

THE ALDWARE CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



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Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 397

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YORK BRANCH & CLUB OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS FOR 2023-24

President:	Mr R W Gray	
President Emeritus	Air Commodore W G Gambold RAF (Retd)	
Life Vice-President:	Mr J J Mawson	
Vice-Presidents:	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	<i>wings@rafayork.org</i>
Area & Annual Conf. Rep.	Mr R Ford	
Branch Standard Bearer	Mr G Murden	
Deputy Standard Bearer	Mr O Mennell	
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	Mr R W Gray	
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 Social Secretary	Mr J Forrester	

Please address all general enquiries to the Branch Secretary.

On the Cover: On Wednesday 23 August, our Branch was permitted to collect donations for the 2023 Wings Appeal at the Ebor Meeting at York Racecourse. The event was opened by the RAF Falcons Parachute Team, seen here with Ian Smith and Dick Gray. (photo: York Racecourse)

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EDITORIAL

Since putting together the last edition of the Chronicle newsletter, I was wondering how I might find sufficient material for this edition, but I need not have worried! September is invariably a busy month for the Branch and this year has proven to be even busier, as you will see from the events covered in this edition. I'm very please that we are busy, both as a Branch and a Branch Club, because a number of branches and branch clubs seem to be disappearing off the map very quickly.

Further to our Area President's Big RAFA Ride (see page 10) he met with RAFA HQ staff and produced a report. Paragraph 4 of the report is particularly worrying.

"You told me that a few of you are thriving as Branches, Clubs and RMGs and have no concerns about the next 5 years. However, most Branches, Clubs and RMGs are fragile, with some of you feeling that next year may be your last when you can find volunteers for your key positions of Trustees and Committee Officers; typically only 10% of Branch members are active. This is due to the ageing demographics of most Branches and RMGs, and unless something different is done, you will close."

To some extent, this rather foreboding message was replicated at the RAFA National Conference in Birmingham on 14-15 October, which I attended as Branch Delegate vice Ron Ford. However, there was some very good news on RAFA's financial position and also far more emphasis on welfare and wellbeing initiatives than Branch governance, which had been a feature of recent conferences. The future of the membership voting process is also under the spotlight for change as over 10,000 RAFA members do not have Branch membership and are therefore currently disenfranchised. RAFA HQ staff are currently working on how this might be overcome in future.

Finally, I can report some outstanding news on our 2023 Wings Appeal total. See page 5 for details.

SECOND DONATION FOR WINGS APPEAL FROM THE YORK GERIATRIC CAR CLUB.

On Saturday 23 September, Branch member Paul McCarthy presented the Branch Club with a second cheque for £100 from the York Geriatric Car Club. We are very grateful to Paul and the Car Club members for choosing our RAFA Wings appeal once more. The cheque was gratefully received by our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith.. (see photo.)



WINGS APPEAL UPDATE 2023.



At the end of this collecting year (2023), the total collected for this year's Wings Appeal stood at over **£20,000**.

WINGS COLLECTIONS IN AUGUST & SEPTEMBER.



Wings Appeal Officer Ian Smith at York Racecourse.

On Wednesday 23 August, several York Branch members carried out an all-day Wings Appeal collection at York Racecourse with kind permission of the Racecourse Management. The collection was subject to specific rules as required by the Racecourse and an Administrative Order was produced by the deputy Project Officer, Dick Gray, to ensure the day went as smoothly as possible. The Project Officer for the collection was Ian Smith, our Wings Appeal Officer. The weather was cloudy but it stayed dry and everything went pretty well according to plan. The RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team dropped in and meant an excellent photo opportunity for our collectors

As a result of considerable planning and hard work a total in excess of £3900.00 was raised for our Wings Appeal. A very good result. In addition, a separate online donation of £575 from the race day was credited to our RAFA Branch total. However, the team identified some lessons for future collections on race days. For our Project Officer (who happened to turn 80 on the same day) it was a considerable achievement, having bid to have a collection at the racecourse for 8 years.

The Battle of Britain Wings Appeal City Street collection took place on Saturday 16 September, led by our Branch Wings Appeal Officer Ian Smith and assisted by our Branch President, Dick Gray. Dorothy Mennell looked after the comings and goings of our collectors by issuing and collecting in the collecting tins and buckets.

