

November 2018



The charity that supports the RAF family

The Royal Air Forces Association  
Wales, Midland & South Western  
Area Headquarters  
Rafa House, Chancel Lane  
Pinhoe, Exeter, EX4 8JU  
Tel: 01392 462088  
Email: [southwestern@rafa.org.uk](mailto:southwestern@rafa.org.uk)  
[www.rafa.org.uk](http://www.rafa.org.uk)

## Wales, Midland and South Western Area

# Newsletter

**AREA CONFERENCE AND REUNION  
WEEKEND ON 22 – 24 MARCH DETAILS ARE  
NOW AVAILABLE**

**STOP THE PRESS!**

**Please see attached package details.**

Arrangements are coming together for our fifteenth Area Conference and Reunion weekend, which will take place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Plymouth, over the period Friday 22 to Sunday 24 March 2019. Area Council is looking forward to welcoming you to this new venue for what we hope will be an enjoyable and worthwhile weekend in Devon's 'City of voyage, discovery and military importance'. Yes – the RAF will be resident in senior service country!

Situated just yards from the famous Plymouth Hoe, the Crowne Plaza Hotel (formerly Holiday Inn) is offering a superb package for our Conference weekend and I urge you to make your bookings as soon as you are able. Clearly, the main purpose of the weekend will be to provide important updates on Association business with some more branch development opportunities, but also for friends old and new to get back together and enjoy comradeship that runs through the core of our Association. However, for wives, husbands and partners who simply want to join us for the weekend – the shops are just around the corner!

Your package weekend can now be reserved by calling the hotel on 01752 639988 between the hours of 8am and 7pm Monday to Saturday, or contact [revenue@cpplymouth.valoreurope.com](mailto:revenue@cpplymouth.valoreurope.com). You will be required to pay a £50 non-refundable deposit per room by debit or credit card with the final payment payable upon your arrival. Please inform the hotel of any accessible or dietary needs when you make your booking. Please don't delay, make your booking as soon as you are able and in any case, before 1 March 2019.

Enclosed/attached are the package details and a superb discounted rail travel arrangement between the hotel and GWR – really worth considering! The hotel has sufficient parking, however, the majority is underground and quite tight. If you do plan to drive – you can expect free complimentary car parking if you take up the full weekend package or a £5 parking charge if you choose the Saturday night only package. Really important - please use this postcode for your sat nav if you are driving – **PL1 2HU**. We have also managed to negotiate a 15% discount on all beverages purchased at the Walter Raleigh and Drakes Bar for the entire weekend (even more reason to take part). We are also looking at the possibility of providing limited stocks of Association branded red and white wine – fingers crossed! A final note – our Area Conference and Reunion weekends are very well supported and always provide an opportunity to drive the RAF Association forward on our patch, please take part, please join in, you'll have a good time.





## TICKETS FOR THE BIRMINGHAM TATTOO

By purchasing a ticket from us you will be making a significant contribution to the RAF Association Wings Appeal which enables us to support those in need. We have managed to negotiate reduced ticket prices at £16 per ticket, including a £1 booking fee.

Secure your tickets - <https://rafa.ticketlight.co.uk>

For either Saturday 24 November or Sunday 25 November 2019. Your transaction will provide an event e-ticket which must be exchanged for your seating tickets when you arrive at the Arena Birmingham Box Office. This is accessible from both the north and south car parks.

If you are unable to purchase tickets online then please call Ian Campbell, Branch Support Officer, on 07584577064, who will provide assistance.

## AREA VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Please see attachment/enclosure for updated information.

Our Area Volunteer Coordinator, Lucie Paddison, has provided a useful update enclosed.

## SWINDON AND THE RAF MEDICAL SERVICES JOIN FORCES

Swindon and the Caduceus (RAF Medical Services) branches of the Royal Air Forces Association recognised the importance of the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary with both branches having strong ties to RAF Lyneham and Wroughton hospital which were on the doorstep and decided to host a 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary ball to celebrate this year.

The idea was born as the RAF100 baton left Swindon on the start of its journey on 6 April 2018, and a team was then formed to organise the ball. With 108 guests including the Mayor of Swindon, the Head of the RAF Medical Services, Deputy Commandant of the Defence Academy, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, and President of the local RAF Association region in attendance the night was a great success.

