

**RANCH  
MEMBERSHIP  
200**

 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCES  
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

# RAFAGEN

THE NEWSLETTER & MAGAZINE OF THE LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN &  
DISTRICT BRANCH (now with Stevenage)

**WINTER 2023**



**Branch formed 15<sup>th</sup> October 1946**

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

Branch Registered Charity No. 1071536 Branch



# RAFAGEN

The official newsletter and magazine of the  
ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION  
LETCWORTH , HITCHIN & DISTRICT  
BRANCH OFFICIALS FOR 2022

Now including Stevenage



**Hon. President Viscount Lord Trenchard**

**Chairman:- Jim Box**

**Vice Chairman:- Ken Needham**

**Secretary:- Marie Mahoney**

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

**Treasurer:- Ken Needham**

**Wings Appeal Officer:-Eric Dagless**

**Branch Welfare Officer: Vacant**

For Welfare Contact:-Branch Secretary

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

**Membership Secretary:- Ken Needham**

**Branch Padre:- Rev. Canon Lindsay Dew**

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**General Committee:**

**John Airey: John Tunesi: Elliot Needham**

**Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Flt. Lt. Liam Obiston**

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VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE

[rafa-leitchworth.org.uk](http://rafa-leitchworth.org.uk)

## NEWS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Did you notice that this year Christmas merchandise was on sale from the middle of September? We still had to have the Baldock Charter Fair, my birthday, Halloween and Bonfire night to name a few events before 25<sup>th</sup> December. I know they sell Cadbury's cream eggs all year round, but mince pies in September is pushing it in my opinion.

Are you looking for a few last minute stocking fillers? Why not try RAFATRAD? That's the merchandise arm of the Association, and have lots of R.A.F. novelties. Just put RAFATRAD into your search engine for details.

Our ex Branch Chairman, Lisa Berry, pointed out that one of the photographs put onto our Facebook page of the Battle of Britain service we held in October was not all it should be. See if you are as quick as Lisa in finding "our ghost".

Go to page 13 and look at the photograph at the top left hand corner. Check on the Air Cadet standing next to Marie, our secretary.

# WINGS APPEAL COLLECTION







The medieval Hitchin Market place on a sunny September was the site of one of our Wings Appeal collection events. We had many visitors telling us of their times in the Royal Air Force, but not as many as we would have liked putting cash into our buckets, or sapping their credit cards on to our card machine.

Financially the day was an average one for such an event, but like always we would have liked more. We are not complaining but we don't think that three other charities that were also on the Market Place didn't help.

Thanks go to Eric, our Wings Appeal Coordinator for organising the event, and the members who volunteered to give a couple hours of their time to help.





*I wish all Branch members a Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year, and look forward to another year of NAAFI Breaks. ....*



*Jim Box .....Chairman*

*Peace and good will to you and your loved ones this Christmas season. Ken Needham. ....Vice Chairman & Treasurer*



*My very best wishes to all members of R.A.F.A. Letchworth, Hitchin & District Branch. Have a good Christmas and don't eat too much turkey.. Marie Mahoney .....Secretary*



*Wishing all members a Happy Christmas together with a Healthy and Peaceful New Year.. Eric Dagless .....Wings Appeal Officer*



*Peace and good will to you and your loved ones this Christmas season. .... John Tunesi .....ATC Co-ordinator*



*Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season! May happiness, good health, and prosperity be yours in the coming year..*



*..... John Airey General Committee Member*



*It's the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring... except me wrapping last minute presents and remembering to send you a Merry Christmas message before things get hectic! . . . . . Elliot Needham..... Media Officer*

*. . . . . And a special message from our Branch Padre.*



*Hello again,*

*It hardly seems possible that in 2 weeks' time it will be Advent Sunday. A season in the Church's year that can easily get lost in the rush towards Christmas. The Sunday before Advent Sunday is traditionally known as 'stir up Sunday' because the words of the old Collect which is still used today ask God to stir us up. 'Stir up O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people, that they richly bearing the fruit of good words may by Thee be richly rewarded'. A prayer inviting God to stir us up to good works. Not to earn our way to heaven but rather to reveal the love which He has for us which turns our lives around and changes us as we recognise that His love changes everything. As we enter the season of Advent we call to mind and prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus born as a Babe in Bethlehem, and also to prepare our hearts and lives to greet him when He comes again in power and glory bring judgement and mercy for all. As we seek to prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ – His first coming born as a vulnerable baby – we try to prepare for His second coming in power and majesty.*

