

THE ALDWARCK CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



Branch Headquarters:
3-5 Aldwarck
York
YO1 7BX

Telephone: 07495 651849

Our Website: www.rafayork.org



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

Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 465

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YORK BRANCH & CLUB OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS FOR 2021-22

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 Chairman	Mrs D Edgar	
Club Deputy Chairman	<i>Vacant</i>	
Club Hon Secretary	Mr S Edgar	
Club Hon. Treasurer	Mr A Ramsbottom	
Club Bar Manager	Mrs J Snelling	
Club Deputy Bar Manager	Mr S Edgar	
Club Fundraising Officer	<i>Vacant</i>	
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: RN Phantom FG1 XT859, seen at RAF Biggin Hill's Battle of Britain 'At Home' Day in September 1969, sporting its World record holding achievement artwork. It is sometimes hard to believe that this was over 50 years ago. Photo: Adrian M Balch.

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DISCLAIMER

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EDITORIAL

Whilst putting together this edition of the Chronicle, the sad news broke of the death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh on 9 April. I very much regret that I never met him. What an amazing man of his generation in every respect.

This edition does not contain much material on our recent Branch and Club activities as there has been very little happening for obvious reasons! That said, we were able to hold our Branch and Club AGMs on 27 March via Zoom and we were able to mark the April Turning of the Page ceremony in the Minster, albeit restricted to a solo effort.

Looking back over fifty years, I recall the Daily Mail Transatlantic Air Race of May 1969 and I'm sure that many readers will have their own recollections of the event. UK Service participation was high and the then new Harrier "jump-jet" stole the show. You can read a bit more about the event in this newsletter.

At the time of writing, I have no idea when we will be able to re-open our Club again, but I do hope that it will be open by the time I am editing the next edition of the Chronicle! It won't be too long now, before we can get together and also participate in various events, I hope.

BRANCH CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS

Hello everyone. I hope you and your nearest and dearest are in good health. Stay safe as, hopefully, it's not too long now till we can say we are through this most horrendous time.

As RAFA regulations and the Charity Commission rules dictate, we held our AGM before the end of March but, for the first time ever, it was using computers and the Zoom technology. It seemed to go OK.

Even though we have no non-committee members in our Aldwark club at the moment, our back room work for some of the committee members does not stop, even though it has slowed down quite a lot. The club building is visited frequently to ensure there is no damage or structural problems, flooding from burst pipes, that we haven't been burgled etc. and to collect the mail. Hopefully this attention to the building will allow us to get back together to normal pronto as soon as we are legally allowed. Roll on! Sadly, as we have no outside area or staff to provide table service, we were unable to open when the pubs re-started. The committee have also had to comply with RAFA doctrines and requirements, although currently not as big a task as normal.

Although the Branch Committee remains unchanged, there were big changes in the Club Committee as its Chair, Maureen Barter, stood down as did the Secretary Jean Potter, the Vice-Chair Pat Harrington and the Social Secretary Gillian McCarthy. This left us with a big dilemma, as RAFA insisted that a new committee be formed before the end of the AGM and there were no volunteers available. However, Denise Edgar and husband Steve kindly volunteered to take the roles of Club Chairman and Secretary respectively and that solved our immediate problem. Many, many thanks to Denise and Steve for helping us out of a tight corner.

There is not a lot more I can say at the moment, Let's cross our fingers that Boris's Road Map stays as it is and mid-July soon arrives.

Dorothy and I will have had our second jabs by the time you read this, and I trust many of you will also have had your seconds. Keep your shirt sleeves up as our Flu jabs will follow soon.

We really do look forward to seeing you all back in the club for our weekly Thursday and Saturday jaunts so we can catch up with everyone and have a few jars and a good chinwag.

With my very best wishes.
Brian.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

This year's AGM was originally planned for 6 March but we decided to delay it until 27 March in case COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. However, our Branch Chairman, Brian Mennell, was able to prepare for a "virtual" AGM, as recommended by RAFA HQ and so we were able to hold our meeting, via Zoom on Saturday 27 March, run by Brian from his home office.

It was, as they say, "a little different", but 25 members were able to login and attend the meeting. In addition, I had received 19 AGM voting forms by post or email so our attendance was pretty good considering the restrictions. The Area Relationship Engagement Officer, Marc Boyle, also attended the meeting via Zoom and gave a brief update on the year's events from RAFA HQ and Area's perspective. There were a number of vacancies on the Branch Club Committee for 2021, as the Club Chair, Maureen Barter, Club Vice-Chair, Pat Harrington, Club Secretary, Jean Potter and Club Fundraising Officer, Gillian McCarthy, were all standing down.

