

Branch Membership

186

**SPECIAL
ELECTRONIC
EDITION**

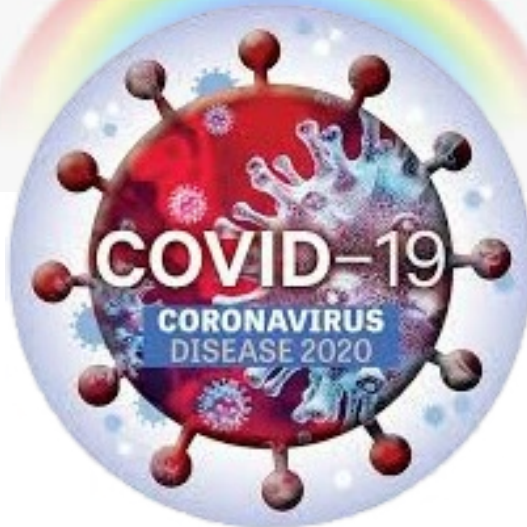
 **ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH

Special self isolating edition



ISSUE 3

ISSUE 3



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Registered Charity: 226686 (England & Wales) SC037673 (Scotland)

1071536 (Branch)

RAFAGEN

The official newsletter of the Letchworth & District
Branch of the Royal Air Forces' Association



ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT

BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2020

Vice President:- Dennis Dawson

Chairman:- W.O. Shaun Griffin

Vice Chairman:- Alan Millard

Secretary:- Ken Needham

Assistant Secretary:- Marie Mahoney

Treasurer:- Ken Needham

Wings Appeal Officer:- Roy Newbury

Branch Welfare Officer: Mark Howell

Contact details :- Tel :-07874015229 email :- markhowell65@gmail.com

Membership Secretary:- Headley Parkins

Branch Padre:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew

Contact details :- Tel :- 01462742165

email :- lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

General Committee:

Dean Meek ; Donna Cook ; John Airey ;

Lesley Starr ;

Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin

Monthly Meetings are held at the Letchworth Rugby Club, Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City Herts (Behind the Letchworth Leisure Centre) on the 3rd Monday of each month at 19.45 hrs. Licence Bar. Ample Parking

NAAFI BREAK is held at The Par 3 Golf Centre, Willian Way, Letchworth Garden City on the 1st Tuesday of each month 10.00 hrsn 'til 12.00 hrs

**Another Special Forward from
our new Branch Chairman,
Shaun Griffin**



Due to the commitment Shaun has to the Association and his work in the Royal Air Force that the present situation demands, he is unable to say a few words in our emergency RAFAGEN this time.

Shaun is not only coordinating the branch Covid-19 volunteers he is still doing his full time job with the R.A.F. Regiment.

Let us hope as restrictions get relaxed, our devoted 'Front Line' team will be able to get back to normal and can be more relaxed.

Editor

Part of something special



All correspondences regarding the RAFAGEN to
Ken Needham, 68 Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3HJ.

Telephone: 01462 671534

E-mail Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk

I keep looking on the Internet to see if anyone has come up with an illuminated sign, showing the days of the week. I want to put one at the foot of our stairs, so that each morning when I come down stairs I will know what day of the week is. With this 'self isolating' all the days merge into one.

V.E. Day 8th May 1945, so 75 years on I would like to make our next issue of Emergency RAFAGEN a special VE Day issue. There are plenty of wartime stories to tell, as the history books on the shelves behind me here have recorded, but I would like your stories. You don't have to be a top class writer for inclusion in RAFAGEN as you well know from my efforts. Just send me some ideas and we can make something of it. If you don't want to write a story, have you any wartime photos that will bring back memories. I lived in Spondon in Derby at the time, and I can remember all the street parties around where I lived. I will have to look in my photo albums, and I hope you will do the same.

Let us make the next issue a first class issue and help us forget all this Covid 19 trouble.



Project HELP LINE

Having no one to talk to can be incredibly isolating, particularly if you're used to sharing your home and time with others. We know that shielding and self isolation due to COVID-19 is causing many people among our RAF community to feel very lonely. Something as simple as a friendly chat can make all the difference.

We are determined to ensure that no single member of our community is alone and struggling through these difficult times.

We are providing a free phone friendship line for anyone in our RAF community to call if you are feeling isolated, in need of more specific support, or simply want to chat with someone who understands.

We can also arrange for a dedicated friend from our amazing army of volunteers to make regular telephone contact.

I don't care who your dad is, this is an illegal gathering



Kings College have now partnered with the UK's leading charities and all of the Royal Medical Colleges to better understand the virus in those who are more vulnerable. From pre-existing health conditions, to age and pregnancy - we're enabling research that helps us beat COVID-19 for all.

