

# “The Aldwark Chronicle”

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association

York Branch



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**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>
Branch 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>
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 J Snelling	
Ass't Bar Officer:	Mr R Woods	
Club Chairperson	Mrs M Barter	
Club Secretary	Mrs J Potter	
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>

## **Editorial**

Hello everyone. Yes, despite the negative medical assessment handed me last December I am happy to report I am still alive and kicking. Well, maybe not so much kicking these days, but it certainly appears you will have to put up with my utterings for at least this edition.

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### **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

Dear Members,

A message for all members, Full and Associate, who in the past have paid me their subscriptions in the Branch by cash or cheque. As membership renewal is now spread over the year, and with the introduction of new members renewal on their joining date. It is now difficult for me to keep track of everyone's renewal dates. You will receive a letter when your subscription is due, accompanied by a prepaid envelope. You simply return your reminder with a cheque made out to the Royal Air Forces Association, or if you prefer you can set up a Direct Debit for which I have forms if required.

Any queries please see me at the Branch

**Kath Allison**

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### **NEW RAFA WELFARE AREA COMMAND**

With effect from Sept 6th 2019 our Welfare RAFA NE area control was transferred from RAF Linton On Ouse to Preston, the two ladies from Linton being made redundant.

There are now five staff manning the new Northern Area Control located in Preston, consisting of:

1. Regional Welfare Manager
2. Welfare Support Officer
3. Welfare Support Officer
4. Volunteer Cluster Officer
5. Admin Officer

The five members of staff are now responsible for the management of the RAFA welfare for an area covering the 15 counties of Northumberland, Cumbria, Tyne & Wear, Durham, North/East/South/West Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, with approximately 79 Branches from Alnwick to Liverpool.

This is a huge area and HQ are planning to manage this by creating 'CLUSTER AREAS' with a volunteer 'Caseworker' acting as a 'Cluster Leader' and being the Point Of Contact (POC). This will then form a network within the Northern Area to provide peer support to the volunteer caseworkers such as myself. The Preston Volunteer Cluster Officer will be the POC for the Cluster Leaders and this will improve communication with the welfare teams and ensure the quality of service provided is to the benefit of welfare clients.

Potential candidate Volunteer Cluster Leaders will be interviewed and

appointed, and the plan is for each Cluster Leader to have 12 caseworkers to work with, and this will ease the responsibility of the HQ having such a large area to control with just two Welfare Support Officers.

I am not aware of exactly how many Cluster Leaders will be appointed or how many Caseworkers there are, but HQ would like to implement this plan as soon as possible. However, this is solely dependant upon the recruitment of volunteers for the Cluster Leader positions and we await further information from our Welfare Region North (WRN) management team.

**Ron Ford**  
**Honorary Welfare Officer**  
**RAFA York Branch**

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## **BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE - 2019**

The annual Battle of Britain Commemoration Service and Turning of the Page Ceremony, took place in York Minster on Sunday 15 September (coinciding with the official Battle of Britain Day). The service commenced at 1130 and opening prayers were read by the Right Rev Dr Jonathan Frost, Dean of York Minster. The Standards of No 72 Sqn RAF, The Royal Observer Corps, RAFA (Northern Area), Central and Eastern Air Cadets and York Branch RAFA Standard were laid at the Altar. York Branch Standard Bearer was Mr Gordon Murden. The first Reading was given by Group Captain Keith Taylor ADC, MA BEng (Hons), Station Commander of RAF Linton-on-Ouse. The second Reading was given by Air Commodore W G (Bill) Gambold DL FCMI RAF (Ret'd), RAFA York Branch President Emeritus. Rev (Sqn Ldr) Geoffrey Firth RAF, Station Chaplain for RAF Linton-on-Ouse and RAF Leeming, delivered the Sermon. During the Service, Mr Ian Smith, RAFA York, Group Captain Keith Taylor, Officer Commanding RAF Linton on Ouse and Cadet WO East of No 110 (City of York) Sqn turned a page of the Book of Remembrance. After the Service, most Branch members made their way to the Club for liquid refreshment. On this occasion we were not joined by personnel from RAF Linton-on-Ouse as they had to return to the Station soon after the Service ended. This Commemorative Service and Turning of the Page was especially significant and poignant as it was the last one to be undertaken by Station personnel based at Linton on Ouse in its current form. (Minster Photos courtesy of RAF Linton Photographic Section.)

