

 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCES**

**SPECIAL  
ELECTRONIC  
EDITION**

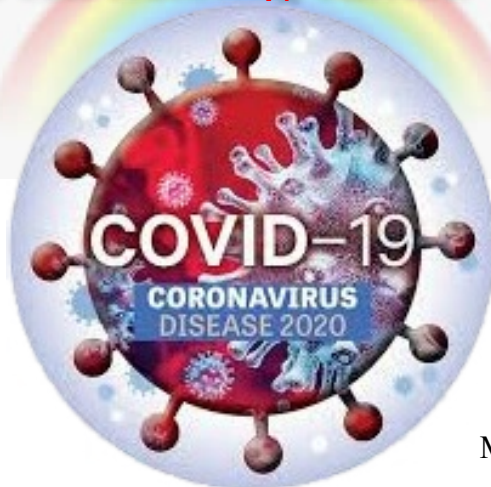
**Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

# RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT  
BRANCH

**Special self isolating edition**



**ISSUE 7**

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Branch  
Membership

**186**



**Patron: Her Majesty The Queen**

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

# 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:- Vancant*

*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 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month at 19.45 hrs. License Bar Ample Parking

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



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](mailto:Secretary@rafa-Letchworth.org.uk)

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It appears that times are getting a little closer everyday to becoming normal, and people are getting out and about more. So for the time being our Emergency Covid-19 RAFAGEN will close down and we will get back to publishing each issue as we used to .That is an electronic version and a printed version. Our printing company is now open for business, so the Autumn issue will come out as normal.

I thank those who have sent me their stories and for the kind words that I have received over these unusual times. Let us hope that we are soon back to 100% normal, and that we don't have to go through it all again with a second phase.

I will still need your stories for the ongoing RAFAGEN, and if I may suggest, a few words on how Covid-19 effected you. For example, one member told me that when it all started, relatives did his shopping, and neighbours made sure he was eating properly by cooking the occasional meal. Can't be bad.

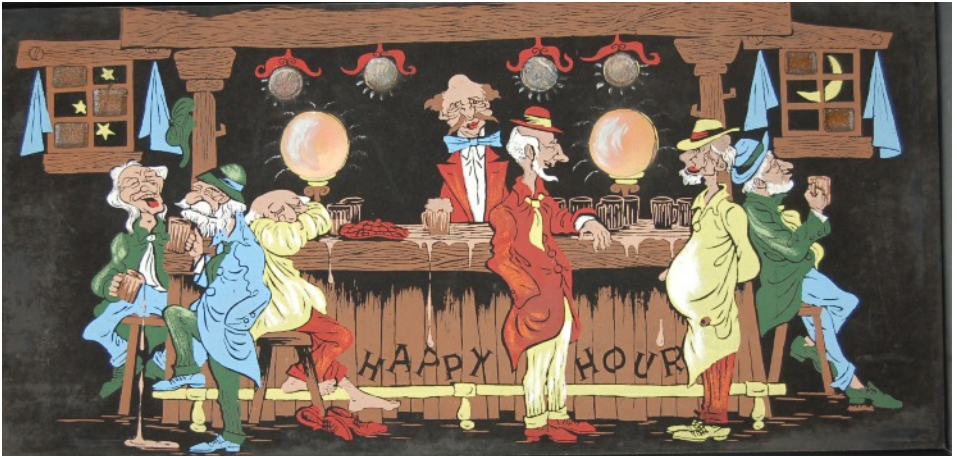
All I am hoping is that my holiday booked for next year doesn't get cancelled again. Wrong again - The cruise line has gone into receivership

Since our last issue, the committee have appointed a new Vice Chairman. We welcome back, Lisa Berry to replace Alan Millard, who sadly passed away during the 'lock-down'. Lisa until this year was our Branch Chairman, but decided to stand down when she found that her new job in civvy street, was more time consuming than she first thought. She is now settling in at work, and although still busy she feels that she can cope with the less tasking position of Vice Chairman.



We did all our tests for our “On-Line NAAFFI Break, and all went well. So I decided to press the button to start a new venture for the branch. We told as many members as we could, and our Media Officer put the word out on Facebook. All that was needed was the reference and the password both obtainable from me. When the big day came all that had registered was the two who helped with the tests,. With such a poor response I have cancelled the project, hoping that we will soon be able to return to the Par Three Golf Centre for a real NAAFI Break.