*When Christmas comes and the church greets the birth of Jesus we greet Him again into a world where war continues in Ukraine, and in more recent weeks the awful conflict between Israel and Gaza in response to the terror attack by Hamas where many Israelis were killed, homes burnt to the ground and people taken hostage. The destruction of lives and homes in Gaza has been brought to us daily in the news media. We pray for peace and we long for peace. We live in a dark, dangerous and violent world, much like the time when Jesus was born. The might of Rome was*

*absolute and any reaction to their power was met with powerful violence. A world then as now, facing disruption, fear, heartache and sadness. It was into this same kind of world that Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago - a world of uncertainty, a world of sorrow and sadness, a world with a mix of human failure and success. The message that Jesus came to live and to show was the message of God's love. His presence with us in our joys and in our sorrows and to love us so much that He would draw us back to a living experience of the His love which makes all the difference. So as you prepare for Christmas 2023 do remember to hear the story again and to say 'thank you' for all the good things we have received not least health and wellbeing. As we prepare, with all haste towards Christmas, I hope that all of us might be encouraged to spend some time in opening our lives to the wonder of God's love in the birth of His Son.*

*I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a joyful, peaceful New Year.*

*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 NAAFI Break, as well as serving on the Committee. You can ring me on 07545878082 or email me on [lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com](mailto:lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com)*

*Cheers & blessings*

*Lindsay*

*Revd Canon Lindsay Dew*







# COMMITTEE NEWS

**November 2023**

After the formalities, the Chairman proposed that we co-opt Elliot Needham to the committee as our Media Officer. The committee approved the appointment. The Branch rules state that the committee can co opt members to the committee, but that person has no voting powers until voted to the committee by members at the next Annual General meeting. The Media Officer controls what is published on our Facebook page.

The Chairman reported that the branch Christmas lunch was in hand, and the secretary had all the names wishing to attend the RAF Henlow Christmas lunch, and would be contacting them as soon as she has further information from the camp.

The committee wished to thank all those involved in the smooth running of the Battle of Britain service in October.

After a discussion it was agreed that the branch should look to having a Publicity Officer. Any volunteers out there?

The Letchworth A.T.C. Would be carrying the branch Standard at the Remembrance Day parade in Letchworth this year.

Coffee cups were empty, so all that had to be done was to agree that the next committee meeting would be of January 3<sup>rd</sup>. That meeting we will be preparing for the AGM the following month. If you would like to join the committee please let our Secretary know before 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

# WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Information supplied by Membership Department of The Royal Air Forces Association

Elliot Needham of Newmarket.

Ronald Lowe of Stevenage

Andrew Watts of Stevenage

**WE NEED MORE NEW MEMBERS**

Upon checking to see if there have been any updates on applying for the Veteran's ID Card I found the following



## Update 28 September 2023

Thousands more veterans will receive HM Armed Forces Veteran Cards by the end of the year thanks to a £3 million injection to expand the roll-out to veterans who left service before 2018.

The Ministry of Defence and the Office for Veterans' Affairs are jointly delivering this service as part of ongoing improvements in veterans support.

## Membership Renewals

As 2023 draws to a close, HQ have sent reminder letters to members due for renewal before the end of the year giving them the option to renew centrally by returning a response form to HQ, completing our online renewal form or by contacting us on 0800 018 2361.

Branches who wish to carry out their own membership renewals can do so using the forms below. Forms 4 and 5 are for membership batches and include the option to renew existing members or sign up new members. There is also a downloadable PDF of the branch membership form. All forms will also be available under the 'library' section of the community hub.

If there is anything we can support you with, please get in touch by emailing [membership@rafa.org.uk](mailto:membership@rafa.org.uk).



### **The Last Post**

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

***NONE REPORTED THIS  
QUARTER***

# REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2023



The public view the wreaths after the service at Letchworth

The branch wreath is the one on the top step.





Comet Newspaper



© LightRocket via Getty Images



# BATTLE OF BRITAIN

## A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND REDEDICATION FOR VICTORY IN THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October the branch held the second of their annual Battle of Britain service at St Thomas Church, Bedford Road, Letchworth Garden City.