**Andy Bryne**



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*Here is a fascinating piece most were probably not aware of. I spotted it in "The Bulletin" newsletter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Signal Regiment Association (which is sent to me via my RAF Seletar connection), and used with permission.*

## **ARMISTICE DAY 1919**

November 11th, 2019, will be the 100th anniversary of the first two-minute silence, which took place on Armistice Day 1919. How did this all begin? the following account may be of interest.

The concept of a silence where people stopped whatever they were doing to think of friends, relatives or, indeed, all those killed or maimed in the war, originated in Cape Town where the firing of the noon gun on Signal Hill in the centre of the city was first used on May 14th, 1918, to signal the start of a three minute silence. This was later reduced to two minutes 'in order to better retain its hold on the people'. This continued every day until January 17th, 1919.

The vision of everyone in that city pausing in their everyday business each day to think about those engaged in a war 5,000 miles away reached individuals in this country who wrote to the press but their letters initially did not make much impact. It was Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, a pro-British South African writer and politician - whose eldest son had been killed in the war - who was in London in October 1919 who made approaches to the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, and indirectly to the King. He suggested that the daily silence in Cape Town might be replicated throughout the Empire on November 11th.

As a result, on November 5th, 1919, the King issued a proclamation calling for a silence to be observed. "I believe" his message proclaimed "that my people in every part of the Empire fervently wish to perpetuate the memory of that Great Deliverance and those who laid down their lives to achieve it" and so he proposed that "at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month there may be, for the brief space of two minutes, a complete suspension of all our normal activities".

Although some orders had been issued about, for example, tube trains stopping at stations so that the silence would not be observed in tunnels, neither the King nor those in power had any idea how the proposal would be greeted. But even before Big Ben signalled the hour it was clear that the concept would be met with almost universal support throughout the Empire. In London the Cenotaph had been adopted by the public as the focus for remembrance and the throngs who gathered made Whitehall almost impassable - and it was to stay like that all day. As the chimes of Big Ben rang out maroons were fired from fire stations and police stations, and people throughout the country fell silent. Worked stopped, court cases were suspended, convicts in prisons and children in orphanages all observed the silence. The silence was observed first in New Zealand followed by Australia, India, South Africa and the UK and so to Canada. At that moment the concept of Commemoration and of Remembrance took on totally new meanings.

Most of this information culled from 'The Last Post', an excellent book that I

highly recommend, written by Alwyn W Turner, ISBN 978 178131 285 8. Aurum Press 2014.

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## **THE 1946 RAF MUTINY**

Soon after the India Command of the RAF was formed in 1918, with a projected deployment of 8 squadrons on the subcontinent, an aircraft repair depot was established at Lahore with a detachment at Karachi and a port depot at Bombay. In 1922 the main unit was shifted from Lahore to Drigh Road. The change to Karachi was logical because aircraft could be off loaded from British ships at this subcontinental depot, assembled, test flown and ferried to the squadrons. This was to remain the station's chief function until after World War II when RAF Drigh Road was handed over to the Royal Pakistan Air Force in October 1947.

The history of this erstwhile RAF base is relatively well-documented but, perhaps less well-known, is the role that it would play in a mutiny involving RAF personnel which took place there in January 1946.

*“At seven-thirty in the evening of Thursday 17 January 1946, eight or nine hundred men had gathered on the football field at Drigh Road, Karachi. It was dark. The sun had set more than an hour ago, and no moon was visible. It was so dark that one could not recognise an immediate neighbour unless he struck a match to light a cigarette.*

*A few minutes later a voice called out from somewhere in the middle of the crowd, “You all know why we’re here.”*

*The men did indeed know. They were there because they had grievances. They were angry and wanted action. The decisions they took had consequences that reached far beyond Karachi.”*

Personnel in the Armed Forces are trained to obey. Parades, kit inspections, saluting, polishing boots and buttons may have other justifications, but all are used to accustom Servicemen and women to instant obedience to the orders of their superiors. How, then, could twelve hundred RAF personnel at Drigh Road in January 1946 come to defy their commanding officer and take part in what was technically a mutiny? In general, the morale of British forces during the Second World War seems to have been surprisingly good. There were plenty of grumbles, of course, and every reason for them - the heat, flies, disease, abominable food, long hours, poor living conditions and, of course, the doubts about when wives, girlfriends and families would be seen again.