This year, we were joined by around 20 air cadets from No 110 (City of York) Squadron, led by their Adjutant, Flying Officer Gianluca Gaudiosi, who collected £318.42 between them.

Overall twelve members of RAFA York branch took part in the Battle of Britain City Street collection and, together with the air cadets, collected a grand total of £2376.69. This was a very good result, especially as the collection day weather was rather damp to start with. Barry Snaith collected an impressive total of £429.63 and Dick Gray collected £380.23.

This impressive effort put our Branch relatively close to achieving the target of £20000 for the Wings Appeal this year and so Ian organised an additional collection at Morrisons on 20 October. Despite the very wet and windy weather and the need to call it a day before 3pm (Storm Babet was in full force), a total of £424.07 was collected by Ian, Jean Snelling, Gordon Murden and Barry Snaith.

2023 UPDATE.

After the collection on 20 October, the 2023 Wings Appeal collection season came to an end. This year, Branch members collected the amazing total of

£20598.32

This is an incredible achievement and I am very grateful to Ian and to all our Branch members who collected for the Wings Appeal this year.

Editor.

FUNERAL OF BRANCH MEMBER HAROLD WILLIAM WILSON

The funeral of York Branch Associate member, Harold Wilson, took place at the Vale Crematorium in Fladbury, Worcestershire on Monday 19 June 2023. Aged 102 at his death, Harold remained very active for most of his later life and was a well-liked member of his local Royal British Legion Branch in Pershore, Worcestershire.

Having enlisted as a regular in the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry just before the outbreak of war in 1939, Harold was part of the Normandy beach landings in June 1944. He endured the long and vicious campaign across Northern Europe as the Allies liberated it from Nazi Germany. Harold lost many comrades and survived several near misses before an injury saw him sent back to Britain in April 1945 as his regiment advanced on Berlin.

Once recovered, the Yorkshire-born soldier was sent to Italy where he served until he was demobbed in 1947. As well as his campaign medals issued by the UK Government, Harold also received the Legion d'Honneur from the French Government to mark his service during D-Day and the liberation of Europe in 1944-45.



Harold contributed to the York Branch Wings appeal each year by sending a cheque to our Wings Appeal Officer. He also received a printed copy of the York Branch newsletter, the Aldwark Chronicle. Sadly, we were not aware of Harold's passing until the August edition of the Chronicle was returned to our Branch HQ in mid-August with an annotation that he had died.

The photo shows Harold celebrating his 101st birthday in February 2022.

FUNERAL OF BRANCH LIFE MEMBER HARRY RAY KIDD OBE

Harry Ray Kidd, always known as Ray, died on Wednesday 2 August 2023 aged 91. He had been in failing health for some time. Ray's funeral took place on Friday 18 August at York Crematorium. His funeral was very well attended by many members of RAFA and the Air Cadet Organisation. The York Branch Standard and the ROCA Area Standard were also present. Ray was a Life member of the Royal Air Forces Association and was one of our Life vice-presidents. He was closely involved in Branch and Club events until his health prevented him from attending. Ray received the OBE in 1987 for his services to the Air Cadet Organisation. He was also a member of the ROC for 10 years, based at Cloughton Post near Scarborough.

York Branch President Emeritus, Bill Gambold, spoke about Ray's work with the Air Cadets at the funeral. When Bill Gambold was appointed the Regional Commandant of the Air Training Corps, his staff recommended that he spend time with Ray Kidd as he could be relied upon to provide detailed and unbiased advice. Bill stated that he relied on Ray throughout his time in post.

Ray joined No 739 Squadron (Scarborough) Air Cadets as a cadet in 1947. He attended the first International Air Cadet Exchange Scheme to Canada. He did his National Service in the RAF, joining in 1951, and returned to the cadets as a civilian Instructor. In 1966, Ray was commissioned into the RAF Volunteer Reserve (Training) and, with the support of Jean managed to quickly turn the small Easingwold detached flight into a squadron in its own right. (No 2487 Squadron.)

