

# THE ALDWARE CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



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Club opening hours: Thu: Currently closed. Sat: Currently closed.

Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 482

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## YORK BRANCH & CLUB OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS FOR 2020-21

President:	Mr R W Gray	
President Emeritus	Air Commodore W G Gambold RAF (Retd)	
Life Vice-Presidents:	Mr H R Kidd OBE	
	Mr J J Mawson	
Vice-Presidents:	Mr J Allison BEM	
	Ms S Richmond	
Branch Chairman	Mr B R Mennell	<i>chairman@rafayork.org</i>
Branch Vice-Chairman	Mr R Ford	
Branch Hon. Secretary	Mr A M Bryne	<i>secretary@rafayork.org</i>
Branch Hon. Treasurer	Mr D Pollard	<i>treasurer@rafayork.org</i>
Membership Secretary	Mr R Woods	
Welfare Officer	Mr R Ford	<i>welfare@rafayork.org</i>
Wings Appeal Organiser	Mr I Smith	<i>wings@rafayork.org</i>
N. Area & Annual Conf. Rep.	Mr R Ford	
Branch Standard Bearer	Mr G Murden	
Deputy Standard Bearer	Mr A Gunn	
Public Relations Officer	Mr A M Bryne	
Buildings Officer	Mr R Webster	
Website Manager	Mrs M Barter	<i>webmaster@rafayork.org</i>
Club Chairperson	Mrs M Barter	
Club Deputy Chairperson	Mrs P Harrington	
Club Hon Secretary	Mrs J Potter	
Club Hon. Treasurer	Mr A Ramsbottom	
Club Bar Manager	Mrs J Snelling	
Club Deputy Bar Manager	Mr S Edgar	
Club Fundraising Officer	Mrs G McCarthy	
Club Social Secretary	Mr J Forrester	
Club Tea Bar Manager	Mrs D Mennell	
Club Trustees:	Ms S Richmond, Mrs K Woods , Mr R Webster	
Aldwark Chronicle Editor	Mr A M Bryne	

**Please address all general enquiries to the Branch Secretary.**

***On the Cover: the sole surviving Blackburn Beverley XB259 transport aircraft at Fort Paull Museum, Hull. This aircraft, together with the entire museum contents, was sold by auction in September 2020. More on the Beverley in the next edition.***

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## DISCLAIMER

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## EDITORIAL

As we continue to trudge our way through the COVID-19 landscape, it is perhaps appropriate to reproduce here a poem by Derek Mahon, who died on 1 October, 2 days before my father, Donald, aged 101, died.

### Everything Is Going to Be All Right

How should I not be glad to contemplate  
the clouds clearing beyond the dormer window  
and a high tide reflected on the ceiling?  
There will be dying, there will be dying,  
but there is no need to go into that.  
The poems flow from the hand unbidden  
and the hidden source is the watchful heart.  
The sun rises in spite of everything  
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.  
I lie here in a riot of sunlight  
watching the day break and the clouds flying.  
Everything is going to be all right.

*Derek Mahon 1941-2020*

## BRANCH CHAIRMANS MUSINGS.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 is still with us and seemingly getting worse by the day. It is really affecting our Club but, more importantly, the social aspects of regularly meeting our friends on Saturdays and Thursdays. Fund-raising is badly affected too, with no St Crux, Elvington and the like, but Ian Smith, our Wings Appeal Officer, has worked tirelessly behind the scenes and organised a street collection in York and other events and gifts which has raised £10,000 for this year. That's a really good effort given the circumstances and my thanks go to Ian and to those members who have helped him.

We did open the club on Thursday evenings for 7 weeks but, unfortunately, the new rules and regulations on licensed premises closing times and limitations on the number of people in close contact caused us to close again. We had some really good nights amongst a group of friends who enjoyed each other's company. It was something to look forward to each week and it made a difference. It was unfortunate that we had to limit the attendance and that we could not permit opening on a Saturday due to numbers who would or could attend. We shall have to see how this pans out over the next few weeks or months. With the newly announced COVID lock down levels, York is currently at the lowest level, but infections already seem higher than at the previous peak of the pandemic and we will have to be careful. We must all remember that our ages and often underlying health issues make us very vulnerable, **so please take the greatest of care out there.**

As the year goes by, we need to remember that the 2021 Annual General Meeting is fast approaching and there is bad news on that front regarding senior appointments which are essential to the running of the Branch and the Club. David Pollard, the Branch Treasurer, Alan Ramsbottom, the Club Treasurer, Maureen Barter, the Club Chairperson and Pat Harrington, the Club vice-Chair have all said they will not stand for re-election. If you feel you could take on any one of these posts after March 2021 please let me know soonest and I'm sure I can get some training arranged.

