

# "The Aldwark Chronicle"

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association

- York Branch



*Branch Headquarters*

3-5 Aldwark, York YO1 2BX

Tel:01904 652796

[rafayork@gmail.com](mailto:rafayork@gmail.com)

Issue No. 69

**September 2019**



"THE SALINE SOLUTION IS FREE BUT WE HAVE TO CHARGE YOU 5P FOR THE BAG."

**Club opening hours: Thurs - 7:30pm to 10:30 pm; Sat - 11:30am to 3pm**

**Our Website is at: [www.rafayork.org](http://www.rafayork.org)**

**Membership: 494**

## **York Branch & Club Official Appointments for 2019**

President:	Mr Richard W Gray	
President Emeritus:	Air Commodore W G Gambold DL FCMI RAF (Ret)	
Life Vice President:	Mr H R Kidd OBE Mr J J Mawson	
Vice Presidents:	Mr J Allison BEM Ms S Richmond,	
Chairman:	Mr B R Mennell	<a href="mailto:chairman@rafayork.org">chairman@rafayork.org</a>
Vice Chairman:	Mr R Ford	<a href="mailto:depchair@rafayork.org">depchair@rafayork.org</a>
Hon Sec	Mr A Bryne	<a href="mailto:secretary@rafayork.org">secretary@rafayork.org</a>
Hon Treasurer:	Mr D Pollard	<a href="mailto:treasurer@rafayork.org">treasurer@rafayork.org</a>
Club Treasurer	Mr A Ramsbottom	
Membership Secretary:	Mrs K Allison	
<b>Welfare Officer:</b>	<b>Mr R Ford</b>	<b><a href="mailto:welfare@rafayork.org">welfare@rafayork.org</a></b>
Dep Welfare Officer:	Mrs C Hanson	
Wings Organisers:	Mr I Smith	<a href="mailto:wings@rafayork.org">wings@rafayork.org</a>
N Area & Annual Conf Rep	Mrs M Barter	
Branch Standard Bearer:	Mr G Murden	
Dep Standard Bearer:	Mr R Ford	
Bar Officer:	Mr R Gray	
Ass't Bar Officer:	Mr G Murden	
Club Social Secretary	Mrs G McCarthy.	
<b>Publicity Officer:</b>	<b>Mr A Bryne</b>	<b><a href="mailto:andybryne@rafayork.org">andybryne@rafayork.org</a></b>
Buildings Officer:	Mr R Webster	
Chronicle Editor	Mr D Taylor	<a href="mailto:newsletter@rafayork.org">newsletter@rafayork.org</a>
<b>Website Manager</b>	<b>Mrs M Barter</b>	<b><a href="mailto:webmaster@rafayork.org">webmaster@rafayork.org</a></b>

**Please address all general enquiries to the Hon Secretary**

## **Editorial**

Here we are again with reports on the previous months' activities at the club and round about, during which the Annual Conference also took place at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole during May 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. The main focus appeared to be the controversial, at least as far as our Branch is concerned, plus may others it would seem, One Member, One Vote, and One Charity proposals. Secretary General Nick Bunting summarised the progress of last year's "study". It had taken the whole year for 8 companies to conclude that it would be legally possible to become one charity. The resolution before the members was to allow a further year to examine the costing of these changes and bring the results to conference in 2020. He was aware the mood of conference was not supportive of a single charity but he pointed out that some branches had failed to produce financial accounts, fill in the 1056 forms, used money inappropriately and maintained an excess of reserves.

In spite of the apprehension the representatives agreed that the work started last year could continue and be reported in 2020, when a decision would be taken. (Seems to me this already been reached!) It is anticipated that the concerns raised by conference would be fully addressed at that time.

Sounds like Brexit all over again to me!

Meanwhile, we carried on regardless with our usual run of Branch events and entertainment.

---

## **TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONIES, April/June 2019**

On Wednesday 3 April, a Turning of the Page Ceremony took place in York Minster at the RAF Memorial Astronomical Clock at 12 noon. The veteran page turner for this event was Mr Ron Ford, who is currently the RAFA York Branch Vice-Chairman and Welfare Officer. He was assisted by Wing Commander David Middleton, Officer Commanding Operations Wing at RAF Linton on Ouse, and Cadet Flight Sergeant Felicity Hunter, a member of the Air Cadet Organisation. The Raison d'Etre was read out by Mr Ray Kidd OBE, RAFA York Branch Life Vice-President. Personnel from RAF Linton on Ouse. Members of the RAF Association, York Branch, were also in attendance, as were over 20 RAF personnel and RAFA veterans. The Branch Standard Bearer for this occasion was Mr Gordon Murden. After the ceremony, RAF personnel, along with RAFA members and guests made their way in bright sunshine to the Branch HQ in Aldwark for refreshments and a convivial chat.