Men put up with all these things mainly because, almost without exception, they knew that this was a war that had to be won. They would have expressed this in different ways: fighting for their country, standing up for democracy, opposing aggression. Nearly all wanted the war to be over.

However, a few months after the end of hostilities the atmosphere changed. Except for a few regular airmen, most pay books showed their holders to have joined for “Duration of the Present Emergency”. and to these airmen the emergency was over. The war had been won and it was time to get back to Britain and into civilian life.

Clearly, most accepted that millions of servicemen could not be demobilised

overnight, to flood the labour market and leave millions unemployed. However, the rate of demobilization was such it seemed many may have to wait years. Another grievance was, "If we have to stay in the RAF, why could we not go home and serve our time in Britain? The official answer was that there were not enough ships. Few believed that. Some pointed out that plenty of ships seemed to be available to take supplies to Indonesia to help the Dutch regain their hold on that country. Some drew attention to the great liners being made available for the "GI brides" to cross the Atlantic to the USA. Others asked whether it really mattered how many ships there were. There were hundreds of Allied aircraft at the disposal of the RAF, so why could they not be flown home? The men at Drigh Road had to service civilian airliners as well as RAF aircraft, which further inflamed the situation. No official answers were forthcoming, more men were convinced they were being held in India as a matter of foreign policy by a Labour government that seemed to have forgotten them.

To make matters worse, there was a widespread belief that soldiers and sailors were being released more quickly than RAF personnel. An impression that seemed totally justified. As John Strachey, Under Secretary for Air in the Labour government, explained in a confidential minute in October 1945: "A relatively large RAF and a small army is by far the most economical way of meeting our world commitments". Consequently, demobilisation for many RAF personnel seemed remote. The atmosphere was not helped by poor living conditions and that enemy of all Service morale, boredom.

The War had been over for five months. To the men, that meant it was time to go home. To the RAF Top Brass, that meant it was time for peacetime discipline and routines. Early in January came the crucial blow. Station Orders announced that on Saturday 19th January, the whole Station would parade in Best Blue uniform, and the parade would be followed by a kit inspection.

As a result, a large group of personnel met on the football field on the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> January 1946 to discuss what amounted to mutiny. Various suggestions were put forward, ranging from a full-scale strike, starting the next day, to a deputation to the CO, but consensus was reached in a surprisingly short time, and the whole meeting was over in not much more than half an hour. Unanimously, the men resolved that, on the Saturday morning, no kit would be prepared for inspection. Men would go to the parade ground at the scheduled time, but wearing khaki drill, not best blue, and would refuse to parade. Anyone who had the opportunity to talk to the commanding officer would make it clear that the men had strong grievances which wanted to put to higher authority.

On the Saturday, all the men appeared on the fringes of the parade ground at the scheduled time, and all were in khaki. There was not a blue uniform in sight, and it was clear that there would be no CO's parade that day. It was some time before the Commanding Officer appeared. There had doubtless been some communications with Command at Delhi. Several men gathered around him to air their grievances and, although appearing harassed, the CO seemed conciliatory and told the men to go back to their duties (it being a Saturday there were few to go back to) and promised to arrange a senior officer from Air HQ to hear their grievances as soon as possible. The most important demand was for

a faster rate of demobilisation, and that was something that the men could not get from Karachi or Delhi. Only the government could decide that, so the men knew they needed a political campaign aimed at the House of Commons and the Labour Government under Clement Attlee.

