to be in January this year. Full details on page 9

The next RAFAGEN will be published early in January 2026 with full details of our Annual General Meeting. If you have any stories or comments you would like included in this issue, may I have before Christmas please.



On the first weekend in November, members of the military collect for the Poppy Appeal at London railway stations, both over and underground.



Rob Rinder joins those collecting at Waterloo



Who could not resist handing over a donation to the senior officer?



It started with me browsing some of my old photos and there was an old gentleman in a wheelchair with his white beret on his head, The story that goes with the photo is of a Dakota aircraft way back in 1946. On board there was the crew, and fourteen RAF Policemen, on a movement from Changi in Singapore to Calcutta. The plane was struck down somewhere, as The plane hit excessively bad weather, and had to turn around and head for Butterworth in Malaya, but never made it. It has never been found.

On the list of the 14 Policemen who lost their lives, there is mentioned a Cpl 1540712 Arthur NEEDHAM dob 14/02/1922, could it be that there were ever two Cpl Needham's in the trade, and were they related?

The old gent in the photo was from Canada and was aware that there was a copy of the letter telling members of the deceased airmen's families, of the aircraft's demise. He was given a copy of the letter as a keepsake, as he was very good friends with two of those poor chaps who lost their lives.

Very Interestingly this story was found by my old friend Tom Evans, and he researched the incident in his vast knowledge and historical facts that he had at his fingertips. I am sure that your members will not remember, but Tom was the Chief Guide when your Branch came to Scampton for a tour and a visit. Sadly he is no longer with us

John Smallwood

Editor I wasn't aware of Arthur Needham and the Dakota crash, and I can confirm that he, and the rest of the Needham's who have worn the white hat are not part of my family tree. As far as I know.



HAVE I CHANGED THAT MUCH?

Can you recognise our first mystery uniformed airman?



Answer in the next issue of RAFAGEN. Better still, if you think you know why not drop me an email.

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS
TO ALL
MEMBERS**

MOSQUITO MUSEUM

BRANCH VISIT



Members of the Branch visited the Mosquito Museum at London Colney in the south of the County, and spent two hours touring the museum and learning about the de Havilland family and the story of the Mosquito.

The Museum is located next to Salisbury Hall just off Junction 22 of the M25. With wide open spaces and free parking, there is a small café serving hot drinks, sandwiches, pastries & cakes with outdoor picnic tables and a lovely museum shop. There are two huge hangars (the Walter Goldsmith Hangar and the Geoffrey de Havilland Hangar). There is a third hangar (the Amy Johnson Hangar) where you can view the volunteer restoration teams at work. There is an outdoor grass aircraft park with eight other aircraft, some of which the museum try to make available to visitors when the ground is dry and firm.

The de Havilland Aircraft Museum is the only Museum in the world to have three de Havilland Mosquitos on display where the prototype was originally designed and built on the site.

For the full history of the museum go to: www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk



Left : replica of the de Havilland Iris engine



Right : restored Starboard engine of Mosquito night fighter HJ719 built in 1943 in Hatfield

Right : De Havilland designed and built the DH88 Comet Racer in nine months as a response to a chance in winning an air race proposed by Sir MacPherson Robertson in October of 1934





BRANCH NEW YEAR LUNCH

WHEN: January 20th 2025

WHERE : The Meadows, Hitchin College, Cambridge Road Hitchin
SG4 0JD

TIME : 11.45hrs for 12.00hrs

COST : £15.00

Interested?

Then make sure your name is on the list please email Ken on kwn4180056@outlook.com. **Before Christmas please, in order that**

TWO COURSE MEAL

MAIN

LAMB NOISETTE WITH PRUNES AND PEA A LA FRAISE *or* HERB-MARINATED CHICKEN WITH LEMON COUSCOUS AND HARISSA JUS *or* GRILLED BRILL WITH CAPER & DILL DRESSING, CHARRED LEEKS AND POTATO TERRINE *or* CRISPY POLENTA WITH MEDITERRANEAN VEGETABLES AND SALAD

DESSERT

GATEAU PITHIVIERS *or* BUTTERMILK PUDDING WITH BLOOD ORANGE *or* APPLE AND PASSION FRUIT MOUSSE

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Information supplied by Membership Department of The Royal Air Forces Association

**WE MAY HAVE OVER 200 MEMBERS
WE STILL NEED MORE**



**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**

Protect the RAF community
by leaving a gift in your Will

Request your free Will guide



COMMITTEE NEWS

November 2025

This meeting was a long one, as it is the last until 2026. The next is only just in 2026, but we have a lot to get through this time, as the next one will be devoted to preparing for the Annual General Meeting.

