

# THE ALDWARE CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



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Club opening hours: Wed: 12 30 pm to 3 30.pm Sat: 11.30 am to 3 pm.

Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 393

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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: On Saturday 6 July, some members of our Branch attended the Armed Forces Day event at the LNER Stadium at Monks Cross. The gazebo was erected and manned by some of our members, including Dick Gray, Steve Pearson and Chris Thorpe. (Photo via S Pearson)***

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## DISCLAIMER

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## EDITORIAL

This has been a very busy period for both the Branch and Branch Club, with several key events taking place, including attendance at a D-Day anniversary event at York Railway Station, the Turning of the Page Ceremony on 7 June and Armed Forces Day events as well as the Annual Joint Church Service. Club activities have continued and, despite low attendance numbers on some occasions, our new Wednesday lunchtime opening times (replacing Thursday evenings) seems to be settling in, especially when it coincides with a monthly film show.

This year's Area Conference appeared to be a much better event than some of the previous years and a report, by Ron Ford, is reproduced on page 10. There are some resolutions covered in the report, not least being the proposal to change to a "one member one vote" system. Please read and let the Committee have your views.

The latest edition of "Air Mail" includes a piece on the challenge facing RAF Association branches and clubs. I quote: "Each year the number of RAF Association branches decreases by roughly ten per cent. A number of factors have an impact on branches' survival: the requirement to carry out governance activity, the availability of volunteers, changing membership demographics and more. In May 2024, there were fewer than 225 RAFA

branches.” Our current membership is close to 400 and yet we only have a few people willing to serve on the Branch and Branch Club committees. We have the same people turning up to help with collections and events and the vast majority of our membership seems to be invisible. There is no doubt that the closure of nearby RAF Linton on Ouse has affected us adversely, but time has moved on and yet we still seem unable to attract new and existing members to help. I know I’ve banged on about this before, but I will keep doing so; otherwise, our Branch and Club will go the same way as so many others.

Sadly, one of our oldest Branch members, Mr Milton Robinson, died peacefully on 11 June at the grand old age of 103. He had been a member of the RAF Association for 63 years. His funeral took place at the Church of the Epiphany, Tockwith on Tuesday, July 9th.

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## WINGS APPEAL UPDATE 2024



At the time of going to print, the York Branch Wings Appeal for 2024 stood at :**£12938.15**. This is an excellent result for the year so far. A reminder that there will be more Wings collections soon, including at the Railway Station on 1 August and the Racecourse on 21 August.

### **REVISED BRANCH CLUB OPENING DURING WEEKDAYS.**

**Please note that the Branch Club will now be opening on Wednesdays , from 1230 hrs to 1530 hrs instead of Thursday evenings. This is due to a lack of attendance on Thursday evenings over the last year or so.**

## RAF EAST MOOR MEMORIAL SERVICE – 11 MAY 2024

The annual RAF East Moor memorial service took place at the Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial at Sutton on the Forest on Saturday 11 May. The weather was warm and sunny. Ten members of RAFA York Branch attended, including our Standard Bearer, Gordon Murden. Indeed, our Branch Standard was the only one present, a noticeable difference from previous years, where at least four or five other standards would be paraded.

The guest of honour was Lieutenant Colonel Patrick LeBlanc, Royal Canadian Air Force, who is currently based in the UK at RAF High Wycombe. Also present was Rachel Semlyen MBE from the Yorkshire Air Museum, air cadets from No 2487 (Easingwold) Squadron and members of the Sutton on the Forest village community.

Two pipers were present and they signalled the commencement of the service. An address of welcome was given by Lieutenant Colonel LeBlanc RCAF, followed by reflections and prayers led by Revd Steve Whiting. The Act of Remembrance, led by Squadron Leader Henry Morgan RAF (Retd) The Last Post and Reveille were sounded by Mr Jamie Higdon and wreaths were laid by representatives of the organisations present, starting with Lieutenant Colonel Patrick LeBlanc who laid wreaths and flowers on behalf of No 415 and 429 squadrons RCAF. Mr Robert Sheffield laid a wreath on behalf of Sutton on the Forest and Rachel Semlyen MBE laid a wreath on behalf of the Yorkshire Air Museum, whilst York branch Chairman Andy Bryne laid the RAF Association York Branch wreath. Wreaths were also laid by a member of Easingwold Squadron Air Cadets and by Oliver Mennell.



