



# ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

[www.rafregt.org.uk](http://www.rafregt.org.uk)

## ESSEX & NORTH EAST LONDON BRANCHES NEWSLETTER Jan 2009

Dear Members and Friends,

We hope you all had a good Christmas and we wish you all the very best of health and happiness for the New Year.

### **Remembrance Day 11<sup>th</sup> November**

For the first time in the past 50 years, Brenda and I missed our local Remembrance Day Parade in Romford as we were taking a late holiday cruise in the Med.

We were very impressed when the Captain of the ship Island Escape announced that on the 11<sup>th</sup> at 11am there would be a service in one of the theatres aboard.

At the time, 75% of the passengers (who were mostly Brits) assembled and it was refreshing to see those who had brought their poppies with them and had them on display.

A fitting place to hold our remembrance of those who gave their lives in that particular theatre of war.

### **Witham December Meeting**

The December party and raffle held at the RAFA Witham looked as if it would not be up to its usual popularity, the branch having lost some of our stalwarts during the year, but on the night, thanks to the attendance of the Middle East Veterans, who always make the effort and support the raffle it turned out to be a really good night. The buffet supplied by the ladies of Witham was as usual, well received.

A total of 70 attended which included 4 new potential members introduced by Tom Craig from Clacton.

There were fifty prizes donated by members and a total of £131.00 was collected by selling raffle tickets.

The gaps in our group were noticeable, more so at Christmas time.

At the conclusion of the evening a donation of £50 was made to the RAFA Wings appeal as a mark of thanks for the hospitality shown to our Association.

Bill Smith

### **Christmas Lunch**

A fantastic turnout for our Christmas lunch, probably the best ever – around 24 members and friends arrived and the catching up on news etc began.

Lots of raffle prizes, many thanks to those who donated them and to everyone for buying tickets. Some of the proceeds for the raffle were given to the waitress and a small amount kept back for future use.

## **Founders Day**

We will be celebrating Founders Day this year on Sunday 1 February at the Liberty Bell, Romford at 12 noon for 12.30. We would be grateful if you would bring one sweet and one savoury food item to help make a hamper for a raffle prize at our forthcoming Party Night. (Essex members if you cannot attend the Party Night and wish to make a donation, I will collect it from you at our AGM Meeting in Witham).

We wish a very happy wedding anniversary on Founders Day to Jean & George Stout and Susie & Frank Newman.

## **Help for Heroes Party Night – 6 March 2009**

This is going to be a fantastic event. Tickets are limited, first come, first served. £10 each and worth every penny. Lots of raffle prizes needed so please bring these to the next meeting. We will have a trio of musicians and a vocalist, drinks at club prices and a buffet. Some members will be able to contribute to the work involved with the buffet. If we have the caterers in, we will lose the profit we hope to make. The use of the club has been given free of charge. Any offers of help / suggestions greatly received.

## **News of the Regiment**

### **Implementation of Lance Corporal Rank for the RAF Regiment**

The rank of lance corporal (LCpl) is to be introduced to the Gunner trade in April 2010 to identify the critical leadership role undertaken by nominated and experienced gunners on RAF Regt front-line units. Experience on Operations Herrick and Telic has highlighted the key role played by RAF Regt SAC's appointed as commanders of small combat elements, leading up to three other gunners, such as in the role of ground close combat section 2i/c/fire team commander. The introduction of new weapon systems, tactics and structures has meant that, to a greater extent than before, these SAC's have had to operate independently and make command decisions in combat situations. The AFBSC's recent decision to introduce the rank of LCpl to the RAF Regt will ensure that these junior commanders are recognised officially in the vital leadership roles that they undertake. Gunners selected to fill these posts will be trained, remunerated and given formal command authority through promotion to the rank of LCpl. Appropriate specialist training will commence in August 2009 and the first LCpls should be 'badged' with effect from 1 April 2010. Further details will be published in Centurion No 28.

### **II Sqn RAF Regt 87 Anniversary Day**

II Sqn RAF Regt intend to hold their 87 Anniversary celebration, at their hanger at RAF Honington on Thursday 14 May 2009. The event will be open to past and present Squadron members. Full details will be published in due course and, at this stage, we ask that all former Squadron members keep this date clear.

