

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

**SPRING 2020**



Red Arrows over Niagara Falls



**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 2019

*Vice President:- Dennis Dawson*

*Chairman:- Lisa Berry*

*Vice Chairman:- Roy Newbury*

*Secretary:- Ken Needham*

*Treasurer:- Ken Needham*

*Wings Appeal Coordinator:- Roy Newbury*

### *General Committee:*

*John Airey: Rev. Lindsay Dew: Marie Mahoney: Alan*

*Millard: Mark Howell: Dean Meek*

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

**RAFAGEN** Edited by Ken Needham

**Branch Welfare Officer: Mark Howell**

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

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

**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. Licensed 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 hrs 'til 12.00 hrs



### *Ken's comments*

First of all a very Happy New Year to all of our readers from myself and members of the committee.

It is that time of the year when I have to ask, no tell you to put 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 into your diary. That is the date of our AGM. Full details on the following pages. It is important that we get a good attendance as it is the future of YOUR branch that will be discussed during the evening. Enclosed with RAFAGEN is time is a reply/nomination form, which we would like you to complete, especially if you would like to join the committee.

Last summer my wife and I were enjoying a bit of a break, her reading the Daily Telegraph, me struggling with a more than difficult sudoku.

Suddenly the wife said "I see you have been writing to Richard Madeley." Me, write to a newspaper? Let alone an agony uncle. I can't even string two sentences together. She then went on to read out the letter to me.

"Dear Richard. Help! I'm turning into a proper Victor Meldrew. I am approaching 82. I'm fit, active, happily married with two successful children, and lovely grandchildren. I'm a lucky man, and I know it.

"The trouble is, more and more irascible: I feel angry and fearful about living in what was once considered a polite, stable and reliable nation. I have a severe case of Victor Meldrew when it comes to football hooligans, public hugging and crying, infuriating recorded messages, political

correctness, overpaid footballers, litter, beards, the Speaker of the House of Commons, animals' and pupils 'rights', and, of course, politicians. I know what you will say 'relax' because I can't do anything about these matters, but that doesn't help. How can I be saviour of my country and my blood pressure? - Anon Herts. "

I fit the description down to a tee, but I can assure everyone that it was not me, but I fully agree with his (or her) sentiments.

You learn a little something new each day so the saying goes, and the other day I learnt something new which I now pass on to you, just in case you were not aware. It appeared in the Newsletter of a fellow branch - Rushden & District, and was headed **G.P. Appointments** and the article read as follows :-

"Your GP may not be aware that you are a Veteran, therefore ensure that your GP knows you are a Veteran and records it as such on their computer system. If you are referred for specialist treatment, clinic or hospital, do not assume that it is known that you are a Veteran; there is no system or coding to indicate you were once your information has left the GP's computer. **HERE IS THE CRUNCH** Once you have received details of an appointment, admission, etc., you need to phone the department or hospital and let them know that you are a Veteran and as such entitled to faster access i.e. have an earlier appointment or be placed higher up the list. Contrary to popular belief, this entitlement does not solely apply to Veterans who may have sustained injuries whilst on operational service. All Veterans, whether they served on operations or not are entitled to be fast-tracked or given priority; this is in accordance with the fully acknowledged Military Covenant by the NHS.

The National Health Service has codes to identify those who've served in the Armed Forces. This assists the National Health Service to enable veterans to receive appropriate support when needed. GP practices should ask patients whether they have served, but this doesn't always happen, so if you're a veteran, ask your GP or practice staff to ensure that your records are coded appropriately.

The codes are as follows:-

13JI - Military veteran.

13JY - History relating to military service.

13q0 - History relating to Army service.

13ql - History relating to Royal Navy service.

13q2 - History relating to Royal Air Force service.

13q3 - Served in Armed Forces. Some GP practices are now (or soon will be)  
'Veteran Aware'

NHS England and the Royal College of General Practitioners have endorsed the 'Military Veteran Aware' accreditation. Accredited practices will:

1. Have a lead for veterans' issues within the surgery.
2. Identify and flag veterans on their computer system.
3. Undertake dedicated training and attend armed forces health care meetings.
4. Increase understanding of the health needs of veterans amongst both clinical and administrative staff.

This scheme has been in the process of being rolled out nationally since 2018”.

