

THE ALDWARE CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



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Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 408

Issue No 81

August 2022

YORK BRANCH & CLUB OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS FOR 2022-23

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	
	Mr B R Mennell	
	Ms S Richmond	
Branch Chairman	Mr A M Bryne	<i>chairman@rafayork.org</i>
Branch Vice-Chairman	Mr R Ford	
Branch Hon. Secretary	Mr S Pearson	<i>secretary@rafayork.org</i>
Branch Hon. Treasurer	Mr C Thorpe	<i>treasurer@rafayork.org</i>
Membership Secretary	Mr R Ford	
Welfare Officer	Mr R Ford	<i>welfare@rafayork.org</i>
Wings Appeal Organiser	Mr I Smith	
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 Administrator & Aldwark Chronicle Editor	Mr A M Bryne	
Club Chairman	Mrs D Edgar	
Club Deputy Chairman	<i>Vacant</i>	
Club Hon Secretary	Ms S Richmond	
Club Hon. Treasurer	Mr S Edgar	
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	

Please address all general enquiries to the Branch Secretary.

On the Cover: *The City of York Civic Party and RAFA York Branch President & Chairman after the Joint Annual Church Service at All Saints Pavement on Sunday 26 June 2022. (Photo: Dave Ruddock York RBL)*

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DISCLAIMER

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EDITORIAL

Since the last edition of the Chronicle was produced, back in May, the Branch and Branch Club have been very busy fulfilling several ceremonial and fund-raising tasks as well as celebrating events such as the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at the beginning of June. You will find more details on what we've been up to in the pages of this edition.

Attendance at our regular Branch Club opening times has generally increased on Saturday lunchtimes and we have welcomed some members who are not normally "regulars." However, despite the light evenings and warmer weather, we still find it difficult to attract members to our Thursday evening get-togethers. I'm not sure why this situation persists and I would welcome any comments and/or suggestions readers might have on how we could improve attendance on Thursday evenings.

We had a good turn out for the Armed Forces Day City street collection on 25 June and this has bolstered our Wings Appeal fund to over £10500. By the time this newsletter reaches you, we will have had a second City street collection (16 July) where we hope to repeat the success of the Armed Forces Day collection.

On page 15, the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict is again

remembered, this time by our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith, who served there for a period shortly after the conflict ended. In the next edition, we will share the views of our Welfare Officer, Ron Ford, during his time in the Falklands in 1997.

We have three Wings Appeal Street collections booked for 2022 and, by the time you read this, two of them will have happened. The first was on 25 June and you can read all about it in the article below which follows this editorial. The second took place on Saturday 16 July, during a period of very warm weather. The total amount raised that day, by only 8 collectors, was £1754.62. Although not as high as the June Armed Forces Day collection, it was, nevertheless, an excellent result. Dick Gray collected £410.55, and Barry Snaith collected £398.72. Ian Smith was third with £342.07.

The third street collection will be on Saturday 17 September and we hope that as many members can assist in this street collection as possible.

Finally, I would wish, on behalf of Branch and Club committee members and all RAFA York members, to thank our Website Administrator, Maureen Barter, for all her efforts in undertaking the role for at least the last six years. Maureen is moving further south, to be nearer some family members, so thank you Maureen for all the work you have done and we hope that your relocation goes as smoothly as it can.

ARMED FORCES DAY WINGS STREET COLLECTION 2022.

On Saturday 25 June (Armed Forces Day) a total of 22 York Branch members and supporters spent several hours in York City Centre collecting donations for the RAFA Wings Appeal. The total amount raised at the street collection was **£2494.78**. This was, as Wings Appeal Officer Ian Smith stated, the best result from a street collection in recent years and much better than expected given the cost-of-living increases and other pressures on the public's finances at present. This takes the amount raised so far this year to over £10500, an absolutely excellent achievement.

In addition to our regular Wings collectors, we were assisted by our RAFALO, Simon Milner, who brought 2 other RAF Regiment members with him to assist. Air Cadet Oliver Mennell also took part. Brian Mennell kept an eye on collecting tins going in and out whilst Steve Edgar, Don Gunn and Ron Ford did a sterling job coping with the demands of customers at the Bar. Overall, it was a very successful and enjoyable day.

