



# ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

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## The Best of the Best

**The Best Fighters in the RAF  
Operate on the Ground**

**The Royal Air Force Regiment  
Ground-based specialists,  
protecting RAF assets from  
enemy attack.**



## NEWSLETTER NO: 271 JANUARY 2012

# THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NEWSLETTER

## NUMBER 271 JANUARY 2012

Dear Readers.

Valerie and I would like to thank all those members and friends who sent Christmas cards to us, wishing all our members and us well for Christmas and the New Year. I'm always amazed and touched with all the cards that we have received. Not only from our relations and our 'civilian' friends but also from members and from good friends of the Birmingham Branch, sending good wishes to Valerie and I and to all members of the Branch, not only for Christmas but for the New Year too, our thanks to all of you.

### **The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine**

Major Cheesman has now left the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) and Major John Harker has replaced him as the new Officer Commanding, Patient Support Services (OC PSS). In addition, the RCDM has now moved premises from K Block, Selly Oak Hospital, Raddlebarn Road, Birmingham, to a new address and I have received the following letters from Major Cheesman and Major Harker.

#### **From Major John Harker LANCS Officer Commanding Patient Support Services Royal Centre for Defence Medicine**

As a supporter of the RCDM Welfare Fund, I would like to inform you of three changes which have occurred recently.

1. Major Ian Cheesman has now left RCDM and Major John Harker has replaced him as the new Officer Commanding Patient Support Services (OC PSS).
2. RCDM has moved premises from K Block, Selly Oak Hospital, Raddlebarn Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6DJ to Level 2, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham (QEHB), Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2WB.
3. With immediate effect, the point of contact for all donations (financial/non-financial) will change from Major Cheesman to Mrs D Binnion. However, due to the lack of storage space for goodies, could you please first contact Mrs Binnion on 0121 371 5317 to arrange a suitable appointment.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and look forward to hearing from you in the future. John.

#### **From Major Ian Cheesman RLC Officer Commanding Patient Support Services Royal Centre for Defence Medicine**

Dear Malcolm. As I leave Patient Support Services after four years and indeed the Army after thirty-three years I wish to thank personally you for the valued service you have given to the wounded and injured and also for the wonderful support you have shown to me during my tenure at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine.

This has been a most humbling appointment and one which I could not hope to better so it is an apt point at which to end my military career. I have been privileged to have worked with the medical and welfare services, the families and particularly I have been 'inspired by the inspirational' in my dealings with the patients themselves for whom we strive to support as they come to terms with life-changing injuries.

The support provided by RCDM and the team here would not be possible without the additional donations and support from the general public; you have been unwavering in your support and enthusiasm, which has also helped motivate me and the team.

Once again thank you very much for working so hard for our lads. I hope you will support my successor Major John Harker in the same vein.

I am now moving to Barnstaple, Devon, to run my Bistro (Seasons Cafe Bistro) and would be delighted to welcome you should you be in the area. Keep up the good work and take care. Kind regards. Ian.

\*\*\*\*\*

We welcome Major John Harker to his new position and will indeed support him in his endeavours. We also thank Major Ian Cheesman for his efforts as OC PSS and wish him well for the future and should we be in Barnstaple in the future we will certainly visit Ian.

So for the future, please address any donations or correspondence to; **RCDM, Level 2, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2WB**. And as the point of contact for all donations (financial and non-financial) has changed from Major Cheesman

to Mrs D Binion, please address them to her and due to lack of storage space for goodies, could everyone please first contact Mrs Binion on 0121 371 5317 to arrange a suitable appointment.

## **Goodies for our Injured Boys**

It is most important that we remember the dangers that our young men and women serving on operations are all facing, so please remember the appeal your Branch Committee have set up. Please send any donations you may wish to make, to the Branch Treasurer Tom Magee and he will pass them on to the right place.

We still need money for the injured lads and lassies so see what you can do. It may be that due to the article that I published in last month's newsletter, some of you might have got the wrong idea that we have stopped collecting money for our injured troops. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have stopped collecting for the Military Ward Welfare Fund as it has plenty of money. We are still collecting money for the further support of our injured troops.

However, it will be no good if we forget all about them after they leave Selly Oak Hospital or Headley Court, for those badly injured may need support and or assistance for the rest of their lives. The Royal British Legion is the best option for this and this year our new Lord Mayor's "Home for the Brave Appeal" is the best one for us to support this year.

## **BRANCH BIRTHDAYS**

A very Happy Birthday to the following Birmingham Branch members whose birthdays are this month, may you all have many more.