After the closing remarks by Mr Robert Sheffield, representing Sutton on the Forest Parish Council and the playing of the Canadian and UK national anthems, those present made their way to the Grey Village Hall, where 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.

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. However, 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.



*A Halifax III of No 415 Sqn RCAF at RAF East Moor in 1944.*

## YORKSHIRE AIR MUSEUM FRENCH AIR FORCE ELVINGTON 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

On 16 May 1944, French Air Force personnel arrived at RAF Elvington and, shortly afterwards, commenced operations over Nazi-occupied Europe, flying Handley Page Halifax bombers. No 346 “Guyenne” Squadron was formed on 16 May 1944 with No 347 “Tunisie” Squadron also forming at Elvington on 20 June 1944. The French squadrons remained at Elvington until October 1945, when they flew their Halifax aircraft to Bordeaux, marking the end of the French Air Force wartime association with RAF Elvington.

However, this was not the end of the association, which has grown over the years, especially with the establishment of the Yorkshire Air Museum and Allied Air Forces Memorial in 1985. To mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the raising of the French Tricolour at RAF Elvington, a special ceremony was held at the exact location on the morning of 16 May 2024. The ceremony commenced with an address and service led by the Air Museum Padre, Rev Taff Morgan. The French Tricolour was raised by Messrs Paul Bogaert and Alain Mallia. The ceremony concluded with the reading of a letter to Paul Bogaert, the retiring president of the Association des Anciens et Amis des Groupes Lourdes. Paul’s dedication to the association between the French Association and the Yorkshire Air Museum has ensured that the links today remain as strong as the dark days of the Second World War. Around 2300 French airmen and groundcrew were based at Elvington in 1944-45 during which time 41 aircraft and 216 airmen were lost in the cause of freedom.







The ceremony was followed by a guided tour of a new exhibition (1944-45) and a chance for a close-up tour of the Museum's Halifax BIII bomber, which is currently on display outside the hangar. The event ended with a buffet lunch for invited dignitaries and guests with speeches by Rachel Semlyen and Ian Richardson, and a toast to the Entente Cordiale by M. Sebastian Bidaud, Deputy Head of Mission, French Embassy, London.





Guests attending the event included the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, the Sherriff of North Yorkshire, the Lord Mayor of York and Civic Party. Several Royal Air Force personnel also attended as well as Mr Ken Cook, a surviving veteran of the 1944 D-Day landings. There was considerable local media present to record the event.



It was an honour for Pat and I to represent RAFA York Branch at this event, together with our Branch Club Chairman, Denise Edgar, in her role as Royal British Legion York Branch President.

## AREA CONFERENCE 2024

This year's Area Conference took place at Renfrew, Glasgow, on 18 May. Our Branch delegate, Ron Ford, attended.



### ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION YORK SNINE CONFERENCE REPORT - 18<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024

The Conference was chaired by the Area President, Air Commodore (Ret'd) Stuart Stirrat, and subsequent to his opening remarks, it was noted that:-

#### **A Voice for All.**

1. An update of the work towards the '**One Member One Vote**' was still in progress and branches were urged to consult with their members with regard to voting for this proposal, and anyone who wishes to have their say on this matter can get in touch by e-mailing comments and questions to [voiceforall@rafa.org.uk](mailto:voiceforall@rafa.org.uk). The final version of the document will be distributed to branches in time to inform them of the resolutions at the Annual Conference 2024.