\*

For the Queen's Birthday commemoration the Page was turned on Friday 7 June, again at the RAF Memorial Astronomical Clock, York Minster, at 12 noon. The veteran page turner for this event was Mr Don Gunn. He was assisted by Squadron Leader John Le Cornu from RAF Linton on Ouse and Acting Pilot Officer Sophia Bird, a member of the Air Cadet Organisation. The Raison d'Etre was read out by Mr Brian Mennell, RAFA York Branch Chairman, whilst Life Vice-President John Mawson read the Dedication. Personnel from RAF Linton on Ouse, mainly from the University Air Squadron, and members of the RAF

Association York Branch were also in attendance with ten veterans on parade. The Branch Standard Bearer was Mr Ron Ford. After the ceremony, RAF personnel, UAS cadets and RAFA Branch members and guests made their way to the Branch HQ in Aldwark for refreshments and an excellent social get-together.



(Most photos courtesy of RAF Linton on Ouse Photo Section. Permission was granted by those named for the use of their images) More are displayed on our website: [www.rafayork.org](http://www.rafayork.org)

Andy Bryne

\* \*

## SIX LITTLE STORIES

1/ Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella.

That's FAITH.

2/ When you throw babies in the air they laugh because they know you will catch them.

That's TRUST.

3/ Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but still we set the alarm to wake up.

That's HOPE.

4/ We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.

That's CONFIDENCE.

5/ We see the world suffering, but still we get married and have children

That's LOVE.

6/ On an old man's shirt was written the sentence: 'I am not 80 years old;

I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience.'

That's ATTITUDE.

\* \*(



## EASTER BONNET COMPETITION

The traditional Branch Easter Bonnet competition took place at the Club on Easter Saturday 20 April. Competitors were asked to bring their bonnets in unmarked bags so that judging would be completely anonymous. The judging of the 7 bonnets entered was carried out by Joy Morettini who judged the winning bonnet to be that of Ron Ford. A delighted Ron

then wore his bonnet and received a bottle of wine as his prize. He admitted that his grandchildren had some part in the creation of this very imposing piece of headgear! The runner-up was Oliver Mennell.

*Ron wearing the winning item; wouldn't exactly call it a bonnet.*

Andy Bryne

\* \*

---

## **THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A NS AIRMAN**

Life at 739 (Scarborough) ATC Squadron was action packed and could not have been better. We had a very full flying programme in such aircraft as Tiger Moth, Dominie, Anson and Oxford, with one memorable flight in a Lancaster from RAF Leconfield. An Exchange Visit to Canada flying in a North Star via Iceland was one highlight. I was also a keen shot, with an abundance of trips to various ranges and using an assortment of weapons. Unfortunately these were days before the widespread use of ear defenders, which is where I was to come unstuck later on.

Returning to the trip in the Lancaster, initially I stood with my head in the astro-dome and spotted a distant dot, which came ever nearer until it became a sky filling Spitfire seemingly only yards away, but only for an instant. At the last minute it dipped under our belly as we banked steeply to port, leaving me as terrified as I was puzzled. You have no doubt guessed that we were on a 'fighter affiliation exercise', which if it had been mentioned, was certainly not understood. Thankfully, or so I thought, I next went into the bomb-aimer's domain with magnificent views of the countryside below. Later as we made our approach to land, the tyre marked runway loomed large and it struck me that there was only a sheet of Perspex between me and it. We touched down, taxied to the dispersal and cut engines. I waited for the co-pilot to let me out as he was located behind and above me. After waiting for a while with nothing happening, I tapped on his protruding boots. Back came the curtain and all was made clear by the horrified look on his face, that I should have come out of there and been positioned further aft in case of an accident and would have been within range to grab my parachute should it be needed. Clearly the pilot had been so involved in his primary tasks that he lost sight of the fact that I was on board.

On to National Service, and as my job in civilian life was Post Office (later BT) Engineering, I was expected to join the Royal Signals, they being closely aligned, but I had set my heart on a flying career, so to keep everyone happy I went into the radio stream of the RAF, with the firm intention of volunteering for aircrew duties. I trained as a ground wireless mechanic at RAF Compton Bassett. The food was far from good and one day to my disgust I got a big fat juicy worm in my fish. Right, I thought, I am going to sort this out, and when the Orderly Officer came calling for complaints I shouted "Yes Sir." Over he came and I showed him the mess on my plate and said "Just look at this awful worm." He studied the contents very briefly and said "Meat with your fish, you are a very lucky airman" and walked off.

The long awaited day came when I was called for aircrew selection. All appeared well until the medical when my ears were put to the test, and I was found to be high tone deaf, which is where the lack of ear defenders came in. I

passed for pilot or air gunner subject to my hearing loss being sorted, which sadly it never was, so I remained a wireless mechanic.