Andy Bryne (Branch Secretary) is doing a great job keeping everyone updated with what HQ RAFA is up to and Ron Ford (Welfare and Vice Chairman) likewise is doing really well with his side of things. It's great to know that our organisational and welfare issues are holding together well in these difficult times.

Maureen Barter (Club Chair) and myself are doing all we can to keep the ship on a steady course through these troubled and stormy times with our main aims to keep our members safe and to keep the Club and Branch safe, secure and in as good a financial state as we can so we can open again for business a.s.a.p.

Christmas is also fast approaching, and it is unlikely that the Annual Draw will go ahead, nor a Christmas Dinner. Should anything change, we will advise you. However, if I don't see you beforehand have the best Christmas you can with whatever number of family you will be allowed.

*Brian Mennell*  
*Branch Chairman*

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### RAFA PONTEFRACT BRANCH BADGE



Over the past couple of years, a number of RAFA Branch Clubs have permanently closed. These include: Uxbridge (July 2018), High Wycombe (2019), Ilford & Woodford (2019), East Belfast (2019), Horsham & Storrington (June 2020), Skipton (August 2020) and nearby Pontefract (2020). Having seen the Pontefract RAFA badge (see photo) for sale on a certain bidding website, I decided to purchase it as I was aware that the Pontefract Branch & Club had recently been closed and the premises were being sold off. Skipton has been more fortunate as it has survived as a club (becoming an independent social club in August 2020 ) and is now known as the Moorview Social Club.

*Editor.*

## HORSE QUOTATIONS



Of all creatures God made at the Creation, there is none more excellent, or so much to be respected as a horse. *Bedouin proverb*

I can make a General in five minutes, but a good horse is hard to replace. *Abraham Lincoln*

The horse, with beauty unsurpassed, strength immeasurable and grace unlike any other, still remains humble enough to carry a man upon his back. *Amber Senti*

In the end, we don't know what horses can do. We only know that when, over the past thousands of years, we have asked something more of them, at least some of them have readily supplied it. *Jane Smiley*

Equestrian activity teaches young ladies to cope with large, friendly, but dumb creatures – the ideal training for marriage. *Anonymous*

Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway. *John Wayne*

The horse is prepared for the day of battle. But the victory belongs with the Lord. *Proverbs*

Horse sense is the thing a horse has which keeps it from betting on people. *W.C. Fields*

If you are fearful, a horse will back off. If you are calm and confident, it will

come forward. For those who are often flattered or feared, the horse can be a welcome mirror of the best in human nature. *Clare Balding*

When you are on a great horse, you have the best seat you will ever have. *Winston Churchill*

Where in this wide world can man find nobility without pride, friendship without envy or beauty without vanity? Here, where grace is served with muscle and strength by gentleness confined. He serves without servility; he has fought without enmity. There is nothing so powerful, nothing less violent, there is nothing so quick, nothing more patient. England's past has been borne on his back. All our history is his industry; we are his heirs; he our inheritance. *Ronald Duncan*



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### **YORK BRANCH WINGS APPEAL JUST GIVING LINK**

Our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith, has set up a just giving account for York Branch Wings Appeal donations. This is to help the Branch raise funds for the Wings Appeal, something that has been very difficult this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The link is:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/RAFAYorkBranchWingsAppeal>

## YORK BRANCH CLUB REOPENING - 6 AUGUST 2020



Our Branch Club reopened to members only (no guests) on Thursday 6 August, after being closed due to COVID-19 restrictions since Thursday 19 March. Prior to the reopening, a small group of members carried out a thorough clean of the Club premises and set up sanitisers and warning notices in accordance with PHE advice

and directives. To ensure maximum safety, we have had to introduce some basic, but important rules including: signing in and out in the Club lobby, no standing at the bar, no use of the tea/coffee facility and keeping the lounge door open when the building is occupied to ensure increased ventilation to name but a few. Thursday's reopening proved to be very successful, with attendance at the maximum permitted at one stage and several very happy faces to be seen! Our President, Dick Gray, ensured no-one loitered at the bar by taking up a strategic position at the side of the bar to keep an eye on things!