3rd Jan **Robert Shepherd** Ballymena Cty Antrim  
 4th January **Robert Watkins** Nuneaton Warwicks  
 5th January **Samuel Hadley** Dudley West Mids  
 6th Jan **Godfrey Coates** Birmingham West Mids  
 9th January **John Lawton** Stoke on Trent Staffs  
 14th January **Chris Baxter** Daventry Northants  
 14th January **Samuel Owen** Crewe Cheshire  
 24th January **James Bayliss** Colehill West Mids  
 25th Jan **Stephen Rowlands** Tamworth Staffs  
 27th Jan **Gustaaf Schrauwen** Sutton Coldfield  
 28th Jan **Thomas Swann** Stanford Le Hope Essex

## **RAF Regiment News**

### **Tongans handover to new contingent in Camp Bastion**

A third contingent of Tonga Defence Services (TDS) has conducted a ceremonial handover to begin work alongside members of the

RAF Police and the RAF Regiment to deliver force protection at Camp Bastion. A traditional challenge called a Sipi Tau was issued to the replacement contingent by the Tongan soldiers who had just completed a six-month tour of duty at Camp Bastion.

The second TDS contingent to support ISAF operations in Afghanistan, handed over their duties to the third contingent in Camp Bastion, where they will be based for the next six months. The parade, attended by VIP guests including the newly appointed commander of Joint Force Support (Afghanistan) Brigadier 'Mitch' Mitchell, attracted plenty of interest from personnel hoping to see the traditional Sipi Tau war dance of the South Pacific Islanders.

Having travelled over 8,000 miles (12,875km) from an island of only 100,000 people to Helmand province, the TDS, who in total are only 600-strong, represent a formidable force, as the Sipi Tau demonstrated. The Commanding Officer of the Royal Tongan Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Tupou Aleamotua, explained: "The Sipi Tau is a challenge laid down by Tongan warriors. The outgoing unit will lay down the challenge to the new. The new contingent will reply with their own Sipi Tau to say they accept the challenge and will take up the responsibilities."

As is customary during such a parade there was an exchange of flags, and then more unusually prayers, which were sung perfectly by the Tongan troops who are well known at Camp Bastion for their sensational singing as well a fierce competitive spirit on the sports pitch.

The new contingent's role, serving alongside members of the RAF Police and RAF Regiment, is critical to ensuring the security of Camp Bastion's main entry point, perimeter, and airfield. Brigadier Mitchell said:

"The deployment of fifty-five Tonga Defence Service Marines in Camp Bastion today is a real boost to our capability here. We are delighted the Tongans show such support for the ISAF effort. That the deployment represents approximately on third of their Armed Forces is illustrative of their commitment." He added: "I enjoyed meeting some of the troops today and was given a taste of their formidable spirit and identity when those returning home performed the Sipi Tau - a rousing spiritual dance. We look forward to working with the TDS and I wish them a safe tour."

## **A Herculean Christmas Gift Arrives at Cosford!**

Late December, a Hercules C130K Mk.3 became the latest aircraft to go on display at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford, arriving just in time for Christmas. The aircraft was moved from the airfield to the Museum's site yesterday and placed in its new permanent display space, outside overlooking the Museum site. This supersized Christmas present took a team of fifteen Museum Technicians and RAF Personnel three hours to safely move the aircraft into position, once the aircraft had been defueled.

Now one of the largest aircraft in the Museum's extensive collection, the Hercules C130K Mk.3 made its final flight into RAF Cosford in August courtesy of No 47 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton. Since its arrival earlier this year, the aircraft has undergone a short period of maintenance carried out on the airfield.

The XV202 Hercules C130K Mk. 3 was an American aircraft built by Lockheed in Marietta, Georgia and acquired by the RAF in 1966, used mainly on longer routes and for paratrooping. This particular aircraft was one of 30 Hercules modified during the early 1980's, with the fuselage being lengthened by 15ft. Work was carried out by Marshall of Cambridge (Engineering) Ltd, using fuselage plugs in front of and behind of the wing.

RAF Museum Curator, Al McLean says: "We are very pleased to have this iconic aircraft, particularly as it has such a long record of service with the Royal Air Force and it makes a fine addition to the Cosford site."

Visitors wishing to see the Hercules can now do so on a daily basis and over the Christmas period. The Museum will be open daily throughout December from 10am apart from Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The Museum will then close again on New Year's Day and will reopen on Monday 2nd January 2012 from 10am. Admission is FREE.

## **NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM (NMA) UPDATE**

### **Search and rescue memorial unveiled**

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, a Memorial to all of those who have served in RAF Search and Rescue operations since 1941 was unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The slate monolith, overlooking the RAF section of the Arboretum, pays tribute to 70 years of saving lives and was unveiled by the Air Officer Commanding No 2 Group, Air Vice Marshal P Osborne and dedicated by the RAF Chaplain in Chief, The Venerable Air Vice Marshall R J Pentland. It is inscribed with the words:

**This memorial stands as a commemorative testament to all who have served Britain's search and rescue organisations since February 1941 'THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE'**

All three SAR Force Squadrons paraded their Colours along with the RAF Mountain Rescue Association. 203 (Gainsborough), 202 (Winsford) and 22 (Sandy) ATC Squadrons also paraded their Colours in what is also the Air Training Corps 70th Anniversary year.