A 9-point programme was agreed to be presented to Command as follows:

- 1/ Air HQ to put complaints over repatriation and demobilisation direct to the Air Ministry.
- 2/ Permission to be given for the circulation of a petition addressed to the Prime Minister.
- 3/ An official announcement to be made, making it clear that men always had the right to correspond with their MPs.
- 4/ The parliamentary delegation then visiting India to be asked to send one or more of their members to Drigh Road to meet the men. (or that the newly-formed Men's Committee be flown to meet the delegation)
- 5/ No kit inspections.
- 6/ No Saturday parades.
- 7/ An investigation into the quality of the food served in the mess.
- 8/ A reduction in the excessive hours worked by most of the men.
- 9/ Cancellation of daily parades to work.

On 21<sup>st</sup> January, Air Commodore Freebody arrived from HQ and, in the words of David Duncan, *"turned out to be just the man for this particular job. He was on a mission of conciliation, and he did not bat an eyelid as he was told that LAC Attwood, would chair the meeting, and that LAC Duncan would be the spokesman."*

The Air Commodore agreed to all but one of the men's requests; he would not accept that there should be no CO's parades but agreed that "best blues" were not required. This result took the men by surprise and delight and, to all accounts by those based there at the time, conditions improved very quickly.

However, as might be expected, the events at Drigh Road served to galvanise other units into taking up grievances and, by the end of January 1946, RAF units all over the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia were experiencing outbreaks of discontent, mainly strikes, spread largely by signal traffic. The overwhelming grievance was that of slow demobilization. The strikes were largely successful in meeting their objectives. On most of the affected camps the food improved, as did various aspects of the living conditions. Most importantly, there was also a speeding up in the rate of demobilisation, and within the next few months an extra 100,000 RAF men were released. In February 1946 a statement on RAF demobilisation covered five months instead of the usual three. Between February and June, RAF Groups 27 to 35 would be released and on 1 March it was announced that No 35 Group would be demobilised by the end of May

However, as is often the case, the strikes had other far-reaching effects. Accusations appeared in the British press that the strikers were weakening Foreign Secretary Bevin's hand at the United Nations.

The RAF strikes came as a great shock to the establishment at the time. After all, nothing of the kind had happened before in the Royal Air Force.



The SIB arrived at Drigh Road in late March 1946 and were particularly interested in personnel who were known communists and/or had been members of the airmen's discussion groups. However, only 6 out of around 50000 mutineers eventually faced any charges. This was not the case at some other RAF units in the Far East. Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park, AOC, SEAC, had his headquarters in Singapore. Alarmed when the men at RAF Seletar, on his own doorstep, took strike action and rejected his appeal to return to work, he sent a full report to the Secretary of State, the Chief of the Air Staff and the Air Member for Personnel. His message ended with the question,

*"What assistance may I call on the Army to give in the event of the men refusing persistently to return to work when ordered by their officers?" Slessor replied, "You can, of course, call on the Army to give you any assistance you, in consultation with (General) Dempsey, may consider practicable and necessary. Obviously, it is most undesirable to call on Army at all unless absolutely essential. You know you have the support of the Air Ministry in taking firm action where necessary. But no one but responsible commanders on the spot can decide in detail what action is necessary or practicable."*

Many RAF commanding officers on affected units gave an undertaking that there would be no punishments. The men were thus able to return to work without bitterness, confident they had made their point about demobilisation. Many station commanders would have liked to leave the matter there, but, at a higher level, punishments were considered appropriate.

Eventually, Seletar/Kalang airmen, Attwood, Stone, Noble and Zymbalist - all known communists - were charged and found guilty of mutiny. None had offered violence or taken up arms; they had encouraged the withdrawal of labour until conditions improved. Cymbalist, said to be the leader, was sentenced to ten years. However, circumstances, in the form of a campaign in the UK by Trade Unions, led to his release after twenty-two months. The key factor in the campaign on behalf of the arrested airmen was the alliance of the trade unions with a group of left wing Members of Parliament.

