

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: 465

Issue No 75

February 2021

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
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Branch Hon. Secretary	Mr A M Bryne <i>secretary@rafayork.org</i>
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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: This 7 feet high bronze statue of Lord Trenchard, the “Father of the RAF”, was designed by Vivien Mallock and commissioned by the Old Cranwellian Association to mark the centenary of the formation of the RAF College Cranwell in November 2020. The statue is located on the West side of College Hall Officers’ Mess.

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DISCLAIMER

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EDITORIAL

As we start this new year, with seemingly only the salvation of the COVID-19 vaccine to provide some relief and hope from the daily round of often depressing news, the opportunity for us to meet up at our Club and to take part in various events still seems to be a long way off. Hopefully though, it won't be too long until we can resume our normal lives again. Rest assured that we will not reopen our Club until lifting of restrictions permit it.

Sometimes it seems as if we are almost overwhelmed with news updates and guidance on the subject of the Pandemic. Whilst this is not surprising given the dangers of the disease, two unfortunate, but, in my opinion (and I stress only my opinion), inescapable, factors keep playing on my mind: the first is that we are not the dominant species on this planet and the second is that the NHS cannot save everyone's life and it is a falsehood for the Public to believe that it can.

I am currently preparing the paperwork for the AGM, made more difficult this year due to the uncertainties of how we will be able to hold it. Given the situation at the time of writing, we will not be able to hold a "real" meeting, but will have a virtual one instead with use of email and post where necessary.

BRANCH CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS

Oh, what a lovely time we are all having. Locked up in house arrest – can't go to the pub - see the grand-kids etc. I can honestly say I am losing the will to live. How much longer will this punishment go on? However, I was somewhat heightened at the end of January when Dorothy and I got the anti-virus jab at the new Immunisation Centre here in York. It was really switched-on, the jab didn't hurt at all and we were in and out in 20 minutes including sitting in the car for 15 mandatory minutes after the jab. Let's hope, alongside all the others who've had it, that this helps in getting rid of Lockdown and we can get back to a near normal life. Roll on!

Talking about a near normal life, it'll be really good to get the Club re-opened as soon as possible so we can all meet up again and see our friends. We are mandated by RAFA HQ and the Charity Commission to hold an AGM on or before the 31st March 2021. This will be difficult under the Lockdown restrictions. In looking at dates we have chosen Saturday 27th March 2021 for our AGM.

We are hoping that, with the way things are currently going, we may be re-opened by then (cross fingers) and we can go ahead physically. If not, Andy and I will look at how we can arrange a virtual AGM; more on this to follow later. In the meantime, Andy has sent out nomination forms for anyone wishing to take up a Committee Post. We are in a bit of a pickle. Members of the Club Committee who are resigning this AGM are: Maureen Barter, Jean Potter, Gillian McCarthy and Pat Harrington, so we urgently need at least a Chairman and Secretary for this committee. Also, at the 2022 AGM both David Pollard and Alan Ramsbottom wish to stand down as Branch and Club Treasurers respectively so these are two other posts we must fill. Needless to say, I am very sorry these decisions have been made by these people and I thank them all for their support whilst serving the Branch/Club. Please consider volunteering for one of the vacant posts, it's nowhere near as daunting as you may think, I promise.

In sending out the next issue of the Chronicle we are giving you the formal notification of the next AGM, together with the Agenda for the event and the reports of the various office holders and the financial statements. Well worth a read.

My best wishes to you all. Stay inside and stay safe. You know it makes sense even if it doesn't make you happy.

Brian Mennell
Chairman
York Branch RAFA

BRANCH & CLUB NEWS

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2020

Like so many events in 2020, this year's annual Remembrance Sunday observation was very different from the norm. To quote York City Council, "As I'm sure you will be aware, sadly, we had to take the difficult decision not to have a city parade this year. Ordinarily it is a 500 person procession to which approx. 5,000-6,000 people congregating on the streets of York (on a dry sunny day) also attend. Even if we thought a smaller, representational, procession could be considered, there is no way we can anticipate how many people would come out to see it or manage it in a safe way."