A Sea King helicopter from RAF Valley captained by Flight Lieutenant Phil Fazal of 203(R) provided a flypast as Sergeant Richard Percival laid a wreath in remembrance of all those who have lost their lives saving others.

In a message in the order of service in the Chapel of Remembrance the Duke of Cambridge – Flt Lt William Wales, Patron of the National Memorial Arboretum, said: "I am proud to be a member of SARF, and I am honoured to serve alongside the extraordinary men and women in its ranks, especially on this 70th Anniversary."

## **Future Events at the NMA**

### **Pegasus set to mark memorial to the 'paras'**

A Winged Horse is to tower above the tree line at a national memorial in honour of parachute regiments. The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Memorial will be unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Alrewas, in July next year. The huge bronze structure will feature a Pegasus horse, its wings outstretched on a plinth above a larger than life paratrooper.

The Memorial has been designed by the Parachute Regiment Charity, which is currently in the process of trying to raise the £230,000 needed to create it. Stephen Cooper, director of charities, said: "Pegasus is the traditional symbol of the airborne forces. In 1940, when Churchill saw the Germans had invaded the Netherlands using paras, he said 'we want some of those'. He ordered a force of 5,000 of them to be established.

At that point all the people who had done it before were on the other side.”

The impressive bronze horse has been designed to rise above the tree line in order to give the impression of it taking flight. “Standing on the platform will be the paratrooper as if he has just landed, gathering his equipment canister,” Mr Cooper said. “It’s going to be a spectacular design.”

The charity has been working with the arboretum since last year on the Memorial. “2010 was the 70th anniversary of the airborne regiments, but also the parachute regiment has been heavily involved in Afghanistan and we’ve taken an awful lot of casualties,” Mr Cooper said.

There’s no national memorial to the para forces anywhere in the UK at the moment and we wanted it to be somewhere that was as accessible as it could be. We chose the Arboretum because it’s right in the middle of the country and it’s public as well. It will be of great significance.”

Anyone who wishes to contribute to the Memorial Appeal can do so by visiting [www.justgiving.com/Parachute-Regiment-Airborne-Forces-Memorial](http://www.justgiving.com/Parachute-Regiment-Airborne-Forces-Memorial), or by sending a donation to Memorial Appeal, RHQ PARA, Merville Barracks, Colchester, CO2 7UT.

## **At last, a memorial to the forgotten heroes of Britain’s ‘Pearl Harbour’**

**Published in the Telegraph by Neil Tweedie  
Seventy years ago, the pride of the Royal Navy, the battleship Prince of Wales and the battle cruiser Repulse, were sunk by Japanese aircraft. Now a tribute is to be unveiled**

Never was a blue sky so unwelcome. The grey, tropical clouds that had helped mask the movement of the two great ships since their departure from Singapore had parted, and now, hanging lazily on the horizon, were Japanese reconnaissance aircraft.

The officers of the battleship Prince of Wales and her consort, the battle cruiser Repulse, codenamed Force Z, knew that an engagement of some kind could not be far away. It was the morning of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1941, three days after the attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, and the Royal Navy was about to suffer its greatest single defeat of the Second World War.

The bugles sounded shortly after 11am. Crude radar screens in the bowels of the capital ships were registering smudges of approaching aircraft, scores of them. Sailors and Marines,

their mid-morning tea break interrupted, ran to join shipmates already at their posts. Anti-aircraft guns trained skyward, preparing to deliver a hail of fire against the Japanese aerial armada.

It was soon all over. At 1.20 p.m. Prince of Wales, pride of the Navy, commissioned only eight months previously, slowly rolled over, her hull torn open by four torpedoes. Repulse, elegant veteran of the First World War, had already slid beneath the azure calm of the South China Sea, similarly disembowelled.

For more than an hour Jim Wren, a Royal Marine, and the other young reserve gun crew had sat inside Repulse listening to the roar of battle before emerging to chaos. “We knew she was going and going fast,” he remembers. “She was right over on her port side. Pretty well half the ship was below the water line. I stripped off some of my heavier clothing, climbed over the side, crawled over the bilges and into the water. There was no time to freeze with fear. It was do or die.”

The ships, 41,000 tons and 33,000 tons respectively, had shot down just three of 85 aircraft before succumbing. They were the first battleships to be sunk at sea exclusively by airpower, their demise signalling the end of the big gun era. With them went British prestige in the Far East.

Devoid of naval protection, Singapore, the fortress constructed at vast expense to protect the eastern Empire from Japanese expansion, fell two months later. For the British, who had denigrated the Japanese as myopic, semi-primitives, it was a humiliation, a harbinger of imperial decline.

The most terrible cost, though, was in human life. Of the 1,612 officers and men aboard Prince of Wales, 327 died. The toll on Repulse was higher, 513 from a complement of 1,309. Eight hundred and forty souls, blown apart by torpedoes and bombs, scalded to death by escaping steam and ripped to shreds on the exposed undersides of the stricken titans. Or drowned while awaiting rescue, or trapped in the watertight compartments that became their tombs.

Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, commander of Force Z, was one. A resolute believer in the big gun, disdainful of the aircraft as a weapon, he chose to remain to the end on the bridge of Prince of Wales, his flagship.

Winston Churchill, who had sent the ships to their doom, wrote of how he was awoken in the night to be told the news: “In all the war I never

received a more direct shock. As I turned over and twisted in bed the full horror sank in upon me.” Yet the destruction of Force Z is now a footnote, a distant tragedy obscured by the greater struggle against Nazi Germany. Yesterday the United States marked the 70th anniversary of Pearl Harbour with memorial services and lowered flags across the country.

The British, meanwhile, will largely ignore the 70th anniversary of their own catastrophic overture to the war with Japan. Except for a hundred or so people, including half a dozen special old men, who gathered at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011 to witness the unveiling of a small memorial.

Of the 2,081 survivors from Prince of Wales and Repulse about 40 are thought to be still alive. Most were too infirm to travel and those making the journey had no VIP to greet them. The Prince of Wales declined an invitation to attend and a single Petty Officer represented the Royal Navy.

“These things happen,” says Hannah Rickard, secretary of the Force Z Survivors Association, whose late father, Ken Byrne, survived the sinking of the Prince of Wales. “It is a bit of a shame but the real VIPs are the survivors.”

The memorial has been paid for by the relatives attending the unveiling. They have raised £11,000 of its £13,000 cost. Mr Wren is 91 but made the journey from his home in Salisbury. “It was one of Churchill’s big mistakes” he says. “It was all so quick: we arrived at Singapore on the 2nd and were sent to the bottom on the 10th.”

The threat from Japan could not have arisen at a worse time. The battlecruiser Hood had been lost in May and the aircraft carrier Ark Royal and battleship Barham in November. Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, favoured a slow build-up in the Indian Ocean but Churchill, true to form, demanded a more aggressive strategy in the Far East, in the shape of a modern battleship. Thus Phillips found himself on the afternoon of 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 weighing anchor at Singapore, as fires still raged at Pearl Harbour. The Japanese were believed to be landing on the north-east coast of Malaya and the Navy could not be seen to run from the fight, despite an almost total absence of air cover. William Tennant,

captain of Repulse, warned his crew: “We are off to look for trouble. I expect we shall find it.”

Phillips told his crews: “We are sure to get some useful practice with the HA (high-angle anti-aircraft) armament.”

Against Force Z were ranged more than 100 bombers based in Vichy French Indo-China, equipped with advanced torpedoes. Stalked by submarines and aircraft, the two capital ships, screened by four destroyers, searched in vain for troop transports. While returning to Singapore Force Z was caught in the open. Repulse was hit first by a bomb that almost ended Mr Wren’s life.

“The first thing I knew was the alarm sounding. I was still on the mess deck with a cup of tea. I dropped it, ran for the door, and as soon as I got through it a bomb dropped through the deck right behind me.” Then came the torpedoes. The great ships twisted and turned, managing to avoid 41 of the 49 dropped.

Repulse went down at 12.33. Mr Wren found himself holding on to a piece of flotsam. “There was huge oil slick from the ship. I was covered in oil – everyone was. I swallowed a lot and was terribly sick. Someone hauled me on to a raft. Eventually we were picked up by the Electra, one of the escorts. I can’t remember anything being said. You are in a state of shock. You have lost everything: your ship, your home, comrades. There were a lot of bodies on the deck.”

Charles Wright, from Gloucester, was a 22-year-old anti-aircraft gunner on Prince of Wales. “We were given the impression that the Japanese were inferior, but they proved differently. The ship was brand new and we thought she was unsinkable. It was a beautiful clear day. Of course, the Japanese are the masters of coming out of the sun.” A single torpedo crippled Prince of Wales, causing major flooding, reducing her speed, impairing her steering and knocking out the power for half her big anti-aircraft guns. She survived Repulse by 50 minutes.

“There were numerous fellows coming up from below, mainly the boiler room,” recalls Mr Wright. They had been scalded terribly by burst pipes.” He helped his wounded shipmates on to the destroyer Express, which had come alongside. She had to pull away as the battleship turned turtle.

Mr Wren was evacuated from Singapore but his vessel was captured at anchor off Sumatra. He spent more than three years in a prison camp, watching a third of the inmates succumb to cruelty and disease. Mr Wright was evacuated to Ceylon and posted to the cruiser Dorsetshire, which was sunk in an air attack.

Today the wrecks of Prince of Wales and Repulse rest in less than 250 feet of water, sometimes visible from the air. Designated as war graves, the leviathans are nevertheless prey to divers, some in search of booty. Pictures of human remains adorn diving websites.

But some good comes out of bad. One of Mr Wren's friends on Repulse was a young marine who had placed a picture of his sister on the back of his locker door. "I said I'd like to meet her," remembers Mr Wren. "And I did." He and Margaret have been married for 65 years. She was there at the memorial, providing comfort. "It was emotional," says Mr Wren. "No doubt about that."

