

ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION

SHREWSBURY AND DISTRICT BRANCH (No 250) 2017 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member

1. With the turn of the year we bid farewell to a busy 2017 and look forward to an even busier 2018 which marks the Centenary of the Royal Air Force; which, having been formed on the 1 April 1918, welcomes that landmark early next year. As you may expect there will be a number of events held across the country to mark this significant birthday which will involve the Association, and your Branch. We do hope that you will be able to join us as we celebrate. We will be involved in the transit of an Area Token through Shrewsbury, and we are planning a celebratory Lunch as well; more details to follow so please keep in touch with developments through our excellent website. But what of 2017?
2. Firstly, we received excellent news that, in conjunction with the Queen's Birthday Honours List our Chairman Paul Sharp was awarded a National Presidential Certificate; the Association's highest award, for his outstanding contribution to the work of the Association over many years. Well done Paul! We met monthly at the Harlescott Club, and our website continued to provide you all with up to date details on what was happening with your Branch. We welcomed our new Branch Support Officer Mike Logue, late of RAF Shawbury and known to many of us, who has been a great help through the year.
3. 2017 brought its usual round of parades, church services and meetings. We had a successful AGM where we again voted in a full Committee to manage the Branch's affairs; indeed we welcomed a new 'volunteer' in the shape of Iain Davison! We participated in the Association's Annual Conference at Yarnfield in the May, and the Wales, Midland and South West Area Reunion and AGM at Torquay in March where our outstanding Standard Bearer Shawn Marston both carried Standards and acted as our Branch Delegate. We collected for the Wings Appeal at a number of locations around the area, led by our Wings Appeal Organiser Alex Madeley who reports more fully below; and we maintained our close affiliation with 1119 (Shrewsbury) Squadron ATC who supported us on a number of occasions. We again honoured the fallen at our 1 April ceremony at the Shrewsbury Cemetery War Graves. We attended the Mayors Sunday Service in May, and we were present with the Area Mobile Exhibition Trailer (MET) at the Shrewsbury Armed Forces Day event which was incorporated into the Food Fare where we again raised our profile and sought new members. During August we attended the RAF Shawbury Families Day where members were granted access to the Station.
4. We held a profile raising event on the Shrewsbury Square where we had the MET so we made quite a splash; the Mayor honoured us with a visit, indeed she was so impressed that she joined! We also recruited a further 6 members and collected over £200 for our Wings Appeal total as well. Our Chairman joined the Shropshire Armed Forces Covenant Group as the Royal Air Forces Association representative. We attended the Annual Battle of Britain Parade and Service at St Chad's Church; and the Annual Remembrance Parade and Service at the same location. We were also present at the Vennington Show in July in support of the Area MET. Our welfare officers attended a number of courses to maintain their



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high level of knowledge and expertise, and they also attend Area Welfare Seminars. The officers of the Branch were also in attendance at a recent Branch Support and Development Workshop arranged by the Area, and I am pleased to advise that it seemed that we were doing most things right. Finally we had a most enjoyable Christmas Social earlier this month attended by our new member – the Mayor. A busy year where we achieved much and we would be delighted if as many as possible of you could join us in 2018, which promises to be an exciting year of celebration.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

5. The Chairman writes:

Dear fellow Members of Shrewsbury & District Branch Royal Air Forces Association

Another year rushes past and it is time for our Christmas News Letter yet again. I am delighted to report that our Branch Membership numbers are holding up well something, our Hon Membership Secretary, will expand upon in his Report later in this newsletter. Welcome to those of you who are receiving our Branch Newsletter for the first time. We have lost some old friends but we have also been fortunate in gaining new ones. Our ability to continue as a viable Branch does require some effort by your Committee to ensure that we have all bases covered from Welfare to Wings Collections and I am delighted that one of our newer members, Iain Davison, has come onboard to assist us, Welcome Iain.

Our Social meetings continue to be the focus of our Branch activity and we have a wonderful venue for our monthly meetings in The Harlescott Social Club (Roseway, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 4HW). It has plenty of space to host our needs and the Club Committee continue to make us welcome. Unfortunately the Club catering facilities have not been available this year whilst some restructuring took place so we have had to rely on a self-help buffet (excellent value at £1.00 per head) although I am assured that the newly refurbished kitchen should be operational in the Spring. Our meetings continue to be well attended with regular talks (both funny and interesting) and we are grateful for the support from the Station Commander at RAF Shawbury and in particular the RAFALOs and the Padre from the Station.

