

Branch
Membership

205

As at 1st June 2022

ROYAL AIR FORCES Association

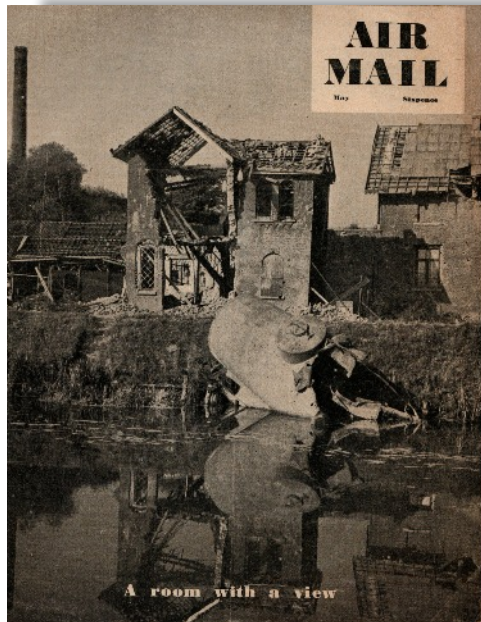
The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER & MAGAZINE OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN &
DISTRICT BRANCH

SUMMER 2022

AIR MAIL
May 1945



Price
6d

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

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

Branch Registered Charity No. 1071536



RAFAGEN

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

ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2022



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**VISIT OUR
WEBSITE**

rafa-leitchworth.org.uk



NEWS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

My wife and I caught Covid in the early stages of the pandemic, not serious, but it did take the wind out of our sails. So much so that we were determined not to get it again. So we had all the jabs and followed the Government rulings to the letter. Even now when all the restrictions have been relaxed, we still wear our masks when in shops or places with lots of people. In reality almost back to normal.

I was brought back to the real world the other day when I received a telephone call from a close relative, telling me that he and his wife had Covid. As they come under the vulnerable group, they have been told by their GP to isolate for ten days. The call resulted in me doing a bit of essential shopping.

This made me realise that Covid is still around, and there may be members out there that still need our help. We are no longer in regular contact with our Branch vulnerable members, but if YOU require our help, we are still here to help. My contact details are on the second page, together with Marie, our Branch Secretary's number.



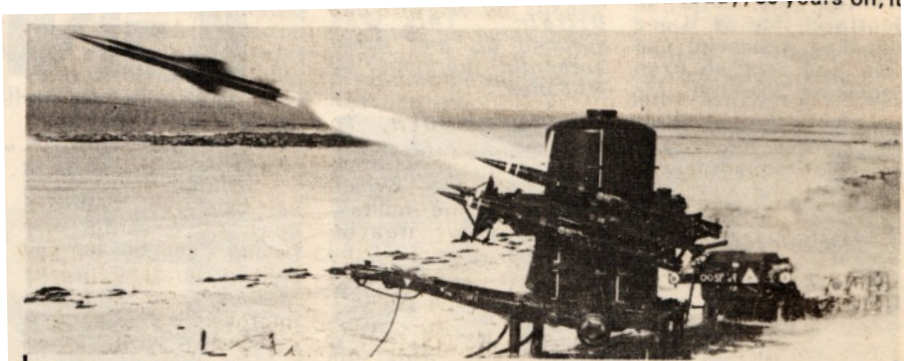
MORE NEWS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



You will be pleased to know that your Branch is at last moving forward into the Twenty-first century, with the purchase of a Credit Card reader. Yes, we now take payments and donations by Credit Card. As the saying goes “That will be done nicely”.

You couldn't miss the fact that in June 2022, Her Majesty The Queen (the Association's Patron) will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee after 70 years of service. I am sure that many of you will be attending special dinners, teas, and parties to celebrate. If you are attending an event we would like to receive photographs of you and your friends celebrating. You won't get the chance to celebrate another Royal Platinum Jubilee.

Below is from the Autumn 1974 issue of “AIRMAIL”.



The RAF Regiment's 63 Squadron, which has been awarded the Queen's standard for 25 years' distinguished service, is the first unit to operate the Rapier missile system. It has moved to RAF Gutersloh, 80 miles from the East German border, replacing a squadron equipped with Bofors anti-aircraft guns.