It was noted that **not all** branches use their vote and the majority of

members do not vote at conference. However the opinions of the York branch were sought as to whether they would support the 'One Member One Vote' at the Annual Conference 2024. It was highlighted that if we give every member an opportunity to vote for resolutions and they ignored it, then they would have no right to complain afterwards.

### **Forward Together.**

2. An update of the '**Forward Together Working Group**' was presented by Margaret Greer and this is still in progress with the aim of reviewing the way in which branches, clubs and RMGs presently function. Therefore, to find out more about the key challenges facing branches and the impact they are having, it was requested that branch members help by considering and answering the following questions: -

- In your experience, what is causing branches and RMGs to close?
- How important is it to your branch to remain an individual charity?
- How would you feel about funds being held by HQ as a restricted fund for your use?
- How many local footprint activities does your branch undertake?
- Would you like to do more of these activities?

### **A lack of volunteers.**

3. Currently, many branches are closing to become RMG's due to a lack of volunteers to take on committee responsibilities and it was suggested that more emphasis be placed upon the need to get more people involved through the use of e-mail, telephone calls, face-book, social media and face-to-face discussions.

### **One Charity.**

4. It was stated categorically that there is NO intention to consider the option of **One Charity** by amalgamating the RAF Benevolent Fund with the Royal Air Forces Association. Both of these organisations cater for different aspects, although they do communicate with each other and offer assistance.

### **A plea for funds.**

5. CEO/Secretary General Nick Bunting and President Sir Baz North have commented that there was a need for branches to bring funds from local level to National level on the basis that if a branch has more than £5,000 held in its local fund, then it would be appreciated if committees could consider donating the extra funds to central account. And it was noted that

the York branch had already transferred £10,000 from their Welfare Fund to the central account and in addition had agreed to forego their Wings rebate for this year. The York SNINE representative Ron Ford was assured that should funds be required in future for members of the York branch, then they would be available.

### **SNINE Area Issues.**

6. It was noted that there were a number of vacancies for SNINE Council Committee member positions, and it was requested that any member who believes they can commit to any of these positions contact HQ to discuss the issue.

7. Susan Kidston, the Area Chairperson, briefed the conference stating that the SNINE area is the largest geographical area in the UK having more than 9000 members including many serving personnel, and they have been the most successful area in terms of Wings Appeal fundraising. A total of **18** branches raised more than £2,000, **8** branches raised more than £5,000, and **2** branches raised superb amounts of over **£20,000 from York** and **£30,000 from Carrickfergus**. Therefore, a huge thanks was offered to our fundraisers especially our Branch Wings Appeal Officer Ian Smith who has done a fantastic job of inspiring and organizing members and volunteers into raising funds, and Ron Ford the York Honorary Welfare Officer accepted the Fundraising £20,000 Certificate for 2023 on his behalf.

8. There were discussions regarding the present Cost of Living (COL) Crisis which was at the forefront of requests for assistance with the main reasons highlighted as financial difficulties associated with 'energy bills,' 'food poverty,' 'homelessness' 'debt' and 'mental health issues'. A survey of needs revealed the following results:

80% of members were afraid to pay bills.

69% found it difficult to pay unexpected bills, such as car repairs or central heating bills.

59% said that there was a negative impact on their lives.

47% had to use savings which affected their future plans.

The impact of the present Cost of Living Crisis is affecting many members whose ages range from 18 to 105 and there has sadly been an increase in welfare casework of 16% cases in 2023.

9. RAFA income for the year 2023 was £16.2 million with expenditure at £17.7 million and it was noted that during the period 2014-2023 (nine years), a total of £115 million has been spent on welfare.

10. The SNINE Area has played a huge role in Welfare support Provided by the Area's 39 Case Workers, 13 Branch Welfare Officers and 3 Assistant Branch Welfare Officers, with a total of 614 beneficiaries being given support throughout 2023. **74.8%** were given **financial** support, **11.8%** were given **non-financial** support and **11%** were given both **financial and non-financial** support. This highlighted the fact that financial difficulties was the highest result of hardship and this figure is unlikely to change in the near future.