Those attending this years service was The Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, **Sir Tim Wilson** ; The Branch President, **Lord Trenchard** ; The Mayor of Stevenage, ;**Cllr Myla Arceno** and her consort **John Arceno** ; Sqdn Leader **Dave Rawlinson** ; Station Warrant Officer RAF Henlow, Warrant Officer **Steve King** ; Chairman of Letchworth RBL, **Nigel Kenworthy** ; Chairman of Letchworth RNA, **Brian Pyke** ; Commanding Officer Hitchin RAFTC, **Flt Lt Ken Yau**.

Attending with members, wives, Air Cadets, and guests was our ex Standard Bearer, **Mark Howell**, who came all the way up from the South Coast to carry the branch standard. Mark carried the Standard along with others to the alter of the church.

The address was given by **Revd Tony Ruffell**, Chaplain RAF Henlow.

Our thanks go to The Revd Jessica McLaren, Vicar of St Thomas's for her warm welcome and allowing us to use the church for this special occasion





# BATTLE OF BRITAIN

## A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND REDEDICATION FOR VICTORY IN THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN



Above

Members of the Hitchin Air Training Corps with their  
Commanding Officer who attended the service

Right

Member Mark Howell who carried the Branch  
Standard.







## **DIMPLES Bar & Cafe.**

**Willian Way,**

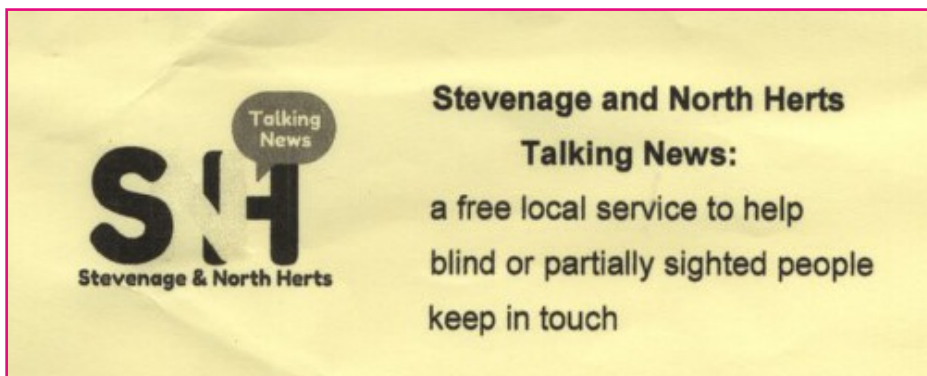
**Letchworth Garden City. SG6 3JH**

**Open Tuesday - Sunday (10 am to 4 pm Winter times)**

**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**



If you or anyone you know has difficulty reading and would like to receive audio recording of our local newspapers and national magazines. Stevenage and North Herts Talking News can help.

### **HOW THIS TOTALLY FREE SERVICE WORKS**

- We can lend you a simple hand-held rechargeable player to listen to your recordings if you need one. We will show you how to use it.
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Registered charity number 1184417



# **THE INCREDIBLE TRUE CHRISTMAS STORY FROM WWII'S DARK DAYS**

By

John Champion

December 25, 2017

## **An Incredible True Christmas Story From WWII's Dark Days**

In the last days of the Second World War, right before Hitler realized that picking a fight with the entire world wasn't going to end well for him, the German army launched one final offensive against the Allies. The most hilariously named of all conflicts, “the Battle of the Bulge” was a last-ditch effort by a cornered and angry German war machine. Since it was raging over the Christmas season of 1944, yuletide cheer was running in understandably short supply.

Cut to a small cottage on the German-Belgian border, where 12-year-old Fritz Vincken and his mother were busy minding their own damn business. Their dreams of blissful ignorance were shattered when three American soldiers arrived at their front door, one with serious wounds. These Americans were armed, desperate, and, what with it being Christmas Eve and all, freezing to death. For Germans to be sheltering enemy troops was high treason, yet still Fraulein Vincken invited them in and tended to their wounds.

Then there was another knock at the door. Four German soldiers had arrived.

Fraulein Vincken knew she could be shot, but she took a gamble and sternly told the lost and hungry Germans that there would be no killing that night. The boy and his mother had a Christmas chicken all fattened up and ready to be butchered, so they went ahead and prepared the feast for their unexpected guests.