I was posted to RAF Henlow, and will never forget the first CO's Inspection. My bed was nearest the door, and being newly qualified thought of all the possible questions I may be asked. I braced myself as distant commands could be heard, a car door slamming, footsteps and then the doorway darkened and the illustrious figure of the CO appeared. I was bang-on in my thinking as he made straight for my bed space, ignoring me, with a sweep of his arm, baton lifting my webbing off the hooks where it hung for the inspection, it performed a near somersault and ended up in a forlorn heap on the floor. "Filthy brasses, charge this airman" he thundered! Oh well that solved the problem of who was going to say what and to whom. I could have enjoyed this much more had it happened to someone else, and sure enough it did as he went to my next door neighbour, Joe from Ormskirk, and repeated the exercise. At least I would now have company when I was on jankers, I thought. Wrong again! Later, Joe muttered darkly "He can stuff his b\*\*\*\*y jankers, and went on to tell me he was allergic to cow's milk, which, if he drank in sufficient quantity, brought him out in a fearsome looking rash. I know not where he got all the milk from, but the following morning he looked absolutely dreadful, his face badly marked. He reported sick, then walked around the station waving his 'excused duties' chit, a broad grin on his face. Sitting round the stove in our billet that night we had a very serious discussion of the morning's events, decided that such a lordly figure would not behave in such a fashion without some extenuating circumstances, finally concluded it must have been due to his wife neglecting his bodily needs!

Retuning to jankers, if anyone wishes to talk to an expert on burnishing fire buckets until they shine like the morning sun, then paint them to completely hide the shine, I am your man!

Ray Kidd

\* \*

---

## **RAF EAST MOOR COMMEMORATION**

A fair number of Branch members were present at the annual East Moor commemorative service, held by the Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial at Sutton on Forest on Saturday 18 May. The weather forecast had not been very good earlier in the week, but it remained dry and cloudy throughout the event. As usual, a contingent of serving Canadian Armed Forces personnel, RAF personnel and members of Easingwold Air Cadets also attended, together with local residents and youth organisations.

The service began at 1430hrs with an address of welcome by Lieutenant Colonel Bernie Thorne of the Canadian Armed Forces. Reflections and prayers were led by the Reverend Steve Whiting of Sutton on Forest and the Act of Remembrance by Squadron Leader Henry Morgan RAF (Retd).

Wreaths were laid by members of Nos 415 and 429 Squadrons RCAF, as was. Both squadrons based at RAF East Moor during the Second World War. Also, Wing Commander Thorpe, RAF Leeming, and Squadron Leader Mitchell, RAF Linton on Ouse laid wreaths on behalf of the RAF. Brian Mennell,

accompanied by Grandson, Oliver, laid a wreath on behalf of York RAFA, whilst Fred Ullathorne laid a wreath on behalf of the White Rose Aircrew Association. Several standards were paraded, including our Branch Standard (bearer, Adrian Gunn) and a trio of pipers provided some stirring music. On conclusion of the formal aspects of the service, refreshments, as usual, were provided by local residents in the nearby village hall, which gave our members a good opportunity to chat to the visiting Canadian Armed Forces personnel.

RAF East Moor opened as an RAF station in the summer of 1942 and became home to RCAF bomber squadrons from November 1942 until May 1945. No 415 Squadron was the last RCAF Squadron to be based there. RAF East Moor then became an RAF station until it was closed in November 1946. This commemorative event ensures that the Canadian personnel who flew and fought from this peaceful corner of Yorkshire are not forgotten.

As per last year, a group - including the Canadians - later repaired to a site nearby Raskelf, where another Canadian Memorial is sited. Here a short service was held to commemorate those lost in the crash of a Canadian-crewed Halifax, which, on returning to RAF Dishforth after a training sortie, was shot down by a marauding Junkers 88. Also, as per last year, a pair of horses in a nearby field sauntered across and appeared to join in upon hearing the pipes!

**Andy Byrne & Fred Ullathorne**



*Lt Col Benrie Thorne & CAF wreath layers*



*The Canadian wreath*



*The Memorial*



*The Standards parade*



*All wreaths in place*

\* \*

## **ESCAPE LINES MEMORIAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REUNION & SERVICE - EDEN CAMP**

On Saturday 27 April 2019 around 20 York RAFA Branch members travelled to the Eden Camp museum near Malton to attend the annual reunion and service of remembrance of the Escape Lines Memorial Society (ELMS). The Branch Standard was paraded by Gordon Murden whilst Robin Boulton carried the POW Association Standard. The weather was as forecast, unfortunately, heavy rain for most of the event. Nevertheless, the service went ahead as planned, although numerous umbrellas were in evidence.

This annual ELMS reunion is for the 'helpers', escapers and evaders who either organised, or used the escape lines of occupied Europe during World War II. The event honours members of Allied aircrew, who bailed out over enemy territory, escapees from enemy Prisoner of War camps and all those who came to their aid at great risk to themselves, from members of the Resistance, to guides and safe house keepers. These acts of bravery took place in many occupied countries during the Second World War, including Italy and Belgium, and Italian students from Istituto Augusto Capriotti and Belgian students from Le Val Notre Dame were amongst those laying wreaths during the service. John Mawson, assisted by Dick Gray, laid a wreath on behalf of the RAFA York Branch.