Denise Edgar offered to take up the Club Chair role and Steve Edgar the Club Secretary role until such time as the Club had re-opened and settled down such that we could follow up expressions of interest received from 3 York Branch members for the vacant Club Committee posts. All persons volunteering for Branch and Club Committee duties were voted in unanimously and we thank them all for doing so. It has been a most difficult year for everyone. At the AGM, we decided to fix the date of the 2022 AGM as Saturday 26 March. Hopefully, we will all be able to hold it at the Club next time!

SOME RANDOM SNIPPETS

He who laughs last, thinks slowest.

Everyone has a photographic memory. Some just don't have any film.

On the other hand, you have different fingers.

I wonder how much deeper the ocean would be without sponges?

Nothing is fool proof to a sufficiently talented fool.

A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

From David Taylor's Collection.

SOME SAYINGS FOR REFLECTION

"The problem with the world is that the intelligent people are full of doubt, while stupid ones are full of confidence." Charles Bukowski

"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." George Orwell

"Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword obviously never encountered automatic weapons." Gen. Douglas MacArthur

"When passion rules, she never rules wisely." Benjamin Franklin

"He who is to be a good ruler must have first been ruled." Aristotle

"As for the best leaders, people do not notice their existence. The next best, people honour and praise, the next the people fear, but when the best leader's work is done the people say, we did it ourselves." Lao Tzu c500 BC

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and help them become what they are capable of." Johann von Goethe

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." Nelson Mandela

"Tomorrow will be a good day." Capt. Sir Tom Moore OBE

"Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life." Omar Khayyam

"Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be." Abraham Lincoln

"Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears." John Lennon

"Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." Marcel Proust

You never really learn much from hearing yourself speak." George Clooney

"Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder." Henry David Thoreau

RAF RETIRES ITS SENTINEL R1 AIRCRAFT FLEET



A Sentinel R1 departs from RAF Akrotiri during Operation SHADER.

On 25 February 2021, an RAF Sentinel R1 (ZJ694) flew its last sortie with No 5 Squadron before the type's retirement. The touch down of mission RRR7303 at RAF Waddington marked the end of 13 years of RAF service for this airframe. The aircraft operated in one of the regions that have more frequently been watched by the long-range, wide-area battlefield surveillance platform. In fact, RRR7303 flew towards the Baltic and, operating inside NATO airspace of Poland and Lithuania, carried out surveillance activities off Russia's Kaliningrad semi-exclave, and then close to Belarus. RAF Sentinels have been frequent visitors of the Baltic airspace, often sparking the reaction of the Russian Su-27 Flanker strike aircraft based in Kaliningrad.

The Sentinel R1 is a long-range, wide-area battlefield surveillance aircraft, delivering critical intelligence and target tracking information to British and coalition forces. The airframe is based on a modified Bombardier Global Express powered by two Rolls-Royce BR700 turbofan engines. The 5 RAF Sentinels have been operationally deployed in support of operations in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, and, more recently, Iraq and Syria. The retirement of the Sentinel leaves the U.K. without a long-range, wide-area battlefield surveillance capability as a replacement has not been yet determined.

Although never having had the opportunity to fly in one of these aircraft, I was part of an RAF Air Warfare Centre team fortunate enough to visit the Sentinel production line at Greenville, Texas in 2004. The amount of "electric string" and avionics being fitted to the airframes seemed positively huge to me at the time!

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JOHN FOSTER 1940-2021



John Anthony Foster passed away at York Hospital on 7 February 2021 aged 80, after a short battle with illness. John was born in Scunthorpe in November 1940 and joined the RAF in 1961. After initially being rejected, he was determined to succeed and said, "as a taxpayer, I own the aircraft and jolly well intend to fly them." The RAF recruiters invited him back and decided to take a risk on him, which proved to pay off as John went on to have a 34-year flying career, qualifying on 24 different aircraft types and clocking up over 10,000 flying hours, flying as far as Canada and Indonesia. His first posting, in 1964 was to No 617 Squadron at RAF

Scampton, from where he flew a Vulcan bomber to Australia and Goose Bay, Canada. He also served in RAF Germany, with No 17 Sqn, flying the Canberra bomber on reconnaissance missions. In 1970, he attended the Qualified Flying Instructors' course at the Central Flying School, a prelude to a long career training military pilots.