What was discussed this time outside the admin matters, and there was a bit of those this time. The committee tried to sort what we should do for the January get-together instead of the usual Christmas Bash. This wasn't as easy as it sounded as each member seemed to have an individual idea on what we should do. In the end it felt that we would hold a lunch at one of three selected places. However as no one could agree until further investigation could be sort, the Chairman called a halt to the discussion, saying that we should have an extra meeting to finalise this in a couple of weeks time.

The Chairman thanked Jim for organising the members trip to the Mosquito Museum, which everyone agreed that it was a first class event.

It was reported that as we had no Standard Bearer, the Branch Standard would be carried by a member of the Letchworth Air Training Corps.

It was pointed out that next October the Branch is 80 years, and should we hold something special. The Chairman agreed that we should, but as Committee was having problems sorting out something for January, he thought it could be held off for a couple of months. Any suggestions to the Chairman please.

The meeting closed and we all went home.

Page 9 will give the answer to the January New Year lunch.

KNIFE ANGEL AT WELWYN GARDEN CITY



The Knife Angel (also called the National Monument Against Violence & Aggression) is a contemporary sculpture formed of 100,000 knives created by artist Alfie Bradley and the British Ironworks Centre, based in Oswestry, England.

Completed in 2018, the structure of the angel stands at 27 ft (8.2 m) tall. To create the sculpture, 200 knife banks were produced by the Ironworks and amnesties held for individuals to donate anonymously their knives.

Knives seized by police were also included, some of which arrived in evidence tubes still with bodily fluids on their surface.

The sculpture was created to highlight knife crime in the United Kingdom and educate young people on the harmful effect violent behaviour can have on their communities.

The sculpture was made at a reported cost of £500,000.

The Knife Angel was on public display in Welwyn Garden City during the month of October.



The Knife Angel is on tour to all counties in England, staying a month in each county.



DIMPLES Bar & Cafe.

Willian Way,

Letchworth Garden City. SG6 3JH

Open Tuesday - Sunday

The home of the Branch NAAFI

BREAK

ROYSTON BRANCH OF R.A.F.A. HOLDS A SERVICE TO MARK R.A.F. ANNIVERSARIES

The service was held on Sunday 14th September at the Royston Parish church. The service was to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

During the service the Royston branch had its new Branch Standard consecrated, and the old one laid up.

The service was attended by our Branch President Viscount Lord Trenchard, as a Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire; Jennifer Crompton, Deputy lieutenant of Cambridgeshire; Laurence Brass, Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council; Keith Hoskins MBE, Chairman North Herts Council, Elizabeth Freeman, Deputy Mayor of Royston Town Council; Paul Arnill MBE, Chief Officer of Royston Town Council and Chris Hinchliffe. MP.

Other members included Flt Lt Adam Kelly, officer commanding, RAF Air Cadets; Flt Lt Claire Kelly, representing regular RAF officers; and Pilot Officer Tahlia Banks, representing the Volunteer Reserve and University Air Squadrons; Retired Wing Commander Tony Kelly, a former officer commanding, played a dual role as the branch's current Standard Bearer, parading the newly dedicated standard.

Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire air cadet bands provided the prelude, while the 2484 Squadron (Bassingbourn) and 105 Squadron (Cambourne) formed a route-lining party into the church.



Annual Conference 2025

Over 240 branch representatives, members, staff members, guests and volunteers joined us for Annual Conference 2025 on 18 and 19 October at Wyboston Lakes Resort in Bedfordshire. (Your Branch was represented) Four resolutions, which included the re-election of the Chair of Council, were passed successfully with over 3,000 members choosing to submit their votes in advance. Several queries were raised during the Questions for the Officers of the Association, including a question about the community portal. We're delighted to share an update on the community portal development project in this bulletin. You can read more about this below.

The Conference weekend also included a speech by the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Paul Lloyd, the annual gala awards dinner on Saturday evening, followed by a Service of Dedication on Sunday morning. In addition, a series of workshops were held throughout the weekend, covering topics from safeguarding to building thriving communities, as well as taster sessions on Finding it Tough? and Navigating Dementia, plus a session on the findings of our 2024 research study, understanding the characteristics of the RAF community.

The full report of Annual Conference will be produced in your next RAFAGEN.

SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT



Sorry to say that we had no response to the above photograph which was shown in the last issue of RAFAGEN.



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



BALDOCK

Here the Branch wreath was laid by John Tunsei



HITCHIN

Here the Branch wreath was laid by Jim Box



ASHWELL

**Here the Branch wreath
was laid by Cannon Rev.
Lindsay Dew**



STEVENAGE

**The Branch wreath was laid
by Terence Salter**

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

Here the Branch wreath was laid by Marie Mahoney



The Branch Standard was carried by a Cadet from Letchworth A.T.C.

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

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 kwn4180056@outlook.com

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

Wednesday 26th November

No meeting during December

Wednesday 28th January 2026

Wednesday 25th February 2026 (**Annual General Meeting**)

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