The Letchworth Par 3 Golf Centre cafe “Dimples” is open again, which unfortunately doesn’t mean that NAAFI BREAK can start up again just yet. In the absence of you favourite coffee morning I thought you might like the opportunity to get out of the house and stretch your legs, especially if that warmer weather comes back. With the re-opening of the cafe comes new opening times. The cafe will be closed on Monday and Tuesday of each week, and the golf course only open to members on those days. These new opening times will **NOT** effect our NAAFI BREAK sessions. The owners have agreed to open on the first Tuesday of each month especially for us. This will mean that we will have the place to ourselves, so when the rules of Lock-down allow, let’s fill the place. If you are interested in NAAFI BREAK and want to know more about it, please contact me.



Seen on the wall of the office of a Manager of a Distillery I had the pleasure of visiting. Although the Distillery was not in this country, and I have no significance to anyone at the bar, I could add a few names of my own - Ken

## LATEST NEWS

**The Letchworth Rugby Club have been in touch to say that they will be open for business again as from August 2020. Your Chairman has decided that the first meeting should be a committee meeting, to catch up on the business that should have been done during ‘Lock-down’, and mainly to discuss the format we should take to ensure our members are protected during our social evenings.**

**This committee meeting will take place on 17<sup>th</sup> August, and we will make sure that all branch members are aware of the result.**

**The Par 3 Golf Centre have also been contacted to see if we can start up NAAFI Break again, but I am afraid the news is not so good there. The Golf Centre are wanting us to start again, but the premises, is large large enough to hold our meetings in the old format, but not big enough to hold our numbers at social distancing. So I am afraid we will have to wait a little longer for our NAAFI breaks.**

**Again we will keep members informed.**

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# A Birthday trip to the seaside

## A memory of the service days of Jim Box

When I was with 210 Squadron at Ballykelly in the 1960s, training trips on Shackletons were usually either called Operational Flying Exercises (OFE) of about 6 to 8 hours, or Long Range Operational Flying Exercises (LROFE) of 10 to 14 hours.

The crew I was with were scheduled for an OFE on a day in September 1962 which happened to be my birthday.

We had planned to do practice low level radar homings followed up by practice bombing and a sonar exercise. These



exercises gave the electronics team and pilots a chance to hone their skills.

The second phase was the navigators turn with a navigational exercise. The annual Squadron photographic competition was taking place this particular month so we intended to find a subject to photograph for the competition.

During our final briefing the skipper, F/O Pat Patterson, asked me where I would like to go as it was my birthday. I suggested a trip to the seaside for an ice cream. Pat took me at my word and Blackpool was inserted into the navigation plan to take a photo of the tower.

The weather that day was perfect for a trawl around the coast and a visit to the seaside. Arriving at Blackpool I took position in the starboard beam seat, opened the window and prepared to take the photo with the hand held camera. Pat positioned the aircraft with a run along the shore at 300 feet which was our normal photo height for hand held cameras.

Turning on for a second run Pat said we were going for a close up. Looking through the viewfinder I found myself looking up at the just the top of the Tower. I told Pat that was a bit too close as the Tower is just over 500 feet high and we were about 400 yards out at very



*Hope you didn't get this close to the tower*

much less than 300 feet. We pulled up and away and completed our navex.

On returning to Ballykelly at our debrief, the Duty Operation Officer asked had we enjoyed Blackpool as an aircraft with the number 210 on the side had been reported for scaring the donkeys. A few days later the photos were back at the Squadron and the Tower picture worthy of entry to the competition. However, Pat thought that it might “open a can of worms” and he would prefer not to have an interview with the CO with his SD cap on to explain the low level beat up of Blackpool beach, so the photo was never entered.

Nothing else was heard of our trip to the seaside and my birthday treat passed into crew history.



