

THE ALDWARCK CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association York Branch



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Branch Charity Number 500974

Current membership: 391

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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-Presidents:	Mr H R Kidd OBE	
	Mr J J Mawson	
Vice-Presidents:	Mr B R Mennell	
	Ms S Richmond	
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Branch Vice-Chairman	Mr R Ford	
Branch Hon. Secretary	Mr S Pearson	<i>secretary@rafayork.org</i>
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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: *Fairey Swordfish of the Royal Navy Historic Flight at Flying Legends Air Show, Leeds Airport East (Church Fenton) on 16 July 2023. This aircraft was built by Blackburn at Sherburn in Elmet. (Editor)*

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DISCLAIMER

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EDITORIAL

We have experienced the hottest June since records began in the UK and, I must admit, it was very warm on the weekend of 24-25 of June, when we marked Armed Forces Day on the Saturday and the joint RBL/RAFA church service on the Sunday. If anything, Sunday was hotter than Saturday but we got through it! So far, July has been much more “normal”, cool and wet!

We did very well with our City street collection on 24 June despite the hot weather. So far, our Wings appeal is in excess of £12000, a remarkable achievement considering the current financial climate. Details of the June weekend can be found in this edition of the newsletter and also on our website.

I have to say that, although it was a very warm weekend, it was rather disappointing that we did not get as much assistance from our members as we have sometimes done in the past. We have over 390 Branch members on our books at the moment; surely some more of you could help us?

Our second Turning of the Page ceremony took place on Friday 9 June and we were very pleased to have a contingent of officer cadets from the Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron, now based at RAF Leeming, attending

along with our Branch Standard and some of our Branch members. Hopefully this will be repeated in future as it was in pre-COVID days.

At the bottom of this page you will see a request for assistance for members to understudy some of our Branch and Club Committee posts. I placed this request in the last edition of the Chronicle and received absolutely zero response. Do we really have over 390 members? Sometimes I wonder!

At present, our Branch Welfare Officer, Ron Ford, is still undertaking medical treatment and cannot undertake his welfare duties, these being covered by RAFA HQ. I'm sure you will join me in wishing Ron a full recovery. He is also our Membership Secretary and has undertaken Club bar duties until his current illness, so we are used to seeing him around. It's noticeably different with his absence.

Finally, this year's Flying Legends Air Show took place much closer to home, at Leeds Airport East (Church Fenton) and seemed to go very well, despite the somewhat stormy weather at times. It was fantastic to be able to attend an air show in this part of the UK again. I noticed that there was a RAFA stall, but in this case, it was run by HQ staff and volunteers as they are responsible for attendance at air show events such as this.

YOUR HELP NEEDED.

We need to be able to maintain our Branch and Branch Club committees in the months and years to come. Therefore we are requesting volunteers to assist in supporting the governance of the Branch and Branch Club. In particular, we need to cover the duties of the Branch Hon. Welfare Officer as soon as possible.

Sadly, in the last few years, the number of RAF Association branches and Branch Clubs have declined and the situation has not been helped by the recent COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-22. In our Scotland, Northern Ireland and Northern England Area, the number of Branches has reduced to around 280 (several of which are Regional Members' Groups) and there are currently only 14 Branch Clubs operating. (In total, only 55 Branch Clubs remain throughout the whole of RAFA).

We do not wish to be in the position to have to struggle to fill our committee posts in future, so **we need volunteers now** to ensure that the York Branch & Club does not end up in the situation which has faced many other RAFA Branches and Clubs.

UK FORCES NUCLEAR TEST MEDAL – UPDATE

The MOD published an update to the award of a nuclear test medal on 30 March 2023. Currently (May 2023) I have been unable to find an image of the official nuclear test medal. (There are a number of “unofficial” ones.) It is expected that the medals will start to be awarded later this summer and this was confirmed this month (July).

Nuclear Test Medal - Eligibility Criteria

The Nuclear Test Medal is a commemorative medal to recognise the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Test Programme during the period 1952 and 1967.

The link to the website is:

[Nuclear Test Medal - Eligibility Criteria - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nuclear-test-medal-eligibility-criteria)

The Medal is awarded to UK Service and civilian personnel, and individuals from other nations, who served at the locations where the UK atmospheric nuclear tests were conducted, including the preparatory and clear-up phases, between 1952 and 1967 inclusive.

The Medal is also awarded to UK personnel who served at locations where American atmospheric nuclear tests took place in 1962 under Operation DOMINIC.

Qualifying service for the medal is defined as service of any length.

Eligible personnel are defined as follows:

(1) UK Service and civilian personnel, and individuals from other nations, who served at the locations where the UK atmospheric nuclear tests were conducted, including the preparatory and clear-up phases, between 1952 and 1967.

(2) UK Service and civilian personnel who served at the locations where American atmospheric nuclear tests took place in 1962 under Operation DOMINIC.