**Andy Bryne, with input by Dave Taylor**

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## **ALLIED AIR FORCES MEMORIAL DAY - 2019**

Fifteen York Branch RAFA members attended this year's Allied Air Forces Memorial Day at the Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington on Sunday 1 September. The event highlighted several significant anniversaries, including the outbreak of World War II, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both D-Day and the Arnhem operations as well as commemorating the deeds and sacrifices of airmen and women in more recent conflicts. As is now usual, it was a truly international event, where people came together to celebrate and commemorate the unique relationship and cooperation that Allied Air Forces have established throughout military conflicts across the years, leading to the representation of many nations at this significant memorial occasion. Represented were the Royal Air Force, United States, French, Canadian, Czech Republic, Royal Australian, and the Royal New Zealand Air Forces. On this, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Second World

War, representatives from the Polish Air Force were also present. The RAF Chief of the Air Staff was represented by Air Commodore Richard Davies CBE, Commandant of the Air Warfare Centre, RAF Waddington. The weather was bright and cool, with sunshine for most of the time and just an occasional light rain shower. A flypast had been scheduled for later in the afternoon, but it had to be cancelled when the designated aircraft, the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Dakota, sadly became *hors de combat* upon start-up.

The day's events started at 1000 hrs, with an opportunity for a good look around the museum, before the major parade, led by the Yorkshire Military Marching Band, comprising members of various Service organizations and the Air Cadets. The Parade led to the Memorial Service in the main display hangar, set against the impressive backdrop of YAM's famous Halifax bomber, "Friday the 13th". The service was led by Yorkshire Air Museum Honorary Chaplain, Rev Charles "Taff" Morgan MBE and Rev John Hetherington. The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, also attended. This was followed by the poignant finale of the 'Sunset' Ceremony, Lowering of the RAF Ensign, and the March Past.

This year's event was again blessed with good weather and was well attended, not least by members of our Branch. It was also the first Memorial Day for the new Museum & Memorial Director, Barbara George, who took over from Ian Reed on 1 June. She has worked at the Museum since 2014 and has been the Deputy Director since 2017. As she stated in her welcome to guests attending the lunch, the Allied Air Forces Memorial Day is the most important day in the Yorkshire Air Museum's calendar and well-worth attending.



## ***People who jump off a bridge in Paris are in Seine***

1. If you take an Oriental person and spin him around several times, does he become disoriented?
2. If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?
3. Do infants enjoy infancy as much as adults enjoy adultery?
4. If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?
5. If love is blind, why is lingerie so popular?
6. Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?
7. When cheese gets its picture taken, what does it say?
8. Why is a person who plays the piano called a pianist but a person who drives a racing car not called a racist?
9. Why are a wise man and a wise guy opposites?
10. Why do overlook and oversee mean opposite things?
11. Why isn't the number 11 pronounced onety one?
12. 'I am' is reportedly the shortest sentence in the English language. Could it be that 'I do' is the longest sentence?
13. If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted, musicians denoted, cowboys deranged, models deposed, tree surgeons debarked, and dry cleaners depressed?
14. I thought about how mothers feed their babies with tiny little spoons and forks so I wondered if Chinese mothers use toothpicks?
14. Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do, write to them? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the postmen can look for them while they deliver the post?
16. You never really learn to swear until you learn to drive.
17. No one ever says, 'It's only a game' when their team is winning.
18. Ever wonder about those people who spend a pound on those little bottles of Evian water? Try spelling Evian backwards:
19. Isn't making a smoking section in a restaurant like making a peeing section in a swimming pool?
20. If 4 out of 5 people suffer from diarrhoea, does that mean that one enjoys it?
21. Why if you send something by road it is called a shipment, but when you send it by sea it is called cargo?

## ***LIFE REALLY BEGINS AT 80***

I have really good news for you. The first eighty years are the hardest; really just a succession of Birthday Parties. But once you reach 80, everyone wants to carry your baggage and help you up the steps. If you forget your name, or anyone else's, an appointment, your own telephone number, or promise to be in three places at the same time, or cannot remember how many grandchildren you have, you only need explain that you are eighty. Being 80 is a lot better than being 70. At 70 people are mad at you for

everything. At 80 you have the perfect excuse no matter what you do. If you act foolishly it is your second childhood. Everyone is looking for symptoms of softening of the brain.