To help support this important initiative, we need more volunteers using the app. Which can be obtained from the App store on your mobile phone. Just search for 'Covid 19'

Once you have registered on the App,, you will report how you are feeling daily.

RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association

Brain Exercise

ALL YOU HAVE TO WORK OUT IS ARE THE STATEMENTS
TRUE OR FALSE

What is definitely true is that it's question time – and the answers are down below when you're ready.

- 1 Cyclones spin in a clockwise direction in the southern hemisphere
- 2 Goldfish only have a memory of three seconds
- 3 The capital of Libya is Benghazi
- 4 Brazil is the only country in the Americas to have the official language of Portuguese
- 5 The Channel Tunnel is the longest rail tunnel in the world
- 6 Darth Vader famously says the line “Luke, I am your father” in The Empire Strikes Back
- 7 Olivia Newton-John represented the UK in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1974, the year ABBA won with “Waterloo”
- 8 Stephen Hawking declined a knighthood from the Queen
- 9 The highest mountain in England is Ben Nevis
- 10 Nicolas Cage and Michael Jackson both married the same woman
- 11 Japan and Russia did not sign a peace treaty after World War Two so are technically still at war
- 12 The mathematical name for the shape of a Pringle is hyperbolic paraboloid
13. Charlie Chaplin came first in a Charlie Chaplin look-alike contest
- 14 Michael Keaton's real name is Michael Douglas

- 15 Napoleon was of below-average height
- 16 Donald Duck's middle name is Fauntelroy
- 17 The Statue of Liberty was a gift from France
- 18 According to Scottish law, it is illegal to be drunk in charge of a cow
- 19 The Great Wall of China is visible from space
- 20 The first tea bags were made of silk

Answers ON THE NEXT PAGE

ONE FINAL TRUE OR FALSE QUESTION AND I WILL GIVE THE ANSWER IN THE NEXT ISSUE.



TRUE OR FALSE ANSWERS

- 1 True
- 2 False – scientists have found their memories can actually last for months
- 3 False – it’s Tripoli
- 4 True
- 5 False – The Gotthard Base Tunnel in Switzerland is 4 miles longer at 35.5 miles long
- 6 False – the line is actually “No, I am your father”
- 7 True
- 8 True
- 9 False – Ben Nevis is in Scotland
- 10 True – to Lisa Marie Presley no less
- 11 True – the two countries have signed a joint declaration but not a peace treaty
- 12 True
- 13 False – he came third
- 14 True
- 15 False – at 5 ft 7 in he was slightly above average height for the time
- 16 True
- 17 True
- 18 True
- 19 False
- 20 True

REQUIRE THE SERVICES OF OUR NEW WELFARE OFFICER?

Here are the contact details of the branch Welfare Officer :-

Mark Howell

Tel :-07874015229

email :- markhowell65@gmail.com

If you need to contact Mark urgently and he is not available, contact the branch secretary, Ken Needham



The Association Welfare Officers Provide friendship, help and support to the entire RAF family

Welfare is at the heart of the Royal Air Forces Association. Our definition of welfare is broad and wide-reaching; the people we help includes serving personnel, where we support all kinds of initiatives to improve morale and the working and personal lives of our servicemen and women, as well as continuing to be there for any veteran who finds themselves in need at any time after they have left the service.

Combating loneliness among veterans: sometimes help is as simple as a visit from a friend. For many elderly veterans living by themselves, loneliness and isolation is something that they have to face on a daily basis, in spite of the sacrifices they have made for their country.

With the founding belief that this should never be the case, the Association operates a UK-wide network of over 400 voluntary Welfare Officers, who liaise with former serving RAF personnel and their families in need of all kinds of support.

Every year, these volunteers undertake over 100,000 welfare contacts, making calls and visits to homes and hospitals.

Our volunteers put people in touch with specialist agencies, assist with forms for financial help or simply provide a listening ear and a friendly face.

oooOOOooo

LETCWORTH COVID-19 VOLUNTEERS

A group of volunteers from the Letchworth, Hitchin & District branch of R.A.F.A.

During these times of self isolating, Shaun (our branch chairman), and a group of volunteers taken from branch members, have for the past few weeks been contacting branch members over the age of 70, to ensure that they are fit and well and have no problems in getting medication and supplies.

In the main they have found no major problems. They have collected a few grocery items and the occasional prescription. They have however, found that their weekly call is welcomed by many. I am sure that being able to speak to a fresh voice is very welcome, even if it is only to say that they are doing fine., And have no urgent needs.

It is not only Association members that we are helping. The brief was to help any member of the Royal Air Force family. The team have done that too. A call came from Area Office to say that an ex WRAF was in need of a delivery of groceries. The list was passed onto Shaun, who went to a local supermarket, collected the items and delivered them to her home in Stevenage.

