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Wales, Midland & South Western Area

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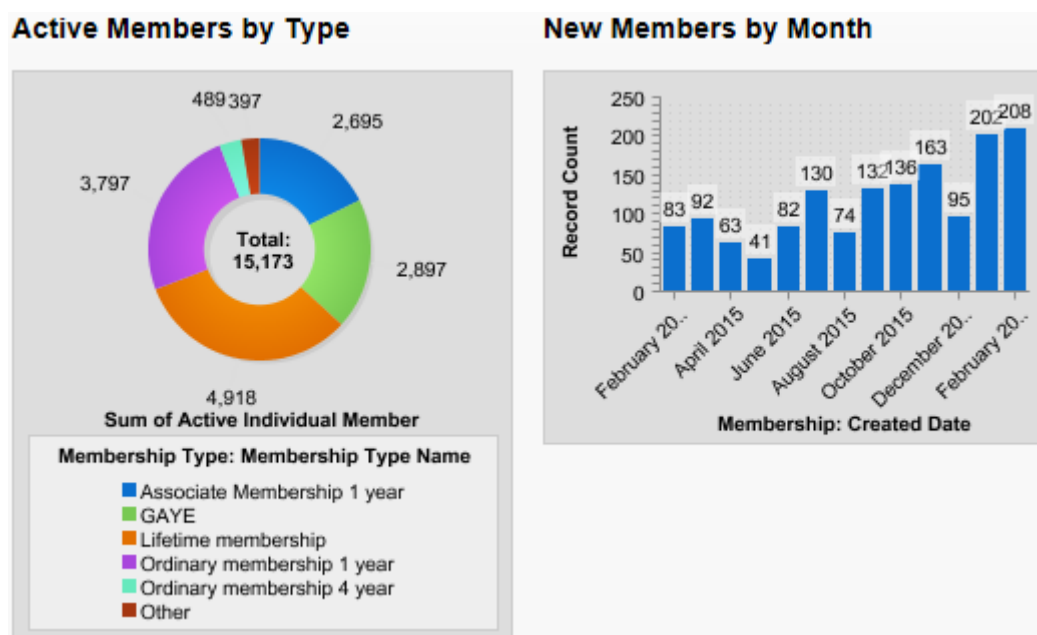
Newsletter

Please keep up your membership renewal efforts and make sure those signed data protection forms are returned to Exeter!

1. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

What a cracking couple of months we've enjoyed in terms of new members and the rate at which renewals are being processed – thank you for your hard work especially with those Branch members who need a gentle nudge. Clearly, it will help you if Exeter provides an updated branch membership list, however, we can only do that if your Branch Committee has returned a signed copy of the data protection agreement. Papers were sent out in early February – let us know if the Branch Secretary hasn't received anything! Please don't forget to capture e-mail addresses when you sign up new members. This will help us greatly to stay in touch.

Nationally the membership numbers are very encouraging with 1200 new members already joining in 2016. As an area, you'll see we are just as strong with 410 new joiners during January and February. Here's how we are looking:



2. AREA PRESIDENT'S CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

In recognition of their meritorious service to the Association, the Area President has been pleased to award his Certificate to the following:

Mr and Mrs Jim and Lynda Doyle	- Barry Branch.
Mrs Reg Abbott	- Exmouth Branch.
Mr Tony Edmunds	- Sturminster Newton & Gillingham Branch.
Mr Geoff Horton	- Barry Branch.
Mr Keith Moule	- North Cotswold Branch.
Mrs Thelma Messenger	- Cardigan RMG.
Mr Colin Spraggs	- Cardigan RMG.
Mrs Vivien Williams	- Llanidloes Branch.

Certificates will be presented at the Area Reunion or as individually arranged. Many congratulations to all.

3. GIVE OUR SOPHIE YOUR SUPPORT!



Sophie Witkowski, Head of Welfare at the RAF Association, will be running the Virgin London Marathon on 24 April 2016, to raise funds for the Association.

Sophie said: "I have always enjoyed watching the London Marathon, seeing all those people supporting charities is really inspiring. I applied for it last year through the ballot, before I started working for the Association but was unsuccessful. When this place came up I thought I'd put my name forward!"

"I have been really encouraged by the support the Association gives and the commitment it has to delivering welfare to meet the needs of the RAF family. I have spoken to many people who have seen a positive change in their lives and am in admiration of the continued support of our membership.

