

THE ALDWARD CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



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Club opening hours: Wed: 12 pm to 3 pm Sat: 11.30 am to 3 pm.

Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 394

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YORK BRANCH & CLUB OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS FOR 2024-25

President:	Mr R W Gray
President Emeritus	Air Commodore W G Gambold RAF (Retd)
Life Vice-President:	Mr J J Mawson
Vice-President:	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 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	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: Eighty years ago, the Allied invasion to liberate Nazi-occupied Europe began in earnest. This picture shows a view of one of the Normandy landing beaches on the history-making day of 6 June 1944.

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DISCLAIMER

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EDITORIAL

Since the publication of the last “Chronicle”, the Branch and Branch Club have continued to be quite busy and this year is shaping up to be quite exciting in many respects, not least in the excellent progress with our Wings Appeal total and the welfare and wellbeing activities we undertake, but also in our attendance at various ceremonial events, the ELMS service and parade at the end of April being just one example.

The Club Committee has found that the low numbers of members attending our Thursday evening meetings has meant that it has become uneconomical to open the Club on Thursday evenings at the present time. It was recommended that we change our weekday opening from Thursday evenings to Wednesday afternoons, which may well encourage more members to attend. (Bus services are also better during the day!) The Branch Committee approved this change at our April meeting and, from Wednesday 1 May, we will open on Wednesday afternoons. We will see how this develops.

We were privileged to host the RAF Association Senior Management Team, led by the Association President, at the Branch Club on Tuesday 5 March. This visit was part of the Team’s visit to RAFA branches and Clubs and also to the Kidzone facilities at RAF stations in Scotland and Northern England. My thanks to all those members who turned out to help host our guests.

Our page-turning ceremony in York Minster was boosted by attendance from the Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron, based at RAF Leeming. It was very pleasant to host them, and some of their families, at the Branch Club after the ceremony.

Sadly, we also continue to lose some of our members to illness and passing on. Our previous Branch Chairman, Brian Mennell, died in February and many of us attended his funeral at York Crematorium on 12 March. Brian was a staunch supporter and trustee of the Branch, serving as our Chairman for 5 years. He will be missed.

WINGS APPEAL UPDATE 2024



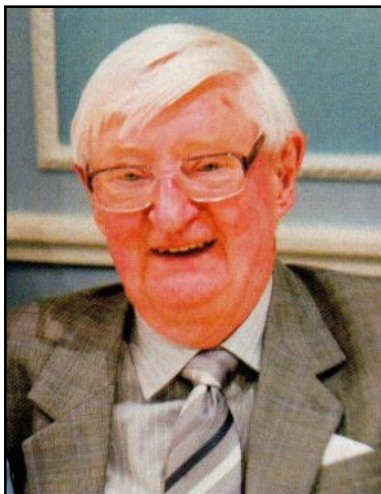
At the time of going to print, the York Branch Wings Appeal for 2024 stood at : **£7354.51**. This is a very impressive amount considering we are only part way into the collecting year.

Congratulations to Ian Smith, our Wings Appeal Officer, and to all those members and Air Cadets who turn out to raise money for the appeal. If you want to help, there are still plenty of opportunities between now and the end of September! Details of collection dates are on the back page and on the noticeboard at the Branch Club.

REVISED BRANCH CLUB OPENING DURING WEEKDAYS.

Please note that the Branch Club will now be opening on Wednesdays , from 1200 hrs to 1500 hrs instead of Thursday evenings. This is due to a lack of attendance on Thursday evenings over the last year or so.

FUNERAL OF BRANCH MEMBER ROY SHAKESPEARE



The funeral of Branch member Roy Shakespeare took place at York Crematorium on Tuesday 30 January. York Branch was represented by Standard Bearer Gordon Murden, Dick Gray, Steve Pearson and Andy Bryne.

Born in March 1930, in Coventry, Roy attended Grammar School and also Coventry Cathedral choir, until the Cathedral was destroyed by Luftwaffe bombing raids in November 1940. After leaving school, Roy did his National Service in the Army, where his interest in working with maps and charts with the Royal Engineers became a lifelong interest for him. He was also able to pursue his love of rugby, a sport at which he excelled. After National Service, Roy moved to York, to begin his training as a teacher, where he met his future wife. For a while, they moved to Nigeria, where Roy taught British Leyland employees.