*I couldn't find a Shackleton with the number 210 on the side, but my picture shows a Shakleton pasked up at Ballykelly, number 269 - editor*





## ***Project HELPLINE***

***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.***

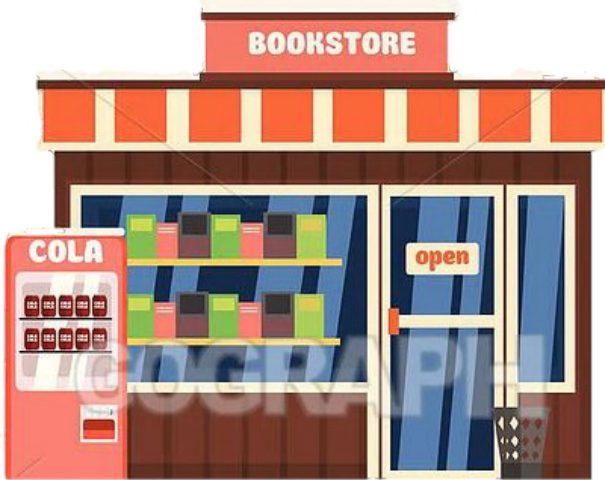
***We are providing a freephone friendship line for anyone in our RAF community to call if you are feeling isolated, in need of more specific support, or simply want to chat with someone who understands.***

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

If you need someone to talk to, please call 0800 018 2361 or email [opconnect@rafa.org.uk](mailto:opconnect@rafa.org.uk).

To volunteer your services to our friendship helpline or to become a telephone befriender, please email [opconnect@rafa.org.uk](mailto:opconnect@rafa.org.uk).

We are here and will continue to be here for anyone that needs us. We are united, standing shoulder to shoulder with our RAF community in these times of crisis.



The Branch have a number of books which they would like to offer to members at a set price, a donation or free of charge.

Each publication of RAFAGEN we will offer a few books. If you are interested please contact Ken Needham

## Part works

**Item 1 AIRPLANE:-** 180 weekly parts made into 18 bound volumes. An Obis publication.. A must for any aircraft enthusiast. Full details of all types of aircraft, both civil and military from all over the world. - **£5 or nearest offer**

**Item 2 THE FALKLANDS WAR:-** .A Marshall Cavendish publication in 14 weekly parts made into one one bound volume. The day to day record from invasion to victory. Photographs, stories, and sketches of all that happened during during those history making weeks. - **Offers around £2**

## Coffee Table Books

**Item 3 ROCKETS & MISSILES** by Bill Gunston. A comprehensive technical directory and history of military guided missile systems of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Featuring a magnificent 8 page colour fold-out. - **£1**

**Item 4 FLYING TO THE SUN** by Geoffrey Cuthbert. Quarter of a century of Britannia Airways, Europe's leading airline. - **£1**

**Item 5 THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF SHIPS** edited by E.L. Cornwell Containing 465 colour and 355 black and white illustrations, the excellent book tells the story of ships from the ‘dug-out’ through to the modern day vessels. - *£2 or offer*

All the book bundles as listed in the last issue have been sold.

## **LETCHWORTH COVID-19 VOLUNTEERS**

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

Due to the relaxing of the Covid-19 ‘Lock-down’ regulations, the weekly calls to to our Over 70’s, will, unless requested to stay weekly, will reduce to a call once a fortnight. The member will have contact details of their volunteer, should they be needed.

If you, or if you know of any ex R.A.F. Airman or Airwoman who who would like a call from one of our volunteers to make sure everything is OK, or even for friendly chat to help over these difficult times., Please give me (Ken Needham) a call, my details are are the next page. Don’t be afraid to make that call, we love hearing that members of the Royal Air Force family want to make contact.

During these troublesome times we, like other branches how found they they have lost contact with some of their members. Members move home, change their telephone provider, and even change their email address, and we at RAFA are not to advised. When something like this pedantic comes along , we don’t know how to contact you and make sure you do not need our help. Our volunteers from the branch have helped so many during these special times, but we could be helping more if we knew were you are. If you have changed your contact details at any time, why no drop Ken Needham a note with your current details. It doesn't matter if you have told us before. We would rather be told a dozen times than not at all.

The weekly calls our volunteers have been doing are being well received, and are appreciated. That does not include the physical side of what they are doing. I know the Chairman keeps giving them a pat on the back, and they deserve it.