It's early days yet, and it must be stressed that this is a trial reopening. Since reopening however, the Club has been well-patronised and we have regularly achieved our capacity of 15 persons present at any one time. Should the situation regarding COVID-19 infections deteriorate in York, we will close the Club

immediately until it is safe to reopen. We will also close it if members fail to adhere to the revised regulations, which after all, are based on common sense! Unlike many social gathering places in York, where anyone and everyone can come and go as they please, our Club has a very strict control of entry and is currently open to RAFA York Branch members only. We are not permitting our Club to be used by any other organisation during these restrictions. If you are not a Thursday evening "regular" please contact the Branch Chairman before you intend to visit and book a place. We don't want to turn people away, but we will not compromise on the



regulations. We also know that some members may still feel nervous and uncomfortable with any form of social activity and wish to remain shielded to some extent. This is perfectly understandable and no-one needs to attend the Club if they feel this way.

It would be marvellous if we could reopen the Club on Saturdays, but we cannot do so at present due to the social distancing regulations. The number of members who normally attend on a Saturday would currently exceed the maximum permitted under the COVID-19 social distancing rules. However, rest assured that we will reopen when conditions permit, but that will probably not be for some time yet. Personally, I felt very pleased indeed to see old friends again and that, after all, is what so much of RAFA is all about.



### **.....AND CLOSING AGAIN!**

Due to an increase in COVID-19 virus transmissions and hospital admissions in the UK as a whole during September, the decision was taken to close the Club once more on 23 September 2020. Prior to this, the Club had been open (as a trial only) on Thursday evenings and seemed to be working well. We were open for 7 weeks but the increased threat of a Coronavirus “spike” meant that the safest course of action (given the age of most of our regular attendees) was to close the Club again until further notice. As to when it will reopen? I have no idea whatsoever at the time of writing!



## A HIDDEN PICTURE WITH A STORY

By DICK GRAY

**“Operation Varsity (24 March 1945) was a successful airborne forces operation launched by Allied troops that took place toward the end of World War II. Involving more than 16,000 paratroopers and several thousand aircraft, it was the largest airborne operation in history to be conducted on a single day and in one location.”**

The story of this framed print of Halifax bombers; Horsa and Hamilcar gliders was found unceremoniously gathering cobwebs within the RAFA York branch premises. Although the print depicts one of many such important aspects of the RAF's involvement in the Second World War, the picture in general is sadly of poor quality. I noted on the reverse of the picture frame was the name “SqN Ldr J R Fisher 31316” plus “2 Years” and “1-5-56” and ‘X Scampton’. So, with help from the Internet and the Branch Vice-President John Mawson, I was able to piece together an interesting and worthy story of one of our past branch members and former World War II pilot.

**John Raymond Fisher** was born in Kensington, London in 1916 and had an elder sister, their father being a retired international award-winning clock maker, who was incidentally 69 years old when he fathered John. Educated at Dulwich College, John was a keen member of the OTC (Officer Training Corps). On completing his education, John became a stockbroker (a job he loathed). He joined the Supplementary Reserve of the Royal Tank Corps as a Territorial, and then became a volunteer with the elite Artists Rifles. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Tank Corps on the Supplementary Reserve of Officers in



*John Raymond Fisher as a pilot Officer age 23 in 1939*

November 1937 but transferred to the Royal Air Force in the acting rank of Pilot Officer in April 1939.

Owing to his eyesight, however, John's initial application for pilot training was turned down, and he was serving as an Equipment Officer at Hartlebury on the outbreak of hostilities. Having then been similarly employed at Waddington and Kettering, he made a second - successful - application for pilot training and embarked for Canada in early 1942. On qualifying for his "Wings" in March 1943, he returned to the UK and trained up on the Halifax Mk 1, II and V aircraft with No 1652 HCU (Heavy Conversion Unit) of No4 Group at RAF Marston Moor (Tockwith, near York). Having attended further courses, John was posted operationally to No 298 Squadron at Tarrant Rushton in Dorset in February 1944. There they were to train for towing giant gliders. It was while practising towing gliders that a senior officer suggested that the powerful Merlin engine Halifax would be capable of towing two gliders; John Fisher was selected as the experimental pilot and the system was set-up. The runway in use (more or less into wind) was not extremely long and John Fisher's combination only just made it over the threshold. The senior officer concerned stated that if Fisher makes it, we will send the rest' and he did.