After much discussion and studying of the guidelines it was agreed that no formal parade or public wreath laying could take place in York Memorial Gardens at 11am on Remembrance Sunday 2020. However, a few Service and other organisations' representatives were permitted to lay wreaths at the Memorial, but there was none of the spectacle and mass tribute normally seen. Our Branch President, Dick Gray, laid a wreath on behalf of RAFA.

York Minster held a 'congregation free' Service of Remembrance at 10.30 which was live streamed on YouTube.

In general, the guidance given was, for the safety and security of everyone, the best way to Remember Them was by observing the 2 minutes' silence at 1100hrs on our doorsteps. Hopefully, we will be able to return to what we are used to and mark our remembrance on parade in November 2021.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

Please note that the 75th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Air Forces Association (No 0437) York Branch & Club will be held in a virtual format on Saturday 27th March 2021 commencing at noon. This is due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONY—31 DECEMBER 2020

On Thursday 31 December, the last page-turning ceremony for 2020 was carried out in York Minster. The ceremony was limited to one RAFA York Branch member only and took place on the same day that the City entered stricter Tier 3 COVID-19 restrictions. Long-serving Branch member Fred Ullathorne turned the Page of Remembrance at noon on behalf of the York Branch and thereby ensured that the tradition was not broken. Prayers were said by the Rev. Canon Michael Smith.



Fred Ullathorne turns the Page of Remembrance at York Minster Astral Clock on 31 December 2020. (Photo courtesy of York Minster)

Whilst the last ceremony of 2020 was, by necessity, short and simple, it ensured that the link between past and present was not severed. It was, as Fred Ullathorne stated, an event that nearly didn't happen. We are very grateful to all involved that it did.

Editor

THE LAST SURVIVOR BLACKBURN BEVERLEY XB259

The Blackburn B-101 Beverley was a 1950s British heavy transport aircraft built by Blackburn and General Aircraft and flown by squadrons of the Royal Air Force Transport Command from 1957 until 1967. A total of 49 aircraft were built and the type only saw service with the RAF (everyone else decided that the turboprop Lockheed Hercules, which first flew in 1954, was a much better aircraft and this type also replaced the Beverley in RAF service eventually). The Beverley was powered by 4 Bristol Centaurus 173 18-cylinder air-cooled radial piston engines, which invariably spread oil all over the wing surfaces and the surrounding atmosphere!



Beverley XB287 of No 47 Sqn RAF Abingdon, 1964.

In operation, it was regarded as "ungainly but highly effective" and was described by Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Freer as "like something out of the Ark, but it was a superb supply dropper." Another Beverley joke was that the designers got the idea of the aircraft structure from seeing a Dutch barn break free in a gale!

Like all the other Beverleys, XB259 was built at Brough, East Yorkshire. It first flew on 29th January 1955 and its final flight was on 30 March 1974, landing at Paull Airfield, Hull. Beverley XB259 never saw squadron service with the RAF. It was retained by Blackburn Aircraft and given a civilian registration – G-AOAI. It was used for tests and modifications. These tests included RATOG (Rocket Assisted Take-Off Gear) using Napier-Scarab rockets. It was later numbered as XB259 and transferred to RAE (Royal Aircraft Establishment) Farnborough where it was used to aid the development of supply dropping techniques. It was also used to test the

braking parachutes to be used in the Victor and Vulcan 'V' bombers. In the early 1970s, XB259 was retired from military service and sold to the now defunct Court Line as an attraction. Following the collapse of Court Line, it was purchased by North County Breweries for a similar purpose and kept at Paull Airfield. The use of the Beverley as an attraction failed, and it was put up for sale as scrap. Fortunately, Mr F. Daly of the Waterfront Hotel, Hull saved the aircraft and in April 1983 it was moved to the Museum of Army Transport at Beverley, East Yorkshire.