Being 70 is no fun at all. At that age they expect you to retire to a house in Spain, complain about your arthritis (they used to call it lumbago), and you ask everybody to stop mumbling because you cannot understand them (actually about 50% of your hearing is gone.)

If you survive until 80, everyone is surprised you are still alive. They treat you with respect just for having lived so long. Actually, they seem surprised you can still walk and talk sensibly.

So please try to make it to 80. It is the best time of your life. People forgive you for everything at 80. If you ask me, life begins at 80.

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## *The Flower of Remembrance*

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 Poppy continued. 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 £6 % 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”.

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## **YORK BRANCH & CLUB ANNUAL LUNCH 2019**

This year's Annual Lunch took place at the Double Tree Hilton Hotel, York on Sunday September 22nd. Organised by Chairman, Brian Mennell, twenty-eight members attended and enjoyed (though not without the odd complaint) a 3-course meal in pleasant surroundings. The Standard Bearer for this occasion was Ron Ford and the Dedication was read by Life Vice-President John Mawson.



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In contrast to the above, on Thursday October 3rd, Gill & Dick Gray organised a Dining-In (which was of course up to the usual high standard) for twenty-one members at the Club premises. Welcomed amongst the diners this time was long term (though rarely seen) Club member, Les Quigley, and wife Jill.

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For those members who do not know Les, and a lot who thought they did, here is his story 'from the horse's mouth.

### ***The LES QUIGLEY story***

"As a young lad of 14 I joined the Air Training Corps in Liverpool, From then on my ambition was to join the RAF. Initially my aim was to become an apprentice, but some how, despite being dyslexic, (identified some 30 years later by an expert), I seemed to become better at my academic studies. I managed to pass 9 "O" levels, so at 16 I thought about applying for aircrew. I was good at maths and physics so thought about becoming an AEO (Air Electronics Officer) on V bombers. At the time a fellow school mate, Chris Coville, who I knew was interested in the RAF told me he had applied for and been awarded an RAF Scholarship to train as a pilot at the RAF College Cranwell (then the worlds most prestigious air force college) I was flabbergasted as until we met in the 6th Form Chris had been in the "B" Form whilst I had been in the top "A" Form. I immediately applied for an RAF Scholarship myself and was offered a place for initial selection at RAF Hornchurch . After two weeks arduous selection (the 2nd week being at RAF Cranwell) I returned home, hopeful but not overconfident because most of the 24 lads who reached that week's final selection seemed smarter than me. Most were from Public Schools whereas I was a scouse, living

in a council house and attending a Liverpool Grammar School.

Several weeks later I received a letter saying that I had been awarded a Scholarship and could choose to go to either Cranwell for 3 years, to train as a Pilot, or to Henlow (Then the RAF Technical College), for 4+ years to train as an Engineer. At the same time I was awarded a flying Scholarship. This meant that once I became 17, I would attend a civilian flying school to gain a Private Pilot's licence. I spent the next 24 Hours believing I was in a dream. I only started truly believing the next day, when I read in the Daily Telegraph that I was one of only 7 boys in the country to be awarded an RAF Scholarship in that period.

Chris too was awarded a Flying Scholarship so we hoped that we would both be sent to the same FTS. We weren't I was sent to Oxford (Kidlington) and Chris to Skegness. At first it sounded as though I had landed the best school. Oxford was rated the top PPL school in the country. However, when we found where we were to be billeted and what we were to fly, it turned out that Chris had scored. He was billeted in Butlins Holiday Camp and flew wartime Austers. I was billeted in a wartime hut and flew post war Piper Colts. I finished the course and got my licence in 3 weeks whilst Chris managed to stretch his training out to over 6 weeks whilst living the high life. The good news, at the end of it all was that we both had licences and Chris had found somewhere where we could hire an Auster for £3 an hour and bunk-up for free in an old "met caravan" on the edge of the airfield. Whilst in the 6th Form at school we then lived the life of Riley - saving up our 10/- pocket money until we had £3 - hitching lifts from Liverpool to Skegness - getting in 2 half hour flights and then heading back for School on Monday! We both still had to get 2 "A" level passes to get into Cranwell. This didn't bode well for either of us as we had spent the Upper Sixth following our motto "Flying, women, & beer - in that order"