Donations for the Force Z memorial should be sent to: Force Z Survivors Association, 19 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 8JP. Cheques made payable to: HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse Survivors Association.

### **Clay model for Durham Light Infantry memorial statue is revealed**

Veterans have announced a date for the unveiling of a permanent memorial to the sacrifices of one of the country's most famous military regiments. Campaigners spoke as they gave their stamp of approval to a larger-than-life-sized clay model of a Durham Light Infantry (DLI) bugler which will be cast into a bronze and set on a plinth at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire.

The memorial will be unveiled at a service at 2.30pm on Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. And campaigners have signalled their determination to continue the momentum of their successful fundraising drive to pay for a duplicate statue to be erected at a site, yet to be determined, in Durham City. DLI Memorial Appeal co-ordinator Colonel Arthur Charlton, who along with DLI trustee Brigadier Robert "Bob" Macgregor-Oakford visited the studio of Alan Beattie Herriot to see the model, said they were "delighted". He said:

"To finally see what originally had been a figment of the imagination in reality was quite

something. When we walked into the studio, where the clay sculpture was made, it was very much a case of, wow. Apart from a few tiny alternations to make sure everything was spot on – and they were like the width of his bootlaces – we were delighted with it. It has now gone to the Powderhall Bronze Foundry, in Edinburgh, and we hope to see the actual bronze sometime in January."

Colonel Charlton said the £75,000 target for memorial had been achieved and, because of popular demand, campaigners were now setting their sights on raising enough money for the duplicate statue. He said: "We are third of the way down track for our second objective of £30,000. We have not yet confirmed a site. That is still under negotiation."

He added: "We would like to say how appreciative we are of the support we have had from The Northern Echo and the Darlington Building Society and the many donors – including the many anonymous donors we have not been able to personally write to thank."

The appeal was launched in January after two former DLI soldiers, Keith Straughier, a former signaller, and Richard Softely, a former bugler, visited the Staffordshire arboretum and discovered their regiment was not honoured there.

The statue dressed in combat uniform of the Korean War is symbolic, because it was a platoon of 1 DLI buglers who sounded the ceasefire in Korea for the whole of the Commonwealth Division, from a hilltop in the front line. Korea was the regiment's last Battle Honour.

Donations for the memorial can be made payable to the Regimental and Chattels Charity of the former DLI and sent to the DLI Memorial Appeal, The Rifles Office, Elvet, Waterside, Durham, DH1 3BW.



### **FROM THE RAF REGIMENT SECRETARY DEATHS:**

**MARTIN ANTHONY.** Former RAF Regt Cpl Anthony MARTIN, born 12 Oct 32, died on 2 Nov 11 aged 79. He was a National Serviceman from Jan 51 – Jan 54 and served on 17 and 25 Sqns RAF Regt. No other Service

details are available. He was a member of the Notts & Derby Branch of the RAF Regt Assoc. The funeral has taken place. He is survived by his wife, Mrs A Martin, of 60 Fabis Drive, Clifton Grove, Nottingham, NG11 8NZ, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

#### **NEW NOTICES:**

#### **PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING COMMANDANT GENERAL RAF REGIMENT**

“I have handover as Commandant General of the RAF Regiment to Air Commodore Nick Bray. It has been an enormous privilege and honour to serve as Commandant General over the past 2 years; indeed, it has represented the professional and personal highlight of my career, especially having now served in our Corps from both extremes of the rank spectrum.

“Whilst my first thoughts are, as they were when I took over, for our comrades on operations, I would like to convey my gratitude to all members of the Regimental family – serving, retired, friends and families – I salute you all and wish you every success in the future.” Per Ardua, Russ La Forte.

#### **COMMANDANT GENERAL HANDOVER-TAKEOVER**

Air Cdre N Bray MA RAF assumed the appointment of ACOS FP and CG RAF Regt on 9 Dec 11, vice Air Cdre R W La Forte CBE MA BA RAF, who will become ACOS Trg at 22 Gp.

#### **MESSAGE FROM THE CG RAF REGT**

I am both proud and honoured to have assumed the appointment of CG and look forward to leading the Corps through whatever challenges we encounter in 2012 and beyond. Having been away for the past year, at the Higher Command and Staff Course followed by a tour in Afghanistan, it is very heartening to return and see all that has been achieved over the past 12 months.

It is also abundantly clear that every member of the RAF Regt (regular and auxiliary) has remained enormously committed, dedicated and focussed on our tasks – well done and thank you!

As ever our operational credibility and capability is exceptionally strong and our wider contribution to the RAF and UK Defence is fully appreciated. Our ability to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances and evolving threats has proved as vital as ever and this has manifested

itself both in Afghanistan and (in small specialist tasks) in Libya.