Beverley XB259 at Fort Paull, Hull in 2020.

By 2001, XB259 desperately needed painting to provide some protection against the elements and to curb deterioration. The painting was carried out over a over a 15-day period during September and October. Unfortunately, "Hammerite" paint had been used on the aircraft previously, and this caused difficulty in preparation work. All the old paint was stripped off, and 200 gallons of paint provided three coats of protection on the 13,658 square feet of airframe. The Museum had decided to use a camouflage paint scheme without squadron markings as XB259 had not seen squadron service. Camouflage paint would also provide better protection from the elements. Despite camouflaged Beverleys having black under surfaces, a 'wrap around' camouflage paint scheme was used. This was on the advice of painting contractors. Black undersides would have caused humidity problems thus giving long term preservation difficulties. On balance it was thought better to ensure a long-term future for XB259, rather than present a 100% accurate colour scheme.

The Museum of Army Transport closed for the last time in Summer 2003,

once again putting the future of XB259 in doubt. The aircraft was put up for sale by tender and was eventually purchased by the owners of Fort Paull, a preserved coast artillery fort located at Paull near Hull, close to the airfield where XB259 made her last landing. Moving the Beverley was no simple task, but successfully accomplished by road in several loads. On arrival at Fort Paull, a large crane was used to lift the large parts of the airframe over the fort's walls. Once the rebuilding of XB259 commenced, steps were taken to preserve the airframe and to combat corrosion.

Fort Paull closed as a visitor attraction at the beginning of 2020 and the entire contents of the museum fort, including the Beverley, were put up for auction. The online auction was held on 19 September 2020 and the Beverley sold for £21000. The successful bidder was Martyn Wiseman, a businessman and pilot, who has an airfield near Selby at Birchwood Lodge. He intends to relocate the Beverley to Birchwood Lodge and restore it, but also equip it as a holiday let. He has already converted an eight-seater Hawker executive jet, which featured on George Clarke's Channel 4 show "Amazing Spaces". The conversion will see the area where the paratroopers once waited to jump turned into two bedrooms, while the main cargo hold – which could carry 94 troops – will be a kitchen and dining area. The day before the auction, scrap dealers from London had pushed the price of the plane up to £18,000, but Mr Wiseman was seemingly determined to prevent this unique aircraft from being scrapped. The final bill for the aircraft and spares came to £34,000. Both he and philanthropist Georg Von der Muehll, a Swiss banker, chipped in £28,000 each.

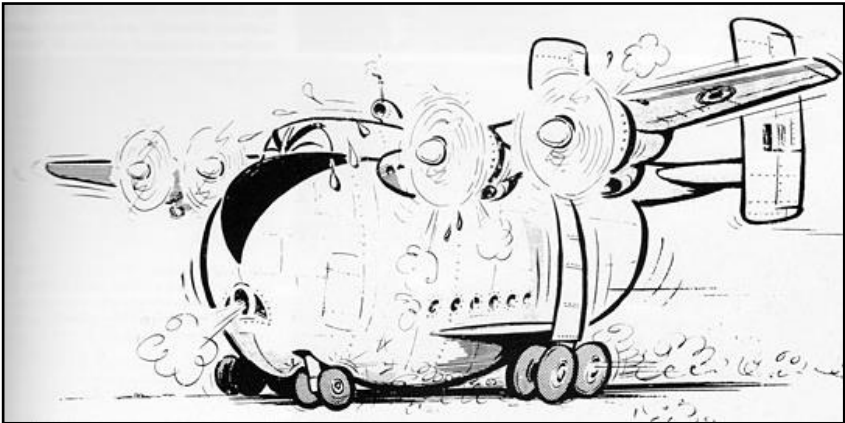
Some people had hoped it would remain as part of an aviation museum collection, but Mr Wiseman said "simple commercial reality" had to prevail. Nothing would be thrown away, with some internal fittings going on display in a separate building. He said, "You have to be realistic. As a museum it's not an attraction – people will come once and that's it. We don't have the funds to restore this back to its original condition and maintain it for the next 50 years without it paying its own way." By converting the interior as a holiday let, Mr Wiseman believes that the aircraft will be self-funding and will still be a unique survivor. Needless to say, this plan did not impress the previous owners and volunteers who have worked on the aircraft over the years.