"I'm really excited about running the marathon on behalf of the Association. I have never done anything like this before and it will be a real challenge, but I have a training plan which I hope gets me over the finish line!"

Please support Sophie's fundraising efforts and help to make her hard work and dedication even more meaningful to the Association by visiting her fundraising page at the following address: <https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/sophiewitkowski2>

4. VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

Volunteering Launch - This month marks the official launch of the Befriending Service at the Lords and Commons Dinner on 8 March. A number of high profile delegates will be attending, including the Chief of the Air Staff. This month we are also going to be ramping up communications around all volunteering opportunities and making sure the public hear about what the Association does and how they can help us.

We have a new website and registration system where volunteers can easily get involved and sign up for a variety of roles such as a Caseworker, Fundraising Team Leader or Befriender.

Befriending - Since our soft launch in December, we have been fortunate to have over 100 potential new volunteers come forward. 80 potential Befrienders are in contact with us and we are working with them to find out how they can help us and where they can visit members of the RAF family. After the official launch of Befriending this month, our welfare teams will then be matching up those who need a visit with a volunteer who has time to help. We will keep you updated on progress.

Volunteer Audit - Thank you to everyone who has contacted us over the past couple of months to inform us of who you are and how you help the Association. Many Branches have completed the volunteer survey forms and told us who is undertaking which role for their Branch. We are going to officially thank all our volunteers in National Volunteers Week (1-7 June) and so we would like to hear from as many of our Branches as possible. There is still time to return the volunteer audit forms, so if you have missed the deadline, don't worry, please still send in your forms using the freepost envelopes provided. Individuals still needing to complete a form, please contact your Branch Chair or a copy is available on the Member Portal.

Thank you for your continued correspondence with us around the volunteering programme and please contact us on volunteers@rafa.org.uk or on 0116 266 5224 with any questions.

A Word from our Area Volunteer Co-Ordinator – Graeme Russell

Many of you will be aware of the Area Volunteer Coordinators and the work they do. I am one of three and cover the Wales, Midland and South Western Area. Over the last couple of months, since I joined, I have been busy building contacts with a range of local volunteer centres, community groups and other local organisations where we may recruit volunteers. My role helps to raise awareness of the Association, our work and the volunteering roles in which people can get involved to support the RAF family.

My role firstly has been focused on recruiting volunteers for roles in Wales, with the priority of my time given to recruit new Honorary Welfare Officers/Caseworkers where we don't currently have Branch coverage. This year there will also be a recruitment campaign focussed on recruiting Befrienders to support our welfare work. I am also focussing on recruiting Fundraising Team Leaders and Fundraisers for organising and collecting for the Wings Appeal, in locations where we do not currently have collections taking place.

I am also working alongside the Branch Support Officers, to offer additional support to Branches, helping support Branches with their recruitment of volunteers and making best use of the networks and local contacts I am establishing. If your Branch requires volunteers and you need some help to recruit, you should complete and return the Branch volunteer vacancy details form, which is on the Member Portal and forward it to me graeme.russell@rafa.org.uk or by post to the Wales Office at Newbridge.

5. RAF & ALLIED AIR FORCES MONUMENT SERVICE – PLYMOUTH HOE – SATURDAY 25 JUNE

This is an early 'heads-up' to all Branch and Regional Standard Bearers.

The RAF & Allied Air Forces Monument Service Committee is looking to swell the numbers of Association Standards and invite Branches to consider this Service which will be held at Plymouth Hoe on Saturday 25 June commencing at 0930hrs. Clearly there is likely to be some diary conflict with local Armed Forces Day celebrations, but if you are interested in parading your Standard then please make direct contact with the Committee Chairman, Wing Commander Francis Reis RAFVR(T) at francis.reis@plymouth.ac.uk.



6. AREA MEMBERSHIP TROPHIES – 2015

Trophies have been awarded to the following Branches for their membership achievements in 2015. Presentations will take place at the Area Reunion:

Highest % Increase in Membership (small branch)	- Dawlish Branch.
Highest % Increase in Membership (large branch)	- WRAF Branch.
First Branch to achieve 100% Renewal of Members	- RAF St Mawgan Branch.

7. AREA WINGS APPEAL TROPHIES - 2015

Trophies have been awarded to the following Branches for their Wings Appeal achievements in 2015. Presentations will take place at the Area Reunion:

Highest Gross Per Capita	- North Cotswold Branch.
Highest Collection	- Torquay Branch.
Highest % increase in Collection	- Gloucester Branch.