A change in Roy's career came when he was commissioned into the Royal Air Force as an Education Officer. He served for 16 years, retiring as a squadron leader. The family's tours of duty included RAF Changi (Singapore) RAF Cosford and RAF Lossiemouth. The family also lived in Spain for a time, before eventually settling in York. Two of Roy's children currently live overseas, one in Spain and the other in the USA. Roy certainly enjoyed a well-travelled life and was well-respected as a parent, teacher and rugby player.

BRIAN MENNELL

1946 2024



Brian Mennell died on 4 February 2024 and his funeral took place at York Crematorium on Tuesday 12 March. A large contingent of RAFA members and Air Cadet officers formed a guard of honour and the Branch Standard was carried by Gordon Murden. The service was conducted by our RAFA Branch Padre, the Rev. David Simpson. The eulogy was read by Brian's son, Gary and his Grandson, Oliver Mennell, spoke about some of the amusing occurrences in Brian's life. A reading was given by York Branch Chairman, Andy Bryne.

There were many RAFA York Branch members present as well as friends and colleagues from Brian's time in the Air Cadets as a Volunteer Reserve Training officer. Brian was a member of the RAF Association for 23 years and he was York Branch Chairman for 5 years and vice-Chairman for some years prior to that.

As a young teenager, Brian wanted to join the RAF as a radar technician, but his father, who had served in the RAF, felt that this was no career for a young lad. Brian was not put off completely by this parental advice and had joined the air cadets as soon as he could, when he enrolled with No 110 City of York Squadron, rising to the rank of cadet warrant officer. Later, he was an enthusiastic member of No 2487 Easingwold Squadron Air Cadets. Brian also researched the history of several RAF stations in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and wrote books on these topics. He was a member of the Aircrew Association (White Rose) Branch until it closed, and produced the Branch newsletter "The Gen."

Brian's first job after leaving school was as an apprentice technician with the Post Office, for whom he worked for several years. In 1963, the Great Train Robbery took place and the British Transport Police came to the Post Office in York seeking expert opinion on how the criminals had bypassed the railway signals and it was at this time Brian applied to join the British Transport Police. Starting in the Hull area, Brian was in the British Transport Police for over 25 years and rose to the rank of Inspector, commanding the York region for the British Transport Police.

In 1985, Brian renewed his passion for the Air Cadet Organisation and re-joined as a Civilian Instructor at 2487 (Easingwold Sqn) but was quickly commissioned into the RAF VR(T). This began a long association with Easingwold Squadron, eventually becoming its Commanding Officer and later Chairman. It was also about this time that he renewed his interest in gliding, having first gone solo with the Air Cadets at RAF Spitalgate, near Grantham in the 1960's. Many weekends were spent at Dishforth, flying with the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association. After leaving the Police, gliding became his full-time job, being the Airfield Manager at Rufforth Gliding Club. Here, he was an instructor and tug pilot and accumulated many flying hours. He also taught David Jason to fly motor-gliders whilst he was in Yorkshire filming a Touch of Frost in the 1990's.

After retiring from the VR(T), he was asked to come back and assist as the Regional Public Relations Officer, a role he particularly enjoyed as it meant he could put his interest in photography to good use, he also rose to the rank of Squadron Leader. Brian later became a Fraud Investigator for the City of York Council, once again using the skills he had learnt as a Detective in the Police. He also undertook a degree in criminology.

One of Brian's greatest interests was touring old battlefields across Europe and visiting the Commonwealth War Graves sites associated with them. Over the years, he visited sites in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Poland and Italy. Some of these tours included group tours with members of RAFA York Branch.

In 2005, together with son Gary, Brian began researching a book on the war graves at RAF Scampton, this led to three more books on a similar subject and also a book on the history of Easingwold Squadron Air Cadets. The books were published and sold several thousand copies. Whilst these books provide a lasting legacy of Brian's interest in military and aviation history, most of us will remember Brian for his dedication to RAFA York Branch, both as a member and a highly valued trustee.

VISIT TO RAFA YORK BRANCH BY RAFA SENIOR TEAM

At the end of January, our Branch was notified of a forthcoming visit in March by three members of the RAF Association HQ trustees, namely the RAFA President, Air Marshal Sir Baz North KCB OBE, the RAFA Chairman, Air vice Marshal Alastair Reid CB and the RAFA Secretary General/CEO, Mr Nick Bunting OBE. Arrangements were made between HQ, our Branch and Branch Club officers to host our VIP guests at the Club on Tuesday 5 March. They had been visiting various locations in the north of England and Scotland, and had visited RAFA Kidzone facilities at RAF Boulmer and RAF Leeming earlier that day.