(3) Foreign nationals who served at the locations where the UK atmospheric nuclear tests were conducted, including the preparatory and clear-up phases, between 1952 and 1967.

(4) The medal can be awarded posthumously to the legal next of kin of eligible individuals who have since died.

Applications for the medal can be submitted by completing the [Ministry of Defence medal form](#)

RAF EAST MOOR COMMEMORATION SERVICE – 13 MAY 23

Sutton on the Forest played host as usual to the annual RAF East Moor commemoration service at the memorial on Saturday 13 May. The weather was fine and there were a number of Standards on parade, including our RAFA Branch Standard, carried by Gordon Murden. Our Branch wreath was laid by Oliver Mennell and the assembly included several members of the Royal Canadian Air Force. After the service, participants enjoyed a pleasant afternoon tea in the village hall nearby.

When opened in 1942, RAF East Moor was home to No 158 Sqn RAF flying Halifax bombers, before becoming the base for Nos 429, 432 and 415 Royal Canadian Air Force, also mainly equipped with Halifax bombers. RAF East Moor closed in November 1946.

(Photos courtesy of Alan Dolding)





WINGS CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION – 18 MAY 23

On Thursday 18 May, our Area RAFALO, Simon Milner (who is also a member of our Branch) attended the Branch Committee meeting, where he gave us an update on the Area Conference which had taken place on 13 May. Simon's main duty, however, was to present our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith, with the Area Fundraising Certificate for 2022 Wings collection. The fundraising certificate was signed by the Area Chairman, Alan Myers, and includes the total collected by York Branch for 2022 which was: £15454.89. Yes, that's right, £15454.89. This is an excellent achievement, particularly given the current economic climate, and our Branch also collected the highest amount in the SNINE Area for 2022.





WINGS APPEAL UPDATE AUGUST 2023.



At the end of July 2023, the total collected for this year's Wings Appeal stood at over **£12500.00**. This is an excellent result so far and there are still several collection opportunities to come, including a Wings collection at York Race Course on Wednesday 23 August.

TURNING OF THE PAGE CEREMONY – FRI 9 JUNE

The 2nd TOTP ceremony for 2023 took place at Noon on Friday 9 June. This occasion was to mark the official birthday of His Majesty the King and to remember those whose names are entered in the Book of Remembrance.

The Page was turned by RAF Association York Branch member Robin Woods, representing the veterans, assisted by Sqn Ldr Jad Reece, representing the present-day Royal Air Force, and Officer Cadet Tom Nicholls from the Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron, representing the future of the Royal Air Force. The RAFA parade was led by Branch President Dick Gray and Branch Chairman Andy Bryne read the Raison d'être and the RAFA Dedication. The Branch Standard was carried by Gordon Murden. The Rev. John Hetherington (RAF Leeming) concluded the ceremony with a short prayer.



Officer Cadet Tom Nicholls was one of the three page turners. (photo-RAF Leeming)

See the link below for news and articles from the Royal Air Force.
[Inside AIR podcast | Royal Air Force \(mod.uk\)](#)



RAFA York Branch members at the Astral Clock after the ceremony (Photo-RAF Leeming).

On conclusion of the ceremony, RAFA members and RAF and YUAS personnel adjourned to the RAFA Club in Aldwark for refreshments.

THE KING'S OFFICIAL BIRTHDAY FLYPAST – 17 JUNE 2023

On Saturday 17 June, seventy aircraft from the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force took part in a spectacular flypast for The King's Birthday Parade, marking the first Birthday Flypast for His Majesty King Charles III.

The flypast included 18 Typhoons from RAF Coningsby and RAF Lossiemouth which performed the special formation for His Majesty the King. The aircraft which took off from 15 different locations across the UK joined up across the south-east of England before flying across the capital. Unlike the Coronation Flypast, which was restricted to helicopters and the RAF Aerobatic Team (the Red Arrows) only because of bad weather with low cloud, the Official Birthday flypast took place in fine weather and so the Armed Forces were able to carry out the full display which had been planned for the Coronation.

The RAF Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton (who has only recently assumed his role) said,

“We are very proud to be able to showcase our capabilities to our Commander-in-Chief, on this historic occasion for His Majesty the King. We provided a fitting and appropriate tribute for our monarch, that was a true spectacle for the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.”



The view from one of the 3 Lockheed Hercules aircraft during the flypast.

The event featured a mix of aircraft ranging from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight dating back to the 1940's, the C-130 Hercules on its final ceremonial flight before retiring from service to multiple Typhoon fighter jet aircraft and the Envoy IV CC1, making its flypast debut.