Perhaps there is still some life left in the old Beverley yet. It is certainly a type that has not fared well in preservation, the RAF Museum's example (XH124) gently rotted outside at Hendon Museum from 1968 until 1981, when it was cut up for scrap. A salutary lesson perhaps that aeroplanes should either be in the air or in a hangar!

2021 Update.

Since XB259 was purchased from the Fort Paull museum in 2020, the ongoing pandemic has prevented much progress being made. In addition, personnel from the Fort Paull heritage site dropped any assistance they had given to the project, maintaining that the Beverley should be retained in a museum in its original form. In October 2020, an advertisement appeared on the Barnstormers aviation sales website offering 4 Bristol Centaurus engines for sale. The outcome of the sale is unknown.

Under the terms of the purchase agreement, the aircraft will need to be removed from the Fort Paull site by June 2021. Dismantling started shortly after purchase but, as far as I know, the aircraft is still at Fort Paull. A sad story in a way, especially as the future of this last survivor seems to be in peril once more.



Flight deck of Beverley XB261 on display at Newark Air Museum. This aircraft spent its life with the A&AEE at RAF Boscombe Down until retired in 1971.

Editor.

ORIGIN OF TERMS (MAINLY FROM THE USA)

SHOT OF WHISKEY' - In the Old American West a .45 cartridge for a six-gun cost 12 cents, so did a glass of whiskey. If a cowhand was low on cash he would often give the bartender a cartridge in exchange for a drink. This became known as a "shot" of whiskey.

BUYING THE FARM - This is synonymous with dying. During the First World War US soldiers were given life insurance policies worth \$5,000. This was about the price of an average farm, so if you died you "bought the farm" for your survivors.

IRON CLAD CONTRACT - This came about from the ironclad ships of the US Civil War. It meant something so strong it could not be broken.

RIFF RAFF - The Mississippi River was the main way of travelling from north to south. Riverboats carried passengers and freight but they were expensive, so most people used rafts. Everything had the right of way over rafts which were considered cheap. The steering oar on the rafts was called a "riff" and this transposed into riff-raff, meaning low class.

COBWEB - The Old English word for "spider" was "cob".

SHIP STATEROOMS - Traveling by steamboat was considered the height of comfort. Passenger cabins on the boats were not numbered. Instead they were named after US states. To this day cabins on ships are called staterooms.

SHOWBOAT - These were floating theatres built on a barge that was pushed by a steamboat. These played small towns along the Mississippi River. Unlike the boat shown in the movie "Showboat" these did not have an engine. They were gaudy and attention grabbing which is why we say someone who is being the life of the party is "showboating".

OVER A BARREL - In the days before CPR a drowning victim would be placed face down over a barrel and the barrel would be rolled back and forth in an effort to empty the lungs of water. It was rarely effective. If you are over a barrel you are in deep trouble.

BARGE IN - Heavy freight was moved along the Mississippi river in large barges pushed by steamboats. These were hard to control and would sometimes swing into piers or other boats. People would say they "barged in".

HOGWASH - Steamboats carried both people and animals. Since pigs

smelled so bad they would be washed before being put on board. The mud and other filth that was washed off was considered useless "hog wash".

CURFEW - The word "curfew" comes from the French phrase "couvre-feu", which means "cover the fire". It was used to describe the time of blowing out all lamps and candles. It was later adopted into Middle English as "curfeu" which later became the modern "curfew". In the early American colonies, homes had no real fireplaces, so a fire was built in the centre of the room. In order to make sure a fire did not get out of control during the night it was required that, by an agreed upon time, all fires would be covered with a clay pot called a "curfew".