Ray joined the Air Cadet Central and East Yorks Wing Staff, where his initial responsibility was training cadets for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In 1980 he was promoted to Wg Cdr to lead the West Yorkshire Wing whose HQ was in Bradford. He then took command of Central and East Yorks Wing in 1983 and held that post until he retired from uniformed service in 1988. He then became the President of the Wing and a member of the Air Cadet Council. Ray was Chairman of RAFA York Branch from 2002 until 2008. He was appointed a life vice-presidency of the Branch in 2013.

Ray wrote a couple of excellent books, one on Central & East Yorks Wing Air Cadets ("Wings of Youth") and another on a detailed History of the Air Cadets Organisation, ("Horizons"). Ray's enthusiasm for the Duke of Edinburgh Award resulted in him chairing a working group representing all the military cadet organisations in North Yorkshire for over 10 years. Ray's dedication and commitment to all cadet organisations has resulted in many youngsters being motivated to achieve their full potential. He always

impressed people with his cool calm but persuasive argument – he was truly a gentle gentleman who was admired by his peers and was the perfect role model for many.

We will all have our own memories for Ray Kidd, but two in particular stay with me as York Branch Secretary and now Chairman. The first was Ray's experiences in Canada on the first International Exchange Scheme. I was entranced with his photos of his experiences in Canada, having been very fortunate myself in taking part in an exchange there in 1972 as an air cadet. The second was the tale he told about an air experience flight in a Lancaster. This was a fighter affiliation exercise and Ray was instructed to get into the bomb-aimer's position and stay there. Upon landing, the crew vacated the aircraft and Ray remained dutifully where he was told to stay as the gyros wound down and the Merlin engines ticked as they cooled down. The crew suddenly remembered they had an air cadet on board and went to retrieve him!

Ray is pictured below at the York Branch Club in 2021.



AREA PRESIDENT VISITS YORK BRANCH & CLUB ON BIG RAFA RIDE

On Saturday 26 August, Stuart Stirrat, the new President of the RAFA Scotland, Northern Ireland and Northern England Area visited York as part of his “Big RAFA Ride” journey around the Branches, Branch Clubs and Registered Members’ Groups (RMGs) in our Area. His intention was to visit all of the RAFA community locations in what is a very large and, in parts, not easily accessible, geographical area. However, his journey was made slightly easier by undertaking this task on a powerful motorbike!

Stu Stirrat joined the RAF in 1985 as a pilot and flew Wessex helicopters from RAF Aldergrove. He later went into RAF Intelligence duties and retired as an air commodore in May 2023.



Branch members with Stu Stirrat at the Club.

By the time Stu reached us, around 1815 hrs on the Saturday, he was on Day 23 of his ride, having already visited Stockton, Whitby and Scarborough before his final visit for the day. Stu had left his home Branch at Halifax (he is also the President of the Halifax Branch of RAFA) on Friday 4 August. His ride included the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Stornoway, Orkney and Shetland, before heading south again through mainland Scotland and Northern England. His last stop was on Tuesday 29 August, back at Halifax once more.

When Stu arrived, we had to inform him that, had he arrived earlier, he would have witnessed a great Club Saturday which included Wings Appeal Officer Ian Smith's 80th birthday party! Nevertheless, a number of us remained to welcome Stu to the Branch and Club. Denise Edgar and I were able to show him around the building and explain our plans for improvements. We also told him about the various events and socials that we have. He brought his mascot teddy bear with him and, at one point, we were worried that vice-president Brian Mennell might take it home! Steve Edgar had already done a busy shift as barman at lunchtime but stayed on to ensure the bar remained open. Well done Steve! Also thanks to Steve and Ros Pearson for giving Stu a bed for the night.



Brian with Joy the RAFA Ride mascot & Joy getting tanked.

As a relative newbie, Stu is anxious to know about the achievements, challenges and hassles going on in his area, and we felt that he was certainly prepared to ask some quite direct questions to RAFA HQ. It was a very good to meet him. After carrying out his month-long journey, Stu Stirrat visited HQ RAFA and produced a very useful report for Area Branch members.

YAM ALLIED AIR FORCES MEMORIAL DAY 2023.

This major event in the calendar returned on Sunday 3 September after a break of three years. Once more, the weather was kind and the sunshine ensured that most of us felt the warmth after a while! The memorial event at the Yorkshire Air Museum pays tribute to the service of Allied personnel in the defence of the freedoms we enjoy today.