## **Membership fees for 2020**

### **Ordinary Membership** (Former & present members of the R.A.F.)

1 year £23.00 with Quarterly AIRMAIL magazine

4 years £86.00 with Quarterly AIRMAIL magazine

### **Associate Membership** (Non R.A.F. Personnel)

1 year £16.00 with Quarterly AIRMAIL magazine

4 Years £61.50 with Quarterly AIRMAIL magazine

1 year £12.00 excluding AIRMAIL

## **Welcome to New Members**

Mr Malcolm Menzies of Hitchin

Mr Scott Stead of Shefford

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**OF THE**  
**ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION**  
**LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT**  
**BRANCH**

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LETCHWORTH,  
HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES  
ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD ON

**MONDAY MARCH 16<sup>th</sup>**

**20.00 HRS**

**LETCHWORTH RUGBY CLUB**

REAR OF THE LETCHWORTH LEISURE CENTRE

**BALDOCK ROAD,**

**LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY**

**ALL LIFE MEMBERS, FULL MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATE  
MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND.**



Any member wishing to have their name put forward for nomination for a seat on the committee, should contact the branch secretary as soon as possible for a nomination form

President \*  
Vice-President \*\*  
Chairman  
Vice Chairman  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Welfare Officer\*\*\*\*  
Wings Appeal Officer  
6 General Committee Members

Media/Public Relation Representative \*\*\*  
Newsletter Editor \*\*\*  
Speaker Secretary \*\*\*

\* Position to be discussed at committee before being put to the members.

\*\* Mr Dennis Dawson already holds this post, but needs members approval to continue.

\*\*\* denotes minor, but nevertheless important posts which are usually taken up by the members of the Committee..

\*\*\*\* Qualifications required.

**A full list of the current committee can be seen on the inside cover of this RAFAGEN**

If you have any questions on what is involved on being on the branch committee, please contact the branch secretary, Ken Needham on 01462 671534 or by email [secretary@rafa\\_letchworth.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rafa_letchworth.org.uk)

Nomination forms must be in the possession of the Secretary by 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020

# **THE BAND OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT**

**BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE BOARD OF THE DEFENCE**



## **CHARITY CONCERT** **IN AID OF THE R.A.F BENEVOLENT FUND**

**AT THE CHAPEL HAILEYBURY**

**BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE MASTER**

**WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 2020**

**18.00 HRS FOR 19.30 HRS**

**TICKETS ADULT £25 CONCESSIONS £19**

**INCLUDING A GLASS OF WINE OR SOFT DRINK**

**NO REFUNDS NO RESERVED SEATING**

**TICKET DETAILS FROM Alan Warman 72 Wheatsheaf Drive, Ware  
Hertfordshire SG12 0XS**

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





## **Your letters, emails and notes on the back of fag packets are appreciated**

Hi Ken,

Many thanks for the latest copy of RAFAGEN, always a good read! I note that you produce an 'E' version, I would be pleased to have that and as you say it saves the branch financially.

Just one point that I noticed and in my opinion needs correction

### **KNOW YOUR UNION FLAG**

Regarding "When Can You Fly The Union Flag?" I think the first sentence should read "Flags should be flown every day of the year, from "sunrise to sunset".

I noted that you said the article was taken from Forces Network. So it is their error not yours! The article goes on to say "If a flag is to be flown at night, it should be illuminated". But we have all attended parades when the flag was raised at sunrise, or at least early in the morning and sunset ceremonies when the flag was lowered. So I think that is the norm as regards military establishments.

I wrote to the Forces Network to voice my opinion.

Fred Maryon by e mail

*Editor :- I have to agree with you Fred, it annoys me to see the Union Flag flown almost 24/7 in North Herts towns. As a member of this branch I can't shout too loud, as the N.H.D.C. fly the R.A.F Ensign for us in Letchworth, Baldock and Hitchin during the month of September, to remember the Battle of Britain and our Wings Appeal month. They are up from September 1st until 30<sup>th</sup> and aren't lowered. Perhaps we should invite a member to shine a torch on them during the night!!!*



*Get your diaries out, because our R.A.F.A.L.O. W/O Shaun Griffin has been busy ensuring that our Branch Social evenings are entertaining.*

*Please note that speakers may change at short notice due to circumstances, especially those speakers who are serving members of the Armed Forces.*

## 2020

20 Jan - Flight Sergeant Sarah Ward - Hitchin ATC Sqn update.

17 Feb - Jim Box - The Avro Shackleton.

16 Mar - Branch AGM & social evening.

20 Apr - Martin Johnson - Herts wildlife.

18 May - William Marsterson - Churches, Places and People  
(Beds Herts Historic Churches Trust).

15 June - Flight Sergeant Charlotte Poynter - Letchworth ATC  
Sqn.

20 July - Austin Car Company - David Davis.

17 Aug - Ian Waller - Family history and genealogy.

21 Sep - David Taylor 100 Years of the Royal Air Force.

19 Oct - Gary Fisher - Henry V (All you need to know about  
Agincourt).

16 Nov - Dr Rudi Newman - The bridge is down.

21 Dec - Branch Christmas Bash.

2021

18 Jan - Alistair Hodges - De Havilland (topic tbc).

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The group from NAAFI BREAK wish you all “A Happy New Year”.