At the front of the flypast was a Juno HT1 helicopter piloted by Flight Lieutenant Tom Knapp from 60 Squadron, No.1 Flying Training School based at RAF Shawbury. The event culminated in a spectacular show of red, white and blue from the pilots of the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows who were led by one of the RAF's newest aircraft, the Envoy. One Wildcat and four Apache helicopters from the British Army participated in the flypast.

Many of the aircraft taking part in the flypast have been actively involved in operations around the world this year including the NATO Air Policing mission in Eastern Europe and the evacuation of British Citizens from Sudan.

The King's Birthday Flypast concluded the annual ceremony of Trooping the Colour which took place on Horse Guards Parade, which became an annual event as long ago as 1760. This year, the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards Trooped their Colour in the presence of His Majesty the King.



Typhoon "CR"

from the Mall.

formation seen



The RAF Red Arrows finale, led by an Envoy Mk IV

ARMED FORCES DAY - 24 JUNE 2023

RAFA York members took part in the Armed Forces Day events in York by operating a stall in Parliament Street together with other Service charities and organisations. However, some months prior to this, our Wings Appeal Officer, Ian Smith, had already used his foresight to obtain permission for a city street collection on the same day. This meant that we were, as far as I could see, the only Service charity undertaking a street collection as well as having a stall.

As a result of the dedication of some of our members (why is it that it is nearly always the same people?) we raised a total of £1751.28 towards this year's Wings collection. The weather was cloudy for some of the time but still very warm and humid, not ideal for such an activity. However, it could have been cold and wet, so we must be thankful for that! Thanks also to our RAFALO, Simon Milner, for sorting out the stall and bringing the necessary equipment from RAF Leeming.



ANNUAL JOINT RAFA & RBL CHURCH SERVICE - 25 JUNE 2023

The annual joint RBL/RAFA York branches church service for 2023 was held, as usual, at All Saints Pavement on Sunday 25 June at 1030 am. The service was attended by the Lord Mayor, Reverend Councillor Chris Cullwick, the Lady Mayoress, Mrs Joy Cullwick, the Sheriff of York, Ms Sue Hunter and the Sheriff's Consort, Mr Nigel Goodwin. The Lord Mayor read the first lesson and the Chairman of York Branch Royal British Legion. Mark Hogan, read the second lesson. The sermon was delivered by the Reverend David Simpson, RAFA York Branch Padre.

After the service, the Civic Party processed in hot sunshine to the RAFA Branch Club in Aldwark for refreshments, accompanied by some members of York Branch RBL and RAFA. The weather was very warm indeed, so the breeze from the Branch Club's open windows was welcome. All in all, it was a very busy and successful weekend for our Branch and Club.



Escorting the Civic Party to RAFA House after the Service.



Relaxing in the Branch Club lounge bar after the Service.

FLYING LEGENDS AIR SHOW AT CHURCH FENTON

Many years ago, when the Royal Air Force was a much larger service, and there were several active RAF stations in Northern England, air shows were a regular feature for appreciation by aviation enthusiasts and families alike. However, for several years, there have been virtually no air shows in our region and so it was welcome news to read that the 2023 Flying Legends Air Show would take place at Leeds Airport East (ex- RAF Church Fenton) over the weekend of 15-16 July.

Many of you will remember the annual SSAFA air shows at RAF Church Fenton. As someone who was based there for 2 years in the late 1980s, I was required to attend which was not an onerous task! The Flying Legends Team took a bit of a risk in moving their annual show from Duxford to North Yorkshire but it seemed to go very well. We went on the Sunday, which was the drier day, and found it to be very well organised with good facilities. Car parking and access was excellent and the only negative aspects to me were the relative lack of ground attractions and the incessant chatter of the two commentators who frequently missed telling the assembled audience what was “coming in from the left” until it had been and gone!



BBMF Lancaster at Legends 2023 (Editor)

There was only one aircraft unable to fly due to the windy conditions on the Sunday and that was a Gloster Gladiator biplane, examples of which were based at Church Fenton just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. To see the visiting BBMF Lancaster undertake a number of flypasts and also the RNHF Fairy Swordfish (built at nearby Sherburn in Elmet) was a real treat. Twelve Spitfires in the air at once was also very impressive. Hopefully, Legends will be at Church Fenton again next year and, hopefully, won't be on the same weekend as RIAT at Fairford!

FAMOUS FLIGHTS

THE INTERCEPTION OF THE ITALIAN OCEAN LINER REX IN 1938

On 12 May 1938, the US Army Air Corps staged the most extensive manoeuvres in its history up to that time. Maj. Gen. Frank M. Andrews, commander of General Headquarters Air Force, oversaw the exercise. He established his headquarters at Mitchel Field on Long Island. For the wargames, he had pulled together 187 combat aircraft and thousands of airmen from all three wings of GHQ Air Force. The aircraft were deployed to 19 airports in the north-eastern United States.