Representatives of France, Australia and New Zealand were in attendance, along with civic dignitaries and representatives of the RAF Association, including our Branch, the Royal British Legion, the Royal Observer Corps Association and the Air Cadet Organisation. A buffet lunch was provided for the York Civic Party, Service and Service charities representatives and senior invited veterans, with the service itself from 1400 hrs in the Canadian Memorial Hangar. The service in the hangar commenced with an introduction by Rachel Semlyen MBE, the Chair of the Air Museum trustees. She was one of the pioneers of what is now the Yorkshire Air Museum, having worked to secure part of the old RAF Elvington site from destruction. The Service itself was conducted by the Rev. Taff Morgan.



After the service in the hangar, the parade formed up for a march-past in front of the dignitaries before proceeding to the signals square and mast for the 'Sunset Ceremony' with the lowering of the RAF ensign. The parade included many standard bearers from Service and Air Cadet organisations and a large contingent of air cadets formed the bulk of the

parade. Our Branch Standard was carried by Gordon Murden and Oliver Mennell carried the Easingwold Squadron Air Cadet Standard.



There were several RAFA York Branch members present, although not as many veterans as last time (2019), no doubt due in part to the passage of time. Indeed, it was difficult to believe that the museum itself was established as long ago as 1985. Significant repair work to the Control Tower/Watch Office (which was built in 1942 to last for 10 years) is now well under way and planning for a further two hangars to house most of the Museum's precious aircraft, is under way. It was very good to be back at Elvington again for this auspicious event.

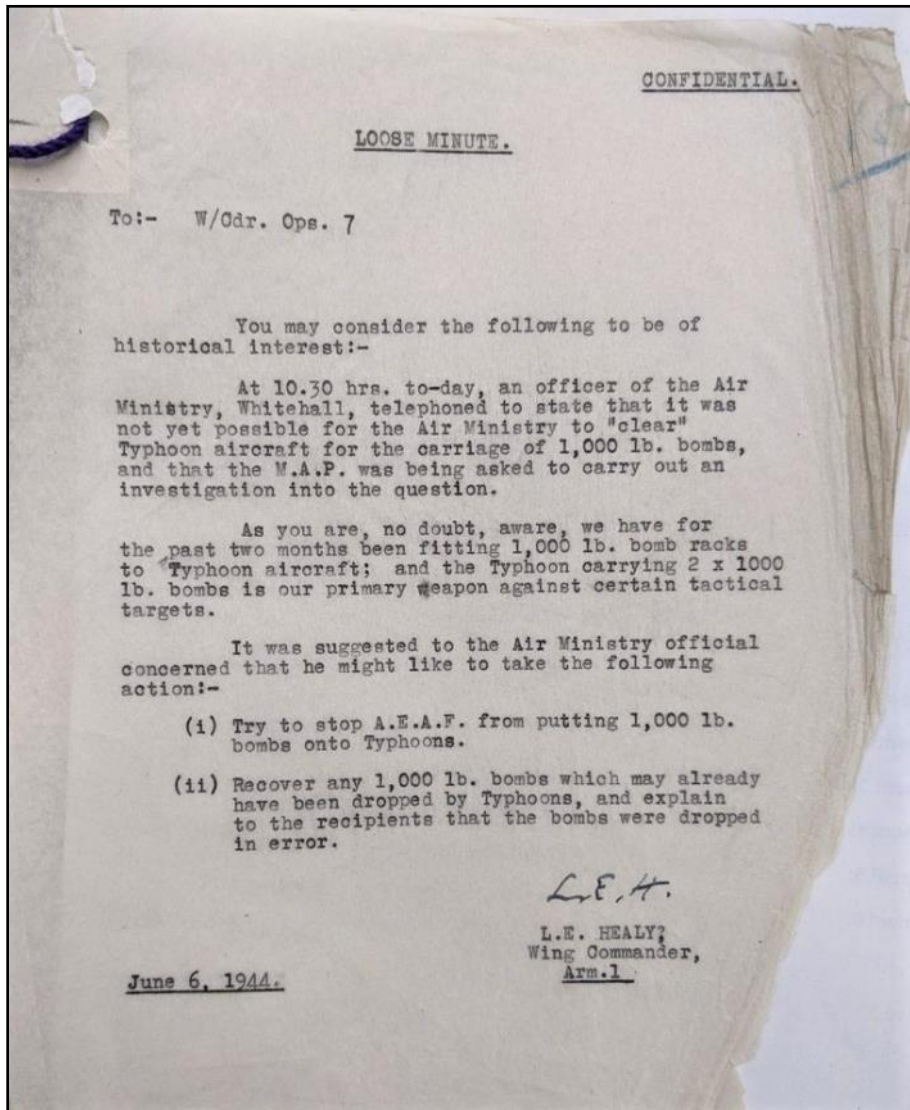
RAFA BRANCH LUNCH AT THE MARCIA - BISHOPTHORPE.