**WATCH OUT FOR FURTHER  
NEWS ON ANOTHER  
DAYTIME GATHERING.**



## Padre's Hour

Hello again,

Happy New Year and I hope you have a joyful Christmas. I wonder if you, like many at the start of the New Year, decided to make a New Year's Resolution. You know the ones – I'll lose weight, I'll exercise more, I'll give up smoking, drink less,

not buy new clothes for a month (or the year!), be better at sorting out the house rubbish and make sure I recycle, re-use, and/or return. It's all very well making resolutions but how long do we stick at them? Do they become something forgotten as the first few months of the year go by and gradually the enthusiasm we had wanes when we first made them? Obviously there are huge health benefits to us personally if we choose to give up something like smoking, or we chose to drink less, as well as being good for our financial health.

I've always struggled living long term with the resolutions I make – the New Year starts well, the good intentions are there, but then things begin to slip and before too long I'm back to living as I did last year.

It struck me that maybe I might do better if I decided that in 2020 I would choose to live differently, that I would strive to be friendlier, to be more forgiving, and to remember to be kind to myself.

Jesus said that the second commandment was to love our neighbours as ourselves and it strikes me that if we did that the world and our relationships with others would be in a terrible mess because somehow we find it very difficult to love ourselves. If we responded to others as we do to ourselves people would soon think that we were mean. Somehow we find it much easier to be kinder to others than to ourselves. We find it easier to be generous to others than we do to ourselves, and we are often more lenient to others than we are to ourselves. Not that I'm trying to stop or devalue the significant human responses to those in need but rather to encourage us to live more gently with ourselves and allow a bit of slack every now and then. The second commandment implies that as we love

others so we must also learn to love ourselves in the same way. To be more accepting of our limitations and to treat who we are 'inside' with much more love, respect and tolerance. Then I hope we would find it easy to live with who we are and recognise our self worth and value to God and our neighbour. 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, as well as serving on the Committee. You can ring me on 07545878082 or email me at [lindsay.dew@btinternet.com](mailto:lindsay.dew@btinternet.com)

Kind regards & blessings  
Lindsay

Revd Canon Lindsay Dew

### **Just heard on the Grapevine**

The Letchworth Branch of the Royal British Legion have just appointed a new president, Eric Daglass.

Eric is not only a member of the Royal British Legion, but is also an Associate member of the Royal Air Forces Association, and a member of this branch.

Congratulations Eric.

Right - Eric at our  
December NAAFI  
BREAK



# UK Veterans Railcards – All The Gen

Veterans Railcards that give former members of the UK Armed Forces discounted rail travel are to be launched later this year – but what will the cards offer and who is eligible?

## What Is The New Veterans Railcard?

The card will work in a similar way to other railcards including two new cards which were launched last year – one for rail travellers aged 26-30, and another for teenagers aged 16-17 that offered half-price fare reduction.

Full details on how it will operate have not yet been released but it is expected to come with similar terms and conditions to existing railcards for other concessionary groups.

## Who Is Eligible For The New Veterans Railcard?

The new railcard will be available to 830,000 veterans and will give them a third off most rail travel. It extends discounts to veterans not yet covered by existing discounts.

Any veteran, no matter their age, will be able to buy the card unlike other railcards that normally apply to particular age groups.

It is estimated that between 1.6 and 1.7 million veterans already qualify for either the Senior (over-60s) or Disabled Person's Railcard.

## When Will The New Veterans Card Be Available?

The veterans railcard will be released on Armistice Day, November 11, and more details are to follow in the coming ten months that will give a full rundown of all terms and conditions.

## How Much Will The Veterans Railcard Cost?

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced that the card will cost £21 for an initial introductory period but the price will then increase to £30.

He has announced that the railcard will be on sale from Armistice Day.

### What Discounts Will The Veterans Railcard Offer?

Again, full details are yet to be revealed, including on what restrictions there might be to discounted travel.

However, the card is expected to offer a third off most train travel to former members of the British Armed Forces.

Like other railcards, it is expected to come with restrictions on certain times such as weekday mornings, where a minimum fare is applied. With existing rail cards, this can apply from 4.30am to 10am, Monday to Friday.

It is expected that the holders of the new veterans railcard will be able to use it at any time, peak or off-peak.

