

Branch Membership

186

**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



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

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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, William Way, Letchworth Garden City on the 1st Tuesday of each month 10.00 hrsn 'til 12.00 hrs

A Special Forward from our new Branch Chairman, Shaun Griffin



During these challenging times, its more important than ever to support one another within the RAF Family. There are many ways in which we can still reach out to help one another, or indeed ask for help ourselves. Isolation doesn't have to mean that you're not connected with a large and industrious network of people willing to support you.

The way in which our Branch is supporting our at risk Members will be apparent in this edition of RAFAGEN, needless to say we will do what we can within the Government guidelines to ensure you feel part of our family. Thank you to those who have stepped forward already to play their part in these initiatives – your time and compassion is very much appreciated.

Communication will be key to alleviating ambiguity in the coming weeks and months – so please do use the Branch Website and Facebook pages if you are able. If that's not your thing, pick up the phone and talk to Ken Needham, I know he would be delighted to hear from you. We intend to keep you up to date on the developing situation.

In the meantime stay safe and we look forward to seeing you all later in the year when we return to normal business.

Regards

Shaun

Part of something special



WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

In these very unusual times when, like so many of you, I and my wife are self isolating, I cannot produce the usual version of RAFAGEN for all our branch members. So I decided to produce a special Electronic version, and hope that I can get it out to as many members as I can. With your help I may be able to get more issues out. I say with your help because I would need your input.

What is the Association doing in these difficult times?

Well to start with your branch has been given the details of all of our members over the age of 70. These over 70's will be contacted on a regular basis by a team of volunteers from the branch. They will ensure that they are coping with self isolation, and they willing to get any groceries, urgent needs, prescriptions etc.

If you haven't been contacted, but need help, contact me (Ken Needham) on 01462 671534 and I will get one of the Letchworth Covid-19 team to give you a call.

If you are under 70 and are classed as a vulnerable person and need help, please call me. I can not help personally, but I know a lot of people that can. I should be saying "only ex Royal Air Force members can apply, but in this case forget it. **ANYONE IN NEED CAN GIVE ME A CALL.**

Our Head Office in Leicester are coordinating the distribution of parcels to all vulnerable members

If you have access to a computer or mobile phone, may I suggest that you visit the branch Facebook page. Our branch media offer, Shaun, is keeping the pages up to date with all the latest news.





252 action for non compliance

Everyone must stay at home to help stop coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading. Wash your hands with soap and water often to reduce the risk of infection.

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, you should only leave the house for 1 of 4 reasons:

shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible

one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household

any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person

travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home

These 4 reasons are exceptions – even when doing these activities, you should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres apart from anyone outside of your household.

You should also:

wash your hands with soap and water often – for at least 20 seconds

wash your hands as soon as you get home

cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze

put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands

not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean



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

Before I get down to telling you all about the recent Annual General Meeting, I wish to add to a bit of information I gave to you last month, regarding veterans and doctors. One of our NAAFI BREAK attendees asked his doctor about what it meant and how it effected him. He was told that the surgery was aware of the ruling, but it only applied to those who were ill during their service life and continued in civvy street, or suffered later a medical attention as a result to something that happened during their service life.. So that injury you acquired whilst playing tiddlywinks doesn't count.

Now over to the Annual General Meeting. Not very well attended, but can you wonder, with all the information that was being passed around at the time. It was decided to hold the meeting, and leave it up to the members to use their commonsense as to whether they attended or not.

The meeting was, as usual, not very long. The part that took the longest was to appoint the 2020 committee.

Lisa Berry, had decided to stand down due the work commitment of her new job. She told me that she couldn't give the time to the branch, and felt that if she couldn't give all of her time to the post, she would have to stand down. She said she would still be an active member, but in the background..

Another officer relinquishing his post was Roy Newbury. I don't know when Roy became Vice Chairman, it must have been around the time I was "requested" to take on the roll of branch secretary, or may have been before. Roy is to continue with another post he has held for quite a few years. Dennis Dawson was unanimously voted to remain as Vice President.

The elected members were as follows. One of the largest and strongest we have had for years

Chairman Shaun Griffin (Branch Trustee)

Vice Chairman Alan Millard (Branch Trustee)

Secretary Ken Needham (Branch Trustee)

Assistant Secretary* Marie Mahoney (Branch Trustee)

Treasurer Ken Needham

Wigs Appeal Officer Roy Newbury (Branch Trustee)

Welfare Officer Mark Howell (Branch Trustee)

Membership Secretary Headly Parkins (Branch Trustee)

Branch Padre Rev. Cannon Lindsay Dew

National & Area Conference Delegate John Airey

Newsletter Editor Ken Needham

Media & P.R. Officer **Shaun Griffin**

General Committee Members Dean Meek ; Donna Cook ; Lesley Starr

BRANCH R.A.F.A.L.O.

Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin

- Refers to a new post

Welcome to New Members for 2020

Mr Malcolm Menzies of Hitchin

Mr Scott Stead of Shefford



The minister was paying a pastoral call on one of his flock, and remarked that he hadn't seen her at church lately.

"No" came the straightforward reply "My daughter is learning to play the harp — and I am having second thoughts about going to heaven!"

DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES BOTH OUR EVENING SOCIAL GROUP AND N.A.A.F.I. BREAK HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

OUR SPEAKERS FOR THE EVENING SESSIONS HAVE HAD TO BE CANCELLED, BUT AS SOON AS WE ARE UP AND RUNNING A NEW LIST WILL BE PRODUCED.

My wife and I find immense pleasure in walking around the gardens of our "stately homes". Thinking about how difficult it is in keeping our small garden neat and tidy, we sometimes wonder how these gardens are coped with on a large scale.

Mr Charles Simmons, the Head Gardener at Blickley Hall in Norfolk and after the winter of 1981/82 he was asked by a visitor how the gardens had fared. He admitted that some plants had been damaged and some had died, and he pointed out areas of devastation. But he was not in despair. "We're knocked back, but not knocked out," he said



A good phrase, and one we could use today.

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



Our branch has been without a Welfare Officer for a few number of years, which is not a very good position for a welfare charity to be in. So when at a committee meeting last year, Mark said that he would like to be trained to be a Welfare Officer. His hand was bitten off.

Over the past few months Mark has had training, and passed in all of the R.A.F. Association's requirements, and is looking forward to answering members call when welfare is needed. He has already had one case, and is one of the volunteers of Letchworth Covid-19 team helping the over 70 members if needed.

Mark's trade in the R.A.F. was in the M.T. Section, a very popular section with my trade. They got us out of many a scrape. He, like me joined the local police force - Bedfordshire. (I was in neighbouring Hertfordshire) Now he works at Luton Airport. No he isn't a pilot, but his work is just as just as important.

May we, the members, welcome Mark to the post, and we know that he will do a sterling job.

Ken Needham

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

Hello again,

I hope you are well and safe. We are certainly living through some strange times as a nation and decisions taken by the Government have affected us all because of Coronavirus. In a very short space of time we have had to radically adjust our lives to living a new normal. No more

going out when we choose - nipping down to the shops or socialising with our friends or simply just doing what we like when we like. We're being urged to wash our hands more frequently – especially when leaving the house to go out and immediately when we return because we don't want to take anything out nor bring anything back. Social distancing has become a new phrase now in everyday use.

Many shops are closed along with pubs, clubs and cafes. Churches are not only closed, but locked and we can't go in for a quiet 5 minutes private prayer nor join with others in the usual Sunday and mid week services.

The way we follow the restrictions has had a drastic effect on every aspect of our lives not just for today but possibly for several months to come.

Elsewhere in this edition of RAFAGEN you will read of the work being done by RAFA, who like many support charities, are working to ensure that no one is left alone or isolated and that support is given when need is known. This of course translates to our own Branch as members have offered their support to those who might otherwise feel very lonely.

The Church has been responding to help Christians know of their fellowship with others, by using social media and live streaming services. I have certainly enjoyed being guided in worship and prayer as it has been



streamed live from various places such as clergy studies or living rooms and even their gardens.

Christians have been called to prayer & action to support those at the front line of the work being done to care for the ill, for the research being done to find a way to defeat the virus. All of us have been invited to join a huge army of volunteers both locally and regionally who will help those who are most at risk and vulnerable. It is so good to see that over three quarters of a million have stepped up to volunteering to assist the NHS in whatever way they can.

One of the prayers I use each day was written last week at the outbreak of coronavirus. I've found it very helpful and perhaps you might like to use it too as you say your prayers.

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. 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

St Clement Danes, London, the
R.A.F. Church in days gone by



R.A.F. News from Twitter

Puma helicopters from RAF Benson have deployed to Scotland to support the coronavirus response. Our helicopters can move rapidly to help where needed; a great asset for the government and UK population.

Alongside other services, the RAF is providing critical support to the UK in the fight against coronavirus. We have been involved already, in airlifting critical patients from remote regions and bringing UK nationals back from around the world.

Today, Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew recorded a video message thanking the Royal Air Force for their hard work in these difficult times, reiterating government guidance to ensure everyone's safety

As part of the ongoing UK Government response to coronavirus, RAF Puma helicopters will be stationed at Kinloss Barracks to assist any NHS requests across Scotland & N England. A 2nd helicopter facility will cover the Midlands and the South England from RAF Benson.

Loneliness is a big concern at the best of times. Be kind to one another and reach out to those around you to stay connected. Stay in touch via phone/video calls to check-in and catch-up with elderly or vulnerable relatives and neighbours - to offer a friendly ear where you can.

With many of us spending most of our time indoors, it can be hard to remain focused. Jigsaw Puzzles are a great way to pass time, relieve stress and stimulate the brain.

Message from the editor. If you are short on jigsaw puzzles, just let me know.