After a gap of a few years (the last Branch lunch was held in September 2019), our Branch held its annual lunch on 20 September at the Marcia Inn, Bishopthorpe. After a recommendation by Branch member Rob Woods, Denise and Steve Edgar organised the lunch and 26 Branch members attended.

We all agreed that it was an excellent meal and an excellent venue. Whilst we were at lunch, there was at least two heavy downpours of rain and very blustery wind. However, by the time we'd had coffee and got ready to leave, the rain had stopped, and the wind had died down, which was brilliant timing! Many thanks to Denise and Steve for arranging this event.

AN AMUSING LOOSE MINUTE FROM WORLD WAR II.

The above scan of a loose minute sent by Wing Commander Healy, Arm 1 to Wing Commander Ops 7. The document makes clear the former's frustration with the Air Ministry and also his sense of humour. The date of the document is most auspicious! (Received from Treasurer, Chris Thorpe.)



ALL SERVICES PARADE & SERVICE AT EDEN CAMP.

After a break of three years, the Eden Camp Modern History Museum played host once more to the All Services Parade and Service on Sunday 10 September. The weather remained very warm throughout and the threatened rain came to nothing. The parade formed up at 1410 and, after marching to the parade square and seating area, led by the Band and over 50 Standards, stood during the service which followed. Our RAFA York Branch Standard was carried by Gordon Murden and the ROC Area Standard was carried by Oliver Mennell.



The service was led by Canon John Manchester and the salute was taken by D-Day veteran Ken Cooke. Mr Philip Kim, of Soth Korean heritage, gave a short speech of thanks to all those British Service personnel who fought and died during the Korean War. Nearly 60000 British military personnel served in the War and over 1100 were killed. Canon Manchester welcomed veterans particularly who had served during the Korean War, which ended with an armistice in 1953, the 75th anniversary of the end of Britain's governance of Palestine and the 60th anniversary of the end of UK National Service. Prior to the parade, your chairman was able to meet and chat to some other RAFA representatives, including Ryedale and Newcastle & Gateshead branches. Eden Camp Modern History Museum has been

investing in new exhibits and display areas over the past couple of years and is well worth a visit. (Parade photos via Ros Pearson)



BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE & TURNING OF THE PAGE.

The annual Battle of Britain commemoration service and Turning of the Page of remembrance took place in the Quire of York Minster on Sunday 17 September. The service was not held in 2022 due to the period of National Mourning following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

The service commenced at 1400 hrs and was led by the Dean of York Minster, the Very Reverend Dominic Barrington. Three Standards were paraded to the Altar, the RAFA York Branch Standard, the ROCA Area Standard and No 110 (City of York) Squadron Air Cadets Standard. The reading was given by Flight Lieutenant Simon Kinnersley from RAF Leeming and the Sermon by the Reverend Dr (Sqn Ldr) Kate Bruce also from RAF Leeming.

During the Service, the Book of Remembrance was brought to the Quire by Flight Lieutenant Kinnersley escorted by two officer cadets from Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron. The Page turners were, Mr Brian Mennell, RAFA York Branch Vice-President, Flight Lieutenant Simon Kinnersley, RAF Leeming and Officer Cadet Sam Samuel from Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron. In addition to several officer cadets, there was a very good attendance by members of York RAFA Branch and over 40 air cadets from No 110 Squadron.

After the service, many of the Branch members and University air squadron members adjourned to the Branch Club in Aldwark. Refreshments were provided by Denise and Steve Edgar for the Branch Club Committee.





Photos courtesy of RAF Leeming Photo Section.