As the event commenced, so the weather worsened, as if on cue. The act of remembrance was led by the Reverend Canon John Manchester. Music for the service was courtesy of the Sheffield Pipe Band, and Northumberland Fusiliers Cadet Band. The strong international flavour of the event was underlined once more with the attendance of representatives from the USA, Australia, Canada, and France, and included a wreath-laying ceremony and the playing of the Hymn of the French Resistance.

After the formal proceedings, a group photograph was arranged. Unfortunately, the very wet weather meant that not all attendees wished to brave the heavy rain for the camera! As usual, an excellent buffet and hot drinks were provided for us in the "NAAFI Canteen" for which all those attending were most grateful.

As many readers will know, Eden Camp is the site of a Second World War Prisoner of War camp and is a family owned and run business started by Stan Johnson in 1987. It is now a unique historical site has been given new life by developing the museum into an award-winning attraction for all the family, that is both entertaining and educational.

One of the readings at the ceremony was given by Mr Geoff Cowling. He had recently attended the funeral for former Wellington crewman and escapee, Mr Robert Frost from Sandwich. Aged 19, Robert had bailed out of a Wellington bomber on a mission over occupied Europe and had been a prisoner of war. When aged 23, he wrote the following poem:

Cry not for me, my task is done  
The game is played, the sand has run



But if you would my memory keep  
And let me rest, content asleep  
Cry not for me, my task is done  
But make life fit for the unborn son.

Andy Bryne



The ELMS memorial



Soaking Standards



RAFA York wreath laid by John Mawson & Dick Gray

---

## WING COMMANDER GOAT, DSO

**On November 29, 1943 John Steinbeck left London to visit RAF Manston in North East Kent where RAF Hawker Typhoons of 609 and 3 Squadrons and the Hawker Hurricanes of 184 Squadron (soon to convert to the Typhoon) were conducting daily raids on French ports and military targets. While the great author witnessed operations, he got introduced to pilots and commanders and got an up-close introduction to the hulking Typhoon fighter-bomber, it was the strange glycol-quaffing, cigarette munching 609 Squadron goat mascot that seemed to pique his interest most of all.**

**He penned a short humorous piece about the goat that was eventually published in the Daily Express. It was an extraordinary piece of fluff considering the stature of its writer, who had by that time been awarded a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award for *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck's Manston piece today sounds a bit awkward or old-fashioned, but still it makes a fine aviation story as it demonstrates the quirky behaviour and anti-establishment attitudes of frontline fighter pilots. It is republished here as it was written after Steinbeck's visit to Manston in late 1943:**

### **John Steinbeck, 1943**

Billy de Goat was introduced to 609 Squadron by the famed Belgian ace, Pilot Officer Victor Marcel Maurice "Vicky" Ortman.

His name is Wing Commander William Goat, DSO, and he is old in honours and some say in iniquity, but when he joined the RAF wing two years ago he was just able to totter about on long and knobbly legs.

For a long time he was treated like any other recruit, kicked about, ignored

and at times cursed. But gradually his abilities began to be apparent. He is very good luck to have about. When he is near his wing has good fortune and good hunting.

Gradually his horns grew and his talents developed, until now his rank and his decorations are painted on his horns in brilliant colours, and he carries himself with a shambling strut. He will eat nearly everything. No party or any review is complete without him. At one party, being left alone for a few moments, it is reported that he ate 200 sandwiches, three cakes, the arrangements for piano and flute of "Pomp and Circumstance," drank half a bowl of punch, and then walked jauntily among the dancers, belching slightly and regarding a certain lieutenant's wife, who shall be nameless.

He has the slightly bilious look of the military of the higher brackets. Being an airgoat he has rather unique habits. If you bring an oxygen bottle into view he rushes to it and demands it. He puts his whole mouth over the outlet and then as you turn the valve on gently he relaxes grunting happily and his sides fill out until he nearly bursts.

Just before he bursts he lets go of the nozzle and collapses very slowly, but the energy he takes from the oxygen makes him leap into the air and engage imaginary goats in horny combat.

He also loves the glycol cooling fluid which is used in the engines of the Typhoons. For hours he will stand under the barrels licking the drips from the spouts.

He has the confidence of his men. Once when it was required that his wing change its base of operations quickly, he was left behind, for in those days it was not known how important he was.

At the new base the men were nervous and irritable, fearful and finally almost mutinous, and at length when it was seen they would not relax a special plane had to be sent to pick up the Wing Commander and transport him to the new base.

Once he arrived everything settled down. The Typhoons had four kills within 24 hours. The nervous tension went out of the air, the food got better as the cooks ceased brooding, and a number of stomach complaints disappeared immediately.