HALEY'S TERRACE AIRCRAFT CRASH MEMORIAL UNVEILING 27 APRIL 2022

On Wednesday 27 April 2022, at 2pm, a small but significant memorial service and unveiling of a commemorative plaque took place in the grounds of the Joseph Rowntree Theatre in York. The memorial location was chosen as it is in a sheltered garden area but still accessible to public view. The location is also very close to the wartime crash site of an RAF Hampden which came down there in February 1942.



The subject aircraft, Hampden AE394, at the English Electric Factory, Salmesbury, Lancashire .

RAFA York Branch was represented by Branch Chairman Andy Bryne and Branch Vice-President Brian Mennell. Club Chairman Denise Edgar also attended in her role as RBL York President. The RBL York Standard was also paraded by Standard Bearer Ernest Sawdon. Rachel was the Piper, and the officiating Padre was Methodist Deacon Judith Stoddart, who blessed the newly erected memorial prior to the wreath-laying ceremony. The welcome and the history of the memorial were given by Jude Hewlett, whose uncle, Francis Law, was killed in the crash.

On the night of 21 February 1942, the aircraft, AE394, a Handley Page Hampden twin-engine bomber of No 50 Sqn, took off from RAF Skellingthorpe at 18:40 to attack a railway junction to the west of Koblenz, Germany. For an unknown reason (possibly a faulty oxygen connection) the navigator lost consciousness on the flight, but it is thought that he was able to return to his post later. On the return trip the aircraft ran low on fuel due to a navigational error and, after crossing the Yorkshire Coast on one engine the aircraft began to ice up.

After flying on one engine for some time and with a lack of control of the aircraft the pilot ordered the crew to bail out when the second engine cut out over the York area. The pilot saw one of his crew get clear, assumed that all three crew had all made good their escape and then got himself clear of the aircraft. Sadly, the lower escape hatches were jammed shut probably due to the ice formations on the aircraft and the other two airmen were unable to

get out of the aircraft before it crashed at 02:18 near to the centre of York on Haley's Terrace. The other airman who the pilot saw get clear of the aircraft was also killed when his parachute failed to deploy properly. The two men buried in the same grave are probably the two killed when they were unable to get clear of the aircraft.

The crew were as follows:

Pilot - WO Ivor Philip Mapp - Safe

Navigator - Sgt Hector Francis Thompson - Thurlby (St Germain) Churchyard, Lincolnshire (in a joint grave).

Wireless Operator / Air Gunner - Sgt Francis Reginald Law - Thurlby (St Germain) Churchyard, Lincolnshire (in a joint grave).

Wireless Operator / Air Gunner - Sgt Philip Sidney Ballard - Chartham Cemetery, Kent.



Francis Law



The Memorial Plaque





After the ceremony on 27 April.



Piper & Padre.



Hampden bombers of No 50 Squadron RAF.

Longest Day

Do not call me hero,
When you see the medals that I wear,
Medals maketh not the hero,
They just prove that I was there.

Do not call me hero,
Now that I am old and grey,
I left a lad, returned a man,
They stole my youth that day.

Do not call me hero,
When we ran the wall of hell,
The blood, the fears, the cries, the tears
We left them where they fell.

Do not call me hero,
Each night I stop and pray,
For all the friends I knew and lost,
I survived my longest day.

Do not call me hero,
In the years that pass,
For all the real true heroes,
Have crosses, lined up on the grass.

Rob Aitchison

Written for Normandy veteran Harry Billinge who died in April 2022 aged 96.

RAF EAST MOOR MEMORIAL SERVICE – 14 MAY 2022

The last time this memorial service was held at the Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial at Sutton on the Forest was in May 2019, due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was, therefore, very pleasing for some members of RAFA York Branch to be able once more to attend this short, but significant service of remembrance at the RAF Eastmoor memorial which is in the nearby village of Sutton on the Forest.



The RAF East Moor memorial sundial at Sutton on the Forest

As usual, the guests of honour were the contingent of Royal Canadian Air Force personnel, led by Major Doug Publicover, who were joined by members of our RAFA York Branch, Royal British Legion representatives, air cadets from No 2487 (Easingwold) Squadron, representatives from the Yorkshire Air Museum, Scouts from the 1st Moxby Moor Group and members of the Sutton on the Forest village community. The RAFA York Standard Bearer was Gordon Murden.