LANCASTER MEMORIAL SERVICE & PARADE - MOOR MONKTON.

On the night of 27/28 September 1943, Avro Lancaster, number W4904, took off from RAF Faldingworth near Market Rasen, Lincolnshire. The aircraft belonged to No 1667 Heavy Conversion Unit which was responsible for the training of RAF Bomber Command heavy bomber crews. On this particular training flight, the crew of W4904 were undertaking a navigation and dummy bombing run over northern England. Unfortunately, the aircraft encountered heavy rain which probably caused icing at higher levels, causing it to enter a steep dive and crash at Cock Hill near the village of Moor Monkton after 4 hours into its training mission. All seven aircrew were killed. Two of the aircrew are buried in Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate.

For many years, it was believed, wrongly, that the aircraft had been lost at

another site called Cock Hill, but this was located in Old Edlington, near Doncaster in South Yorkshire. A memorial was erected there in 2012 to the aircrew, but further research in Ministry of Defence records by showed clearly that the Lancaster had crashed one mile northwest of Marston Moor Railway Station. Contemporary reports from nearby RAF Rufforth stated that the aircraft had been heard diving steeply in heavy rain in that location. Consequently, further to research being carried out, the memorial plaque was removed and relocated to a new memorial stone in All Saints village church at Moor Monkton. Local resident, Les Hitchings, arranged a memorial service and parade at the church on Saturday 23 September. The parade formed up about 300 yards from Moor Monkton village church, where the memorial stone and plaque are located, led by a contingent of air cadets from a number of local squadrons under the command of Fg Off Gaudiosi, from No 110 (City of York) Squadron Air Cadets. Next came six Standards, including our own York Branch Standard, carried by Oliver Mennell, and the ROCA Area Standard, carried by Tim Kitching. Two London Area Standard Bearers (Mr R Verity and Mr J Bowers) also took part. This was to commemorate the RAFVR airmen from London who died in the crash. The service was conducted by the local Padre, Nick, who also played the Last Post and Reveille on a trumpet.



The Royal Air Force was represented by Air Commodore Sansom (Air Officer, North of England) and the Royal Canadian Air Force by Lt Col C D Bylsma. Two of the airmen killed in the crash were from the Royal Canadian Air Force. Wg Cdr Newbould (Retd) and Sqn Ldr Hicks represented RAF Linton on Ouse, whilst Andy Bryne laid a wreath on behalf of RAFA York Branch and Denise Edgar on behalf of the York area Royal British Legion. A wreath was also laid on behalf of the residents of Moor Monkton. The ceremony concluded with a poignant flypast of a 1940-built Miles M14 Hawk RAF training aircraft (T9738) from Brighton airfield. After the ceremonies, we made our way to the Old School House in Moor Monkton village, where an large, excellent table of home-made cakes were ready for us.

Events for RAFA York Branch - 2023-2024

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 Branch President so that we know what numbers to seat/cater for.

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

2023

- Sun 5 Nov Festival of Remembrance-St Peters School 1400hrs.
Sun 12 Nov Remembrance Sunday.
Fri 8 Dec Wings Collection - Tesco Clifton Moor.
Sun 10 Dec ROCA Carol Service - St Chad's Church 1400 hrs.
Fri 15 Dec Wings Collection - Tesco Askham Bar.
Sat 16 Dec Christmas Draw at the Club.
Fri 29 Dec Turning of the Page Ceremony-York Minster 1200 hrs.

2024

- Sun 18 Feb 24: RAFA Medical Services Branch AGM at York Branch Club (provisional).
Sat 9 Mar 24: Branch Annual General Meeting 1200 hrs.
Sat 30 Mar 24: Wings City Street Collection (Easter Saturday).
Sat 29 Jun 24: Armed Forces Day. Wings City Street Collection.
Sun 30 Jun 24: Joint York RBL/RAFA Church Service, All Saints Pavement 1030 hrs.
Sun 8 Sep 24: All Services Parade & Service, Eden Camp.
Sat 14 Sep 24: Wings City Street Collection.
Sat 19-Sun 20 Oct 24: RAFA National Conference.

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: www.rafayork.org. For timings etc, contact the Club on 07495 651849 (Thu evenings and Sat lunchtimes only).