Rapier, seen being fired above, is a self-contained, low-level air-defence missile system that can be operated by one man. It is able to destroy fast, low-flying, manoeuvring aircraft, as well as helicopters and remotely-piloted vehicles.

The missile is simple, light-weight,

supersonic and direct-hitting. From launch, it is automatically commanded to follow the operator's line of sight to the target.

Developed by the British Aircraft Corporation, it will eventually replace all the guns sited at RAF airfields and installations against the threat of low-level air attacks.



Padre 's Hour

Revd. Cannon Lindsay Dew

June 2022

Hello again,

I hope you are well and safe. We had a well-attended NAAFI Break in May – there was a real buzz about the morning. It's always good to meet up for a coffee and a chat with friends. The RAF of course is a family of those who serve, or who have served, or have been married to or who belong to the families of those who have served. Belonging – the sense of belonging is so important in our lives. When we were born we belonged to our family – to those who cared for us and as we grew up the circles of belonging grew as well. We found ourselves belonging to small groups and large institutions as well as to individuals who became very important to us. For most reading this magazine RAFAGEN we also belong to the family of RAFA – a family whose continuing role is to care for each and every member of that family. Like all families we encourage and support – we sometimes fall out as different views are expressed (this is normal family life) but throughout it all, like all families, we have the sense of belonging in common.

One of the great things about NAAFI Break is the telling of stories – sharing memories of years gone by as we recall different events and people we came across – and there are stories to tell.

Each year the family of the RAF gathers with the nation to observe the Battle of Britain on September 15th each year and church services are held to give thanks for the bravery and courage of the who served throughout and to remember those who died both

in the air and on the ground. It will be 82 years this year since that Battle was fought and won. In the height of the Battle Winston Churchill spoke in the House of Commons and said, 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few', fantastic words and they have gone down as a part of our national history. Families need to remember, to be joyful together, to be thankful, to remember those who have died and to refresh the memories we share – memories which have become part of our national story. The service will be held at St Thomas Parish Church, Wilbury, Letchworth by kind permission of the Vicar Revd Jessica McLaren, and will be followed by refreshments. This I believe is the first time for many years when such a service has been held. I hope you will be able to attend – do make a note of the date on your calendar.



Our own memories from the past are held in the light of horrific events today as the war continues in Ukraine. As people prayed for courage and victory in the face of almost overwhelming odds at the beginning for the 2nd WW so we pray today for peace and justice in Europe and especially for the people of Ukraine.

Prayer for Ukraine.

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine today. We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons. We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow, that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them. We pray for those with power over war or peace, for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions. Above all we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear that you would hold and protect

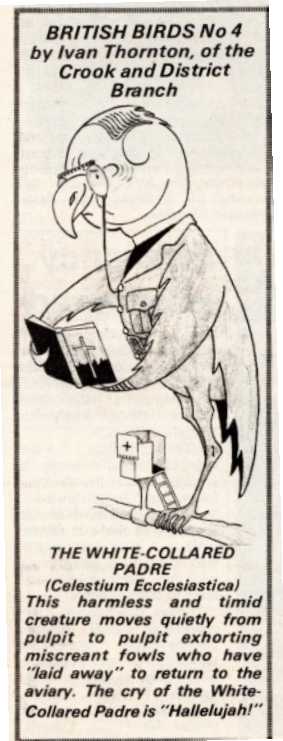
them. In the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

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, as well as serving on the Committee. You can also ring me on 07545878082 or email me at lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com

Kind regards & blessings

Lindsay

Our cartoon comes from the Summer 1974 issue of "AIRMAIL".



First Garden City Heritage Museum

Silver Jubilee Celebrations Upper Maylins Letchworth



COMMITTEE NEWS

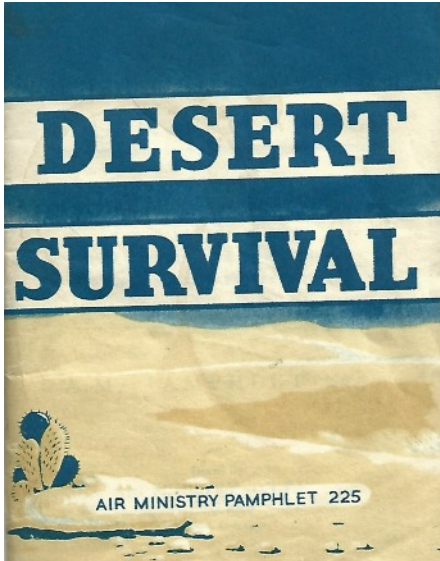
The twice monthly Committee Meeting was held on May 4th, when, after the usual Committee's Branch matters had been dealt with, the following points were raised.