Of particular note, the Corps’ lead in the provision of specialist chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) capabilities for UK Defence in an evolving and pivotal strategic capability.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members of the Corps – both serving and retired – and their families, a Very Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy 2012. My particular thoughts go out to those currently deployed in Afghanistan and around the world at this time. Per Ardua. Nick Bray - Air Cdre - CG RAF Regt

#### **RAF REGT CBRN LEAD FOR DEFENCE**

The newly formed Defence Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Wg, based at RAF Honington and manned by the RAF Regt, assumed responsibility for the UK Defence specialist CBRN capabilities from the Jt CBRN Regt on 14 Dec 11. A Transfer of Authority Parade was held at RAF Honington to mark the event. Further details on the Def CBRN Wg’s roles etc will be published in due course. The Wg is commanded by Wg Cdr David Williams, RAF Regt.

#### **CORPS 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

#### **COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE - 3 FEB 12**

A Service of Commemoration to celebrate the Corps’ 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be held at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds from 11.00 – 12.15 on Fri 3 Feb 12. All Corps members - both serving and retired - and their families are invited to attend. Attendees should be seated by 10.45.

Dress for serving members will be notified separately; dress for retired members will be jacket and Regtl tie, with medals and neck decorations as appropriate. RAF Regt Assoc branches planning to attend are asked to notify the Regtl Sec of their numbers by 20 Jan 12 to enable suitable seating to be allocated; names are not required.

The nearest car park to the Cathedral is the Ram Meadow Car Park (Pay and Display). Transport for serving members will be provided from RAF Honington but families and non-entitled persons will need to make their own way to the venue. In observance of budget restraint, we regret that there will not be any post-event reception.



## **SERVICE OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE**

HM The Queen has commanded that a Service of the Order of the British Empire is to be held in St Paul's Cathedral at 11.00 on Weds 7 Mar 12. Those belonging to the Order and holders of the British Empire Medal who wish to attend should apply for a ticket giving, in block capitals, their full name, address, telephone number, appointment (ie GBE, KBE, DBE, CBE, OBE, MBE, BEM) and other decorations as soon as possible and no later than Fri 13 Jan 12 to: The Registrar, Order of the British Empire, Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, St James's Palace, London, SW1A 1BH, or via the website at [www.obeservice.org.uk](http://www.obeservice.org.uk). Tickets will not be available for spouses who are not members of the Order, or guests, owing to the size of the order and limited seating capacity in St Paul's Cathedral.

## **SOVEREIGN'S COLOUR PARADE PRINTS**

A limited number of prints from the painting capturing the presentation of the replacement Sovereign's Colour to the RAuxAF on 18 Jul 10, are now available for purchase. Painted by the renowned military – and Corps - artist, Stuart Brown, the historic parade included four flts of auxiliary personnel from 17 units across the Force and in addition to the presentation of the Colour to the RAuxAF by HM The Queen, the occasion also saw inaugural Standards presented to 2623 (East Anglian) Sqn and 2620 (County of Norfolk) Sqns RAuxAF Regt.

The prints have been limited to just 300 copies, each numbered and signed by the artist. In addition, 30 of the prints will be released as 'Special Editions' and will also include the signatures of the Honorary Inspector-General of the RAuxAF, AVM Lord Beaverbrook; Honorary Air Cdre 2623 Sqn RAuxAF Regt, Air Cdre Sir Michael Marshall and Honorary Air Cdre 2620 Sqn RAuxAF Regt, Air Cdre Sir Michael Oswald.

The 63 cm x 45 cm prints are available direct from Flt Lt James Pettit and will be sent unframed ready for mounting. The Limited Edition prints are priced at £50 and the Special Edition prints are priced at £75, incl UK/BFPO 'Signed For' postage.

Cheques should be made payable to 'Service Funds RAF Marham'. All enquiries should be made to Flt Lt James Pettit, DSC, 2620

Sqn RAuxAF Regt, RAF Marham, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE33 9PB. Tel: (Mil) 95951 3493 or (BT) 01760 337261, ext 3493.

## **RAF REGIMENT FUND – CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

Flt Lt Darren Priest is the RAF Regt Fund Membership Secretary. He – not the Regtl Sec - should be contacted on any Fund membership or Direct Debit issues at: RTS(A), Trg Wg, RAF Honington, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 1EE; BT Tel 01359 237949 or by email at: [Darren.Priest435@mod.uk](mailto:Darren.Priest435@mod.uk). Flt Lt Norry is no longer the Memb Sec and his contact details should be deleted from any relevant databases

## **NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION**

The Not Forgotten Association (NFA) is a Tri-Service charity that provides entertainment and recreation for the serving wounded and the ex-service community with disabilities. The NFA run a series of events, and provide other benefits, for wounded/injured/ill/disabled Service and ex-Service personnel each year.

Among other things, they hold an annual Christmas Party (usually in St James' Palace or somewhere similar) a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace and a variety of events/activity days etc. More information can be found on their website at [www.nfassociation.org](http://www.nfassociation.org), or by writing to the NFA at 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH.