Don't forget the team are there to help anyone that comes under the Royal Air Force umbrella. If you or know anyone who needs help in anyway please

Padre's Hour - May 2020

Hello again,

I hope you are well and safe. It's been well over a month since the lock down dregs were put in place and although most people seem to be surviving the restrictions, I suspect there are quite a few who find it a real struggle. Maybe you're one of them or you know someone who is. I know that RAFA is working hard to ensure that all



members have what they need day by day. So do contact your Branch to ask for help if you need it. There are volunteers who are happy to help.

For most of us asking for help doesn't come easy for many reasons. We want to preserve our independence, we might feel embarrassed, and maybe we fear what others will think. I have been delighted when the news has told the stories of those who have been contacted to make sure that friends, neighbours, and others have all they need. People in streets, or living in blocks of flats or wider neighbourhoods and communities have set up ways of staying in touch via social media such as Hasp or email. Phone calls are made, a tap on the door asking if shopping is needed or asking if all is OK. Being a good neighbour, acting with kindness is something we're usually very good at – all we need is the opportunity.

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan – how a man making a journey was set upon by robbers. He was badly beaten and left lying on the side of the road bleeding and in pain. Two men passed by on the other side because they had more important things to do, the third, a foreigner and stranger, stopped and offered help by not only binding the man's wounds but then taking him to a shelter and offered to pay the landlord for anything more required. Here's the parable from the Bible,

'Now, a lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" He answered, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind' and 'your neighbour as yourself.'"

He said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live.” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

Jesus answered, “A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. By chance a priest came down that way. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to that place, looked at him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Then he set him on his own donkey and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day when he departed, he took out two denars and gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, ‘Take care of him. I will repay you whatever else you spend when I return.’

“Now which of these three do you think was a neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” ’ (Luke 10:21-37)

The term ‘Good Samaritan’ has become a well known term when we speak of others helping out. Jesus said that we are to do likewise – having open eyes to see the need and then respond in doing what can to help. It seems to me that in the present time we will have opportunities to go and do likewise.

A prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love, for your name’s sake. Amen.

Whether you are someone with a faith or not, I am more than happy to be contacted if you think I can offer support and friendship, help or advice. I will usually be at the monthly Branch meetings and the NAAFI Break, (once they re-start) as well as serving on the Committee. For the time being you can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

Kind regards & blessings Lindsay

Revd Canon Lindsay Dew



Cpl Needham K.

INVESTIGATES UPDATES



More military news wanted on two former branch members Marie McCormick (Nee Armiger) and her husband Dennis. Marie was once the branch secretary.

Branch member Jim Box tells us how to get a service record. “They can be obtained by going to GOV website, www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records”.

I believe this web site has already been contacted, but they request documentation that wasn't available. Action has now been taken to obtain the necessary documents.

W.O. Griffin has informed me that during WW2 148 Squadron was a Special duties squadron. My further checks reveal that this squadron flew the famous Halifax. More information can be found on Facebook page RAF 148 Squadron, Special Duties WW2 . Many relations of members of this squadron report a lot of personal information here. Could be a place to research.



RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association



The wall painting with the letters R.A.F. & 1941 found in a home in Letchworth

I am hoping when times change and can get out and meet people, I will be able to report more. In the meantime if you think you might be able to help with my enquiries, please contact me. Details on the second page.



TELEPHONE NUMBERS YOU NEED TO KNOW - JUST IN CASE

LOCALLY

MARK HOWELL WELFARE OFFICER

0787 401 5229

E MAIL markhowell65@gmail.com

REV. CANON LINDSAY DEW - BRANCH PADRE

0754 587 8082

E MAIL lindsay.dew@btinternet.com

KEN NEEDHAM - ACTING BRANCH COORDINATOR

01462 671 534

EMAIL secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk

NATIONALLY

R.A.F.A. HEAD QUARTERS -

0800 018 2361

Or

0116 266 5224.

IF TV CAN PUT ON REPEATS SO CAN WE

This is a story from RAFAGEN Autumn 2015

RIDE FOR THE FEW

6th Sept 2015.

Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin (Ride for the Few - event organiser)

To mark the significant 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain I had a mind to plan a large charity event to mark the occasion and to honour the “few” in addition to this I wanted to support a charity that is close to my heart. I have been involved in the Royal Air Forces Association for 16 years now, as Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. and Station R.A.F.A.L.O., I am currently the R.A.F.A.L.O. for the Letchworth Hitchin and District Branch in Hertfordshire. The enduring passion in my life has been motorcycles for as long as I can remember, it seemed the natural conclusion of all these ideas and thoughts would be to plan a motorcycle ride to include somehow the Battle of Britain and raise cash for the Royal Air Forces Association. So it was that a plan was hatched from a small acorn that flourished to be a large oak tree, culminating in 75 motorcyclists riding around the most significant Battle of Britain heritage sites a total distance of 544 km which represented one km for each pilot or aircrew killed during the Battle of Britain period. At the time of writing R.A.F. Halton Motorcycle Club had raised £2029.80 for the R.A.F. Association Wings Appeal.