Armed Forces Day 25th June. Preparations are all in hand, all we want now is good weather, lots of customers, and volunteers on the stall. If you can help, please contact the Branch secretary. If not, just come and visit the stall. A little bird told us that it is hoped to have a "Fly-Past" by the R.A.F. again this year.

Wings Appeal 2022. We have provisionally suggested September 10th to have a stall in Hitchin Old Market Place. As we cannot confirm this date as we have to confirm we can get a site. However again we are looking for volunteers to help man the stall. If you can spare us an hour, please contact the Branch secretary.

We are planning something new this year. A church service to commemorate the Battle of Britain. This will be at St Thomas's Church in Bedford Road, Letchworth. Date 2nd October 2022, time to be confirmed, but it will be an afternoon service. After the service tea and nibbles will be available. We would very much like to see you at St Thomas's to remember those brave airmen who not only lost their lives during the raids, but to those who survived which gave us the freedom we have today.

I know it's a long way off, but we did start talking about our Christmas Party. As we have not yet had our summer holidays, we made a few suggestions, and then past it over until the next meeting.



A Walk In The Desert Memories of Jim Box

I was with 38 squadron based at Luqa/Hal Far in Malta during the mid 1960s. Our operational area was not only the Mediterranean but also Libya, with detachments to Aden and the Gulf States. As we operated over desert terrain, we were required to attend a Desert Survival course at RAF El Adem some 15 miles from Tobruk in Libya.

We departed Luqa for El Adem on 23 August 1965 to attend No5 Desert Survival Course in a MOD chartered Viscount. The first day consisted of lectures how to survive in the desert should we have the misfortune to be down in the desert. The next three days was the field phase to experience desert conditions at the height of the summer, including dehydration and practice what we had learned in the lectures.

The first day started with being paired with another crew member called Jim A, I was of course called Jim B. We were driven out into the Libyan desert for about an hour and half, dropped off in what we soon realised was an area where WW2 battles took place. All we had was our small individual survival kits, two baked bean sized tins of water and a parachute between us. Our instructions were to walk on a set bearing until we reached an oil smudge fire. After some 12 miles walking across an old battlefield, we saw the smudge fire and two RAF instructors waiting for us. During the walk we saw many signs of battles that took place in the Tobruk area, old boots, tin cans, pieces of scrap iron, webbing, shell and bullet cases.

The two instructors had with them a tin bath that had been full of ice to cool their beers. Whilst their backs were turned Jim A and I quickly drank from the bath. We were only supposed to drink the water in our tins, and make it last 3 days to experience dehydration. However, we used our initiative and drank from the bath enough to keep going.

We were then directed to a wadi close by, where we set up camp using our parachute and met up with the rest of our crew. The instructors then left us.

The following morning after an interesting night, we noticed small animal tracks all around us that had not been there the previous day. Later in the morning we had a visit from a local Arab riding a green Raleigh bike. Where he came from, we never found out as we were miles out in the desert. With sign language we asked for water and food. He duly departed and returned about five hours later on a donkey, with a jerry can of water and a sack of water melons. We paid for these with cigarettes and a few Lire. Our initiative in use again, live off the land where possible.

Over the next two days we practiced the survival skills taught us. We rationed the water, and ensured that we used the halazone tablets to purify it. Our Flight Engineer forgot to use the tablets before drinking his ration, so he crushed and swallowed them, and jumped up and down.

On the third field day we made sure we used our issued tins of water and waited for a Pembroke aircraft from El Adem to locate us.

The next day the instructors came out to take us back to El Adem and commented that we looked fresher than previous courses after the field phase.

Back at El Adem after a debrief we were presented with a certificate to prove that we had passed the course and joined membership of "The Incompatibles" having "Proved dexterity and determination by still being alive after a specified field phase". We never mentioned the Arab and

NAAFI BREAK GALLERY

At our April meeting Jim and Brenda Box brought in a large quantity of copies of AIRMAIL from the last century, along with some local memorabilia of the last two Coronations. Amongst this latter collection was the Coronation week issue of the Radio Times. Members spent time in going through this magazine to see if the TV was better then than is today, when there was only one channel.