John was appointed Command Officer (Jet Provost) on CFS Examination Wing, which included detachments to Israel and Saudi Arabia to test their air force pilots. John flew the Vampire as part of The RAF Vintage Pair display team performing at air shows. He also led the '25 formation flypast' for the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations at RAF Finningley in 1977. In 1981 John was honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, receiving The Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air. He also received a Green Endorsement in his log book for landing a stricken aircraft safely.

In 1992 John earned the highly coveted A1 flying instructor category standard and went on to teach many pilots at RAF Linton on Ouse and

Church Fenton for a several years. John retired from the RAF in 1995 only to be re-employed the next day by the Ministry of Defence to instruct pilots on the simulator at Linton on Ouse.

In 2018 John flew a celebration flight in a Spitfire at Duxford with all his family watching him.

John leaves his wife, son Paul, daughter Joanne and six grandchildren. John's funeral was held on Friday March 5 at York Cemetery Chapel.

Whilst John was not a member of the RAF Association, he clearly enjoyed a long and successful career as a specialist aircrew pilot, training many young men and women who went on to serve their country in the air. His contribution to flying training in the "Yorkshire Air Force" was considerable and so I felt that an article in his memory would be most appropriate for this newsletter.

Editor.

MURRAY WALKER QUOTES

Murray Walker's high-pitched enthusiasm and accidental gems were part of the soundtrack of many of our lives - a true "great." Murray Walker died on 13 March 2021, aged 97. His broadcasting career spanned more than 50 years, working for the BBC and ITV before he retired from commentating in 2001. Murray Walker was a broadcasting rarity: a man whose voice came to define his sport. Like Peter O'Sullivan and racing, like Richie Benaud and cricket, like Bill McLaren and rugby union, for more than 30 years Walker was THE voice of Formula One.

Here are some of his famous quotes:

"There's nothing wrong with the car except it's on fire."

"Unless I'm very much mistaken. I am very much mistaken!"

"And now excuse me while I interrupt myself!"

"It's a sad ending, albeit a happy one, here at Montreal for today's Grand Prix."

"Two laps to go, then the action will begin. Unless this is the action, which it is."

"I'm ready to stop my startwatch."

Murray Walker: "There's a fiery glow coming from the back of the Ferrari!"

James Hunt: "No Murray, that's his rear safety light."

"Andrea de Cesaris, the man who has won more Grand Prix than anyone else without actually winning one."

"Do my eyes deceive me or is Senna's car sounding a bit rough?"

"And the first five places are filled with five different cars."

"The battle is well and truly on if it wasn't on before, and it certainly was."

"The young Ralf Schumacher has been upstaged by teenager Jenson Button, who is 20."

"The first four cars are both on the same tyres."

"I imagine that the conditions in those cars today are totally unimaginable."

"Tambay's hopes, which were absolutely nil before, are absolutely zero now."

They don't make them like that any more!



TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONY AT YORK MINSTER—6 APRIL

The first Turning of the Page ceremony for 2021 took place in York Minster on Tuesday 6 April at Noon. The Book of Remembrance page turning was carried out by Branch Welfare Officer, Ron Ford. Unfortunately, due to current lockdown restrictions, no other members of RAFA York Branch could be present. Prayers were said at the ceremony by Canon Michael Smith of York Minster.



Photo courtesy of Alex Carberry, York Minster.

YVES MAHE MEMORIAL PLAQUE

This small plaque in Coney Street, York, opposite the entrance to St Martin's church, is worth more than a second glance. Enjoying a stroll around the city on a socially-distanced sunny Easter Saturday, this colourful little plaque caught our eyes and some research was felt to be in order.



In retaliation to the British bombing of the historic city of Lübeck in 1942, Germany launched a series of attacks on English cities which came to be known as the Baedeker Raids. A young French pilot, Yves Mahé, was to play a key role in the defence of York.

The French Third Republic signed the Armistice with Germany on 20 June 1940, but Yves refused to accept his country's defeat. He joined the Free French Forces, a body of troops under the French government in exile, led by Charles de Gaulle, who refused to accept either the French surrender to the Nazis or the Vichy government of Marshal Pétain in France. Travelling on a stolen plane, first to Gibraltar then on to England, he was reunited with his brother, also a pilot.