11. With specific reference to the SNINE area, it was noted that there are **52 Branches, 8 RMGs and 14 Clubs** and once again, it is quite likely that these numbers will decline in the future due to the problems identified earlier. Therefore, it is paramount for the future of RAFA Membership that we request our branch members to assist with recruitment by conversing with family, friends and neighbours in an endeavor to encourage them to join RAFA as Serving/Ordinary or Associate members.

### **RAF Association total membership.**

In total there are now only **65,538** members of RAFA in 109 countries with 229 Branches. Sadly, it is estimated that these numbers will further decline due to ageing members and the inability to recruit members into committee positions.

### **Rothbury House Update.**

12. Rothbury House which is presently being converted from holiday break accommodation into Retirement Accommodation now has 99 single room residents and the chairman gave his thanks to the York branch for their ongoing financial support to the management in aid of welfare for the residents.

13. There was concern by some branches that Rothbury was no longer being used as a holiday respite facility, but it was highlighted that it was not financially viable to continue with this and provide full residency occupation. The facility would provide excellent residential care for many years to come. It was also noted that the Rothbury House manager has stated that the conversion of some rooms into married couple accommodation is being progressed and this fact will be advertised upon completion.

14. It was also stated that Holiday Homes were available in Selsey Holiday Home (Chichester) Hemsby Holiday Chalets (Great Yarmouth), and Dunbar Holiday Home (East Lothian Scotland) These were exclusively for RAF Veterans, and the spouses, partners, widows and widowers of RAF Veterans, and serving RAF Personnel and their families.

## Conclusion.

15. The meeting closed with a speech from Air Cdre Stirrat as he thanked those representative members for attending and offered his appreciation for the magnificent efforts of all members of branches, RMGs and clubs for their sterling efforts to support RAFA throughout the year.

*R Ford*

R Ford  
Conference Delegate  
RAFA York Branch

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*Some of the York Branch members at the Railway Station ceremony on the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, 6 June 2024*

## D-DAY 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE AT YORK RAILWAY STATION

A special commemorative service, organised by the York Branch of the Royal British Legion, in conjunction with LNER York, was held at the York Normandy Veterans' Association Memorial Bench on Platform 3 at York Railway Station at 1100 hrs on Thursday 6 June 2024. This was one of many similar events taking place in the UK and in Normandy to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day, the Allied invasion of occupied Europe.

The service was attended by a number of Royal British Legion (RBL) members and also several members of RAF Association York Branch. The guest of honour at the service was Mr Joe Thomas, Royal Navy, aged 99, who took part in those momentous events on 6 June 1944.



The short service commenced with the Act of Homage, given by Denise Edgar, the President York Branch, Royal British Legion. The Last Post and Reveille, were sounded by Jamie Highton, York Railway Institute Band. Wreaths were laid by the Sherriff of York, Ms Fiona Fitzpatrick, Denise Edgar on behalf of York Branch Royal British Legion and Andy Bryne, Chairman RAF Association York Branch, on behalf of the York RAFA Branch. Prayers and a Reading were given by Revd. David Hobman, RBL York Branch Padre and Helen Bartlet, York Railway Chaplain.

This was followed by an Address, "Returning Heroes", read by The Sherriff



of York, Ms Fiona Fitzpatrick and a poem, “No Crosses”, read by Mr Martin Rowley Vice-Chairman, York RBL. The service concluded with a poem, “Normandy,” by D-Day Veteran Cyril Crain (97), read by Denise Edgar.

The event received considerable interest from staff and passengers at the Station and also from local media.

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### **TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONY - 7 JUNE 2024**

The second Turning of the Page Ceremony for 2024 took place on Friday 7 June at York Minster at 1100 hrs. The page turners were, Mrs Janet Hazelwood (RAFA York Branch), Group Captain David Melmoth (RAF Halton) and Officer Cadet Katie Thompson (Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron) representing the past, present and future of the Royal Air Force respectively. This ceremony marks the official Birthday of the Monarch, King Charles III.