In addition, £10k Wings certificates will be presented at the Area Reunion to branches at Birmingham Moseley, Cheltenham, Chistchurch, Falmouth, North Costwold, Plymouth, Poole, Solihull and Taunton Deane. £15k certificates will go to Torquay Branch and Weston-super-Mare Branch and a £25k certificate will be presented to Dursley & South Gloucester Branch. Many congratulations to all.

8. AREA BRANCH AND BRANCH CLUB EFFICIENCY COMPETITION - 2015

The winners of the Area Branch and Branch Club Efficiency Competitions 2015, who have been put forward to the national competition were as follows. Great work – well done to all:

Small Branch	- Dursley & South Gloucester Branch.
Large Branch	- Birmingham Moseley Branch.
Small Branch Club	- Llandaff & Ely Branch Club.
Large Branch Club	- Tamworth Branch Club.

9. THE LIGHTNING TROPHY - AREA WELFARE

We are pleased to announce that the winner of the Lightning Trophy is Mr Geoff Horton from Barry Branch who continues to work tirelessly for the benefit of others in the Vale of Glamorgan and beyond. The Lightning Trophy is awarded to the individual or group who has made the most outstanding contribution to welfare in our area. Well done Geoff.

10. FLYING OFFICER TEDDY WALES – OUT AND ABOUT

Keep a look out for Flying Officer Teddy Wales who has been busy promoting the Association. Ted has been spotted, working hard with the King's Troop and on operations over Iraq and Syria with 100 Sqn. Ted even got a trip with Red 8! There is every chance you'll see him at our Area Reunion – please say hi!



11. HMRC ALCOHOL WHOLESALER REGISTRATION SCHEME

Clubs may have received letters from their brewery regarding this scheme. We know that Coors have sent letters out to the majority of their customers. This matter is unlikely to affect RAF Association Clubs although we appreciate that brewers such as Coors are simply undertaking a compliance exercise by informing Clubs of this matter. Clubs should therefore not be concerned if their brewery writes to them regarding the scheme.

The Alcohol Wholesaler Registration Scheme was introduced on 1st January 2016 by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to tackle alcohol fraud. It only applies to alcohol wholesalers – businesses which sell alcohol to other businesses. Clubs are therefore not likely to be affected. However, should a Club sell alcohol to another business then they will need to register with HMRC.

From 1st April 2017, Clubs must make sure that any UK wholesalers or businesses they use to purchase buy alcohol are approved by HMRC under this scheme. We do not anticipate that any RAF Association Club will have to change its procedures as a result of this situation and Clubs are likely to be able to continue to buy from their existing suppliers without any problems. Please contact the Association's National Clubs Advisor if you need further clarification on 0116-268-8762 or at brian.fare@rafa.org.uk.

12. MANY CONGRATULATIONS TO MR ALWYNE JAMES FROM WORCESTER & DISTRICT BRANCH

A celebration party was held in January to mark the 100th birthday of Association member, Mr Alwyne James, who was born on Boxing Day 1915! In addition to the card from HM The Queen the Branch presented a body warmer complete with the RAF Association emblem; The RAF Regiment also sent two books as Alwyne was transferred into the Regiment in 1942. There were over 40 Worcester & District Branch Members present including Ian Campbell, BSO. Many congratulations Alwyne.



13. AREA STAFF NEWS

We are pleased to welcome our new Assistant Area Welfare Officer for the South West, Sally Hall, who has started work at the Exeter Office. Please say hello to Sally when she is on her travels.

14. RAFALO UPDATE

This is the latest edition of the RAFALO Update, which includes information on changes to the Service. On 18 Jan 16 MinDPV announced the closures of the following RAF sites:

- o Hullavington Airfield – during 2016.
- o RAF Barnham - within this Parliament.
- o RAF Alconbury - following US withdrawal.
- o RAF Molesworth - following US withdrawal.
- o RAF Mildenhall - partial closure following US withdrawal.