### **194 & 63 Sqs RAF Regt Reunion**

A reunion of former 194 Sqn and 63 Sqs RAF Regt personnel will take place 2 May 2009 at the Royal Carlton Hotel, Blackpool. The Friday, Saturday and Sunday bed, breakfast and evening meals will cost £100 per person. For further details contact Howard Jones on 01244 815469.

## **OMAN Experiences**

The RAF Regt Secretary is keen to speak to SOAF/RAF Regt veterans involved, primarily, in the Battle of Mirbat, the RAF Regt's defence of RAF Salalah in 1972. An author would like to discuss the event in preparation for a book on the 'Secret War' in Oman during the late 1960s-early 1970s. Please contact the Regt Sec initially.

### **33Wg – 1 – 58 – 26 Sqs RAF Regt Reunion at RAF Laarbruch 2009**

The RAF Regt Museum is in the process of loaning a Rapier FSB1 (M) missile system to the RAF Laarbruch Museum in Weeze, Nord Rhein Westphalia, Germany. It is planning to hold a formal unveiling of the exhibit sometime in the Spring/early Summer of 2009 and it is hoped to use the event to stage a reunion for those who served at RAF Laarbruch on the Regt Wgs/Sqns or GDT during the period 1953-1999. The Museum website may be found at <<http://www.laarbruch-museum.net/>> <http://www.laarbruch-museum.net>. Details of any such reunion, including suggested accommodation will be issued at a later date. If anyone is interested on helping to run, or take on the coordination of the reunion attendees, please contact the RAF Regt Sec.

### **1 Sqn RAF Regt – Rockape Ale Project**

1 Sqn RAF Regt is currently deployed in Afghanistan as the Resident Fd Sqn defending the NATO airbase at Kandahar. The Sqn has been deployed since mid-Aug 08 and is due to return to the UK in Mar 09. The Sqn will be operating in the extremes of both summer and winter conditions, with temperature ranges from 45 to -10 degC. It has commissioned a unique bottle of beer through the Red Rat Brewery to celebrate their return and raise money for the Service charity 'Help for Heroes'. A bottle of 1 Sqn Rock Ape Ale will cost £2, of which 50p will go to the 'Help for Heroes' charity. With 150 extremely thirsty members of the sqn, they are hoping to raise a modest £1000 to wet their particularly dry whistles! If you feel that you would like to contribute even to the cost of one bottle, the Sqn would be very pleased to receive your donation.

Donations can be made on line at <http://www.redratcraftbrewery.co.uk/> [www.redratcraftbrewery.co.uk](http://www.redratcraftbrewery.co.uk) and then click on campaigns or by cheque (made payable to 'Red Rat Craft Brewery') sent to: 1 Sqn RAF Regt, (Rock Ape Ale), RAF Honington, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 1EE

### **New RAF Regt Sqn**

It has been mentioned that the Corps will be forming a new Field Sqn. When we have any more news we will let you know.

### **Channel 5 TV**

Over the past couple of weeks Channel 5 has been broadcasting a programme on Monday at 2100 called Warzone. It is about the Kandahar Air Base in Afghanistan. It has been covering life on the base with the RAF, and No1 Sqn RAF Regt has been shown. It showed the Sqn leaving the UK after a 5 hour delay to the take-off and the build up to taking over from 3 Sqn RAF Regt. Last night it had them doing their first patrol outside the wire. Being an ex 1 Sqn Rock I found it very interesting.

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2009**

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|--------------|---|
| <b>Feb 1</b> | <b>Founders Day Lunch – Liberty Bell, Romford 12:00 for 12:30</b> |
| <b>Feb 4</b> | <b>Essex Branch Meeting Witham (AGM)</b>                          |
| <b>Mar 6</b> | <b>Help for Heroes Party Night (See Flyer)</b>                    |
| Apr 1        | Essex Branch Meeting Witham                                       |
| Apr 17 – 20  | Spring Social Reunion (Berkshire)                                 |
| May 10       | Annual RAF Regt Chapel Commemoration (Catterick Village)          |
| May 17       | Tower of London Church Service (Prov)                             |
| Jun 8        | Essex Branch Meeting (Buffet) Witham                              |
| Jun (27)     | RAF Regt Memorial Commemoration Alwres (Veterans Week)            |
| Oct 2 – 4    | Association AGM & Reunion Weekend – Venue TBD.                    |