BARRELS OF OIL - When the first oil wells were drilled they had made no provision for storing the liquid so they used water barrels. That is why, to this day, we speak of barrels of oil rather than gallons.

HOT OFF THE PRESS - As the paper goes through the rotary printing press friction causes it to heat up. Therefore, if you grab the paper right off the press it's hot. The expression means to get immediate information.

David Taylor collection.



RAF LINTON ON OUSE UPDATE



Sad to say, this historic RAF station, with which our RAFA Branch has been long associated, finally closed on 31 December 2020. The last flying unit based at Linton was the Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron (YUAS), whose Grob Tutor aircraft departed Linton for the last time on 1 December 2020 to join the Northumbria Universities Air Squadron at RAF Leeming, their new home. The air traffic service ended on 18 December with the cessation of the Linton-on-Ouse Air Traffic Zone (ATZ) and Military ATZ as well as the associated Lower Airspace Radar Service. A good number of our serving members either joined RAFA whilst undergoing flying training at Linton or were already existing members whilst based there. They have now been posted to other units and some will doubtless transfer to other RAFA branches.



On Tuesday 1 December 2020, YUAS pilots prepare to fly the YUAS Tutors to RAF Leeming (Photo RAF Linton on Ouse)

In August 2017, a number of York Branch members enjoyed a guided tour around RAF Linton on Ouse, organised by John Allison BEM. The itinerary included a visit to the RAF Linton on Ouse Memorial Room, an extensive collection of memorabilia and artifacts covering the history of the Station, particularly its role in the Second World War. Now that the Station has closed, the Memorial Room contents have had to find a new home and have been distributed, where possible, to aviation and military museums. Loan exhibits were offered back to the original owners. No 207 Squadron exhibits

were sent to RAF Marham, Everything that was small enough to go into a cardboard packing case was sent to the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington, near York and larger items were being sent to Eden Camp Museum, near Pickering. A few items, for which provenance couldn't be established, were remaining with the RAF, and contact was being made with other on-station museums to see if they could house them, with the Memorial Room at Leeming being first choice. Once an RAF station closes (and so many have, even in recent years) museum collections like this are bound to be dispersed. However, it would appear that many items will still remain in the area at Elvington and Eden Camp.



This Jet Provost Mk3A (XM464) is an ex-RAF Linton on Ouse resident now a long way from home. It was delivered to 27 Maintenance Unit at Shawbury during July 1960 and went on to serve with 3 FTS at RAF Leeming and 1 FTS at RAF Linton-on-Ouse. After retirement XM464 was sold to the US and went on display at West Texas Airport, El Paso before being acquired and beautifully restored by the Pima Air & Space Museum, Tucson, Arizona. It is seen here in 2014.

THE DAY A STAR VISITED RAF ELVINGTON

On 16 May 1945, the war in Europe had only just ended and the personnel of the two Free French Halifax squadrons, based at RAF Elvington, were doubtless impatient to return to their homeland, which had suffered from Nazi occupation and, in some areas, had sustained terrible damage. The Theatre aux Armees, an organisation that arranged civilian entertainers for French troops, had finally heard of the exiled French airmen in North Yorkshire and arranged for the famous singer and dancer Josephine Baker to visit them and sing, even though the visit lasted only for a few hours, this gave the personnel a tremendous morale boost and reminded them that France had not forgotten them. In Britain, we had Vera Lynn, but in France, the name of Josephine Baker meant much more. Unlike Vera Lynn, Josephine Baker was a cabaret artist and fashion icon as well as a singer. In some respects, her wardrobe was not too dissimilar to that of Lady Gaga in the 21st Century, being somewhat “racy” at times to say the least!

Josephine Baker was not French by birth, being born in St Louis, USA in 1906. She made France her home during the 1920s, at a time when racial segregation in the United States meant that her talent as a singer and dancer could not develop, whereas France was welcoming a diverse number of American artists at the time. Josephine was 19 when she moved to France, leaving behind a difficult childhood and 2 failed marriages (she was 13 when she was first married) and she soon became a star and a fashion icon. On her return to the USA in the mid-1930s, she was refused entry to many clubs and theatres. She felt insulted, rejected and segregated so decided to travel back to her adoring fans in Paris where she took on French citizenship through her third husband.