### **SOE supply and agent dropping operations.**

Less than a month with 298 Sqn, John transferred with 'C Flt' of 298 Sqn, to form No 644 Squadron, still at Tarrant Rushton, to continue with glider towing duties in preparation for the Normandy landings. In common with 38 and 161 Squadrons, however, 644 was also employed on extensive SOE supply and agent dropping operations. Fisher carrying out around 20 such sorties in the period leading up to December 1944, mainly to circuits in France, but also to Holland and Scandinavia. Shown on the next page are just a few of the well-known SOE code names in his flying logbook that John Fisher took part in:

John Fisher's crew members for the following operations were: Navigator, J.C.W. Davies RAF:  
Bomb Aimer, J.J. McDowell RCAF: Wireless Op, T.J. Trood, RAAF: Air Gunner, J.S. Hawkins RAF  
Flight Engineer, R.W. Bullock RAF.

DATE	A/C	TYPE	OPERATION	HOURS	COUNTRY	COMMENTS
7-4-44	B	SOE	Harry 24	3.40	France	Target found, no signal
28-4-44	O	SOE	Scientist 52	3.15	France	Mosquito attack, drop made
3-5-44	C	SOE	Fireman 8/2	5.45	France	Standard load dropped
6-6-44	G	Glider	Tonga	2.55	France	Hamlicar glider on DZ
6-6-44	G	Glider	Mallard	3.30	France	D-Day – Glider dropped
4-7-44	Q	SAS	Gain 13A	4.20	France	Proper signal received
15-7-44	G	SOE	Digger 57-59	6.25	France	Improper signal seen
20-7-44	G	SOE	Digger 57-59	6.20	France	Target found-no signals
23-7-44	G	SOE	Wheelwright 75	6.40	France	No reception committee
27-7-44	G	SOE	Footman 27	5.50	France	Standard load dropped
2-8-44	R	SOE	Messenger 16	6.20	France	After drop diverted St David's
7-8-44	G	SOE	Salesman 7A	4.40	France	15 containers & 2 packages dropped
23-8-44	G	SOE	Donald 15	7.10	France	Unable to drop troops
25-8-44	G	SOE	Mitchel 4	4.40	France	7 tries to drop supplies
27-8-44	H	SOE	Mitchel 3	5.35	France	Drop made despite clouds
5-9-44	G	SOE	Bob 317	5.15	France	Standard load released
10-9-44	J	SOE	Bob 291	5.55	France	No rec – War Corr. Thornton pass.
17-9-44	G	Glider	Market 1	5.15	Holland	Glider dropped on DZ
18-9-44	C	Glider	Market 2	5.30	Holland	Glider rope cut by flak
21-9-44	G	SAS	Houndsworth 79	4.20	Holland	15 containers dropped on DZ
29-9-44	G	SOE	Koos 1	4.50	Holland	DZ covered by cloud
14-10-44	L	SOE	Nico 1C	5.00	Holland	No reception found
23-12-44	U	SOE	Tail 7	9.35	Norway	10/10 Cloud over DZ
25-1-45	R	Bomb	Gruenbruch	4.20	Germany	Bombing Ruhr Germany

### **Operation “Overlord” and Operation “Tonga.”**

On the night of 5-6 June 1944, Fisher towed a Hamilcar glider carrying troops of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division to the River Orne area - ‘medium quantities of light flak. No damage’. The glider’s pilot, Staff Sergeant England, who was severely wounded and awarded the DFM, afterwards wrote to Fisher to thank him for his superb skill in taking them through ‘bastard cloud’. On D-Day itself, as part of “Operation Mallard”, he towed another Hamilcar, piloted by Staff Sergeant Hill, back to the River Orne area - ‘Marvellous trip. No damage’.

### **Operation “Market Garden” Arnhem 17 & 18 Sept 1944, & Ernest Hemingway**

Ten days later, during a Hamilcar-lift practice flight, Fisher’s passengers included Ernest Hemingway, then employed as a U.S. War Correspondent. In September, Fisher completed two trips to Arnhem, the first with a Hamilcar in tow on the 17th, and with ‘Mr. Thornton of the BBC.’ as a passenger - ‘Successful trip. Nearly hit Horsa over LZ’; however, on returning to Arnhem with a Horsa on the 18th, he encountered flak, the first barrage cutting the tow to the Horsa five miles south of the intended LZ - ‘Glider appeared O.K. No damage.’