Wing Commander Goat lives in a small house behind the operations room. His name and honours are painted over the door. It is very good luck to go to him and stroke his sides and rub his horns before going out on operation. He does not go on operation himself. There is not room in the Typhoon for him, but if it were possible to squeeze him in he would be taken, and then heaven knows what great action might not take place.

This goat has only one truly bad habit. He loves beer, and furthermore, he is able to absorb it in such quantities that even the mild nearly non-alcoholic English beer can make him tipsy. In spite of orders to the contrary, he is able to seek out the evil companions who will give him beer. Once inebriated he is prone to wander about sneering at everything. He sneers at the American Army Air Force and he sneers at the Labour Party, and once he sneered at Mr. Churchill.

The sneer is probably inherent in the beer, since punch has quite a different effect on him.

In appearance this goat is not impressive. He has shabby, pinkish fur and a cold and fish-like eye. His legs are not straight. In fact, he is slightly knock-kneed. He carries his head high, and his horns, painted in brilliant red and blue, more than offset any physical oddness.

In every way he is a military figure. He is magnificent on parade. Eventually he will be given a crypt in the Air Ministry and will die in good time of that military ailment, cirrhosis of the liver. He will be buried with full military honours.

But meanwhile Wing Commander William Goat, DSO, is the luck of his wing. His loss would cause great unrest and even despondency.

**John Steinbeck**



*William de Goat with PO Don Buchanan RCAF*



*609 Squadron Typhoon*

\* \*

## **SIGNS OF THE TIMES**

I used to think I was just a regular person but I was born white, which now, whether I like it or not, makes me a racist.

I am a fiscal and moral conservative, which by today's standards, makes me a fascist.

I am heterosexual, which now makes me a homophobe.

I am mostly non-union, which makes me a traitor to the working class and an ally of big business.

I was christened by my parents, which now labels me as an infidel.

I am retired, which makes me useless.

I think and I reason, therefore I doubt most of what the main stream media tells

me, which must make me a reactionary.

I am extremely proud of my heritage, which makes me a xenophobe.

I value my safety and that of my family and I appreciate the police and the legal system, which makes me a right-wing extremist.

I believe in hard work, fair play, and fair compensation according to each individual's merits, which today makes me an anti-socialist.

I only believe in legal immigration which again makes me a racist and God knows whatever else.

I (and most of the folks I know), acquired a fair education without student loan debts and little or no debt, which makes me some kind of an odd underachiever.

I believe in the defence and protection of my country and I honour those who served in the Armed Forces, which now makes me a right wing-militant.

Please help me come to terms with the new me... because I'm just not sure who the hell I am anymore!

Funny ...it's all just taken place over the last 10 to 15 years!

As if all this nonsense wasn't enough to deal with ... now I'm not even sure which toilet to go into!

\* \*

## ODE TO THE SPELL CHECKER

UnKNOWN PUNster @2018

Eye have a spelling checker  
It came with my pea sea  
It plainly marques four my revue  
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.  
Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight 4 it 2 say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write  
It shows me strait a weigh.  
As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee fore two long  
And eye can put the error rite  
Its rare lea ever wrong.  
Eye have run this poem threw it  
I am shore your pleased two no  
Its letter perfect awl the weigh  
My chequer tolled me sew!

\* \*

## ***A DIFFERENT SORT OF CHRISTMAS***

In the early nineteen eighties I was employed by the Sultan of Omans Air Force. I looked after Short Skyvans, Britten Norman Islanders, and Lockheed Hercules, and held the rank of Warrant Officer.

My favourite was the Skyvan, a somewhat quaint machine that legend had

was called the Short Skyvan because it was exactly that. Not only that it was square! A flying shed.

The machine was built at the behest of the MoD to carry a short wheelbase land rover and its trailer, plus two crew. Although strange in shape the machine was ideal for a country that had only one paved runway but many rough strips. Some of them had strange names such as Afar, Furk, and Saiq. They were very rough indeed, but the Skyvan, viewed from a distance, sitting on her donut low pressure tyres, appeared to be ready for any task short of dive bombing.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1982 we were tasked to go to Afar, an air strip on the edge of the Rhub-Al-Khali, the empty quarter, a sea of pink sand. My Skyvan, along with two others, flew to the airstrip where the army had set up camp and we engineers went up by the only road in Oman, which at that time connected Muscat and Nizwa, the old capital. The road was 75 miles long and was being extended south to Salalah, the summer capital. I drove a 1000 gallon fuel truck, a 4 wheel drive military Bedford. A joy to drive if you like that sort of thing, and the only way to get to Afar.

After a long drive on a very rough track we emerged onto the airstrip where we found the three Skyvans alongside a big tent. We were greeted by our pilots who reported that the machines were serviceable, and after a cup of tea we began preparing them for the next day's activities.