*The three page turners in front of the Minster Astral Clock.*

The ceremony was under the command of our Branch President, Dick Gray and the Raison d'être and RAF Association dedication were read by Branch Chairman Andy Bryne. Gordon Murden carried the York RAFA Branch Standard and Tim Kitching carried the ROCA Area Standard. In addition, a small contingent of Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron personnel were in attendance and a good number of RAFA York Branch members.

After the ceremony, most attendees attended the Branch Club in Aldwark for refreshments, the Bar being staffed by Mike Birchall and Jean Snelling. Refreshments were prepared and served by Hazel Birchall, Pat Harrington and Kate Woods.

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**THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY COMMEMORATIONS AT OMAHA BEACH TO REMEMBER & HONOUR THOSE FROM 21 BASE DEFENCE SECTOR & NO 15082 GCI WHO DIED THAT DAY.**

**BY GP CAPT (RETD) TIM WILBOND, PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION OF RAF FIGHTER CONTROL OFFICERS**  
**Article reproduced with his kind permission.**

A key RAF role on D Day was to defend the assault areas from enemy air attacks by day and by night. Experience gained from amphibious operations in the Mediterranean had shown that it was crucial to establish Tactical Air Surveillance and Control (TASAC) units ashore as quickly as possible. These units were relatively small but the military effect they deployed was out of all proportion to their size.

Number 15082 Ground Control Interception (GCI) was one of two TASAC units assigned to the assault and, because the US Army did not have a mobile TASAC capability at the time, it landed on Omaha beach to provide air defence over the American beaches. The unit was comprehensively equipped with three surveillance and control radars designated Type 11, Type 14 and Type 15, a height finding radar designated a Type 13, operations facilities and extensive communications. The unit personnel had received combined operations training and were true fighting Airmen which was to stand them in good stead. Also landing that day was the advanced element of their controlling headquarters, 21 Base Defence Sector (BDS). The five Landing Craft Tank (LCT) carrying 15082 GCI and 21 BDS personnel were to land at midday, but, as they approached the beach, it was being subjected to intense fire and was covered with the dead and the detritus of war. The LCTs withdrew but at around 1700 hours, even though the beach had still not been secured, the order to land was given. By this time, it was low tide and what was not known is that the approach contained

a series of sand banks just below the surface with areas of much deeper water in between. The vehicles had been waterproofed to land in up to 2 & ½ feet of water.

As each LCT grounded the water depth was measured and the green light to land given; however, vehicle after vehicle quickly ran into deep water and were submerged. The problem was exacerbated because the tide was now coming in. The LCT carrying the Type 13 height finding radar grounded a very long way from the beach and the Captain refused to try and get closer and ordered an immediate disembarkation. All vehicles leaving this LCT were lost and the Type 13 disappeared into a particularly deep water and was never seen again. The Type 11 and 14 surveillance and control radars were 'drowned' and only the Type 15 surveillance and control radar, albeit damaged left the beach. Out of 27 vehicles that disembarked, 15 were 'drowned,' 4 were destroyed on the beach and only 8 managed to exit the beach. A total of 6 RAF personnel were killed with one missing and 41 wounded, many seriously, out of a strength of some 150. Four Military crosses, out of only 69 awarded to RAF officers in the war, were won that day and two military medals and subsequently a Croix de Guerre were also awarded. This is possibly the largest number of gallantry awards presented for one operation other than the Dambusters. Apart from the missing man who is remembered on the Runnymede memorial those that died are buried in the British War Cemetery at Bayeux. A memorial to those that died and were injured from 21 BDS and No 15082 GCI stands above the beach at Vierville sur Mer.