Somehow I managed to pass 3 "A" levels and was on my way to Cranwell. However, Chris only managed one. and had to stay back at school for an extra year. He followed me a year later and ended up in the same squadron. (and many years later ended up retiring as Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville, whilst I was still working as a retired Aircraftsman - All Cranwell Cadets held the rank AC2 until 1964 when the rank was removed and we became Aircraftsmen!) Cranwell was tough but enjoyable for those who could take it - we lost a few in the first months! As an Entry, ours was the 89th since 1920, we all soon became "a band of brothers" and still are 56 years later.

Near the end of my 3 years at the RAF College I started blacking out at relatively low "G and experienced pain in my back and legs. I then spent several weeks under examination both at the Aviation Medical centre at RAF Farnborough and in various RAF Hospitals, Nocton Hall, Halton & finally Ely. Whilst in Ely I had a pioneering back operation by the RAF's most senior surgeon. Sadly it didn't work. I didn't know this at the time so, after I had recovered from the operation, I told my flying boss that I was OK and continued flying. Unexpectedly I was called to CME in London for an aircrew medical. The result was that overnight, and just a few weeks before graduation, I went from flying a jet the previous day, with a medical category "A1 G1 Z1" to the next day being declared "A5 G4 Z1". This meant that not only was I grounded (for life!),

but I was also declared unfit for military service!

Despite my strong objections to being pensioned off at just 22 years old, (Which almost resulted in Court Marshall), I had to start a new career in civvy street. I worked for a number of large organisations but still experience back problems. After several years of intermittent major pain, and being fitted in a plaster cast from crutch to neck for 2 months at a time, a Naval Surgeon Commander operated on me, screwed my "back to my bum" and fixed me for the rest of my life. With no thanks to to RAF, I eventually ended up flying again at the age of about 50! Sadly too late for fast jets and fast women, but I did manage to get several hundred hours in a number of different aircraft before the medics caught up with me and grounded me again!

After leaving the RAF I worked for a number of prestigious organisations (including Unilever, Watneys, Burton Group, & Vickers) and a few smaller ones in various management capacities. Life was rather different from the RAF. but nevertheless interesting. I still managed to travel throughout the world and experienced many unusual situations. These ranged from interesting and eventful business dealings to such absurd situations as negotiating with a government minister in Africa for permission to photograph 3 naked ladies in the jungle, and dodging my KGB minder together with the KGB's beautiful female temptresses in the USSR!

In my mid 30's whilst working for Vickers as a senior manager I decided that I had had enough of blinkered bosses in a corporate environment so set up my own businesses. Not all were successes, but thankfully some were. One interesting one was "The Bunker"

The Bunker, a wartime theme restaurant, was opened under our house at Ornham Hall, near Boroughbridge, by accident - it was never planned. It was originally just an RAF bar in the "cellar" complex below the the conference centre that we had above. It was by popular demand of the conference attendees that I decided to open a restaurant since the Bar was run on a restaurant licence. The Bunker grew into an amazing venue for meeting many of the unknown heroes of WWII. Sadly they are all gone, but one day I should publish their stories even though I have long since forgotten their names and their units. It is a reflection of our post war society that Hitler could not close our wartime pubs and restaurants but Harrogate Council did!

Anyway, despite, the endeavours of the "minorities who shout the loudest" to influence weak kneed politicians (local & national) to restrict creative enterprise we have survived to carry on working and enjoy our old age.

Since leaving the RAF I have always kept in touch with my old Cranwell mates wherever they where in the world. We'd compare notes and find that we all had exiting tales to tell! Overtime some had risen to achieve Air Rank, with one - Sir Peter Squire GCB, DFC, AFC, DL, FRAeS - making it to become the CAS, whilst others had less meteoric rises. The one thing we all had in common were enjoyable and eventful careers that have ended up with us all still being great mates."

Hopefully, recorded during his long, First Class, flights to foreign climes, we may



get some interesting stories from the “Bunker” days for future editions.