The exercise was to support army manoeuvres out in the desert. We didn't ask questions but refuelled and serviced our machines and at the end of the day put them to bed. We slept in them that night ready for the return to Seeb the next day, which, incidentally, was Christmas Day! As we settled down for the evening we heard the sound of Pipes approaching through the bush. A procession of chefs and bearers came through and went into the tent. The Omani major in charge then invited us to be seated as guests of the Omani Army to Christmas Dinner, in the traditional British manner.

We had turkey with all the trimmings, and traditional Christmas pud, served with traditional flaming sauce. A wonderful meal washed down with tins of Fosters. When you consider that all the food was cooked on primus stoves, the turkeys being cooked in biscuit tin ovens, we were amazed and honoured! The southern cross shone down on us as we made our way to bed.

Next day we returned to Seeb, and another Christmas celebration! Some of us went down to the beach for breakfast and bucks fizz, then back to the mess for Christmas dinner. A truly wonderful day.

Tim Beer

\* \*

---

## **BRANCH VETERAN ATTENDS D-DAY 75 VOYAGE OF REMEMBRANCE**

York Branch stalwart, Ray Ashby, together with partner, Jean Ellis, courtesy of the Royal British Legion, attended the D-Day 75 Anniversary commemorations as guests on board the Fred Olsen Lines Cruise Ship, Boudicca, where they visited a number of locations in southern England and northern France as part of the D-Day 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorations. There was extensive media coverage of this momentous anniversary and Ray managed to get himself

published on the front page of the Daily Mail on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June alongside Rod Stewart (***a photo I was seeking for the front cover, but failed in my quest!***) who was accompanying the veterans on their voyage. Ray also popped up on local TV news from time to time!

MV Boudicca transported over 250 D-Day veterans on visits to ports on both sides of the English Channel for a series of commemorative events. The 'Voyage of Remembrance' was funded by the Royal British Legion, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence. Whilst attending the various ceremonies, Ray also met (the then) Prime Minister, Theresa May, and Prince Charles.

The cruise, marking the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings, saw the veterans sail to Dunkirk, before returning to Poole, then Portsmouth on England's south coast. The departure from Portsmouth was especially impressive and emotional, receiving much coverage in the National and local media. Boudicca was escorted by a Royal Navy Frigate into the Solent, where a flotilla of Royal Navy vessels were waiting to salute the vessel's passengers. Boudicca then followed the route taken by Naval vessels and troops involved in the landings, sailing across the Channel to Le Havre on 6th June 2019 - 75 years after D-Day - for what was an emotional and unforgettable day for all on board. The Boudicca was due to spend Saturday 8 June at Portsmouth, but rough weather meant the vessel went direct to its disembarkation port at Dover a day early, arriving at 2100 hrs.

Ray joined the Merchant Navy and served in the Normandy campaign during the month following the initial D-Day invasion in 1944. He is a member of the Royal British Legion and an Associate Member of RAFA, York Branch.

Like many, I watched the remarkable and impressive coverage on TV, found it most moving and very uplifting. For Ray and Jean, it was a truly memorable experience, "I still haven't had time to come down from 'Cloud 9', said Ray.

**Andy Bryne & Dave T**

(Photos via Ray Ashby)



\* \*

---

## **YORK ARMED FORCES DAY**

As usual, the Branch had a stall in Parliament Street for the annual Armed Forces Day event in the City. This year, the event happened to coincide with the

hottest day of the year so far, and volunteers looking after the stall were very glad of the protection offered by our gazebo. The RAFA stall was organised by Dick Gray, Branch President, and Ian Smith, Wings Appeal Officer. Helpers included Ron Ford, Barry Snaith, Rob Woods and Trudy Seaby as well as your scribe. A number of members and friends also dropped by to say hello.

Other organisations with stalls nearby included the Royal British Legion, the Army (with a Jackal armoured reconnaissance vehicle and a field catering tent), and the Yorkshire Air Museum with their full-scale Eastchurch Kitten replica biplane. A number of people remarked how small the event was this year compared with previous years, and there appeared to be no air cadet or other youth service organization present either.

Despite the fact it was a very hot day indeed, which also affected the numbers of people passing through Parliament Street, coupled with the fact of it also being Race Day on the Knavesmire, along with a musical event at the same venue, we managed to raise a total of £583.57 for the Wings Appeal. Model aircraft sales also brought in another £70.00.