The USVF withdrawal of Alconbury, Molesworth and Mildenhall had previously been announced as part of the European Infrastructure Consolidation (EIC) Review in Jan 15. This announcement confirms our commitment to release MOD estate and that there is no requirement for retaining Alconbury and Molesworth. Mildenhall will face partial closure as a potential defence requirement is being considered for the site. The overall aim is to reduce the estate by 30%. A full list of sites affected will be announced later in the year. In addition to the RAF sites listed above the sites to be closed are confirmed as: Kneller Hall (Military School of Music); Claro Barracks; Deverell Barracks; Lodge Hill; Craigiehall; Nelson Wardroom; and MOD Feltham. The Transfer of Number 202 (Reserve) Squadron Numberplate. On the disbandment of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Force, the 202 (Reserve) Squadron numberplate will move to the Search and Rescue Training Unit (SARTU), an element of the Defence Helicopter Flying School forward-based at RAF Valley.

The RAF SAR Force disbanded on 18 Feb 16. With its greater seniority, a joint RN / RAF heritage, and a shared background in both training and operations, 202 (Reserve) Squadron is the most suitable squadron numberplate to be bestowed upon SARTU. 202 (Reserve) Squadron will become the Maritime and Mountains Training Squadron operating the Griffin helicopter, delivering basic maritime and mountain flying skills to all DHFS outputs and a full operational SAR training package in support of 84 Squadron in Cyprus. In 2 years' time, the 202 (Reserve) Squadron will transition into the rotary wing element of the Military Flying Training System, with a new, more capable aircraft, and will continue to lead in the delivery of Defence's maritime and mountains training.

202 (Reserve) Squadron's origin is No 2 Squadron Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), formed at Eastchurch on 17 Oct 1914. In Nov 1916 it became No 2 Wing and moved to Dunkirk, flying reconnaissance, bombing and escort sorties. On 1 April 1918, the Wing was renumbered 202 Squadron RAF. During World War 2, the Squadron maintained its maritime role, undertaking U-boat patrols in the Mediterranean and off the west coast of Northern Ireland. The Squadron's helicopter pedigree began in 1959 operating the Whirlwind HAR10 in the SAR role from RAF Finningley, Coltishall, Acklington and Leuchars. The Whirlwind was replaced by Sea King HAR3s in 1978-9. The SAR restructure in 2008 left 202 Squadron with flights at Boulmer, Lossiemouth and Leconfield until the completion of SAR operations in Dec 2015.

No 591 SU Transfers to 38 Gp. No 591 SU is the RAF's Defensive Cyber Operations Unit. No 591 Signals Unit (591 SU) transferred into No 38 Group (38 GP) with effect from 14 Jan 2016. It provides important cyber defence protection, electronic security sweeps, TEMPEST, radio OPSEC, system accreditation services and other aspects of cyber security, for all of Air Command. It also contributes to the Joint programme of defensive cyber activities. There are no plans to re-locate the Unit from its present location at RAF Digby, where it will benefit from collocation with the nascent JFC CEMA organisation.

15. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Area Conference and Reunion, Cheltenham Chase Hotel, Brockworth, 4-6 March 2016.
- Annual Service of Remembrance to commemorate the St Naizaire Raid will be held on the Prince of Wales Pier Falmouth on Sunday the 20 March 2016 at 11am.
- North Wales Region AGM at Llangollen RAFA Club on Sat 9 April at 2pm.
- Mid Wales Region Meeting at Cardigan on Sat 16 April at 2pm.
- The Trebah Military Day will be held on Sunday the 5 June 2016 at Trebah Gardens Nr Mawnan Smith, gates open at 10.00 am.
- Royal Cornwall Show – 9-11 June 2016.

- RAF & Allied Air Forces Monument Service will be held on Plymouth Hoe on Saturday 25 June 2016 at 9.30am.
- RNAS Culdrose Air Day 28 July 2016.
- Red Arrows display - Falmouth Wednesday 10 August 2016 at 6 30pm.
- The Falmouth Branch Battle of Britain Service will be held at the Falmouth Parish Church of King Charles The Martyr on Sunday 4 September 2016 at 10.30am.
- Wreath Laying Service at Sea on Sunday 25 September sailing from Padstow Harbour at 1.30pm (organised through our Bodmin Branch – this is a unique Service. Real flowers please as part of any wreath – Padstow harbour wall at 12.30pm).

Our Cornwall Region is always very prompt in providing details of events, ceremonies and functions on their patch. Is anything happening elsewhere that you'd like us to promulgate? If so let us know. Many thanks.

Paul Baker – Area Director

What you don't see with your eyes, don't invent with your mouth.