Although this was not a usual “Club night,” members rallied round, and we met our visitors at about 6pm. As it was still daylight when they arrived, they requested that they have a look around the outside of our Branch Club building. The Branch Chairman escorted them and then brought them into the Club where they were able to meet and chat with our Committee members and several of our Branch members. Refreshments were provided by the Branch Club Chair, Denise Edgar, and some members also brought in food, which was most welcome. Branch President, Dick Gray, gave the visitors a guided tour of the internals of our building and described our plans to open up the ground floor for easier access and use, and also the need for new toilet facilities.



Later in the evening, the Branch Chairman presented Sir Baz North with a cheque for £1000.00 towards facilities at RAFA's Rothbury House, which is now a residential care home for RAF veterans. This funding from the

Branch Welfare Account, is made possible due to the healthy state of the welfare fund at present.



2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The Branch Club Annual General Meeting took place at the Club on Saturday 24 February. The meeting was well-attended and all those Committee members previously in post were re-elected.

The Branch Annual General Meeting took place, as planned, on Saturday 9 March at 12 noon. The meeting was well attended, more members than last year in fact. In total 30 members, including the Branch Committee members, attended the meeting. All those members who had put their names forward for Trustee and Officer committee roles were voted in. The vacant Deputy Standard Bearer's role was filled by Adrian Gunn. There are still too many Branch Committee duties being undertaken by one or two individuals, and we hope that more members will come forward to take on some of the duties over the next 12 months.

TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONY - 2 APRIL 2024

On Tuesday 2 April 2024, a number of York branch members, together with members of Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron took part in the Turning of the Page ceremony for April, which commemorates the founding of the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918.

The page was turned by RAFA York Branch member Hazel Birchall, Flt Lt Simon Kinnersley YUAS and Officer Cadet Wilson, YUAS, representing the past, present and future of the Royal Air Force. At the end of the ceremony, prayers were led by the Rev John Hetherington, Padre at RAF Leeming. The ceremony was overseen by our Branch President, Dick Gray and the Branch Standard was carried by Gordon Murden, with Tim Kitching bearing the Royal Observer Corps Association Area Standard.



As usual, after the ceremony, Branch members and guests made their way to the Branch Club in Aldwark for refreshments.



CHEQUE PRESENTATION AT RAFA ROTHBURY HOUSE.

On 14 March, York Branch Welfare Officer, Mr Ron Ford, presented a cheque for £1000 to Mr David Dick, RAFA Rothbury House Manager. The funds will be used to purchase much needed garden furniture for the Rothbury House residents.



INTRODUCTION OF THE UK WIDER SERVICE MEDAL



In late March 2024, the British Government announced the introduction of the Wider Service Medal. The Wider Service Medal is a British award intended to recognise the service of members of the armed forces and civilians on operations classed as being "below the threshold for war", with a level of risk regarded as lower than that for which personnel might be eligible to receive either a relevant Operational Service Medal, or the General Service Medal with appropriate clasp.

The changing nature of global operations leads to the potential that large numbers of Service personnel in support and enabling roles may in future not be eligible for the receipt of medals, while the increasing number of operations that do not meet the risk and rigour criteria for the award of either a campaign medal or the GSM with clasp would see personnel deployed for long periods on hazardous operations without the prospect of an award at the end. As a result, the Holmes Review, as part of its recommendations, suggested the creation of a new medal aimed at rewarding this kind of operational service that would not meet the general criteria for the award of a campaign medal. The concept for a new decoration was approved in principle by Queen Elizabeth II in December 2018. Final approval for the new decoration was granted by King Charles III in March 2024.

The obverse of the medal features the traditional effigy of the sovereign. The reverse depicts the crown within a ring containing the words "For Wider Service". From the ring emerge four arrows at the four cardinal

points, symbolising "reach across the world", with the whole contained within a laurel wreath to symbolise service and achievement. The medal ribbon contains a central purple stripe, which is intended to signify the cross-government nature of operations, with symmetrical narrower stripes of white, sky blue, dark blue and green outside the central stripe - these signify air operations (sky blue), naval operations (dark blue) and land operations (green) respectively.

The qualification for the WSM is as follows:

Retrospective from 11 December 2018, personnel must have served up to 180 days aggregated (not necessarily continuous) service on an eligible operation. Additional service up to another 180 days will see individuals receive a bar to the medal, with a maximum of three bars capable of being awarded.