Frank Turner searched for Dick Barton, but all he could find was Mrs Dale's Diary. I wonder if she was "Still worried about Jim"?



Your editor now has the job of going through these dozens of AIRMAILs, and selecting all the items that is thought to be of interest to current RAFAGEN readers.



If you want to see this memorabilia for yourself, just come along to a NAAFI BREAK.



Our May NAAFI BREAK meeting had the largest number to date. We also have visits from a former Chairman Lisa Berry and former Vice Chairman and Wings Appeal Officer, Roy Newbury. It was great to see them both.



Ken's Travels

Places that your Editor has visited, and thought may be of interest to you.

A few years ago my wife and I visited the town of Buckden, just up the A1 from Letchworth. I don't recall the reason for the visit, but I remember that whilst my wife went off to do what she had come for, I wandered around the town.

I noticed the War Memorial at the side of the road, and as War Memorials have a fascination for me, I wandered over for a closer look. I have seen many Memorials, and other than the architecture of the monument, they tell the same story, only this one is different.

Below is a picture of the Buckden Memorial, and before I continue, see if you can spot what I did. You may have to enlarge the page.



Did you find it? You may already know the answer, but I am afraid I didn't, I thought it was a mistake. The Stone Mason refers to THE GREAT WAR 1914 to 1919.

I was so worried about this mistake, I wrote to the BBC Radio 4 programme, 'Answers Please'. I received an answer almost by return, to the following effect.

1914-18 are the most common dates for the First World War found on war memorials, commemorating the years the war began and the year armistice was declared. However, it's to find the dates 1914-19 on First World War memorials. The 1919 date refers to the year the Treaty of Versailles was signed.

I now know that the Stone Mason had not made a mistake, in fact he must have been a perfectionist.

My answer was never 'aired' as the Producer who wrote to me added, this question had already been answered on the programme some months earlier.

oooOOOooo

How did Britain react to the Treaty? When the Treaty terms were announced in June 1919, there was a mixed reaction. The general opinion in Britain was that the terms were fair and should probably have been more severe. British newspapers suggested that Germany would no longer threaten world peace. (*How wrong they were*) Any complaints by the Germans were dismissed as trickery and play-acting. When Prime Minister David Lloyd George returned from Paris in June 1919, he received a hero's welcome. The king came out to meet him at the railway station, which was completely unheard of in British history.

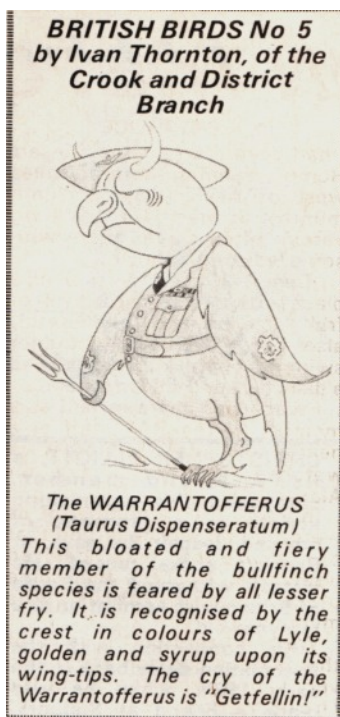
Germany had to pay for the damage caused by the war. The exact figure was not agreed until 1921 when it was set at £6,600,000,000, more than football players of today get.

On Oct. 3, 2010, Germany finally paid off all its debt from World War One. The total? About 269 billion marks, or around 96,000 tons of gold.

What do you call a warrant officer?

The correct way to address a warrant officer is "sir" or "ma'am" by airmen and "mister or warrant officer - surname-" by officers.

Other names are available on request.



I was just asked by a civilian to explain what a warrant officer is, and it's not easy. Try it sometime - it's harder than you think.

How would you explain the Warrant officer's rank, roles, responsibilities to a civilian with limited understanding of the military?

How do you describe their unique skill set to civilian employers?

Our cartoon comes from the Autumn 1974 issue of "AIRMAIL". It is from a Series of "British Birds" by Ivan Thornton of the Crook and District Branch.

Surfing the WWW the other day, I came across the story below. I have never heard of this accident before. Do you know anything relating to the monument? If so we would like to hear from you.