Proving that Hollywood has no monopoly on Christmas magic, both the American and German soldiers turned their weapons over to the woman and ate together, without so much as a passive-aggressive insult.

It gets better. One of the Germans -- a medical student before the war started -- went so far as to help treat the injured American. Then in the morning, the German soldiers gave the Americans a spare compass and directed them back to Allied lines, telling them how to avoid all the most German-infested areas.

The story only spread after the boy grew up and told the story to Reader's Digest (it became so famous that Ronald Reagan mentioned it in a speech when he visited Germany).

Now, you could write it all off as a well-intentioned lie, but in 1995, Fritz found one of the soldiers, who had been separately telling the story to everyone he met for years. On that night, both American and German soldiers really did sit down in the middle of the war and have a quiet Christmas dinner together.

Fritz reunited with re-united Sgt. Ralph Blank. Ralph's daughter even made them the same dinner they had decades earlier.





Photograph showing the first Christmas tree to be sent from the people of Oslo in Norway and displayed in Trafalgar Square in 1947. Now an annual tradition in recognition for the support given by the British to Norway during the Second World War

# **AMAZING FACTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS**

The tallest Christmas tree ever displayed was in Seattle, Washington. It measured 221 ft tall

When the Candy Cane was invented in Germany, it was made into a J for Jesus. The red stripes symbolised his blood.

Black Friday is not the busiest shopping day of the year. The two days before Christmas are.

1 in 3 men wait until Christmas Eve to do their shopping.

Paul McCartney earns \$400,000 a year from his “Wonderful Christmastime” song which is widely regarded as the worst song he ever recorded.

More than 400,000 illnesses are caused by spoilt Christmas leftovers.

Bing Crosby’s version of “White Christmas” is the highest-selling single of all time.

It only took Charles Dickens six weeks to write “A Christmas Carol”.

Visa cards are used about 6,000 times every minute during the Christmas season.

The Ancient Greeks considered the mistletoe as an aphrodisiac, which is probably why kissing under the mistletoe will bring you luck in your love life.

The biggest display of Christmas lights at a private house ever made was in Australia. It had 1,194,380 LEDs covering 3,865 sq metres. It was at the home of David Richards who collected \$20,000 for charity. Any volunteers to do the same next year in aid of the Branch Wings Appeal?

The drink Eggnog originated from the British drink “Posset” which was a hot milky ale-like drink.

The King's Colour Squadron is the R.A.F.'s dedicated ceremonial unit, responsible for representing the R.A.F. at both state and national ceremonial occasions, and providing Guards of Honour for the Royal Family, Heads of State, dignitaries and other VIPs. On the demise of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

In September 2022 the Squadron became the custodians of the King's Colour and was renamed the King's Colour Squadron on 27 October 2022. Formed exclusively by the Officers and Gunners of the RAF Regiment, the King's Colour Squadron holds a dual role capability as a regular field squadron under 63 Squadron R.A.F. Regiment with personnel deployed actively on Operations throughout Europe and the Middle East.

The Squadron provided the Bearer Party and Guard of Honour when an R.A.F. C-17 transport aircraft delivered Queen Elizabeth II's coffin to R.A.F. Northolt at London from Scotland.

## **R.A.F. GEN**

An airman decided that he would spend an evening at his local ASTRA cinema. The film was just starting when he sat down. As his eyes adjusted to the dark, he suddenly noticed a R.A.F. Police Dog Handler and his dog sitting just along the row from him. He was somewhat bemused but decided to try and ignore the dog and turned to watch the screen.

As the film progressed however, the airman noticed that the dog was reacting appropriately to the various scenes; for laughter the dog wagged his tail and barked; for sadness he dropped his ears and whimpered; for violence the dog growled and bared his teeth. It was quite remarkable.

At the end of the film the audience applauded and the dog stood on his back legs, barked excitedly, and wagged his tail. The airman unable to hold back any longer, turned to the Dog Handler and said, "Wow, that was a great film, and what an intelligent Police Dog you have there, frankly, I'm amazed." "So am I," replied the Dog Handler. "He absolutely hated the book ..... !! ?.

*Editor —I know this story is true, as I was that Dog Handler*



*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](mailto:kwn056@btinternet.com)*

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

31<sup>st</sup> January 2024

28<sup>th</sup> February 2024

27<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (Including Annual General Meeting)

24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

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