However, during peak times, as with existing railcards, a minimum fare of £12 would apply.

At the moment, there are only plans for discounted rail travel across England but the Government hopes to roll out a similar discount across Scotland and Wales.

Similarly, it is not yet known if discounted travel will be extended to some city transport networks such as London.

Other limited discount schemes already exist in some parts of the country such as the Manchester Metrolink, which gives free travel on Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day, to former members of the Armed Forces who carry a veterans badge, and free travel to serving Members of the Armed Forces who carry a MoD Card 90.

Final details for London travel discounts with the new veterans railcard are still being negotiated with Transport for London.

The veterans railcard is not the same as the Veterans Concessionary Travel Scheme (VCTS) Pass which offers discounted or free travel on some services in and around London to anyone in receipt of an ongoing payment under the War Pensions Scheme or the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, including war widows/widowers and eligible dependents.

The VCTS pass offers concessionary fares in London Fare Zones 1–6, plus outlying stations including Rickmansworth to Amersham, inclusive, and stations Carpenders Park to Watford Junction, inclusive, on participating Train Company services, London Underground, DLR, London Trams and most bus services in the Greater London area.

A HM Forces Railcard is already available which can be bought by serving personnel for £21 per year.

The new railcard is likely to include similar standard terms and conditions as existing railcards but the veterans railcard is expected to also offer discounts to any spouse of family member so long as they are travelling with the card holder.

### Why Was The Veterans Railcard Created?

The new card offering discounted rail fare is the first step in the Government's plans to do more to support those who have served their country and comes after the Government created a new Office of Veterans' Affairs (OVA).

The Government pledged to provide lifelong support for veterans.

It is hoped the new railcard will help boost veterans' job prospects and strengthen family bonds through cheaper travel.

The discount forms part of the Government's new veterans strategy to support all former servicemen and women.

The strategy sets out support available for those who have served their country in areas including employment and job skills, health and wellbeing, housing and finance.





# Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre

**THE HOME OF THE BRANCH NAAFI BREAK**

- Enjoy a round of golf with family or friends
- Play the traditional French game of pétanque
- Cafe offering wide range of coffees, teas, cakes and hot / cold food
- Fully licensed bar with wide range of beers, ciders, spirits and soft drinks
- Ample parking and free wi-fi
- Everyone welcome

**We support the R.A.F. Association and Wings Appeal**

**Cafe open from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm  
Late nights on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday**

Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre  
Willian Way, Letchworth SG6 2HJ  
01462 483863  
[www.letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk](http://www.letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk)

# Female Soldier Completes Army Infantry Training For First Time

Leading Aircraftman Georgia Sandover graduates RAF Honington 230120 CREDIT MOD.jpg

"Today 23rd January 2020 is particularly special because we have celebrated the graduation of our very first female into the RAF Regiment - a significant event in our 78-year history," Air Commodore Scott Miller, Commandant General RAF Regiment said.

LAC Sandover is one of 18 gunners who have completed Phase 2 training at RAF Honington, in Suffolk.

The training included basic combat tacting in the air and ground environment, the fundamentals of Air Force Protection and advanced fieldcraft skills.

The gunners have also completed several live-fire training exercises, alongside a physical training programme aimed at building up their strength and increasing their fitness.

All 18 gunners have now earned the right to wear the RAF Regiment shoulder-badge, known informally as 'mudguards'.

A total of 18 gunners graduated at RAF Honington on Thursday

"My congratulations to all those graduating today which includes the first female regular serving RAF Gunner," said Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

"The RAF Regiment will benefit from increased diversity and I wish Georgia and all her colleagues the very best for the future."

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, added: "The RAF Regiment gunners graduating today can be very proud of everything they achieved to get where they are.

"We are equally proud of them because they include our first regular service female gunner, making history with every role in the Royal Air Force now open to all."

The graduates will now be posted to one of the RAF Regiments Field Squadrons, and will begin mission-specific training for contingency operations.



LAC Sandover

Picture from RAF Regiment Facebook

# ROYAL AIR FORCES Association

The charity that supports the RAF family

**LETCWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT  
BRANCH**

## **NAAFI BREAK**



**PAR 3 GOLF CENTRE  
WILLIAN WAY  
LETCWORTH GARDEN  
CITY  
SG6 2HJ**

**FIRST TUESDAY OF  
EACH MONTH  
10.00 HRS  
TO  
12 NOON**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE  
VETERANS  
AND THEIR  
GUESTS  
ARE WELCOME TO JOIN  
US**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT KEN NEEDHAM ON  
01462 671534 OR BY E MAIL AT [secretary@rafa\\_letcworth.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rafa_letcworth.org.uk)**