### **Award of the DFC (USA)**

From HQ United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe General Order No. 92, dated 14 November 1944: citation read: “For extraordinary achievement while participating in special operations in the Paris area. On one occasion when his airplane was attacked by enemy fighters over the Channel, and his gasoline tank punctured, he evaded the enemy and despite the damage of his airplane successfully completed the mission. His courage and skill reflect highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.”

### **Operation “Varsity” 24/25 March 1945**

In the closing stages of the war, Fisher was attached to No 190 Squadron at Great Dunmow, a Stirling glider-towing unit, in which capacity he participated in “Operation Varsity” on 24 March 1945, his flying log book noting, ‘Horsa 6th Airborne Division dropped over Rhine, Germany. Good successful trip. One hit from flak.’ The Horsa’s 1st Pilot was Staff Sergeant K. Whitaker, who later wrote to Fisher and his crew to thank them ‘for a really first-class trip over the whole of the route. Apart from the landing, which was pretty difficult owing to the smoke and lots of flak, we had quite a reasonable time after we cast off.’

### **SOE and further special operations**

Having then flown an SOE trip to Norway - “Flank 2” north of Oslo on the 30th - Fisher was allocated to “Keystone” and “Wimper” operations over Holland on 12 April, carrying 20 containers and 9 paratroops - as it transpired an

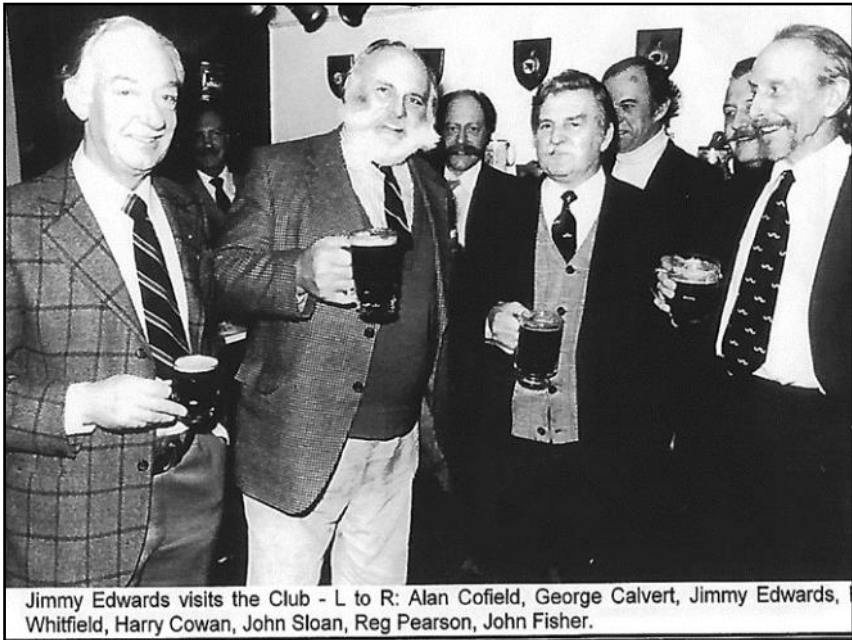
unsuccessful trip. However, on 25 April, in his final wartime sortie code-named "Violet", he successfully dropped Major Pat Worrall of the South Wales Borderers and five other parachutists near Stalag 2A at Altengraben - their mission being to negotiate the safe release of the POWs incarcerated therein. As Worrall later recalled; 'I parachuted down with a radio almost outside the camp gate. I had a letter from Eisenhower, which I presented to the commandant, Colonel Theodore Ochenal. His first remark was; "You British are crazy! Fancy coming here by parachute, risking being shot as a spy, just to save these prisoners a few days hardship." He then took me down to the village pub and we worked out details. I contacted the Ninth Army with my radio.

### **Post-war - Palestine and Mentioned in Despatches.**

Fisher, who rejoined No 620 Squadron in July 1945, went on to witness active service in Palestine, the unit's Halifaxes operating out of Aqir in the summer of 1946. He later served in No. 113 Squadron, another Halifax unit based at Aqir, his flying logbook revealing several parachute drops. He was mentioned in despatches "For distinguished services in Palestine." (London Gazette 29 June 1948).