*(Photos by Andy Bryne)*



***Alwyn Boulby (Life member) Stokesley, North Yorkshire***

Not living close to York I have only made it into the branch a couple of times. Perhaps I make up for that with this missive?  
Do you remember:

- When obscure form numbers like - 1369, 6442 and 252 could mean career-changing moments.
- Bizarre uniform items such as the thunderbird jacket and the flasher mac
- The glorious anonymity of JTs, SACs and LACs before they introduced rank slides for airmen
- When colleagues were posted to RAF stations that nobody knew existed (i.e. 'Machrihanish? Never heard of it – are you sure it's not a wind-up?')
- When the 'back of the bike sheds' was considered an appropriate location for career counselling.
- When wearing medals was considered the particular right of the lucky few, WWII veterans, silver jubilee recipients, or the handful from the South Atlantic.
- When the question 'Where the hell is Decimomannu?' at least stood a remote chance of being answered.
- When crewrooms were occupied and people partook of unintelligible games like Uckers and 'Hunt'
- When an RAF aircraft recognition poster was larger than A4 size
- When you remember curious anomalies such as male only stations (eg Wattisham)
- When anything Soviet was 'bad' and anything NATO was 'good'
- When you drove around with BFG plates
- When you witnessed a survival scramble or spent some time in an HPS.
- When QRA involved 'instant sunshine' and the 'two-man principle' in the 'no-lone zone'
- When Friday lunchtime (afternoon) was spent in the pub (in uniform)
- When 'AOC's' meant an enormous parade (and if you were lucky enough to be at Lossie, repeated 3 times)
- When you had access to a variety of personal weapons that seemed to have come out of Battle Picture Library (303, SLR, SMG etc)
- When you got 3 x Get you home (where-ever home was that day) a year.
- Being scared of rock apes
- Seeing plumbers running and thinking "hope it's the NAAFI wagon"
- Seeing aircrew running, and KNOWING it was the NAAFI wagon!!
- Itchy blankets
- Cheap beer in a busy NAFFI
- When MT had fleets of British built vehicles
- Wearing Gas Masks for hours at a time
- When an MoD civilian was a very rare breed indeed
- Blue uniforms
- When RAF push bikes had the basket on the front.
- The tiniest sliding windows in Guardrooms
- Tin Helmets
- When your whole world could be put into a couple of scrawny lockers.
- When only TG1 and TG2 were on the high payband
- Pickaxe handles to fight off the Commies
- Singing in the bar
- SACWs who could write backwards on glass walls



- Starting night shift at 4pm, finishing at 8pm.
- Starting night shift at 4pm, finishing at 8am!
- Having the choice between a tech charge and a 'quiet word' with the FS
- Station Workshops who could make anything for a crate of beer.
- The knowledge that we really were defending the country

\* \*

---

## *Remembrance Day*

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
 Age shall not weary them, not the years condemn,  
 At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
 We will remember them.

This poignant verse from Laurence Binyon's famous poem is still particularly apt every year when we commemorate the end of two world wars and remember the thousands of our comrades who did not return. We all wear our poppies as a sign that we still remember them.

The poppy emblem was first described as the "Flower of Remembrance" by Colonel John McCrae, who before the First World War was a well known Professor of Medicine at McGill University in Montreal. He had previously served as a Gunner in the South African War, and at the outbreak of the First World War, he decided to join the fighting ranks. However, the powers to be decided that his abilities could be used to better advantage, and so he landed in France as a Medical Officer with the first Canadian Contingent.

At the second battle of Ypres in 1915 when in charge of a small first-aid post and during a lull in the action, he wrote, in pencil, on a page torn from his despatch book, the now famous verses of "In Flanders Fields". These verses were anonymously sent to Punch magazine who later published them.

In January 1918 Colonel McCrae was brought as a stretcher case to one of the large hospitals on the Channel coast of France. On the third evening he was wheeled onto the balcony of his room to look over the sea towards the cliffs of Dover. The verses were obviously in his mind for he told the doctor who was in charge of his case.

Tell them this  
 if ye break faith with us who die  
 We shall not sleep.

The same night Colonel McCrae died. He was interned in a beautiful cemetery on the rising ground above Wimereux, from where the cliffs of Dover are easily visible on sunny days. The First World War finally came to an end in November 1918 when an Armistice was declared, so that peace terms could be arranged. At 11-00 a.m. on 11 November the last shot was fired.

For many years afterwards, Armistice Day was observed on 11 November but it is now known as Remembrance Sunday and is held always on the second Sunday in November.

An American lady, Miss Moina Michael had read the poem and was greatly impressed by the last lines.  
 If you break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders field.

The wearing of a poppy appeared to her to be a way to keep faith, and she went on to write the reply to the poem "The Victory Emblem" which includes the lines  
And now the torch and Poppy red

Wear in honour of our dead.

On 9 November 1918 only two days before the Armistice was signed, Miss Michael was presented with a small gift of money by overseas War Secretaries of the YMCA for whom she worked, and whose conference was being held in her home.

She told of the two poems and announced that she was going to buy 25 red poppies with the money. This she did; she wore one herself and each secretary there bought one from her. It is claimed, probably rightly, that this was the first selling of poppies.