Josephine Baker with her pet Cheetah.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, she was recruited by the Deuxième Bureau, French military intelligence. She became a spy for the Allies, using her fame and celebrity to infiltrate networks and gather high intelligence. She collected information about German troop locations from officials she met at parties. During events at various embassies and ministries, she charmed people while gathering information without raising suspicion. Her café-society fame enabled her to rub shoulders with those in the know, from high-ranking Japanese officials to Italian bureaucrats, and to report back what she heard. After the German invasion of France, Josephine left Paris and used her home in the Dordogne to house people eager to help Charles de Gaulle's Free French movement.



She used her international reputation as an entertainer to move freely and thus helped refugees to leave the country. During the war, she was able to travel around Europe, visiting neutral nations such as Portugal, as well as some in South America. She carried information for transmission to the Allies, about airfields, harbours and German troop concentrations in the West of France. Josephine used her sheet music to write coded messages in invisible ink. She pinned notes with information gathered inside her underwear, daring anyone to strip search Josephine Baker! In 1941, she visited French colonies in North

Josephine Baker in one of her legendary outfits.

Africa to continue helping the Resistance. In Morocco, she sang on a volunteer basis in front of French and Allied troops stationed in North Africa despite serious health problems. After her recovery, she started touring to entertain Allied soldiers in North Africa. Despite her entertainment and clandestine efforts, it was not until 1961 that Josephine Baker was awarded the Medal of the Legion of Honour from General Valin at the Château des Milandes, her residence in the Dordogne. She also received the Croix de guerre and the Rosette de la Resistance. Despite her fame and glory in France, she frequently returned to the United States in the 1950s, supporting the Civil Rights Movement. During the March on Washington in

1963, Josephine stood next to Martin Luther King Jr. and was among the numerous notable speakers. She was the only woman to do so.



Josephine Baker in her French Air Force uniform.

Josephine finally obtained the triumph she deserved in the United States, performing at Carnegie Hall in 1973, at the age of 66. Her last performance was for the Monaco Red Cross in 1975, in Paris, to a standing ovation. She died shortly afterwards of a cerebral haemorrhage following what was an amazingly tumultuous, exciting life.

Over 20,000 people lined the streets of Paris for her funeral at La Madeleine. She received the honour of a 21-gun salute. She was the first American-born woman to be buried in France with full military honours.



Road sign in County Durham, with the hamlet of High Wham suitably modified temporarily to reflect the UK Christmas No 1 music track in 2020.

DONATION TO MUSEUM BY 3 YORK VETERANS



Seen in the York Press at the end of January was an article and photo (above) of one of our veteran York Branch members, Douglas Petty (98) taken at the 2020 VJ Commemoration service in the Minster Memorial Gardens last August. Mr Petty, seated on the right in the photo, together with 2 of his comrades, Sid Metcalfe and Ken Cooke (also in the photo) has donated a total of £500 to the York Army Museum in Tower Street. The 3 veterans felt the museum had always supported them in many ways and it was important to give something back to one of their favourite venues.



A snowy scene at HQ RAF Air Command, High Wycombe on 24th January showing the “plastic” Spitfire and Hurricane gate guards. (RAF Publicity Image)

And finally.....



Events for RAFA York Branch - 2021

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.

Sat 27 Mar	Branch and Club AGM—Virtual Meeting.
Fri 11 June	Wings Collection - Monks Cross Shopping Park.
Sat 26 June:	Armed Forces Day.
Sun 27 June	RBL & RAFA Church Service – All Saints Pavement.
Fri 16 July	St Crux.
Sun 18 Sep	Wings Appeal Street Collection - York.
Sat 9 Oct	St Crux



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.