This year (2024) saw the 80th Anniversary of the landings and the Association decided we should mark this special anniversary. The Chief of the Air Staff was contacted and he agreed to support the event and detailed Air Commodore Jamie Thompson to represent him and authorised a contingent from the Air Surveillance and Control Force, under the leadership of Squadron Leader Dan Brown, to attend. Our Association agent at large in France, Yves Gagnon, did sterling work and arranged matters with the Mayor of Vierville who hosted the ceremony alongside the 29th US Infantry Division and arranged for both a contingent from the French Air Force and, most importantly, the Air Attaché to be there. An Army Signals organisation called 16 Air Formation Signals was attached to 21 BDS to provide landline communications and despatch riders and they lost five killed in the landings; we approached the Royal Signals at short notice and they responded very positively and sent two representatives.

A family situation prevented Yves attending the events in Normandy and he was very much missed; it would not have been possible to put on the event without his hard work. For many years the story of the RAF landings over Omaha beach on D day had all but disappeared into the margins of history

but one man was determined that this story of heroism and sacrifice should not be lost and it was through his efforts that the story now shines as a defining part of our heritage. That man was Dr Les Dobinson who actually landed on D+3 but lost a close friend on the beaches that fateful day. Les was also a moving force along with the Mayor of Vierville in organising the erection of the memorial at Vierville which was unveiled at the 70th anniversary in 2014. The memorial stands on an esplanade built over the top of a German bunker and shares the space with memorials to the 116th Infantry Regiment which led the 29th Division assault at Vierville and the US National Guard memorial. It was my privilege to escort Les at the 75th anniversary events but he died three years ago. He is very fondly remembered in Vierville and he was sadly missed.



*The RAF Memorial with Les in 2019.*

Our main events took place on the 4th of June to deconflict with American events on the 5th and the international event at the American cemetery on the 6th June. We started the day with a private ceremony at the Bayeux war cemetery. The event was attended by Air Commodore Jamie Thompson, the Air Attaché, the RAF and French Air Force contingents and the Royal Signals Corps. We laid tributes on the graves to both the RAF and Army personnel who were killed on Omaha Beach and then I honoured Les by carrying on a tradition he had been following for many years of sharing a drink with the Airmen who died. I can report I used a good malt.

After the ceremony we all departed for Vierville for the main event of the day. The commemoration at Vierville was led by the Mayor of Vierville M. Antoine de Bellaigue and this year the four-star General Daniel R Hokanson, Chief of

the National Guard led the US contingent which included the standard of the 29th Infantry and an honour guard supported by the Divisional band. Although overcast initially the clouds cleared and allowed the Sun to shine down. The event opened with a flypast by four US C 130 aircraft. The Mayor then gave an address followed by General Hokanson and then Air Commodore Thompson. Wreaths were then laid by the Mayor the General and the Air Commodore at the National Guard Memorial and at the RAF memorial. The band then played during the raising of flags and as the US standard retired.



*Air Commodore Jamie Thompson giving his address.*

After the main ceremony had concluded we held a small commemoration at the RAF memorial at which wreaths were laid on behalf of the Association, RAF Boulmer, The Army Signals Corps and one on Les' behalf. I gave a short address in tribute to Les and then the names of those that were killed were read out. We then attended a reception hosted by the Mayor. Les was very well respected in Vierville and at one stage an elderly man came up to talk about Les and he had tears in his eyes I had two pictures of Les at the 75th commemoration in 2019 which I gave to him.

I represented the Association at the service at Bayeux Cathedral on the 5th June which was followed by a procession led by a pipe band to the war cemetery where there was a reception and night vigil. I was able to have a talk with Air Marshal Paul Lloyd, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, and brief him on the story of the RAF on Omaha beach which he did not know about.



The picture above is a reminder of what happened eighty years ago on the 6th June. The Type 14 radar can be seen abandoned in the centre of the picture as the tide rose. The beach was still a killing field when No 15082 landed and casualty rate was very much higher than had been expected.