The French Secretary, Madame Guerin, had a practical and useful idea. She visited various parts of the world to suggest that artificial poppies should be made and sold to help ex-servicemen and their dependants in need. As a result, the first ever Poppy Day was held in Britain on 11 November 1921. The poppies were obtained from a French organisation, which used its profits to help children in the war devastated areas.

At that time, Field Marshal Earl Haig had become the Founder President of the newly formed British Legion. The Legion's purpose was then - as it is now - in time of need to give practical help to all men and women who have served in the Forces and to their widows and dependants. Earl Haig used to say that the provision of work for disabled ex-servicemen was as important as raising money. He always took a great personal interest in the Legion's poppy factory. This factory started its activities in 1922 with five disabled ex-servicemen working in a small room over a shop in Bermondsey, South London.

Today, the Royal British Legion poppy factory carries on in modern premises in Richmond, Surrey, where some 180 disabled ex-servicemen are employed in the manufacture of the 45 million poppies and 70,000 wreaths used in the Annual Poppy Appeal. The first poppy appeal raised £106,000, by 1983 the income had reached over £65 million from which some 50,000 people benefit each year.

A very sobering thought however is the memory of all who suffer as a result of not only two world wars but of the 75 or so conflicts which have taken place over the past hundred and four years. There has not been a year since 1945 in which a British serviceman has not been killed on Active Service.

"We Will Remember Them".

\* \*

---

## NUMBERS

1 Numbers are important to us all, throughout our whole lives. We have to memorize several single and sets of numbers.

2 House numbers, telephone numbers, car registration numbers, maybe even lottery numbers; and possibly post codes. There will be reference numbers, all sorts of other numbers we encounter within our daily lives. Like, How many eggs this morning?

3 Some might want to know how many miles is it to Scotland or London or wherever?

4 One set of numbers eagerly awaited each week or month is our salaries, wages or even pensions. We are always wishing for larger numbers here, especially around April, for the hoped-for enormous percentage increases.

5 We search for frequency numbers on the radio, our TV's have channel numbers. Dates are important, like birthdays, anniversaries, appointments, etc.

6 Measurements come into to play quite often, the personal ones may seem to alter a lot the older we get. We have all sorts of sizes here, like hat, shoe, waist, inside leg, or indeed what's showing on the scales.

7 Hope its not getting too confusing for you?

8 So what about gambling? Wow! Its all to do with numbers, and there are many, many different games and methods to choose from.

Everyone is regulated by the clodifferent methods of saying this, some may say 1720 hours, others five twenty, again others may say twenty past five. Try explaining that to a foreigner?

9 There are numbers that we consider to be lucky, and some we consider to be unlucky.

10 Those of us who have served our country will have a service number. The number 252, we may consider to be unlucky, especially if your name gets written on one of those RAF forms.

Now there are numbers we have to guard and keep safe, like Credit and Debit card numbers and their pin numbers. Not to mention the bank account details. Other important numbers in our lives are, National Insurance together with our personal NHS numbers, yes, its all to do with numbers. Blimey, after all that, I'll have to count out some money to see if I can afford a pint, or two. Have to go now as I have to catch the number 10 bus into town.

\* \*

---

### ***Six Undeniable Facts of Life***

1 Don't educate your children to be rich. Educate them to be happy, so when they grow up they will know the value of things, not the price.

2 Wise words: "Eat your food as your medicines. Otherwise you have to eat medicines as your food."

3 The one who loves you will never leave you because, even if there are 100 reasons to give up, he or she will find one reason to hold on.

4 There is a big difference between a human being and being human, few folks really understand that.

5 You are loved when you are born. You will be loved when you die. In between, you have to manage!

6 If you just want to walk fast, walk alone; but, if you want to walk far, walk together!

## **EVENTS for RAFA (York) Branch 2019**

Dates will be up-dated on a regular basis on website and Club noticeboard.

Please note, it would be appreciated out of courtesy if you intend/would like to attend any of the events listed to inform the chairman so we know numbers to seat/cater for.

**Limited lunch menu available most Saturdays**

### **2019**

- Fri 9 Aug            Dinner, Officers' Mess RAF Linton on Ouse – 1830 for 1900.
- Sun 1 Sep            Allied Air Forces Memorial Day – YAM Elvington.
- Sat 7 Sep            Wings Collection in York City Centre
- Tue/Wed Sep 10/11   Wings Collection at York Railway Station.
- Sun 15 Sep          B of B Service & Page Turning – York Minster.
- Tue 15 Oct          Fund-raising at St Crux.
- Sun 10 Nov          Remembrance Sunday.

In relation to all the above Wings/Fund raising events, an appeal for volunteers will appear on the Branch/Club notice board nearer the event date (as various times/confirmation details of some are yet to be ratified).

**PS. Please note: 'Themed dining-in dates' may be subject to change/cancellation in order to avoid clashing with other more pressing branch activities/matters. For the latest events list please check our website - [www.rafayork.org](http://www.rafayork.org)**