

September 2018

Wales, Midland and South Western Area Newsletter

The charity that supports the RAF family

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AREA CONFERENCE – IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR ALREADY!

Our next Area Conference will be held at the Plymouth Crowne Plaza from 22 to 24 March 2019. Mark it in your diary! The October newsletter will give all the detail you need to make your booking.

THE BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO SATURDAY 24 AND SUNDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2018

Standard bearers have already been invited to attend this year's Birmingham International Tattoo which will be held at the 'Arena Birmingham' (formerly Barclaycard Arena). **We still need more!**

Several Branches in and around Birmingham take part in the Tattoo every year – but 2018 provides a fabulous opportunity to create something special and 'sign off' this unique year in style.

Many standard bearers will remember the last time we gathered en masse for the Tattoo in 2015 where we paraded as many as 59 standards. It looked amazing and most definitely coloured the Tattoo light blue!

2018 is our opportunity to do it all again and bring together as many as 100 standards from across our Association as a final salute to this RAF centenary year.

Your Branch standard bearer will be in the spotlight and in front of a 10,000 strong paying audience!

If your Branch standard bearer wishes to participate then please contact me, Debbie, in the Exeter office on tel: 01392-462088 or email: debbie.byam@rafa.org.uk

Branches will be required to cover the cost of standard bearers' accommodation and a proportion of travel. Partners, wives and families will need to buy a ticket. Please see next paragraph and link for tickets at a reduced price of £16 plus £1 booking fee.

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've managed to negotiate reduced ticket prices at £16 per ticket which will include a £1 booking fee.

Secure your tickets here:

<https://rafa.ticketlight.co.uk/> for either Saturday 24 November or Sunday 25 November. 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 (RAF Association Desk) located immediately next to the Box Office on the Arena Floor level to



the right of entrance E. 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.

NORTH ONE TELEVISION

North One Television is producing a new programme for Channel 4 that will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings next year.

As part of the programme 'North One' is trying to track down veterans to interview that worked on the Dakota or descended from the aircraft as part of the parachute regiment and that were specifically involved in the D-Day landings. If you or someone you know worked on the Dakota, please email PRManager@rafa.org.uk or call 0800 0182 361 and ask to speak to the PR Manager.

BRANCH PROPERTY ISSUES

Several Branches have still not taken action to address their outstanding requirements from the fire risk assessment and are reminded to do so at their earliest opportunity. The fire risk assessments are accompanied by action plans detailing the work required and these should be completed and returned to HQ within 30 days of receipt. Even where work cannot be completed within this period, the action plan should identify what actions the Branch and club has taken and are planning. Council have asked for regular updates on Branch responses to fire risk assessments in particular.

A number of common themes emerged from the fire risk assessments, including poor record keeping and lack of training. To support Branches (and Clubs) an Association fire safety log book has been developed. These provide both guidance on fire safety, and provide forms on which checks and tests should be recorded. The fire safety log books were sent to Branch chairs in mid-June. Please ensure the log book is shared with all of those who have any responsibility for fire safety at the property.

A fire safety workshop took place at Annual Conference, and a copy of the presentation is available on the Members' Portal, under documents / Association governance / Risk

documents. Those Branch officials who were unable to attend the workshop will find the presentation of use in their role and as a Branch and club training resource.

Finally, Branches will be pleased to note that a new property grant application process has been developed. Details were sent to Branch chairs in June. The process and application form are also available under risk documents on the Members' Portal.

RAF ASSOCIATION TOKEN VISITS POOLE BRANCH

On the afternoon of Saturday 14 July 2018 members of Poole (680) Branch, accompanied by cadets and staff from 2391 (Parkstone) Air Training Corps, gathered at the War Memorial in Poole Park to welcome the arrival of the RAF Association Token, which was being carried on foot from Christchurch to Poole by a contingent of Christchurch RAF Association members.

Our special guest was the Worshipful Mayor of Poole, Councillor Sean Gabriel, who had kindly agreed to perform a short handing over ceremony of the token from Christchurch RAF Association to Poole RAF Association.