In 1946 John became a member of RAFA upon its creation from the dying embers of World War II and he subsequently became a Life-Member. In early 1947, John was grounded for employment as an Administrative Officer, but he witnessed further active service in the Arabian Peninsula in the late 1950s. It was during the 50's that he took up gliding through the BGA (British Gliding Association). In 1957 he moved to Hushwaite, near Easingwold, North Yorkshire, where his first wife, Nadine Radford, who had property in the area.

He was placed on the Retired List as a Squadron Leader in September 1966. It is probable that RAF Scampton (as stated on the back of the picture) was one of the stations that John was based at prior to transferring to Civvy Street. He went on to manage the Barclays Bank branch in Clifton, York. It was around this time that John transferred his RAFA membership to the York Branch and became an active member and attended many functions. As can be seen in the attached photo, John sported a handlebar moustache and was a member of the York branch "Handle-bar club". The photo on page 15 shows John Fisher (far right) in our York RAFA Club in Aldwark, entertaining the comedy actor Jimmy Edwards DFC, who popped into the club while on stage in York. Jimmy himself was a pilot himself with 271 Sqn, flying the C47 Dakota and was himself shot down by a Fw190 on 21 Sep 44 over Arnhem, while dropping supplies to British paras below. Jim suffered facial burns and became a member of the "Guinea Pig Club", hence Jim grew a handle-bar moustache to hide the scarring.



Jimmy Edwards visits the Club - L to R: Alan Cofield, George Calvert, Jimmy Edwards, Whitfield, Harry Cowan, John Sloan, Reg Pearson, John Fisher.

For Squadron Leader Fisher, flying remained high on his list of preferred activities, and would visit Sutton Bank gliding club in the early 80's as John Mawson recalls; he would meet up with John on Wednesdays for a day's gliding. Afterwards they would visit the Fauconberg Arms at Coxwold with their respective wives. John and Nadine later separated around 1982. John was to later meet Joan Audrey Harrison-Broadley whom he wooed with the gift of a little St Kilda's ram, black with four horns and earning the name "Diablo". The couple married in 1986 and bred Hebridean sheep, winning prizes at local shows.

A spirited, sometimes unconventional man, who was willing to bend rules which he judged to be stupid, he did believe in getting things done – and done properly. He could be relied upon to help out, as he did on his 70th birthday when he picked potatoes for a friend who was short-handed – his birthday cake being brought out to him in the field. He enjoyed life right to the end, making his last flight at the age of 94 with his friend and owner of Baxby airfield, Dave Smith. So, a fitting tribute to one of our gallant heroes of World War II that has presented this picture with a new meaning.

Sqn Ldr John Raymond Fisher died at Thirsk in May 2012, aged 95 years. His funeral service was held on 8 May 2012 at St Nicholas Church, Hushwaite. John Fisher is survived by wife Audrey, his daughter Melanie

and great-grandson Edd. John Mawson attended his funeral and wake in the nearby village pub.

On 25 March 2015, at an auction held in Hull, Sqn Ldr Fisher's medals, along with an extensive archive and related memorabilia (one of these items was his identity discs with 'St. Christopher' lucky charm) was sold to a private bidder for £2,800. It was noted the Yorkshire Air Museum were interested in acquiring the lot but were unable to then raise sufficient funding. The list of Sqn Ldr Fisher's medals is as follows: 1939-45 Star, Air Crew Europe Star with France & Germany Clasp, Defence Medal, War Medal, Mentioned in Despatches Oak Leaf, General Service Medal (1918-1962) with 2 clasps: Palestine 1945-48, Arabian Peninsula; 1953 Coronation Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross (USA), Arnhem and Normandy anniversary commemorative medals.

*Researched by Dick Gray, President, and John Mawson, Vice-President, of the York Branch, April 2020.*



*Merlin-engine Halifax MkV 1A LL218 of No 644 Sqn at RAF Tarrant Rushton with a Hamilcar glider in tow, prior to take-off.*



## VJ DAY 75TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

On Saturday 15 August, memorial services were held in many parts of the World to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, such ceremonies were, by necessity, rather restricted, but were held nevertheless. York was no exception and a small civic ceremony was held at the Kohima Memorial in the York Minster Gardens on the morning of the Anniversary. Among the attendees was our Branch President, Dick Gray, Branch members Denise Edgar (RBL York President) Gordon Murden (Standard Bearer) and Ray Ashby. *(Photo via Dick Gray)*



The service, led by Canon Michael Smith, began with an act of Remembrance, the marking of the National two-minute silence held at 1100. The Service was scheduled to be held in the Minster but this was changed to the Minster Gardens due to social distancing restrictions inside. The Kohima Memorial was, however, a very fitting location for the Service.