Editor



18th July, 1944. 25 Aircraft from 115 Squadron, Bomber Command, 9 from "A" flight, 7 from "B" flight and 9 from "C" flight were detailed to attack Emieville in France. The planes took off between 04.03hrs and 04.40 hrs.

All the aircraft identified the target visually and by means of yellow indicator markers on which they bombed, as instructed by the Master Bomber from heights ranging between 8,000 feet and 10,000 feet. Bombing was well concentrated on the wood and many fires were seen.

The target was soon covered with smoke and dust.

At 07.15 hrs one of the returning aircraft (J.LM.616 - Piloted by Pilot Officer. S. A. LETTS) crashed at Great Offley in Hertfordshire. All the crew were killed, and the West End Farm, Offley was destroyed and the three occupants were killed. The wreckage of the aircraft was widely strewn and extensively burnt.

07.55 hrs. 24 aircraft had returned safely to base after operations.

**A STORY FROM THE MAY 1945 ISSUE OF
AIR MAIL**

OUR GREATEST ASSET

By “Quis”

Behind all the plans for our security post-war, and indeed all battles ever fought and wars won, a single factor, a single factor predominates — the quality of the youth of the day, moral and physical.

Let us face it, one reason why Hitler and his gang reached so far as they did, and caused all the misery they did, was because they made it their business to train their boys and girls to be strong and efficient.

We have no wish to copy their methods or their ideology. Notwithstanding we shall be wise to reflect that the time has long since departed when we can allow our young people to drift into life. That they have done so well during the war (which when all is said and done their generations have won for us all) is a greater tribute to their inherent abilities than to our foresight, to their breeding than our planning.

The whole of this question comes to the fore when we see the Air Training Corps slowly disintegrate, although even in its prime the Corps was never favoured with fine buildings nor with a wealth of lavish attention. What they have done has been very much by way of expediency.

It seems to me that in the post-war period we need first of all a single Cadet Corps common to all youth, boys and girls, that best attributes of manhood and womanhood may be properly inculcated. If we were wise enough to get the youngsters into such an organisation at an early age we would save many a lad and lass falling into idle ways. By the time they were 16 they should be allowed to select the branch of the Corps they prefer — Air or Army, Navy or Police.

At 18 they would be available for special employment, combined with proficiency courses to give them the opportunity and the encouragement to fit themselves for the better jobs later on.

What would be the object behind such a system? To help them become useful citizens in a world where fit man and women get the best breaks; to ensure they have a full life of happiness, able to enjoy their work and leisure; and the better ready to come to the rescue of this great Commonwealth of ours if ever the need should again arise.

In which I believe the Air Training Corps would not only become the corps d'elite, but should be provided with buildings and facilities to enable our young men and women to learn to fly and if need be to fight.

Gone fore ever are the days when we should argue whether a lad should be given a good pair of boots, or an overcoat or a square meal. In the new era their bodily and mental health may be a matter of vital consequence, not only to them, but to the nation and Empire

We are proud of our young folk. Then let us show our pride by doing something for them.

From a RAF JOURNAL of 1943

FOR AIRMEN ONLY

On and off the ration

Civilian clothes are not part of the official issue. As no clothing coupons are issued to airmen, you cannot purchase flannels, sports coats or coloured shirts, nor is there any chit method to obtain these. You may, however, obtain handkerchiefs by applying to the Adjutant for a chit which will be signed by the C.O. And gladly given.

Pyjamas are not a service issue and you must rely on your pre-war sleeping suits to hold together until you return to civilian life.

If, however, you have civilian clothes and certain items get lost, stolen, or written off by enemy action, you may make application for emergency coupons. (A.M.O. A.473/43 para 29, sub-para. (1) or (2), depending on circumstances). Don't apply to the C.O. For coupons. READ THE A.M.O. FIRST. You will then find there are forms to be filled in and the only place you can get the forms is at the office of your nearest local authority, which is usually to be found at the local Town Hall, or Civic Chambers. Coupons will be issued only for replacement items subject to conditions as laid down on the forms. It is a waste of time trying to get coupons for an issue of civilian clothing. G.K.T.

FACT OR FICTION?

PARTNER ASSOCIATIONS

The RAF Widows' Association (RAFWA) is a national charity for those people whose spouse or partner served in the RAF; or those who themselves serve or served and whose spouse or partner died whilst they were serving.