This photograph shows the mayor of Poole ceremoniously handing the token to Poole Branch chairman, Mike Davis, having received the token from the Christchurch Branch



With standards raised, the token was paraded through a guard of honour formed from cadets and Poole Branch members, towards the mayor and Poole Branch chairman, Mike Davis, who were waiting by the war memorial. The mayor accepted the token from the chairman of Christchurch Branch and then ceremoniously handed it over to Mike Davis. The short ceremony completed, light refreshment were provided for all those in attendance.

As several of Poole Branch members live on the Isle of Purbeck, the following afternoon Poole Branch President, Doug Collett, took the token to the Poole lifeboat station on Poole quay, where crew from the RNLI had kindly agreed to transport the token to Swanage lifeboat station in their inshore lifeboat. A small contingent of cadets and staff from 2391 (Parkstone) squadron were also in attendance to watch the token being handed over to the care of the lifeboat crew and begin its sea journey. The token was carefully wrapped and placed in a waterproof covering (the president's fishing rod bag!) to keep it safe while in transit. On arriving at Swanage lifeboat station, the lifeboat crew handed the token over to Poole Branch chairman, Mike Davis, who had been waiting with a group of cadets and staff from the Swanage detached flight of 2185 (Wareham) Air Training Corps.

The intention had been to transport the token part of its way to Weymouth from Swanage on a train drawn by a Battle of Britain Class steam locomotive, however, this was thwarted at the last moment by a technical problem. Therefore, the following Sunday 22 July, a small group of Poole RAF Association members boarded the No. 30 Purbeck Breezer bus to transport the token from Swanage to Weymouth. The bus travelled through the beautiful south Dorset countryside and along the Jurassic Coast, passing iconic sights such as Corfe Castle and Lulworth Cove. On arrival at Weymouth the token was met by the members of Weymouth Branch flying their standards and marched through the town to the Weymouth RAF Association Branch Club where the official handover of the token took place. Refreshments were provided and after thanking the Weymouth members for their friendly welcome and hospitality the Poole members returned to the seafront to catch the bus for the return journey.

Mike Davis receiving the token from the Poole lifeboat crew who had transported the token from Poole to Swanage. Also in photo are cadets and staff from 2185 ATC squadron.



The arrival of the token at the Weymouth RAF Association club. Poole president, Doug Collett, is holding the token and accompanied by members from Poole and Weymouth RAF Association Branches.



RAF ASSOCIATION TOKEN VISITS WIMBORNE BRANCH

Please see enclosed/attached Wimborne Branch RAF100 report 1 – 8 July 2018. Wonderful reading.

THE FORMER ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION OF TARRANT RUSHTON

Standing in shade, looking across an expanse of ripening corn, this rural corner of mid-Dorsetshire seems unchanged since Thomas Hardy's century.

However, first impressions can be misleading the shade is provided by a large black barn, unmistakably a wartime aircraft hangar. A concrete strip curves away to follow the three mile perimeter of these big open fields.

This is the former Royal Air Force station of Tarrant Rushton, a centre for airborne forces in their gliders behind the mighty Halifax bombers that took them into occupied Europe. Just before midnight on 5 June 1944, the six Horsa gliders taking the very first troops across to Normandy departed, operation Coup de Main seizing the now iconic Pegasus Bridge. They were followed by two waves of gliders directly into the battlefields. Then, in September 1944, many more Horsas and Hamilcars left here for Arnhem, many of their pilots and airborne soldiers never returned.

Since 1982, a memorial has stood here, where an annual service is held to remember those events

which has attracted hundreds of veterans and their families. The memorial and the organisation of those services was largely the work of one man, Flight Lieutenant Dennis Hart RAFVR(T). The airbase ceased as an RAF station in 1946, then became the HQ of Flight Refuelling until it finally closed in 1980. Dennis wanted to ensure all events that took place were never forgotten. Dennis started a committee raising funds to build a memorial to the many man and women who served in both war and peacetime operations here. Through his tireless persuasion and persistence that memorial came into being on 6 June 1982, a crowd of 3,000 drawn to the unveiling over which flew City of Lincoln, the RAF historic flight's Lancaster. Every major anniversary of the Normandy operation was observed with a service, again arranged by Dennis and the 1069 Flight Refuelling Wimborne Squadron RAF Air Cadets, that in 2014 being the last as the veterans dwindled to a handful.