## BATTLE OF BRITAIN EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY SERVICE AT YORK MINSTER

On Tuesday 15 September 2020, a small Service of Remembrance was held by the Astronomical Clock in York Minster at 1230 hours. COVID-19 restrictions meant that the usual Battle of Britain anniversary service and Turning of the Page ceremony could not be held in their usual format. Instead, a much smaller event was organised by our York Branch Chairman, Sqn Ldr Brian Mennell RAVFVR (T) (Retd), who also acted as the event controller. The Reverend Canon Dr Vicky Johnson (Minster Precentor) opened and closed the service with prayers.



The two Book of Remembrance page turners were Sqn Ldr Andy Bryne RAF (Retd), RAFA York Branch Secretary and Sqn Ldr John Lecornu RAF, Officer Commanding, Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron. Three standard bearers attended: Mr Gordon Murden (RAFA York Branch), Mr Fred Ullathorne (White Rose Aircrew Association) and Mr Tim Kitching (Royal Observer Corps – York). After the page-turning ceremony, we observed a two-

minute silence, after which, wreaths were laid by Sqn Ldr John Lecornu (representing RAF Linton on Ouse), Wg Cdr Peter West OBE RAF (Retd) (representing the White Rose Aircrew Association) and Flt Lt Richard Gray RAVFVR(T) (Retd) President, RAFA York Branch. Following a further two-minute silence, Richard Gray gave the RAF Association Dedication before the Precentor closed proceedings with a prayer and blessing. Photographs were taken by Mr Gary Wort from RAF Linton on Ouse.



We were not permitted any more than 9 persons (excluding Minster staff) to participate in the proceedings, which was very disappointing but necessary given the current Government and Minster restrictions. There was also very little room in the area around the Astronomical Clock

due to the ongoing rebuilding work to the Minster organ. At least we were able to mark this very special anniversary in some small and dignified way.

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## **WINGS APPEAL CITY STREET COLLECTION - 19 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The weather was kind on the occasion of the 2020 Wings Appeal City Street Collection, and so were the general public it seems, as a total of £1846 was collected on this, the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, Wings Appeal Collection. Given the current Government restrictions due to COVID-19, the opportunities for fund-raising have been extremely limited this year and the Air Cadets were also unable to assist us this time. Therefore, it was very pleasing to see that a good sum was collected on this very special anniversary year for the Royal Air Force and the Association.

Eleven Branch members volunteered, under the direction of Ian Smith, our Branch Wings Appeal Officer, to stand at various points in the City. Face coverings were mandatory and Wings collectors had to keep clear of doorways etc to maintain social distancing. Amongst the collectors, Ian Smith, Barry Snaith, Dick Gray and Gordon Murden did particularly well in filling their collecting tins. Overall, this was definitely a morale-booster for the Wings Appeal in these difficult times for everyone.

The Wings appeal total at the end of September was **£7579.67**. The collector heading the Harry Cowan trophy list was Barry Snaith with £1852.21.



## Events for RAFA York Branch - 2020-21

Event dates will be updated on a regular basis on the Branch Website and Club Noticeboards.

Please note: it would be appreciated if you wish to attend any of the events listed below to inform the President so that we know what numbers to seat/cater for.

***At the time of publishing we do not yet know when the Club at Aldwark will reopen on Thursdays or Saturdays or when any of our usual Branch activities will take place. Consequently, events already planned for the next few months might have to be cancelled.***

Sun 8 November: Remembrance Sunday. (York Parade cancelled)  
Sat 5 December: Wings Collection at Tesco Clifton Moor.  
Fri 11 December: Wings Collection at Tesco Askham Bar.

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*An RAF Poseidon MRA1 maritime patrol aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth is seen in company with an RAF Typhoon on its first operational mission over the North Sea on 7 August 2020.*

Regarding the Wings Appeal events listed above, the Wings Appeal Officer will contact those members who regularly volunteer prior to the collection dates.

Please note that “themed dining in nights” at the Club are currently suspended until COVID-19 restrictions are eased.