The Association is indebted to Air Commodore Thompson and the Air Attaché Group Captain Jonathan 'JW' Warren for their support. Yves Gagnon worked hard on our behalf liaising with the British Embassy, the Mayor, organising French Air Force participation and acting as the Point of Contact in France. Squadron Leader Dan Brown was a great support and, in Yves' absence on the ground, helped to organise matters and keep me on track. The contingent from the Air Surveillance and Control Force were very smart and a credit to the ASAC force and the RAF.

Duty Carried Out.

## ARMED FORCES DAY EVENTS 2024

This year, our Branch took part in two Armed Forces Day events, the first being a Wings Appeal City street collection on Armed Forces Day, Saturday 29 June and the second being at the LNER Stadium at Monks Cross York on Saturday 6 July.

On Saturday 29 June, a number of Branch members, organised by our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith, went out in the City centre to collect for the Wings Appeal. In addition, we also had our gazebo erected in Parliament Street, where some of our lady members were able to promote the Association, sell RAFA items and to collect funds for the Wings Appeal. They were able to collect over £300.00 for our Wings fund, which, when combined with the street collectors and on-line donations, made an impressive total of over £2900.00. This was an excellent result, given the wet start to the day. Fortunately, the weather improved later.



*Laura, Janet and Yvonne helping out at the Gazebo in Parliament Street.*

On Saturday 6 July, our gazebo was located at the LNER Stadium, as part of the City of York Council's Armed Forces Day event. (See photo on front cover) Although the weather was kind, there appeared to be a low footfall, which meant that a relatively small amount was raised for Branch funds and the Wings Appeal on this occasion.



## JOINT ANNUAL CHURCH SERVICE AT ALL SAINTS PAVEMENT.



(Photo : Dave Ruddock—York RBL)

Our Branch was the lead organisation this year for the joint Annual Church Service with the Royal British Legion York Branch at All Saints Pavement Church in York. The service commenced at 1030 am and the chief guests were the City of York Civic Party, led by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Margaret Wells and her Consort, Mr Paul Midgley. They were accompanied by the Sherriff, Ms Fiona Fitzpatrick and her Consort, Mr Geoff Cossins. The Service was led by our Branch Padre, Rev. David Simpson, and the sermon was delivered by Rev. David Hobman. The Lord Mayor gave the first reading and the RAFA York Branch Chairman, Andy Bryne, gave the second reading and also led the Act of Remembrance. Our Branch Standard was paraded by Gordon Murden and the Royal British Legion Standard by Ernest Sawdon.

After the Service, attendees were invited back to the RAFA Branch Club in Aldwark for refreshments, which had been arranged by our Branch Club Chairman, Denise Edgar. Regrettably, due to a busy schedule, the Lord Mayor and Consort were unable to join us afterwards at the Club, but the Sherriff and her Consort were able to attend.

Unlike some previous years, attendance at this year's Joint Church Service was very low for some reason, and we may have to consider the future of this annual service given the very low attendance by both RAFA and RBL members.

## 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

Thu 1 Aug 24: Wings Collection - York Railway Station.

Sun 11 Aug 24: Women's Services Day - YAM Elvington.

Wed 21 Aug 24: Wings Collection - York Racecourse.

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

Sat 7 Sep 24: Rededication of WWII War Memorial - York Maze.

Sun 8 Sep 24: All Services Parade & Service - Eden Camp 1400 hrs.

Sat 14 Sep 24: Wings City Street Collection.

Sun 15 Sep 24: Battle of Britain Service & TOTP - York Minster.

Sat 19 & Sun 20 Oct 24: RAFA National Conference - Wyboston Lakes.

Sun 3 Nov 24: York RBL Festival of Remembrance.

Sun 10 Nov 24: Remembrance Sunday.

Mon 2 Dec 24: Wings Collection - Tesco Askham Bar.

Fri 6 Dec 24: Wings Collection - Tesco Clifton Moor.

Tue 31 Dec 24: Turning of the Page Ceremony - York Minster 1030 for 1100 hrs.

### 2025

Sat 8 Mar 25: Branch Annual General Meeting - 1200 hrs.

Sat 28 Jun 25: Armed Forces Day 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.