## **RAF REGT COMMEMORATIVE PLATE AND TANKARD OFFER**

The South Wales Branch of the RAF Regt Assoc is offering for sale an approved RAF Regt 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Plate and Tankard at £36 each, including postage, packing and insurance. Further details may be obtained from Mr Alan Day of 59 Bethlehem Road, Skewen, Neath, SA10 6AW; tel (BT) 01792 425373 or by Email at [alanday791@gmail.com](mailto:alanday791@gmail.com).

## **CORPS DIARY DATES:**

### **\* Provisional Dates**

28 Jan - RAF Regt Assoc NEC Mtg 1-11 (RAF Cranwell)

1 Feb - 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Formation of the RAF Regt.

2 Feb - Corps Operational Review (RAF Honington).

3 Feb - Corps 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Service (Bury St Edmunds).

3 Feb - Corps Officers' Briefing and Corps Formation Dinner 2012 (RAF Honington).

## **Open Letter to Angela Merkel the German Chancellor by Frederick Forsyth**

Dear Madam Chancellor. Permit me to begin this letter with a brief description of my knowledge of, and affection for, your country. I first came to Germany as a boy student aged 13 in 1952, two years before you were born. After three extended vacations with German families who spoke no English, I found at the age of 16 and to my pleasure that I could pass for German among Germans.

In my 20s I was posted as a foreign correspondent to East Germany in 1963, when you would have been a schoolgirl just north of East Berlin where I lived. I know Germany, Frau Merkel, from the alleys of Hamburg to the spires of Dresden, from the Rhine to the Oder, from the bleak Baltic coast to the snows of the Bavarian Alps. I say this only to show you that I am neither ignoramus nor enemy.

I also had occasion in those years to visit the many thousands of my countrymen who held the line of the Elbe against 50,000 Soviet main battle tanks and thus kept Germany free to recover, modernise and prosper at no defence cost to herself.

And from inside the Cold War I saw our decades of effort to defeat the Soviet empire and set your East Germany free. I was therefore disappointed last Friday to see you take the part of a small and vindictive Frenchman in what can only be seen as a targeted attack on the land of my fathers.

We both know that every country has at least one aspect of its society or economy that is so crucial, so vital that it simply cannot be conceded. For Germany it is surely your automotive sector, your car industry. Any foreign-sourced measure to target German cars and render them unsaleable would have to be opposed to veto point by a German chancellor.

For France it is the agricultural sector. For more than 50 years members of the EU have been taxed under the terms of the Common Agricultural Policy in order to subsidise France's agriculture. Indeed, the CAP has been the cornerstone of every EU budget since the first day. Attack it and France fights back.

For us the crucial corner of our economy is the financial services industry. Although parts of it exist all over the country it is concentrated in

6 Feb - 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Formation of the RAF Regt.  
 7 Apr - 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of 2 ACC / II Sqn RAF Regt.  
 12-13 Apr - RAF AC Assoc Spring Reunion – Morley Hayes (Dinner on 13 Apr)  
 11-14 May - RAF Regt Assoc Spring Social (Nidd Hall, Nr Harrogate).  
 12 May - Annual RAF Regt Chapel Commemoration (Catterick).  
 30 May - RAF Regt Offrs' Dinner Club Annual Reception 2012 (House of Lords) – \* Date Change  
 4 Jun \* - Naming Ceremony (for those killed in 2011) at the National Armed Forces' Memorial (NMA Alrewas).  
 15 Jun - 63 Sqn RAF Regt Assoc Reunion (Union Jack Club, London).  
 30 Jun - UK Veterans' Day + RAF Regt Annual Memorial Commemoration (NMA Alrewas)  
 19 Jul - II Sqn RAF Regt 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Families' Day (RAF Honington).  
 21 Jul - RAF Regt Assoc NEC Mtg 2-11 (venue TBC)  
 1 Aug - Centurion Journal 2012 - Article Deadline.  
 28 Sep – 1 Oct - RAF Regt Assoc AGM and Reunion (Wyboston Lakes)  
 18-19 Oct - RAF AC Assoc Autumn Reunion – Morley Hayes (Dinner on 19 Apr)  
 26 Oct - RAF Regt Offrs' Dinner Club Annual Dinner 2012 (RAF Club, London).  
 11 Nov - Remembrance Day (Nationwide).  
**2013**  
 31 Jan - Corps Operational Review (RAF Honington).  
 1 Feb - 71<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Formation of the RAF Regt.  
 1 Feb\* - Corps 71<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Service (Bury St Edmunds).  
 1 Feb - Corps Officers' Briefing and Corps Formation Dinner 2012 (RAF Honington).  
 11 May - Annual RAF Regt Chapel Commemoration (provisional date, Catterick).  
 28 Jun - RAF Regt Offrs' Dinner Club Ladies Dinner Night (Morley Hayes, nr Derby).