What to expect from 2018? We will continue to try and identify activities which will be of interest to you. One busy period next year will be when take part in the Area 2018 Project which recognises that the Royal Air Force will be 100 years old; having been formed on the 1 April 1918. To celebrate this anniversary our Area Council has developed a project which they are calling "Building the Royal Air Force and Buying 2 WWII Spitfires". The concept is to 'build' the RAF by taking tokens; based on our commonly used pull-up banner within a decorative sleeve giving it the appearance, when closed, of a large Field Marshal's Baton, to every Branch in the Area. We will receive ours from Wrekin and Wellington Branch in late July and hand over to Ellesmere Branch a week later.

In the wider field our Branch Standard Bearer (Shawn Marston) will be defending his role as National Standard Bearer. On that point I would like to thank our Deputy Standard Bearer, Eric Blackie, who has ensured that our Standard has been present at events in Shrewsbury when Shawn is unavailable.

In addition to the information contained in these newsletter details of all our activities are listed on our Branch website that can be found at: www.rafashrewsbury.org.uk which I strongly urge you to view from time to time.

Finally, I wish you and yours a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Paul Sharp

DETAILS OF YOUR BRANCH COMMITTEE

6. Present Committee members are as follows:

- a. President
Air Commodore (Ret'd) John J Burke BSc CEng DipEL FIET
- b. Chairman
Paul Sharp
- c. Vice Chairman
John Tisbury MBE
- d. Secretary
John Tisbury MBE (Phone 01952 201902)
- e. Treasurer
Pam Small
- f. Welfare Officer
Paul Martin
- g. Assistant Welfare Officer
Iain Davison
- h. Membership Secretary
Paul Martin
- i. Wings Appeal Organiser
Alex Madeley
- j. Assistant Wings Appeal Organiser
Roy Dolton
- k. Social Secretary
Mike Bradbury
- l. ATC Liaison Officer
Mike Bradbury
- l. Web Master
Mike Farmer

RAF Shawbury RAFA Liaison Officer – Flight Sergeant Neil McDonald

The Branch Standard Bearer is Shawn Marston and his deputy is Eric Blackie.

7. The Branch also benefits from the wisdom of our Life Vice Presidents, Mr Jim Penny, Mr Brian Beattie, Mr Roger Fylde and Ms Rose Davies.

8. Please contact any of the above if you have any questions or concerns about the Association or your Branch.

DETAILS OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

9. The following events are programmed:

- 2018 **8 January** - **Blind Veterans and Macular Society – Ted Davies**
 5 February - **People who have lived at Attingham Hall – John Tisbury**
 5 March - **Annual General Meeting**
 23-25 March - **Area Reunion and AGM, Gloucester**
 1 April - **Shrewsbury Cemetery Event at 1800 hrs.**
 9 April - **A Pam Quiz.**
 11-13 May - **Association Annual Conference, Yarnfield**
 14 May - **The History of Wroxeter Vineyard – Wroxeter Vineyard**
 4 June - **Visit to India – Ray Ellis**
 2 July - **The Aries Flight from RAF Shawbury – Dai Lawrence**
 29 July – 5 August - **Area RAF 100th Anniversary Token at Shrewsbury**
 6 August - **Fire Safety in the Home and Work – Shropshire Fire Service**
 3 September - **Tracing your Family History – Graham Bradbury**
 1 October - **Forces Mail in WWII – Tony Tudor**
 5 November - **Expedition, Severn Source to the Sea – Alex Grant**
 3 December - **Christmas Social**
- 2019 **7 January** - **New Year Meeting**

Programme subject to change; however there will always be a talk or event at each meeting.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

10. Social meetings are held at the **Harlescott Social Club, Roseway, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 4HW** meetings are held on the first **Monday** of each month commencing at 1230 pm. (If the first Monday is a Bank Holiday, the Branch will meet on the 2nd Monday). One of the principle aims of the Association is comradeship, and we would like to welcome every one of you to our meetings.

MEMBERSHIP

11. The Membership Secretary writes:

The membership of our Branch remains generally strong with over 300 members; made up from Life, Ordinary and Associate Members. Please note that at the last AGM, March 2017, we removed the offer of Branch Membership in favour of RAFA Associate Membership. We are fortunate to be so close to RAF Shawbury that we benefit from Serving Members stationed there, which boosts our membership total as well as a recent decision to move membership away from central organisations to local Branches. However, our active membership is almost entirely made up from retired members, their spouses and friends. We are exceptionally grateful for the regular attendance of our RAFA Liaison Officers from RAF Shawbury who keep us in-touch with the news of RAF Shawbury and the wider Service in general.