The weather was warm and sunny for the event, which commenced with a tune from the three pipers. An address of welcome was given by Major Doug Publicover RCAF, followed by reflections and prayers led by Revd Steve Whiting. The event organiser, Flt Lt Alan Dolding (a RAFA York Branch member) read an excerpt from the poem, "For the Fallen" which was followed by the Act of Remembrance, led by Sqn Ldr Henry Morgan RAF

(Retd). The Last Post was sounded by Fg Off Dan Ramsbottom RAF from RAF Leeming and wreaths were laid by representatives of the organisations present, starting with the Canadian contingent representing No 415 and 429 squadrons RCAF. The Station Commander, RAF Leeming, Gp Capt Prendergast, laid a wreath as did Leading Cadet Oliver Mennell on behalf of RAFA York Branch.



RCAF representatives lay a wreath.



Ldg Cdt Oliver Mennell lays the RAFA York wreath.



Standards are marched off after the ceremony.



After the closing remarks by a representative of Sutton on the Forest Parish Council and the playing of the Canadian and UK national anthems, the Standards were marched off and excellent refreshments were provided by the ladies of Sutton on the Forest YCA.

RAF East Moor was home to two RCAF squadrons during the Second World War. The station opened in 1942 and was initially part of RAF No 4 Group. The first squadron to be based there was No 158 Sqn RAF, flying

Halifax II bombers. In November 1942, the station was handed over to the RCAF, and No. 429 Squadron RCAF formed at the airfield on 7 November 1942 initially only flying the Vickers Wellington Mk III until January 1943 when the Wellington Mk. X was added. On 19 September 1943 the next squadron arrived being 432 Squadron which initially used the Avro Lancaster Mk II before being re-equipped with the Halifax Mk III in February 1944 and the Mk. VII Halifax in July 1944. The squadron disbanded on 15 May 1945 at the airfield.



Service personnel from Canada and the UK at the memorial.

The last Canadian squadron to use the airfield was No 415 Squadron which flew the Halifax III from 26 July 1944. The unit inherited the additional Mk VII versions during March 1945 but disbanded shortly after on 15 May 1945 at the airfield. After the end of the war in Europe, RAF East Moor was taken over by the RAF for a short while before being closed in late 1946. The memorial at Sutton on the Forest ensures that the sacrifices made by RAF and RCAF personnel which flew from RAF East Moor will not be forgotten.

PLATINUM JUBILEE PARTY AT THE CLUB

There was a fairly early start to proceedings at the Club on Saturday 4 June as some of the Jubilee party “staff” arrived in good time to set up the plated buffet, to stock up the Bar and to check the video system for music and film clips. Some members arrived just after 11 am and, by midday, we were pretty busy! Dick Gray had placed Union Flag bunting in the lounge bar and many members arrived bedecked in red, white and blue garments.



Our Branch President, Dick Gray, explained that the soft toy figure on his hat was a carrot. It was misidentified at one point! Dick and Gill served up an awesome plated buffet around 1pm and the Branch Chairman played some video clips from previous royal events, including the 1953 Coronation Review of the RAF at Odiham (six hundred RAF aircraft flew over for that one!), the RAF flypast on 2 June and the 2012 “James Bond” Olympics opening video. The latter was only surpassed by Paddington Bear later that evening! We also listened to some music clips covering the period 1953 to 2022.



Members present on Saturday certainly enjoyed the celebratory mood and, although we will never again celebrate a Jubilee like this one, it would be good to have a few more “socials” like this one! My thanks to Jean Potter for the photos, as her phone camera is much better than mine!



TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONY – 13 JUNE 2022

The second Turning of the Page ceremony in York Minster for 2022 took place at 12 noon on Monday 13 June. The Parade Steward was Branch President, Dick Gray and Gordon Murden carried the RAFA York Branch Standard and Tim Kitching carried the Royal Observer Corps Standard. The RAFA York Branch Page Turner was Branch Treasurer Chris Thorpe and the Raison d'être was read by Branch Chairman, Andy Bryne, who also read the dedication. The ceremony concluded with prayers by Canon Michael Smith of York Minster.



RAFA & ROC standards on parade.



Chris Thorpe turns the page.

There were a good number of Branch members on parade and in attendance, although the area around the Astral Clock is still relatively restricted due to temporary barriers (large panels) which impeded the view of the ceremony to some extent. After the ceremony, the Branch Club was opened for members to relax and enjoy refreshments prepared by Gill Gray.