On 29 April 1942 around 40 German Luftwaffe bombers crossed the Channel on a course for York. For more than 90 minutes the German bombers rained down 84 tonnes of incendiary and high explosive bombs on the city setting it ablaze. More than 90 civilians died, over 200 were injured and it was estimated that 9,500 houses were destroyed or damaged, a third of the 28,000 houses in the city. Many buildings were severely damaged including the medieval Guildhall and the church of St

Martin le Grand in Coney Street, part of which is still in ruins as a monument to the disaster. At the time, four RAF stations were tasked with defending York including RAF Hibaldstow, near Scunthorpe, where No 253 Squadron had a number of Free French Air Force pilots, including Yves Mahe. Flying his Hawker Hurricane II, Yves Mahé saw the city of York ablaze from a distance so set off alone with all eight machine guns blazing and shot down a Heinkel H111 bomber in flames over the River Ouse (some references state that the enemy aircraft was a Ju88 which crashed near Crockey Hill). The bombers had been lining up to attack the main Rowntree factory but then retreated. Although Yves received support from other aircraft which followed, his lone intervention had set the attackers in retreat.

The young pilot was given a civic reception at the Mansion House in York. Later General de Gaulle presented him with the Croix de Guerre. He went on to fly with French air squadrons, fighting with the Soviet Air Force and was shot down over Smolensk in 1944. He was captured by the Germans, condemned to death but escaped. He served with the French Air Force until 1962 when he was killed flying a Gloster Meteor jet night fighter which crashed in Belgium. He was 42.



Hurricanes of No 253 Squadron at RAF Hibaldstow.

Editor.

CASTING A SHADOW

On page 7 of this edition of the Chronicle, the retirement of the RAF's Sentinel aircraft fleet is covered. However, there are other aircraft types involved in the gathering of military information and the activities of possible enemy forces, one such aircraft type in RAF service is the Shadow R1.



Shadow R1 ZZ417 at RAF Lossiemouth 2015 (Niall Paterson)

These aircraft are operated by No 14 and No 54 Squadrons and are also based at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire. Through a combination of sensors, the Shadow adds a comprehensive intelligence gathering capability to the Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Force and its output is particularly valuable to military ground commanders. The Shadow's electro-optical and electronic capabilities complement those of the recently retired Sentinel R Mk 1, rather than replacing it. Satellite communications links enable information download during a mission and the aircraft is also fitted with a comprehensive defensive aids suite.

The United States Armed Forces have been using variants of the ubiquitous King Air twin-turboprop business aircraft in military roles since the early 1960s, subsequently creating and fielding a family of Guardrail reconnaissance machines based on the King Air 200 turboprop business aircraft. The King Air has most recently been developed into the King Air 350. More capable than earlier versions, the King Air 350 was offered as a special missions platform from the outset and spawned the new generation

MC-12 ISR platform ordered for the US Air Force in July 2008 against an urgent need to improve intelligence gathering in Afghanistan.

A similar requirement led the RAF to commission an initial four Shadow R Mk 1 aircraft, based on the King Air 350CER, under an urgent operational requirement. Delivered to No V(AC) Sqn in 2009, the Shadow features an under-fuselage electro-optical sensor turret, a variety of integrated sensors and extensive communications capability, managed from operator consoles in the cabin.

The Shadow R 1 is powered by two Pratt & Whitney PT6A 1050 Shp turboprop engines. The aircraft is 46ft 8in (14.26m) long, with a wingspan of 57ft 11in. Its maximum cruising speed is 245kt (453km/h) and maximum altitude is 35,000ft.

Number V(AC) Sqn's Shadow flight became 14 Sqn in 2011, after the former Tornado unit disbanded at RAF Lossiemouth under the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review. A fifth aircraft, plus a dedicated trainer have since been added to the fleet and the aircraft's exceptional performance has seen it identified as a key asset for the future.

THE 1969 DAILY MAIL TRANSATLANTIC AIR RACE

Fifty-two years ago, from 4 to 11 May 1969, an air race between London and New York was sponsored by the Daily Mail newspaper to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first transatlantic air crossing. British military participation in the air race was co-ordinated by an RAF team under the codename "Blue Nylon" and included aircraft and crews of No 1 Sqn (Hawker Siddeley Harrier GR1), No.55 and No.57 Squadrons (Handley Page Victor tankers), No.72 Squadron (Westland Wessex), No.543 Sqn (Victor SR2 reconnaissance aircraft) and No.892 Naval Air Squadron Fleet Air Arm (McDonnell Douglas Phantom FG1).