Today the memorial stands silent, but is regularly visited as seen by the many flowers and tributes. Recently we have given it a bit of a lift, painting the fence and repairing broken slabs in the surround. Back at the RAF Association clubhouse in Wimborne, we have also been reviewing the archive of correspondence left by Dennis, who died in 2015. A meticulous organiser and tireless fundraiser, Dennis ensured all details of every year's memorial service was finely planned. I have just completed sorting the correspondence from 300 plus veterans into order. Here and there are a few grumbles about the order the banners were paraded or the youthful spirit of the Air Cadets in the band. Most though speak of their admiration for the organisation at the services, their gratitude for being given a chance to remember those who did not return or to meet again comrades not seen for years. Many describe their days crowded with training flights and crowned with the operations to Normandy and Arnhem, interspersed with many flights into France dropping supplies to the resistance.

This archive is an insight to their history, Major Howard recalls the first landings, a rear gunner recounts his escape after his aircraft was shot down over France. Someone has sent the poignant dinner menu held after the Arnhem operations to which many of the Glider Pilot Regiment would not return. Others would be a lengthy discourse on modern times to which Dennis would always reply with grace and diplomacy.

In amongst the hundreds of pages I find several from my father, a navigator up on this Dorset plateau for 18 months. Only after reading this extensive archive do I really understand what he and the many others went through, how they existed and most importantly why they all felt those were their happiest days. Next year sees the 75th anniversaries of D-Day and the Arnhem operations. We will make sure the memorial is ready to receive any remaining veterans and their families.

If you are amongst those, do get in touch to see what arrangements for a celebration can possibly made for June 2019. Please contact the Chairman of RAF Association Wimborne Branch, email tkelly9380@aol.com or email at bobseymour55@btinternet.com.



Photographs taken in June 2014 at the last service at Tarrant Rushton memorial of Dennis Hart and of the memorial.



Photos and story by Andrew Wright

WESTON-SUPER-MARE RAF ASSOCIATION CLUB ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The Club celebrated its 17th Anniversary with a dinner on 11 August. Several of the Club's founder members were present (see photograph below).



RAF ASSOCIATION CONCERT BAND EVENTS

Your band continues to promote the RAF Association around the area and recently hosted 69 musicians from the University Wind Orchestra of Twente, Holland.

Engagements still to come:

RAF Association Battle of Britain Concert Pavilions, Teignmouth 16 September; Malvern Festival of Military History, Hanley Castle Worcestershire, 6 October. Finally, don't forget the RAF Association Concert Band's 20th Anniversary Dinner in the Winter Gardens, Weston-Super-Mare on Saturday 20 October 2018. Tickets cost £24 and include a meet and greet drink, three course meal with slide show & music.

If you are interested in coming along please contact the musical director on 01934 820205. We would love to see as many of you there to celebrate this milestone for the band.

THE YEOVIL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

The Yeovil and District Branch of the association represented by Mr DM Robertson (Branch Secretary) and Mr DS Vennard (Standard Bearer), Mr D B Wood & Mr GI Jones, received the "Token" from Mr L Munckton (Sherborne Branch Chairman) and Mrs. V Shrimpton (Sherborne Branch Secretary) on 8 August 2018 at the Yeovil ATC HQ.



The Branch would like to thank the ATC Squadron for their involvement in the presentation, during which both the Yeovil and Sherborne ATC standards were displayed.

The Branch would also like to thank the Squadron for their hospitality and support during the Wings Appeal collection in the town.

On 12 August, the token was passed on to the Bridport & Lyme Regis Registered Member Group and received by Mr A Shrimpton at the Bridport

town hall in the presence of the town mayor, town crier and other members of the Association.

The Yeovil & District Branch now meet at the Hungry Horse on the second Wednesday every month at 12 noon. All members and prospective members of the association are welcome.