The Association is run by a network of volunteers who themselves are RAF widows and widowers, so they do really understand what the members are going through.

The RAFWA was founded in 1992 and aims to provide friendship, practical and emotional support to men and women – married or not, with or without children, whatever their sexual orientation as they adjust to life after the death of their spouse or partner.

The RAF Disabled Holiday Trust, provides accessible holidays for disabled serving and former members of the RAF and their dependants

The RAF Disabled Holiday Trust believes everybody deserves a stress-free holiday, free from the worry of whether accommodation is accessible or not. This is why we have a wonderful selection of places to stay and visit both in the UK and abroad, which meet both yours and your families every need.

The Alexander Duckham Memorial Schools Trust aims to promote the education and welfare of children of members, and former members, of the RAF who are in need of financial assistance.

The Trustees will consider applications for means-tested assistance with various costs relating to children, of any age, of RAF members or former members.

For more details of the above Association and Trust, visit the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund web site. www.rafabf.org.uk. Or contact their Helpline on 0300 102 1919

Helping the RAF community take a well-deserved break

Need an affordable break? The RAF Association runs a variety of holiday homes where you can enjoy a low-cost family holiday at a choice of pleasant, relaxing locations. Our accommodation caters for not only RAF Association members, but also serving and ex-RAF and their families. Much of our accommodation has been funded and is maintained by branches and RAF Association members, which enables us to offer such affordable holidays while remaining a viable, cost-effective option for the charity. You can enquire about taking a break in any of our holiday properties in Norfolk, West Sussex and Scotland

Applicant eligibility: Serving personnel, veterans, or spouse, widow/er, or dependent of someone who has served.

For further details, brochure or application form please contact:

Telephone: 0800 018 2361 Email: wingsholidays@rafa.org.uk



The home of the Branch NAAFI BREAK

Last Wednesday morning of each month 10.00 hrs til noon

ALL MEMBERS OF THE RAF FAMILY WELCOME

The Last Post

A chance to pause for a moment in quiet contemplation for our friends and colleagues who have passed away

**Mr Dennis Naseby of Codicote.
Member for 16 years**



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Information supplied by Membership Department of The Royal Air Forces Association

Mr Daniel Green of Letchworth Garden City

Mr. John Agnew of Biggleswade

Miss Mollie Helm of Swadlincote, Derbyshire

Mr. Benjamin Rogers of Bournemouth

Mr. Mark Robson of Biggleswade

Mr Peter Harwood of Pottton

Mr Simon Howard-Dobson of Stevenage



**The Royal British Legion
Letchworth Branch**



Presents

**The Armed Forces Day
Saturday 25th June 2022**

10am - 6pm

Broadway Gardens

**Letchworth
Chasestead sponsors
of the**

Cadets Challenge Shield

Thank You

**to all our Sponsors and
Supporters**

Jamie Harris Funfair

Fun for all the family





Veterans UK - which manages pensions and compensation payments for the armed forces - local authorities, service charities, NHS and GPs will benefit from the card, as they will not have to conduct time-consuming checks to identify individual veterans.

The new ID card is one of three that are available to service leavers. Personnel leaving the armed forces are also able to keep their military IDs, known as the MOD Form 90, allowing them to maintain their emotional connection with their service. Additionally, veterans can access a range of discounts through the Defence Discount Service, the official MOD-endorsed service for the armed forces.

Last year saw the launch of the Strategy for our Veterans, published jointly by the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments, which sets out the key areas of support for those who have left the armed forces. The consultation closed on Thursday 21 February.

All relevant government departments have a responsibility to ensure that the military community is treated fairly, and not disadvantaged by their service, as part of the Armed Forces Covenant. The new ID cards will ensure the process of validating service is as straightforward as possible, so that ex-forces personnel can access support for issues related to their service quickly, where needed.