Taking part were twin-engine B-18 bombers, P-36 fighters, and A-17 attack aircraft, but the star of the show was the B-17 Flying Fortress. The Air Corps had only 13 of these new Boeing-made four-engine bombers, and Col. Robert Olds, commander of the 2nd Bomb Group at Langley Field, Va., had brought nine of them to the manoeuvres. Andrews had borrowed Lt. Col. Ira C. Eaker, who was chief of the Air Staff's Information Division. Eaker served as G-2 (intelligence) for the manoeuvres and to handle the press. Eaker brought with him Reserve 2nd Lt Harris Hull, a reporter for the Washington Post who had been called to active duty for the exercise. Hull learned that the Italian cruise liner Rex was about 1,000 miles offshore, inbound to New York. He suggested an "intercept" of Rex to Eaker, who proposed it to Andrews, who was all for it. It was a splendid opportunity to bring the range and capability of the B-17 to public attention.

Italian officials readily agreed to the plan, which would bring free publicity to their steamship line. The War Department approved as well. Ostensibly, the intercept would exercise GHQ Air Force in its coastal defence role. In reality, it would demonstrate the capabilities of long-range airpower—and of the new B-17 even though it was not an official assigned mission of the Air Corps at the time. In the 1938 wargames, the Rex intercept turned out to be the central event. Olds moved three of his B-17s—No. 80, No. 81, and No. 82—from Harrisburg to Mitchel Field on May 11, the day before the main event. Maj Vincent Meloy commanded a three-ship formation of B-17s. Capt Cornelius Cousland piloted No. 81, and Capt A Y Smith piloted No. 82. The lead aircraft, however, No. 80, was piloted by Maj Caleb Haynes and the lead navigator was 1st Lt Curtis E. LeMay. LeMay was known to be the best navigator in the force.

To document the flight, Eaker had called in the top photo officer in the Air Corps, Maj. George W. Goddard, who came to the exercise from Dayton with his large-format Graflex camera. He flew in the co-pilot's seat on No. 81. Also, on-board No. 81 was Eaker's resourceful Reserve assistant, Lieutenant Hull.

The B-17s had begun to taxi out through the blowing rain when, at 8:30 a.m., they received an update message from Rex. "Immediately I saw that the Rex wasn't nearly as close in as we had expected her to be," LeMay said. "There wasn't much margin remaining." Rex was 725 miles from New York. The three aircrafts plowed eastward through squalls, rain, hail, and downdrafts. "Most of the time, we couldn't even see the water, and turbulence was heaving us all over the sky," LeMay said. At about 11 a.m., a break in the weather let LeMay get a check on speed and drift.

At 12:23, the aircraft broke out of the last squall and into bright sunshine, flying low and line abreast, 610 miles east of Sandy Hook. Rex was dead ahead. Cousland was first to see it and radioed to the other aircraft: "There it is! There it is!" Two minutes later, the three B-17s passed the Rex. Hundreds of passengers were on deck, wrapped in raincoats and scarves, and waving. Meloy exchanged radio greetings with Rex's captain. On the next pass, photographer Goddard got his best shot—two B-17s sweeping past Rex at smokestack level. NBC reported the intercept live, on a coast-to-coast hook-up. Mission Accomplished. Goddard's photo appeared the next day on the front pages of hundreds of newspapers. Magazines picked it up as well. Hanson Baldwin described the mission in detail in the *New York Times*. He said it was "one from which valuable lessons about the aerial defence of the United States will be drawn" and that it furnished "a striking example of the mobility and range of modern aviation."



The Italian Liner
"Rex", 12 May 1938.

The Navy and the War Department could fume all they wanted about the intercept, but GHQ Air Force had made its point. Heavy bombers were long-range instruments of power and capable of actions a long way from home. The issue had moved beyond the question of coastal defence. Some months after the Rex intercept, Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring cancelled a planned purchase of more B-17s in 1939. His action was superseded by a call by President Roosevelt for an Air Force of 20,000 aircraft. By 1941, B-17s were coming off the production line in significant numbers.

(By the late John T. Correll, in Air and Space Forces Magazine, 2008, via York Branch member Alwyn Boulby)

Events for RAFA York Branch - 2023

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.

2023

Wed 23 Aug	Wings Collection - York Racecourse Ebor Meeting.
Sat 26 Aug	Visit by new Area President - Stuart Stirrat 1830 hrs.
Sun 3 Sep	Allied Air Forces Memorial Day - YAM from 1030 hrs.
Sun 10 Sep	All Services parade & service - Eden Camp.
Sat 16 Sep	Wings City Street Collection.
Sun 17 Sep	Battle of Britain Service & Turning of the Page Ceremony-York Minster 1400 hrs.
Sat 23 Sep	Memorial dedication at Moor Monkton 1500 hrs.
13-15 Oct	RAFA National Conference - Birmingham Metropole.
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.

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).