Please note that, for most of us, our membership fee for 2017 will be due for renewal on 31 December 2017. Paying by Direct Debit automatically renews your membership; alternatively, please pay by sending a cheque directly to RAFA (it saves a significant amount of duplication of effort in accounting). If this is not practical, please give your subscription to Paul Martin or Pam Small, our Treasurer, who will forward it to RAFA HQ. There has been no increase in membership fees for this coming year.

We are very pleased that so many of us manage to get to our monthly meetings at the Harlescott Social Club. Our Monday lunch-time meetings are a most enjoyable way of spending time with friends over a light meal and a drink in a warm and pleasant environment. The meetings include a raffle and an interesting talk by a guest speaker. If you have not already joined us there, or have not attended for some time, please do make the effort to come to at least one of the meetings where you are assured a warm welcome. If you are unable to attend the monthly meetings regularly, please remember that your Branch is always here to help so please keep in touch with your RAFA.

Paul Martin
Membership Secretary

WINGS APPEAL

12. The Wings Appeal Organiser writes:

We are awaiting acknowledgement from RAFA HQ of the final total raised by us for Wings this year but expect it to clear £4,000 once again. This is a welcome sum after last year's dip.

It has been a mix of opportunities again this year where the stores are concerned. We lost Asda (normally a very successful venue) but gained a day at Sainsbury's with the help of Iain Davison whose past connections to the RBL put a foot in the door for us once more. As collection from the major stores usually accounts for over 70% of our Wings total, gaining or losing a place in them can be crucial. So it was a year to thank our regular supporters: Morrison's, Tesco and the Church Stretton Co-Op for their continuing, uninterrupted support over the years. Their managers were presented with RAFA Certificates of Appreciation, pictures of which were published in Airmail and the Church Stretton Focus magazine.

Next year will see RAF 100 mark the centenary of the force in a variety of nationwide events. Adding to our Wings' funds, have been some small, local, independent businesses for whose support over the years we're particularly grateful. We hope to involve them in some way in our RAF 100 events in 2018.

With many thanks to all our Wings collectors, the regulars and the new, and including our keen RAFALO's from Shawbury.

Please don't forget, if you can't collect outside, you can collect without leaving your home! We have home collecting boxes for anyone interested or you might want to hold a Brew for the Few.

Alex Madeley
Wings Appeal Organiser

WELFARE

13. The Welfare Officer writes:

Our Branch's welfare work has been progressing quietly throughout the year. Your Welfare Officers are responsible for helping all members of the "RAF Family", in the local area who are in need of practical assistance to improve their lives. Please note that your Branch Welfare Officers are permitted to help only those who personally ask for assistance; if you know of anyone from the "RAF Family", who might like assistance, please advise them to contact your Branch Welfare Officers. Please note that being a member of the "RAF Family" does not need an individual to be a member of our Branch or of RAFA.

One aspect of your RAFA's welfare work is "Befriending". Befriending encourages people who would like to visit members of the "RAF Family" who may be lonely and in need of social contact; possibly in their home, hospital or nursing home. We are very fortunate in having 4 Befrienders in our area. This means that if we know of a member of the "RAF Family" who may feel isolated and lonely it is up to all of us to take the initiative to take the first steps to re-include them in to society. Should you know of anyone from the "RAF Family" who might like assistance, please advise them to contact your Branch Welfare Officers.

Paul Martin
Honorary Welfare Officer

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

14. ***The Annual general Meeting of the Shrewsbury and District Branch will be held in the Harlescott Social Club on Monday 5 March 2018 commencing at 1230 pm.***

NOMINATION FORM FOR BRANCH OFFICERS

15. Attached to this News Letter is a nomination form for Branch Officers. Branch Officers, who are nominated and elected at the Annual General Meeting in March, organise the various events, and manage the assets of the Branch. Your Committee would be pleased to welcome new members to the Committee.

CONCLUSION

16. In conclusion, and on behalf of your Committee, may I take this opportunity to wish you a very Happy Christmas, and all the best for the New Year. We do hope that you will find time to attend our monthly meetings during 2018.

In Friendship One to Another

John Tisbury

Keep up to date with your Branch by visiting our website at www.rafasshrewsbury.org.uk

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