The Daily Mail newspaper had a long history of promoting and sponsoring aviation records, starting in November 1906, when it offered a £10,000 prize for the first aviator to fly the 185 miles between London and Manchester, with no more than two stops, in under 24 hours. The challenge also specified that take-off and landing were to be at locations no more than five miles from the newspaper's offices in those cities. Powered flight was a relatively new invention, and the newspaper's proprietors were keen to stimulate the industry's growth. In 1908 they offered £1,000 for the first flight across the

English Channel (won on 25 July 1909 by the French aviator Louis Blériot), and £1,000 for the first circular one-mile flight made by a British aviator in a British aeroplane (won on 30 October 1909 by the English aviator John Moore-Brabazon). It was therefore perhaps appropriate that the Daily Mail would have some involvement in an air race that celebrated 50 years since Alcock & Brown had flown across the Atlantic!

The 1969 event took place between the 4 and 11 May 1969 and, although named an air race, it was actually a race of individuals between the Post Office Tower in London to the Empire State Building in New York. Each of the individuals or "Runners" had to use some form of air transport. With a number of different categories a total of 21 prizes could be won. A number of point-to-point world records for aircraft were broken.

The shortest overall time between London and New York was achieved by Sqn Ldr Tom Lecky-Tompson of No.1 Squadron in a Harrier GR1 (6 hours 11 minutes) and the shortest time between New York and London was set by Lt Cdr Brian Davies (pilot) and Lieutenant Commander Peter Goddard (observer) of No 892 Squadron in a Phantom FG1 (4 hours 46 minutes). The RAF had also planned to use Phantom aircraft but the Senior Service had other ideas!



Harrier GR1 XV741 of No 1 Sqn at "RAF St Pancras" during the 1969 Transatlantic Air Race (Daily Mail archives).

At the time, I was 14 and just about to join the Air Training Corps and there is no doubt that the exploits of the RN and RAF squadrons participating in this event definitely had a positive effect on my enthusiasm to join the Air Cadet Organisation. Fifty years ago, the St Pancras site was not the busy international railway hub that we know today. Much of the area used by the RAF Harriers then was a disused coal yard. I can still recall the TV images of the Harrier aircraft landing and taking off in clouds of coal dust, disturbing large populations of rats as they did so!



Harrier GR1 XV741 is now preserved and is seen here on display at Brooklands Museum in 2019.

The Harrier aircraft had to be refuelled in the air 4 times during the crossing from London to New York and this was done using the RAF's Victor tankers. The landing site in New York was close to the Empire State Building and the start point in London was the Post Office (now BT) Tower. The RAF's Harriers had somewhat of an advantage being VTOL but lacked the higher speed of the Phantoms. The RN Phantom crews used Wessex helicopters for the 1st and last sections of the race. Two of the Harriers which took part in the 1969 Air Race are now preserved (XV741 and XV744).

Graham Williams was the RAF Harrier test pilot who flew the Tangmere museum's Harrier XV744 (then configured as a GR1) from New York to London in the air race across the Atlantic. He was reunited with his old aircraft at Tangmere in April 2019. He remarked that XV744 looked in rather better condition than when he flew it in 1969! He also went on to say, "It was great fun to do the race. It was quite a challenge. I always said at the time that I regarded it as a somewhat risky venture to do something like that in an aeroplane which was not even in full RAF service at the time. It was in development still but to go and do something like that and take off vertically

from the middle of London to the middle of New York and vice versa, was, I thought, pushing it.” However, they did it and must have impressed the Americans as the USAF and USMC then purchased Harriers!

The 1969 Transatlantic Air Race was not limited to military aircraft, Several civilian aircraft also participated, including a chartered VC10 airliner, hired by Tony Drewerey (time 7 hours 3 minutes) and a Piper Comanche light aircraft flown by Sheila Scott (26 hours 34 minutes) to name but two.



Braking hard, Lt Cdr Doug Borrowman brings Phantom FG1 XT860 to the most rapid stop possible on the Wisley runway after its flight from New York on 4 May 1969. The following Royal Navy Wessex HU5 is ready to whisk observer Lt Paul Waterhouse off to the base of the Post Office Tower. (Adrian M Balch Collection)

Over fifty years on and several of the participants have passed on to the great finishing line in the sky. Many of the aircraft they flew have long since been scrapped but some survive to remind us of how life was like when fun was permitted. The centenary of the 1919 transatlantic flight by Alcock and Brown was not marked in a similar style to the 1969 event which was, I believe, a great disappointment, but perhaps a sign of current times. There were two special flights, one in Canada and the other in the Irish Republic, but, sadly, nothing of aviation significance in the UK.

Editor. (Sourced from various online articles and the Daily Mail Archive)



10 June 1921—9 April 2021

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.

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.