Men and Woman of the Royal Air Force have been recognised for their public service in the Armed Forces Operational Honours List, March 2020.

A SHORT STORY by Ken Needham

When my wife and I decided, nay told, to self isolate for twelve weeks I decided that I would grow a beard.

I don't know whether it was that I felt uncomfortable, or the fact that it meant that my morning ablutions were taking less time, which meant that I had to find more things to do to keep me occupied. Anyway, after four days it was off.

It did however, remind me the last time I grew a beard.

I was stationed at R.A.F. Negombo in Ceylon at the time. I somehow contacted a rash on my face, and duly reported to the M.O. "Nothing life threatening" he said. "Use this cream as directed on the label, and continue with your duties". He did however, give me a note. That note stated that I must not shave for three weeks. Me, a Royal Air Force Policeman with a beard, and a note to say it was official, this could be interesting.

I must add at this point that on my 1250 it described my hair as fair. That was putting it mildly, it was nearly white.

I decided not to tell anyone about my note, letting them point it out to me that I had a beard, and I could proudly show them my little piece of paper.

At the end of the first week, nobody had mentioned my beard.

At the end of the second week, nobody had mentioned my beard.

During the third week I had to report to the Officer in charge of police. Can't remember why, but I was pleased at the request. Flt Lt Quinn was very strict, even to his own, as he felt that by keeping the police on the ball, we would do the same to others. He would notice my beard for sure, and I could then pull out my little note with pride. I would have got one over on Mr Quinn.

The meeting must have lasted about five minutes. I was dismissed. I gave a very smart salute and left the room. He had not noticed my beard.

I was glad when the end of the third week came. Nobody had mentioned my beard.

I took myself off to the camp barbers and asked for a shave. I must admit that it felt good to have a smooth chin again, and that cut-throat razor gave me the best shave I have ever had.

Three weeks without a shave and nobody noticed.

Latest update

Facial Hair Policy. With effect from 1st September 2019, all RAF personnel are permitted to grow a full set beard. A request must be made to the Commanding Officer in writing prior to any member of the RAF growing a beard. Only full beards that are kept short and neatly trimmed will be permitted.



The packing up at the end of the day is the part that nobody enjoys, but we all muck in. Here we are at the Stotfold Steam fair last year.

CAN YOU HELP?



Have you ever, when decorating your first home, written a message on a wall before putting on the wallpaper? Hoping that some future resident will be amused at their find. My wife and I did. I often wonder what the residents thought when they removed the wallpaper.

Rik Goverde had a bit of a surprise when he started to decorate his newly acquired home in Letchworth. What he found was a piece of graffiti from 1941. November 11th to be exact, and above the date the letters R.A.F. and a couple of names. So impressed was Rik with his find that he has framed it and left it in situ. He thought that the house may have some connection with the Royal Air Force, and thought that our branch may be able to help.

He didn't know what he was letting himself in for when he contacted me. I didn't live in the area in 1941 so I couldn't help, so I contacted the branch Media Officer, Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin, and he really started the ball rolling. After gaining the permission from Rik that we could post the picture on our media platforms, Shaun went to town.

First to be recognised were the two names. These appeared to be J. Rumbold on the left and H. Shelford on the right.

We have a budding genealogist on our team and he quickly informed us that according to the 1939 register, a family named Petts lived in the house in question. That didn't help with the two names we have.

At this stage from the information received the identity of Rumbold was that his first name was Jack, and he was a painter/glazier. In 1939 was living in Juliens Road, Hitchin. Shelford, first name Hector, was also a painter decorator, and in 1939 lived in Bursland Letchworth.

If these were the two men referred to on the wall, perhaps they were decorating the house, and during a tea break they decided to have a little fun. But why the date and why the reference to R.A.F.?

New information was still coming into Shaun, who was relaying it all onto me to keep Rik up-to-date.

The two men must have been well known as we learn that Jack (born 1914) was married to Winnie and was married in 1939, when they moved to Paddock Close, Letchworth. (The same road as where our mystery wall painting was found). One report said that he lived in Stevenage before his marriage. Jack worked for the First Garden City Ltd, and his wife worked for Irvin Airshutes making parachutes. Jack was sent during the war years, to Croydon and later to Coventry to help with "bomb damage".

Hector Shelford, the older man, (born 1901 or 1903), had the nickname "Mac". He too worked for the First Garden City Ltd. If the two men worked for the landlords of the Letchworth Estate, is it possible that this house belonged at that time to the Estate? More investigation needed there.

Still no one has come up with the answer to why the date and why R.A.F.

Can you help???????

TELEPHONE NUMBERS YOU NEED TO KNOW - JUST IN CASE

LOCALLY

MARK HOWELL WELFARE OFFICER

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KEN NEEDHAM - ACTING BRANCH COORDINATOR

01462 671 534

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NATIONALLY

R.A.F.A. HEAD QUARTERS -

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Or

0116 266 5224.