HARBOUR HOUSE RETIREMENT HOME, BRIDPORT

To celebrate the formation of the Royal Air Force on 1st April 1918, residents at Harbour House Retirement Home, West Bay Bridport recently enjoyed a short talk on "100 years of the Royal Air Force", given by two local members. Retired Air Engineer Alan Kidson and Navigator Bill Davies between them completed over 75 years service as aircrew serving worldwide. Picture below shows Harbour House staff member Babs Probert presenting a donation cheque to support RAF Association funds to Alan Kidson. Contact: Bill Davies Tel: 01308 281200



FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE 2018

If you wish to attend the above event on 8 November 2018 please contact Catherine Brooks-Price on email: cat.brooks-price@rafa.org.uk or call 0116 268 8784.

A BUSY WEEK FOR RAF 100 TOKEN IN BRIDPORT

Crowds lined the streets of Bridport, Dorset to catch a glimpse of the weird and wonderful mix of floats which made up this year's carnival procession. Included in the parade was the Bridport and Lyme Regis Royal Air Force Association members Land Rover, driven by Richard Pollard, displaying the RAF100 Trenchard token.



The token having arrived earlier in the week from Yeovil Branch, visited a retirement home for a presentation by Bill Davies (ex-navigator) and Alan Kidson (ex-flight engineer) on their time in the RAF before being displayed in a local shop window after which it was then recovered for the Saturday carnival. The following day, on the Sunday, the mayor of Bridport, councillor Barry, accompanied by the town crier, John Collingwood, officially handed the token over for its next journey. The RAF Association, Chairman, Alan Kidson, presented the mayor with a commemorative RAF centenary tankard. The final road journey was by ex RAF Luqa, Malta, 1956 Bedford Fire Engine owned by Chris Scard from Dorchester, to Middle Pymore Farm. Once there, Chairman Alan Kidson was strapped into an autogyro together with the token and flown by pilot Nick Wright over the border into Devon for a handover at Dunkeswell airfield to Paul Baker Area Director for the RAF Association Wales, Midland and South Western Area.



TYWYN AND ABERDOVEY BRANCH WITH THE MAGIC LANTERN CINEMA PRESENT A NEW FEATURE DOCUMENTARY 'SPITFIRE'

Please see details enclosed/attached. To take place on Sunday, 16 September at 1930hrs, doors opening at 1800hrs for entertainment and bar.

CALNE AND DISTRICT BRANCH TAKE PART IN A PARADE TO THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL WITH THE RBL AND REMEMBER THE FALLEN

Royal British Legion members from across Wiltshire and the UK marched with pride as part of the pilgrimage that followed the footsteps of the first world war veterans and war widows who took part in a parade to the Menin Gate Memorial in Belgium in 1928.



The Calne and District RAF Association Branch standard bearer Paul Ellis who is a deputy standard bearer for the Calne and District Branch of the Royal British Legion was invited to take part in the pilgrimage as the wreath bearer.



2,300 standard bearers and wreath bearers from 1,150 RBL Branches took part and paraded through Ypres exactly 90 years after the original pilgrimage.

The parade was the highlight of four days of battle field tours and remembrance at Tyne Cot/Passchendale, Hill 60/Messines, Thiepval/Ulster tower, Delville wood/Longueval, Arras, and Vimy Ridge. We conducted our own service at Thiepval in honour of the thousands who gave their lives for our freedom and modern society.

It was an honour and privilege to be able to take part in the very special act of remembrance.

I have never seen so many standard bearers in one place before and will never see again! A fantastic four days never to be forgotten.



By Paul Ellis
Calne and District Branch

LUCIE PADDISON, AREA VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR FOR WALES, MIDLAND AND SOUTH WESTERN AREA

Lucie has provided us with an update, please see enclosure/attached.

CYBER AWARENESS, SCAMS AND FRAUD

Digital scams and fraud are a very real danger in today's world. The attached information will be a very useful read to Branches to keep a close eye on digital communication.

And finally:

FOR THE FALLEN

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,

We will remember them.

Debbie Byam

Area Administrator

Wales, Midland and South Western area.

Encs:

1. Plymouth Branch poster
2. Wimborne RAF100 report
3. Tywyn & Aberdovey Spitfire poster
4. Lucie Paddison, Area Volunteer Co-ordinator update
5. Cyber Awareness, Scams and Fraud