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I like the following Open Letter from Frederick Forsyth to Angela Merkel so much that I thought you may like it too.

that part of London known even internationally as "the City". It is not just a few greedy bankers; we both have those but the City is far more. It is indeed a vast banking agglomeration of more banks than anywhere else in the world. But that is the tip of the iceberg. Also in the City is the world's greatest concentration of insurance companies. Add to that the brokers; traders in stocks and shares worldwide, second only, and then maybe not, to Wall Street.

But it is not just stocks. The City is also home to the "exchanges" of gold and precious metals, diamonds, base metals, commodities, futures, derivatives, coffee, cocoa - the list goes on and on. And it does not yet touch upon shipping, aviation, fuels, energy, textiles - enough. Suffice to say the City is the biggest and busiest marketplace in the world.

It makes the Paris Bourse look like a parish council set against the United Nations and even dwarfs your Frankfurt many times. That, surely, is the point of what happened in Brussels. The French wish to wreck it and you seem to have agreed. Its contribution to the British economy is not simply useful nor even merely valuable. It is absolutely crucial.

The financial services industry contributes 10 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product and 17.5 per cent of our taxation revenue. A direct and targeted attack on the City is an attack on my country. But that, although devised in Paris, is what you have chosen to support.

You seem to have decided that Britain is once again Germany's enemy, a situation that has not existed since 1945. I deeply regret this but the choice was yours and entirely yours. The Transaction Tax or Tobin Tax you reserve the right to impose would not even generate money for Brussels. It would simply lead to massive emigration from London to other havens.

Long ago it was necessary to live in a city to trade in it. In these days when deals can flash across the world in a nanosecond, all a major brokerage needs is a suite of rooms, computers, telephones and the talent of the young people barking offers and agreements down the phone. Such a suite of rooms could be in Berne, Thun, Zurich or even Singapore.

Under your Tobin Tax tens of thousands would leave London. This would not help Brussels, it would simply help destroy the British economy.

Your conference did not even save the euro. Permit me a few home truths about it. The euro is a Franco-German construct. It was a German chancellor (Kohl) who ordered a German banker (Karl Otto Pohl) to get together with a French civil servant (Delors) on the orders of a French president (Mitterrand) and create a common currency. Which they did.

It was a flawed construct. Like a ship with a twisted hull it might float in calm water but if it ever hit a force eight it would probably founder. Even then it might have worked for it was launched with a manual of rules, the Growth And Stability Pact. If the terms of that book of rules had been complied with the Good Ship Euro might have survived.

But compliance was entrusted to the European Central Bank which catastrophically failed to insist on that compliance. Rules governing the growing of cucumbers are more zealously enforced. This was a European Bank in a German city under a French president and it failed in its primary, even its sole, duty.

This had everything to do with France and Germany and nothing whatever to do with Britain. Yet in Brussels last week the EU pack seemed intent only on venting its spleen on the country that wisely refused to abolish its pound. You did not even address yourselves to saving the euro but only to seeking a way to ensure it might work in some future time.

But the euro will not be saved. It is crumbling now. And since you have now turned against my country, from this side of the Channel, Madame Chancellor, one can only say of the euro: **YOU MADE IT, YOU MEND IT.**

### **Joke time**

A Member Colin Smith sent this one to me. "With all the sadness and trauma going on in the world at this time, it is worth reflecting on the death of a very important person which went almost unnoticed last week. Larry LaPrise, the man that wrote 'The Hokey Kokey' died peacefully at the age of 93. The most traumatic part for his family was getting him into his coffin. They put his left leg in. That's when the trouble started!"

Well that's all for now, keep smiling if you can and stay happy.

***Malcolm***

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



12

Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	2012 NEC Mtg Venue TBA	Thursday 14 <sup>th</sup> June	2012 Branch Night
<b>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> Feb</b>	<b>2012 70<sup>th</sup> Ann RAF Regt</b>	<b>Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>2012 24<sup>th</sup> Ann B'ham Branch</b>
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb	2012 Branch Subs Due	Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> June	2012 National Service Day
<b>Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>	<b>2012 Branch AGM</b>	Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> June	2012 Mem Service Plymouth Ho
Thurs 8 <sup>th</sup> March	2012 Branch Night	Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> June	2012 Allied Air Forces Mem
Thurs 12 <sup>th</sup> April	2012 Branch Night	Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> June	2012 Regt Ann Comm NMA
Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> May	2012 Branch Night	Thursday 14 <sup>th</sup> July	2012 Branch Night
Fri 11 <sup>th</sup> -Mon 14 <sup>th</sup> May	2012 Spr Reunion Nidd Hall	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> August	2012 Branch Night
Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> May	2012 Annual Chapel Comm.	Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> Sept	2012 Branch Night
		Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> October	2012 Merchant Navy Day
		Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	2012 Branch Night
		Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> October	2012 Battle of Trafalgar
		Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> November	2012 Midlands Fest of Rem
		Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2012 B'ham Poppy Ball
		Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2012 Remembrance Sunday
		Sat 24 <sup>th</sup> -Sun 25 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2012 B'ham Int Tattoo

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