So to planning the event, which very quickly became known as Ride for the Few, a small team of volunteers at R.A.F. Halton Motorcycle Club developed my original plan. We decided that as a small R.A.F. Station motorcycle club we wouldn't be able to muster more than perhaps 20 bikers for the ride, so we quickly spread the net wide across the R.A.F. biking community, the ‘whole force’ you might say to coin a currently much used phrase. It seemed that there was a huge appetite for Ride for the Few and soon we had bikers registering to ride from R.A.F. Stations as diverse as Brize Norton and Northolt to Henlow, from Honington and Wyton to High Wycombe, eventually 10 R.A.F. Stations were represented including PJHQ and Wittering and Shawbury. Many Ex R.A.F. bikers became involved as the word spread; the biking community is very esoteric in its nature, this was the catalysis for the Ride for the Few's eventual success. An interesting query came from the Vindis Car group based around Cambridgeshire, who wished to become involved. Frank Vindis was a Czechoslovak WWII spitfire pilot who stayed in the UK after the war and set up a company selling cars. His family are rightly very proud of that heritage, so it was that 4 members from the Vindis Group



who are honorary members of the Pathfinders Motorcycle Club at R.A.F. Wyton decided to join us on the day.

So as the money stacked up on the giving website, so the riders registering increased week on week, when finally the no shows and last minute riders turned up, we met our target of 75 riders riding the 544 km on the day. The weather played heavily towards the success of the day, as we were blessed with a stunning sunny September morning at the assembly area at Kermode Hall R.A.F. Halton. The Sunday morning tranquillity was broken by a cacophony of exhaust noise from a huge variety of bikes from across the whole R.A.F. Family.

After much planning, the lead Spitfire & Mosquito Groups of 20 riders each (lead by Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin and FS Pete Fletcher) started out on the route in to North West London and our first destination R.A.F. Museum Hendon and the fantastic heritage site at the old Fighter H.Q. at Bentley Priory. Hurricane & Blenheim Groups (lead by MACR Steve Barker & Sqn Ldr Dave Roe) headed off to

RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association

the Polish War Memorial at Northolt and the Battle of Britain Bunker at Uxbridge. Groups then converged on the M25 with groups becoming joined at stages to work our way round to a very well organised Kenley airfield. Here we assembled at the Kenley Airfield Tribute for a group photograph and joining the Kenley Branch of R.A.F.A at their Portcullis Club House. An entertaining distraction at Kenley was a 1940s themed event including custom cars and motorbikes and 1940's music, our arrival just added to the flavour of the event. The Royal Air Forces Bikers Branch, also at Kenley, recruited a very healthy number of new members to the Association and added a great amount of R.A.F. colour to a great event. Branch Chairman Mike Roach at the Kenley Branch was a welcoming gracious host, the hot mugs of tea and fruit cake was an instant hit with all who sampled the their generous hospitality. After much chat about differences in fuel capacity and range of the different bikes taking part, a couple of minor break downs and at least one minor blue on blue bike coming together, we arrived at St Georges Chapel Biggin Hill for a brief break, before pushing on to the National Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel Le Ferne near Folkstone. Here Sqn Ldr Dave Roe poignantly reflected on the Battle and the sacrifice of the 'few' with all the riders looking on, before laying a wreath on behalf of the riders. With almost 300 km covered already, a nice sunny ride along the south coast of the garden of England in Kent was a welcome break from cruising along the motorways, as impres-

sive a site as it was having 70 plus riders together, an occasional difference in scenery was a welcome change at this stage. As we headed out past Dover on route to the former R.A.F. WWII Airfield at Manston, riders joints were starting to ache, the planned stops for breaks were a welcomed opportunity to stretch weary legs and muscles. Manston was the last Battle of Britain heritage site we visited on the day but the ride up to it was



perhaps the most enjoyable of the whole day with cliffs and coast off to our right hand side, the sun still beating down. As per the ride plan, riders assembled at the motorway services on the M2 for a final dispersal brief and thank you, with some 144 km still to ride, for the first time that day the four group leaders joined together for the final stretch round the M25 and back to R.A.F. Halton. Tired and weary but with an immense sense of pride and achievement and a welcome soak in the bath and pint of

beer saw us complete a ride which had been 6 months in the planning. The event organisers would like to thank all who have donated, and who hosted the ride at the various venues, to the general public we met on the day. Perhaps for the 80th anniversary we might attempt an even bigger ride.



Royal Air Force Motorcycle Road Racing.



RAFAGEN is the official newsletter of the Letchworth Hitchin & District branch of The Royal Air Forces Association