Another guest of honour was Swindon's very own 98 year old Edna Day she served as a wireless operator in the RAF has been a member of

Swindon RAF Association branch for 70 years having also served on the branch committee and she still helps with street collections now. Edna received a fantastic applause from the whole room.



The team raised over £2,200 towards the Wings Appeal, it will be a night remembered by many as a fine tribute to 100 years of the Royal Air Force.

## RAF ASSOCIATION MID-SOMERSET BRANCH ANNUAL CONCERT - 12 DECEMBER 2018

The Mid-Somerset Branch of RAF Association (Royal Air Forces Association) and the 1955 (City of Wells) RAF Air Cadet Squadron are delighted to announce the date of their annual concert and that tickets are now available.

The concert will take place on the evening of Wednesday 12 December 2018 in the purpose-built Concert Hall, Millfield School, Street, with seating for over 300 people. Organisers of this annual event are looking forward to high attendance this year as the country celebrates 100 years of the RAF with events nationally and locally.

The concert is performed by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force (by permission of the Air Force Board of the Defence Council). This year will be extra special. In addition to following the RAF100 theme, the concert will celebrate the special linkage to the composer Rutland Boughton, who was the band master of the RAF (Central) Band at its inception in 1918 and who founded and directed the original Glastonbury Festivals from 1914 to 1927. The concert will feature a specially commissioned arrangement by Thomas Hewitt Jones (2003 BBC Young Composer of the Year) of Boughton's 'March of the British' – truly a world-first!



With the traditional mix of military, film and classical music combined with some fun festive favourites, there will be something for everyone, seen by many as one of their traditional Christmas events.

The concert raises vital funds for RAF Association and for local Air Cadet Squadrons in Wells, Shepton Mallet and Glastonbury to support some of the many activities undertaken by the young people who are members. In addition, there is a collection at the end of the concert and in this special year for the RAF, the selected charity is the RAF 100 Appeal which is organised by the RAF and the four main RAF charities to support the RAF Family and create a lasting legacy for the next 100 years.

Dick Whittingham, chair of the concert committee said "This is a firm favourite in our calendar each year and with its special associations this year, we're looking forward to welcoming both newcomers and regulars to enjoy the band and the venue as the RAF celebrates 100 years."

Tickets are £16 each and available from Millfield Enterprises Office (01458 444320), Glastonbury Tourist Information Office (01458 832954) or online via <https://raf-central-band.eventbrite.co.uk>

## TOWYN AND ABERDOVEY BRANCH

The handover of the Area Association Token from Llanidloes Branch to Towyn & Aberdovey Branch took place in front of the memorial marking the site of RAF Morfa Towyn which operated from 1940 to 1945. From left to right, John Williams, Chairman of Towyn & Aberdovey Branch, Vivien Williams, Secretary Llanidloes Branch, Richard Stoner, Secretary, Luciano Jones, Vice Chairman and

Alan Chetwynd, Treasurer of Towyn & Aberdovey Branch.

The Memorial was inaugurated by the Towyn & Aberdovey Branch in 1999.



With wholehearted support from the local Towyn Cinema (Magic Lantern), The Towyn & Aberdovey Branch presented a charity film night showing of "Spitfire" the new feature documentary, at the end of Battle of Britain week. With live music and spitfire beer on sale it proved to be a great success raising around £650 for the Wings Appeal.





## AREA RECOGNITION OF THE RAF100 IN SIDMOUTH

Despite there no longer being an RAF Association branch at Sidmouth, the town was determined to recognise RAF100.

The church of St Giles and St Nicholas in Sidmouth, East Devon, was full on Wednesday, 4 April for the service of commemoration and thanksgiving to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Air Force in order to recognise the part played by RAF Sidmouth during the crisis of WWII. The ceremony was organised by Alastair Watson, a former flight lieutenant, air battle manager, under the auspices of the Royal British Legion but with the support and encouragement of RAF Association, Exmouth branch. During the service both organisations paraded their standards together with the local Air Cadet squadron.