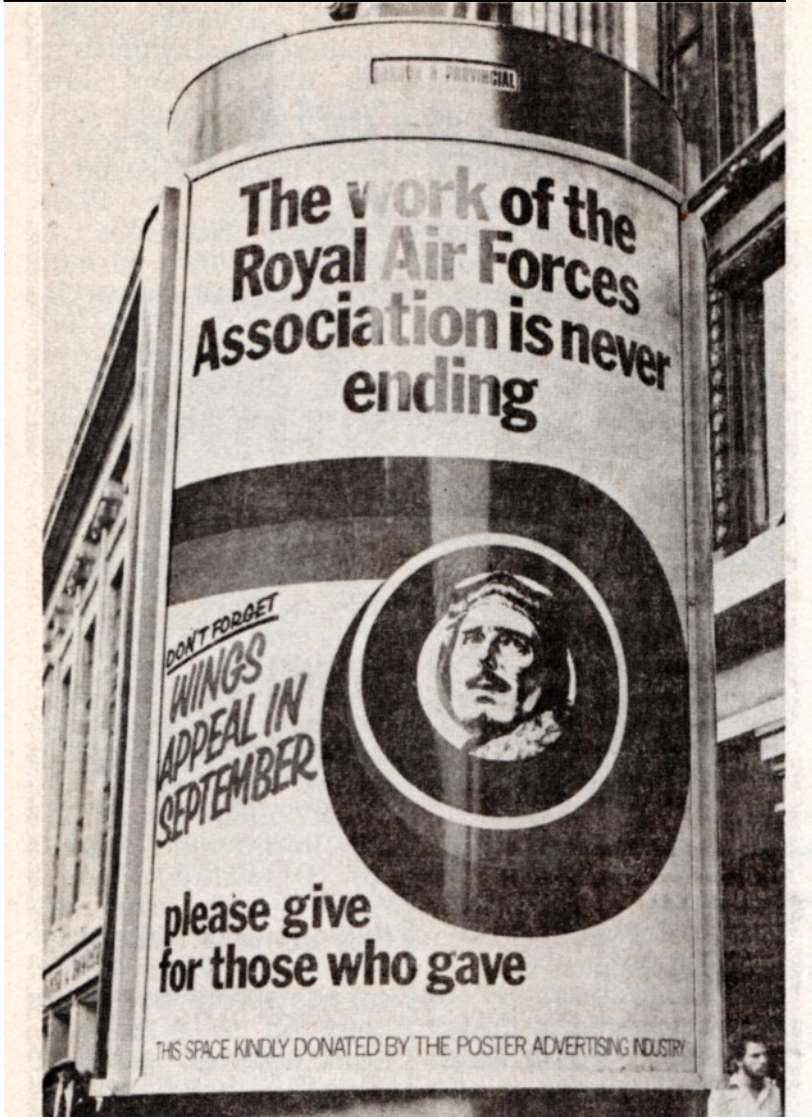
The cards will complement the NHS' commitment to providing specialist health support for veterans in every part of the health service, enabling ex-service personnel in England, Scotland and Wales to access treatment where they have been affected by their service. Last year, NHS England announced that dedicated mental healthcare services are up and running in every part of the country, backed by £10 million of investment, with increasing numbers of GPs and hospitals becoming 'Veteran Aware', in order to fully address the needs of those who have served.

Any veteran in need of support can contact the Veterans' Gateway – the 24 hour service which signposts ex-forces personnel to the wide range of support available to them, including housing and financial advice, career guidance, and medical care from the NHS. Since being set up in 2017, the Veterans' Gateway has already received over 20,000 contacts, advising ex-forces personnel and their families.



Above Nevilles Road and below Heathermere of Letcworth, Silver Jubilee Celebrations





One of 3,500 posters which were displayed during the summer on sites throughout the UK generously donated by the Poster Advertising Industry.

This revolving stand is outside Selfridges in Oxford Street, London.

The RAFAGEN is produced every quarter and sent to members of the Letchworth, Hitchin & District branch of the Royal Air Forces Association.

If you would like to tell your story in RAFAGEN or have any comments about the magazine, the branch or the Association, we would like to hear from you. It can either be by hard copy through the mail, (any photographs will be returned immediately) to Ken Needham 68 Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 3HJ, or via email to kwn056@btinternet.com

The next issue will be published in September 2022

NAAFI BREAKS for the next few months are as follows :-

Wednesday 29th June 2022

Wednesday 27th July 2022

Wednesday 31st August 2022

Wednesday 28th September 2022

Should you wish not to receive the regular issues of RAFAGEN, would you please advise the branch secretary on secretary@rafa-letchworth.org.uk, who will arrange for your address to be deleted from our list.