The initial set of operations eligible for the award of the Wider Service Medal were:

Operation AZOTIZE - the UK contribution to the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission

Operation BILOXI - the UK contribution to the NATO Southern Air Policing mission

Operation CABRIT - the forward deployment of UK land forces to Estonia and Poland as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence

Operation KIPION - the ongoing UK presence in the Persian Gulf region

Operation ORBITAL - the UK operation to provide training and support to Armed Forces of Ukraine from 2015 to 2022

Operation RELENTLESS - the UK's Continuous At-Sea nuclear deterrent operation

Operation WOODWALL - the UK's forward deployment of two River-class patrol vessels to the Indo-Pacific region.

BLACKBURN BEVERLEY XB259 UPDATE

The February 2021 edition of the Aldwark Chronicle included an illustrated article on the last surviving Blackburn Beverley transport aircraft, number XB259, whose future was very uncertain. and it was still languishing at Fort Paull, near Hull, with its four piston engines removed.



Beverley XL149 on static display at RAF Finningley in September 1974.

Fortunately, the aircraft was donated to the Solway Aviation Museum, Carlisle Airport, in early 2024 and a “JustGiving” page was set up to cover the cost of dismantling the aircraft and moving it to Carlisle for reassembly and preservation. The target amount to be raised was £60,000. Over a period of just 64 days, the Museum had raised the required sum to move the aircraft, an amazing achievement. This was especially impressive given that the Blackburn Beverley is not exactly one of the World’s most iconic aircraft. The RAF was the only air force to operate the type and it had, how should we put it, very old fashioned looks! However, until these aircraft were retired in 1967, they served the RAF very well, particularly in the Near and Middle East as well as the Far East.

Originally, 4 Beverley aircraft survived the scrapyards, but 3 were ultimately scrapped, leaving the Solway Museum example as the only complete survivor. XL149 might have survived at RAF Finningley, but the Royal Review of the RAF at RAF Finningley in 1977, meant that the “museum”



Beverley survivor XB259 in Court Line service in 1974.

collection had to move. XL149 was considered too big to move (it was not airworthy) and so it was cut up.

Beverley XB259 has cheated the scrapman on more than one occasion and now it will soon be moving from Paul to the Solway Museum at Carlisle, where it will be reassembled and restored. This will be quite a complex task! Ironically, this aircraft never actually served on an RAF Squadron, being used for trials work for most of its life. It will make a very impressive, and important, addition to the Solway Aviation Museum's collection at Carlisle.



A WELFARE CASE

By RON FORD - BRANCH HWO

Earlier this year, I was contacted by the wife of an ex-RAF member who died in November 2023, to help resolve an issue regarding his Armed Forces Pension (AFP). Her son, who does not reside in York, telephoned the RAF Pensions Department and informed them of the death of his father, and they immediately ceased payment of the pension. Apparently, they then wrote to the Serviceman's widow, enclosing the requisite widow's claim forms to be completed and returned for further action. However, upon receiving no reply, the AFP closed the case.

There had been no further action until I became involved in March, and my investigation included contacting the following: Armed Forces Pensions Service, Veteran's UK Pensions, Equiniti Pensions and the DBS Pensions MOD. The responses were voice-recorded requests to choose various numbers by phone, which resulted in very little progress. However, after many attempts I eventually contacted a real person, who was very helpful, and after consulting records, he said that the death was reported and the pension payments had ceased and subsequently a letter was sent the widow of the deceased airman, explaining the procedures to claim a widow's pension.

However, I was assured categorically by the widow that no such letter had been received and she had no idea of who to contact for help. The gentleman I spoke to apologised and said he would arrange for another letter to be sent to her. He then asked me for her address although I assumed he would have sight of that in his records when the department sent the first letter!

Subsequently, a further letter was received by the lady concerned and, with my assistance, we completed the requisite forms and posted them to the AFP department. After a frustrating process the lady has now been awarded her widow's pension commencing in April which also included a lump sum payment for the period Nov 23 to Mar 24.

The process has been long and time consuming, but we eventually achieved a satisfactory result. However, there may be more men and women beneficiaries who suffered the loss of their partner and have yet to receive their pensions. If this is the case, then I implore you to contact me and I will do my best to assist you.

AVIATION PICTURE DONATION TO BRANCH CLUB



On Saturday 13 April, the Branch and Branch Club received a generous donation of a framed and glazed aviation print from Mr Joe Quin. Mr Quin had previously contacted our Branch secretary, Steve Pearson, offering the picture free of charge for us to display or to auction for fund raising.