Air Commodore Barry Jones, retired, headed the congregation of around 170 which included WWII veterans, serving officers, including Group Captain Jamie Kendall (Defence Academy Shrivenham), local dignitaries, RBL and RAF Association representatives and local Air Cadets. Reverent Laird, formerly assistant Chaplain General to HM Forces, acknowledged the presence of the WWII veterans in the congregation and although unable to mention them all by name, he highlighted the presence of 96 year old Lancaster pilot, Les Harlow DFC, and his wife, Mary.

The Reverend Laird reminded everyone that in WWII, the air ministry saw the huge potential for local hotels to be turned into domestic and training accommodation. Although in 1940 the first unit to arrive, just a few miles east of Sidmouth, was a secret 'chain home' radar station, in 1942 a large number of hotels were requisitioned ready to accommodate the Medical Training Depot (MTD), which was being moved from Harrowgate. Then, soon after, the creation of the RAF regiment, an Officer Cadet Training Training Unit (OCTU) was established. Yet more hotels and local dwellings were taken over. Eventually, the OCTU moved to Cosford to make way for an Aircrew Officers School (AOS). This is how it remained until early 1945, when, with war going the way of the Allies, the units moved out or closed. The AOS moved to Hereford, the MTD to Halton and, after VE-Day, the chain home radar went to 'care and maintenance'. At times during 1942/43 there were in excess of 2100 'light blue' accommodated in the town of Sidmouth.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS 2019

Please see enclosed sheet with detailed information from July-September 2018 Air Mail magazine regarding the membership fees for 2019 and onwards.

## RAF ASSOCIATIONS HONOURS SERGEANT HANNAH SMITH

Mike Chappell, Wales Vice-President, recently attended a Battle of Britain dinner at the RRC Crickhowell and took the opportunity to present Sergeant Hannah Smith with a Certificate of Appreciation to recognise her outstanding efforts in support of the welfare of others in the RAF community.



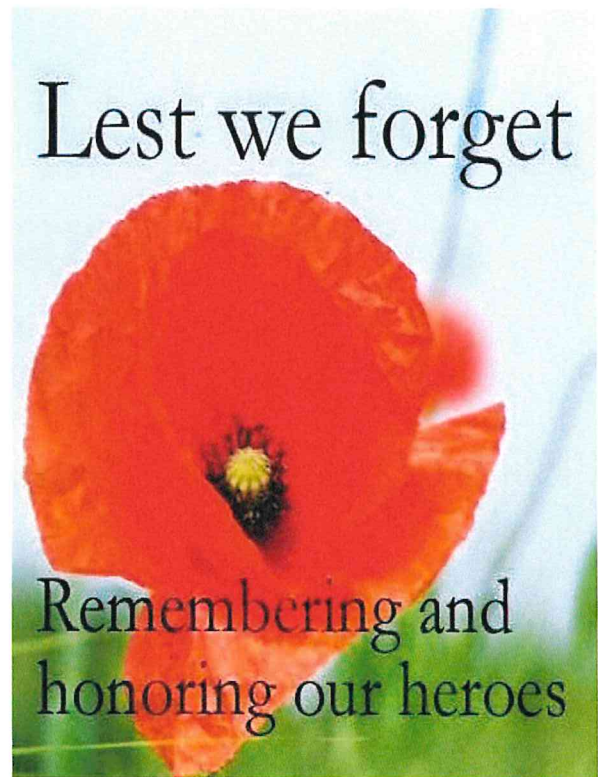
Thanks Hannah!

## UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE RAF ASSOCIATION CONCERT BAND



- Christmas in the Air Concert, Sunday, 9 December, Victoria Methodist Church, Station Road, Weston-Super-mare at 1500hrs. See further details on attached/enclosed poster.
- RAFA Concert & Token Exchange with the Military Wives in the Holy Trinity Church for Barnstaple Branch 16 November.
- Finally, the band will be performing at the Birmingham International Tattoo on 24 and 25 November.

If you are interested in finding out more about your Band please visit our website [www.rafaconcertband.com](http://www.rafaconcertband.com) or contact the Musical Director on 01934 820205.



*Debbie Byam*

Area Administrator

Wales, Midland and South Western area.

Enclosures:

1. Area Conference and Reunion Accommodation Package.
2. Area Volunteer update.
3. Membership Subscription fees for 2019 and onwards.
4. RAF Association Concert band poster.