## **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

# TELEPHONE NUMBERS YOU NEED TO KNOW - JUST IN CASE

## LOCALLY

MARK HOWELL WELFARE OFFICER

**0787 401 5229**

E MAIL [markhowell65@gmail.com](mailto:markhowell65@gmail.com)

REV. CANON LINDSAY DEW - BRANCH PADRE

**0754 587 8082**

E MAIL [lindsay.dew@btinternet.com](mailto:lindsay.dew@btinternet.com)

KEN NEEDHAM - ACTING BRANCH COORDINATOR

**01462 671 534**

EMAIL [secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rafa-leitchworth.org.uk)

## NATIONALLY

R.A.F.A. HEAD QUARTERS -

**0800 018 2361**

**Or**

**0116 266 5224.**

## **Opportunity for Hertfordshire Veterans to have their say about access to Healthcare**

As members of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board, promoted locally as [Hertfordshire Heroes](#), we are launching a survey to better understand the healthcare needs and priorities of veterans in Hertfordshire.

The Board brings together business, military organisations, charities, the NHS and local authorities in a shared commitment, part of which is to ensure that no veteran faces a disadvantage when accessing public services.

Although it is not a garrisoned county, ONS data estimates that there are 36,000 veterans living in Hertfordshire. However, as in other parts of the country, there is relatively little data on specific issues or priorities of the Armed Forces community.

Finding out more about veterans and their experience is vital for our work to ensure the Armed Forces community face no disadvantage in accessing services.

To find out more, [watch this video from the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board's Chairman, Cllr Terry Douris.](#)

The Veteran Healthcare Access survey, which is funded by Hertfordshire Public Health and conducted by Healthwatch Hertfordshire, will be available on the Healthwatch Hertfordshire website until the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2020.

If you are someone who has served in the Armed Forces and is accessing health services in Hertfordshire, we would like to hear from you. Please share your views and experiences by following this link: [www.hertfordshireheroes.org/veteranhealthsurvey](http://www.hertfordshireheroes.org/veteranhealthsurvey)

If you would like more information about this project, or would like to request the survey in a different format, please contact Annabel on 01707 275978 or [info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk)



HERTFORDSHIRE  
HEROES



For All of our Non Military readers this little item by Robert Faulds, may or may not help you understand those of us that served in the Military.

## **We are veterans.**

We left home as teenagers or in our early twenties for an unknown adventure.

We loved our country enough to defend it, and also protect it with our own lives.

We said goodbye to friends and family, and everything we knew.

We learned the basic and then we scattered in the wind to far corners of the earth.

We found new fiends and a new family.

We became brother and sisters regardless of colour, race or creed.

We had plenty of good times, and plenty of bad times.

We didn't get enough sleep.

We smoked and drank too much.

We picked up both good and bad habits.

We worked hard and played even harder.

We didn't earn a great wage.

We experienced the happiness of mail call and the sadness of missing important events.

We didn't know when, or even if, we were ever going to see home again.

We grew up fast, and yet somehow we never grew up at all.

We fought for our freedom, as well as the freedom of others.

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Some of us saw actual combat, and some of us didn't

Some of us saw the world, some of us didn't.

Some of us dealt with physical warfare, most of us dealt with psychological warfare.

We have seen and experienced and dealt with things that we can't fully describe or explain, as not all of our sacrifices were physical.

We participated in time honoured ceremonies and rituals with each other, this strengthened our bonds and camaraderie.

We counted on each other to get our job done and sometimes to survive it at all.

We have dealt with victory and tragedy.

We have celebrated and mourned.

We lost a few along the way.

When our adventures were over, some of us went back home, some of us started somewhere new and some of us never came home at all.

We have told amazing and hilarious stories of our exploits and adventures.

We shared an unspoken bond with each other, that most people will never experience, and even fewer will understand.

We speak highly of our own branch of service, and poke fun at the other branches.

We know however that, if needed, we will be there for our brothers and sisters and stand together as one, in a heartbeat.

Being a veteran is something that had to be earned, and it can never be taken away.



It has no monetary value, but at the same time it is a priceless gift.

People see a veteran and then thank them for their service.

When we see each other, we give a little upwards head nod, or a slight smile, knowing that we have shared and experienced things that most people have not.

So, from myself to the rest of the veterans out there, I commend and thank you for all your service and what you have done and sacrificed for your country.

Try to remember the good times, and forget the bad times.

Share your stories.

But most importantly, stand tall, stand proud, for you have earned the right to be called a veteran.

### ***What is a British veteran?***

*DEFINITION. Who is a “veteran” in the UK? Veterans are defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.*