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## REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY PARADE

The annual Remembrance Sunday Parade at York took place on 10 November in bright sunshine; a welcome relief after some days of very heavy rain. As in previous years, the parade route and Memorial Gardens area were completely packed with onlookers, including many current and ex-Service personnel as well as residents and tourists. Veterans and standard bearers taking part in the parade assembled in Stonegate around 1015 and we set off for the service of remembrance and wreath-laying ceremony. On completion of the service, we formed up behind the Artillery Section and the Band which meant, as was the case in 2018, the veterans were leading the marching contingent. The Branch Standard Bearer was Adrian Gunn and the Wreath was laid by our Branch Chairman, Brian Mennell. After the parade, many of us adjourned to the Club where Jean Snelling opened up the bar for our refreshment. Our Branch was also represented at the Remembrance service at Elvington by Ray Kidd and Ron Ford.

Andy Bryne



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Dark days in London, Days of fear and unsafe nights  
When bombs and incendiaries rained from searchlight night sky  
Wondering, wondering excited and scared if one is marked for us.  
The Air Raid Warning Siren wails, dragging me 8 years old from peaceful  
dreams to insecure reality.  
"Come on Billy . . . Quickly now to the Morrison Shelter,"  
big ugly iron table in kitchen,  
refuge from collapsing ceiling and walls.  
London is too dangerous for kids to have a normal life,  
send them off to the country away from all this strife.  
The decisions made, kids have to leave,  
Pack a small case with just what one needs,  
case in one hand, gas mask on shoulder,  
some kids love it but they are older.  
Me? Im scared, excited, unsure.  
I am eight and being 'evacuated',  
they call us 'Evacuees' . . . all shapes and sizes,  
girls, boys both fat and thin, young and old  
with labels on lapels written on quite bold, my name,

in big letters 'Billy Wild' like I'm to be sold!  
On Waterloo Station with this great mob  
Officials sort us out, what a job,  
I've said goodbye to Sisters, Mum and Dad,  
and I wait with the crowd feeling really quite sad.  
Its not all bad, as I look around,  
soldiers, sailors and airmen abound,  
and the engine to haul us is being stoked up,  
Its name, 'Lord Nelson' I've seen in a book.  
Who's this? a kind lady comes with a trolley  
distributing sandwiches cake and an apple.  
This cheers us up as we tuck into the food,  
it goes a long way to cheering our mood.  
At last we entrain to our many locations,  
the future unknown as we belch steam through the stations.  
Heading where? I wonder and dream,  
of life in the country with strawberries and cream.

Bill Wild

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## LIFE

There are only two ways to live your life: one is as though nothing is a miracle; the other is as though everything is a miracle." (Albert Einstein)

As we grow older and wiser we realize that a £3000 or £30 watch - both tell the same time.

Whether we carry a £300 or £30 wallet/handbag - the amount of money inside is the same.

Whether the house we live in is 300, 3,000 or 30,000 sq ft - the loneliness is the same. And we realize our true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world.

Whether we fly first or economy class, as long as the plane reaches its destination - everyone arrives at the same time. Therefore, we should realize that when we have mates, buddies and old friends, brothers and sisters, with whom we can chat, laugh, talk, sing, talk about north-south-east-west or heaven and earth - that is true happiness!

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

Thurs Dec12	Wings Collection Sainsburys Monks Cross
Fri Dec 13	Wing Collection Tesco Askham Bar
Sat Dec 21	Xmas Draw and Sing along at the club 1.00pm

### 2020

Jan 7	Turning the Page, York Minster
Feb 15	Wings collection Asda Monks Cross
April 1	Turning the Page York Minster
April 17	Wings Collection, Sainsburys Foss Bank
June 5	Turning the Page, York Minster
June 19	Wings Collection, Monks Cross
Jun 26-28	RAFA Annual Conference, Blackpool
Jun 27	Armed Forces Day Wings Collection
Jun28	Annual Service, All Saints Church
Sept 13	Turning the Page, York Minster
Sept 19	Battle of Britain Wings Collection
Oct 6	St Crux

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)**

**For timings etc please check with the Club**