The picture, a print of the original painted by the aviation artist John Rayson (died 1995) depicts a Spitfire aircraft coming in to land over the Kent countryside. The picture was received by the Branch Chairman, who thanked Mr Quin for his kind donation of a very attractive picture.

ANNUAL ELMS SERVICE AT EDEN CAMP – 27 APRIL 2024

The Annual World War Two Escape Lines Memorial Society service and parade took place, as usual, at Eden Camp Museum on Saturday 27 April at 11 am. A number of our Branch members attended and the Branch Standard was carried by Gordon Murden. Branch Chairman Andy Bryne laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch, whilst Denise Edgar, in her role as RBL President, also laid a wreath.



The Band of the Yorkshire Volunteers at the ELMS Service at Eden Camp.

The service opened with an address from Roger Stanton MBE, who explained the background and the reasons for ELMS. The prayers were led by the Rev. Canon John Manchester and the closing remarks by Roger Stanton MBE. Music was provided by the Band of the Yorkshire Volunteers, whose repertoire included a drums only piece, which was very impressive. Students from Hernani in the Basque region of Northern Spain and from San Benedetto del Tronto in Italy attended the event. Both regions were significant in their residents' assistance in helping Allied escapees and evaders to reach safety during World War II. Given the passing of the years, it is more important than ever to engage younger people in aspects of the history of their forebears, as nearly all the veterans of that conflict have now passed on.



This year marks the 80th anniversary of the start of the liberation of Europe on D-Day, 6 June 1944, and the subsequent Battle of Normandy. D-Day was the successful allied invasion of the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944. Codenamed Operation Neptune, the Normandy landings made up the largest seaborne invasion in history and played a crucial role in liberating Western Europe from Nazi occupation.

D-Day was of unprecedented scale. The allied forces' staggering operation involved the coordinated efforts of more than 155,000 troops supported by 11,500 aircraft, and 6,900 naval vessels in an assault on five Normandy beachheads: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. Integral to its success were years of planning, intelligence gathering, and deception campaigns, as well as the courage of the thousands of brave men that stormed the beaches that day. D-Day altered the course of history, signalling the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany. Allied forces shattered Hitler's Atlantic Wall, opening another major front, and affording them a crucial foothold in Western Europe. The Normandy Campaign featured intense and gruelling battles to liberate key cities like Caen. The establishment of a secure front in Normandy was crucial for allied forces to launch further offensives, leading to the liberation of Paris, the push towards Germany, and, ultimately, to victory.

There are a number of events taking place in the UK and Normandy over the anniversary period. This link will take you to the UK Government D Day 80th official website: [D-Day 80 - D-Day 80 \(dday80.campaign.gov.uk\)](https://dday80.campaign.gov.uk)

In York, a ceremony will take place at York Railway Station on Thursday 6 June to mark the 80th Anniversary. Members of our Branch will be present.

Events for RAFA York Branch - 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.

2024

Fri 10 May 24: Wings Collection Morrisons Foss Islands Road.

Sat 11 May 24: RAF East Moor Memorial ceremony – Sutton on the Forest.
1430 hrs.

Wed 15 May 24: Film show at the Club - "What we did on our holidays." 1230
for 1300 hrs.

Sat 18 May 24: RAFA SNINE Area Conference - Glynhill Hotel & Spa,
Renfrew, Glasgow.

Wed 29 May: Navigating Dementia Course (run by RAFA HQ staff)
at the Club - 0930 to 1530 hrs.

Thu 6 Jun 24: D Day 80th Anniversary Event - York Railway Station.

Fri 7 Jun 24: Turning of the Page Ceremony 1030 for 1100 hrs.

Fri 14 Jun 24: Wings Collection Monks Cross Shopping Park.

Wed 19 Jun: Finding it Tough Course (run by RAFA HQ staff) at the Club -
100 to 1400 hrs.

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.

Sat 6 Jul 24: York Armed Forces Day Event - LNER Stadium.

Fri 12 Jul 24: Wings Collection Vangarde Shopping Park.

Wed 21 Aug 24: Wings Collection - York Racecourse.

Sun 1 Sep 24: Allied Air Forces Memorial Day - YAM Elvington.

Sun 8 Sep 24: All Services Parade & Service, Eden Camp.

Sat 14 Sep 24: Wings City Street Collection.

Regarding the **Wings Appeal** events listed above, the Wings Appeal Officer will contact those members who regularly volunteer prior to the collection dates.