Andy Bryne & Dick Gray (photos)

THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT FORTY YEARS ON PART 2



In the previous edition of the Chronicle, I published my memories of the conflict, albeit from a witness to the Royal Naval Task Force leaving and returning to Portsmouth. This time, I am pleased to be able to publish some photos of the Falkland Islands, taken in 1982 and 1983 by our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith.



Gazelle helicopter landing at San Carlos Base.

Ian was part of an operational detachment in the Falklands from December 1982 until March 1983. He was, at that time, WO2 Battery Sergeant Major, based at San Carlos. Although hostilities had ceased by then, it was still a somewhat dangerous place, with lots of ordnance, including unmapped Argentinian minefields, scattered about.

The Falkland Islands are somewhat remote, to say the least and most communication by land was difficult, there being very few roads. It wasn't only the leftover ordnance that was a problem., some "roads" being extremely difficult to negotiate, as the photo below shows!



One of the highlights of Ian's time in the Falklands was a visit by the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, on 10 January 1983. (see photo below)



I am indebted to Ian for allowing the publication of a few of the photos of his Falklands detachment taken from his personal album. (*Editor.*)

Ian returned to British Forces Germany in March 1983. He now looks back on his time there with somewhat fond memories.



Kelly's Garden Camp in February 1983.

HOW TO ACCESS BRANCH & CLUB MINUTES ONLINE.

RAFA regulations state that all Branch members should have access to Committee minutes. To access minutes from our RAFA York Website, please follow this process:

1. Go onto the RAFA York website.
2. At the bottom right-hand corner you will see the words "Log in".
3. Click on this.
4. User name is "committee."
5. Password is "committee2016".

Then click on the "Log in" box and this will take you to the members' page from where you can access minutes of committee meetings when they are published.

JOINT ROYAL BRITISH LEGION & RAF ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CHURCH SERVICE 2022.

The second Joint Royal British Legion and RAF Association York Branch Annual Church Service took place at All Saints Pavement Church on Sunday 26 June. This was the first service held without the strict COVID-19 conditions imposed in 2020 and 2021, so it permitted the use of our RAFA York Branch Club premises to host the City of York Civic Party and our other guests after the service.

The service was conducted by the Revd Dave Hobman, who also gave the sermon. The first lesson was read by the Lord Mayor of York, Councillor David Carr and the second lesson by Andy Bryne, RAFA York Branch Chairman. The Royal British Legion York President, Denise Edgar, read the dedication for the Act of Remembrance. Four standards were paraded, including our own Branch Standard and the RBL York Standard. The Civic Party included the Lord Mayor (Councillor David Carr) and Lady Mayoress (Mrs Lynda Carr), the Sherriff (Mrs Suzie Mercer) and Sherriff's Consort (her daughter, Mrs Rebecca Murphy).



Escorting the Lord Mayor to the RAFA Club after the church service.

After the service, the Civic Party and members of the York RBL and RAFA branches made their way on foot to our Club in Aldwark where excellent refreshments were provided by Gill and Dick Gray.



At the Club enjoying refreshments after the church service. (Photos by Dave Ruddock York RBL)



A florist's pun!

Events for RAFA York Branch - 2022

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 Club Chairman or the President so that we know what numbers to seat/cater for.

A limited lunch menu is available at the Club on most Saturdays from 1200-1300 hrs.

Fri 12 Aug	Wings Collection – Langlands Garden Centre Shiptonthorpe
Sun 11 Sep	All Services Parade - Eden Camp - from 1000 hrs.
Sat 17 Sep	Battle of Britain Wings Appeal City Street Collection.
<i>Sun 18 Sep</i>	<i>Battle of Britain Service & Page Turning - York Minster 1600 hrs. (TBC)</i>
Fri 21-Sun 23 Oct	RAFA Annual Conference – Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel.
Fri 11 Nov	Remembrance Day.
Sun 13 Nov	Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service - York.
Fri 9 Dec	Wings Collection - Tesco Askham Bar.
Fri 16 Dec	Wings Collection - Tesco Clifton Moor.
Fri 30 Dec	Turning of the Page - York Minster - 1200 hrs.

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” may be subject to change/cancellation in order to avoid clashing with other more pressing Branch activities or events so please check the website: