



# **THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION**

## **ABRIDGED REPORT OF THE 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

### **DEVONSHIRE PARK CENTRE, EASTBOURNE**

**13 – 15 MAY 2011**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Association acknowledges with gratitude the help of all those who made the Conference in Eastbourne a success, particularly the following:

The Worshipful the Mayor of Eastbourne, Councillor Carolyn Heaps and the Borough of Eastbourne for their support of the Conference.

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton KCB ADC BSc FRAeS CCGI RAF

The Air Member for Personnel, Air Marshal Andy Pulford CBE RAF

The Commandant Air Cadets, Air Commodore Barbara Cooper CBE RAF

The Air Force Board of the Defence Council, for their help and for facilitating the attendance of Royal Air Force participants

The Chaplain in Chief of the Royal Air Force, The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) Ray Pentland QHC BA DPS MTh RAF

The Central Band of the Royal Air Force (Director of Music, Sqn Ldr Chris Weldon RAF)

The Guard of Honour provided by No 54 (Eastbourne) Squadron ATC

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight

The Eastbourne Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2011 Annual Conference of the Royal Air Forces Association was held at the Devonshire Park Centre, Eastbourne on the 13-15 May 2011. The Conference was opened by The Worshipful the Mayor of Eastbourne, Councillor Carolyn Heaps. The Chairman of Conference was Air Marshal Philip Sturley CB MBE.

## **THE SILENT TRIBUTE**

The Silent Tribute to the Fallen was conducted by the Chaplain in Chief of the Royal Air Force, The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) Ray Pentland QHC BA DPS MTh RAF

## **MESSAGES OF GREETING**

The President announced that messages of greeting had been received from Her Majesty The Queen, Patron of the Association, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, past President, and from His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, also past President. Other messages of greeting were received from:

Air Force Association  
Army Benevolent Fund  
Association of Jewish Ex Service Men & Women  
British Limbless Ex Service Men's Association  
Combat Stress Ex Services Mental Welfare Society  
Forces Pension Society  
Royal Observer Corps Association  
Royal Air Force Widows' Association  
Bomber Command Association  
Chief of the Air Staff  
Officers' Association  
Polish Air Force Association Charitable Trust  
Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund  
Royal Air Force Gang Shows Association  
Royal Australian Air Force Association  
Royal British Legion  
Royal Marines Association  
Royal Naval Association  
Royal New Zealand Air Force Association  
Royal Star & Garter Home for Disabled Ex Service Men & Women  
South African Area, Royal Air Forces Association  
Seafarers UK  
St Dunstan's  
Veterans Scotland  
Victory Services Association Ltd

## **PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATES**

The President awarded National Presidential Certificates, to coincide with The Queen's Birthday Honours List 2010 and The New Year Honours List 2011.

## **PRESENTATION OF FLYING SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS**

The Air Member for Personnel presented Flying Scholarship awards to the following:

### **12 Hour Flying Scholarship**

Cadet Warrant Officer Vici Bates - a cadet for over 5 years with 95 (Crewe) Sqn ATC.

Cadet Flight Sergeant Tom Bean - a cadet for over 4 years with 100 (Nantwich) Sqn ATC.

Cadet Sergeant Rob Watson - a cadet for over 4 years with 2535 (Livingston) Sqn ATC.

Cadet Flight Sergeant Siena Whiteside - a cadet for over 3 years with 966 (Wallingford) Sqn ATC.

### **35 Hour Flying Scholarship**

Cadet Sergeant Jonathan Coates - a cadet for almost 4 years with 886 (City of Ripon) Sqn ATC.

## **ADDRESS BY THE AIR MEMBER FOR PERSONNEL AND DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PERSONNEL AIR MARSHAL ANDY PULFORD CBE RAF**

AMP began his address by stating that the Chief of the Air Staff was very disappointed not to be at Annual Conference, but current operational commitments meant his absence was unavoidable. However, this gave him the opportunity, and he considered it a privilege and an honour, to be in a position to brief the Conference on how well the Royal Air Force was performing around the world and the operational pressures that it was currently facing.

There had been times in the past when previous AMPs had been in the fortunate position of being responsible for growing the Royal Air Force, but not anymore! The Service had never been busier nor had it seen a larger percentage of personnel on operational deployment, preparing to go or recovering from these extremely dangerous duties. The recent developments in the Middle East on the so-called "Arab Spring" had put even more pressure on the Services as a whole but none more so than the Royal Air Force.

Operationally, AMP stated that within the UK the Royal Air Force always had 4 Typhoons at readiness and so far had recorded 17 contacts this year in British Airspace alone, including 4 with Russian aircraft, which reminded everyone that the threat was still very relevant and real. The rest had been civilian airlines that had failed to follow protocol, but could just as easily have been hijacked aircraft on their way to a UK target. This again emphasised the role played by the Royal Air Force in the vital defence of this country. At home, he also paid tribute to the skilled helicopter pilots and crew of the Search & Rescue teams across the country that each year saved so many lives from perilous situations. To give an insight into the diversity of his work, AMP also informed Conference that he had 369 Service Personnel training to be prison guards, just in case Prison Officers took

industrial action. He also briefed the Delegates on the vital role the Service was playing in the defence of the Falkland Islands, providing air defence since 1982.

However, the main effort remained Afghanistan and the Airbridge provided by the Service to that particular theatre was a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week job, as the vast majority of personnel came in and out by transport provided by the Royal Air Force. The new Drones and remotely piloted systems were all controlled by Royal Air Force personnel both on the ground and from locations within the USA. Another vital element was the Royal Air Force Helicopter Force in Afghanistan that delivered the close-in combat air support to transport troops and equipment for operations on the ground. Supporting all these elements was the RAF Regiment that provided the all important force protection, without which personnel would not be able to come and go from the extremely large air bases situated in that country. Finally there were the Royal Air Force medical teams; many people were alive today because of the tremendous work of these highly skilled individuals, saving lives on a daily basis.

To sum up, operations in Afghanistan would not happen without the Royal Air Force.

AMP continued his presentation by briefing Conference on the current situation in Libya and the assistance the Royal Air Force was giving to enforce the no-fly zone over that country. During operations in Libya the RAF had completed the longest mission in history, from UK to target, of over 3,000 miles. Over 60 years ago this month the Service had completed the raids on the enemy's dams and the same courage and determination that was shown then was present in today's Royal Air Force personnel. He also paid tribute to the Nimrod crews over Libya and the vital reconnaissance role that they were doing. Speed, reach, flexibility, commitment and dedication were traits that were as relevant today as they were all those years ago, and AMP believed that the personnel today were every bit as good as those that they followed.

Moving to the domestic front, AMP stated that SDSR provided a different, but equally difficult challenge to the Service. SDSR was well understood by the Service and the need to play their part in bringing the country back to its feet. All the Service asked was fairness in the application of the changes. Overall AMP believed that the Royal Air Force had a bright future; the future equipment programme was as good as any nation in the world. However, with fewer assets, fewer people would be needed and AMP and his team were in the process of reducing personnel from 41,000 to 34,000 by 2015. Around 3,000 redundancies would be voluntary and some would be compulsory. With a pay freeze for 2 years and the allowance bill reduced by £250m, RAF personnel were poorer. Pensions were also under review. This situation had caused pressure right across the Service, but AMP believed that it was vital that communication took place to ensure that personnel understood what was happening to them. AMP hoped that the Military Covenant announced the previous day would bring fairness and parity to all military personnel and their families.

As a result of all these changes, AMP and the other Royal Air Force chiefs were pleased that the Royal Air Forces Association and other Service Charities would be there to assist those that needed help in these potentially worrying times. He thanked the Association for its work for currently serving personnel, citing Storybook Wings, Miles More Minutes Campaign, Contact Houses and Internet Cafes. He also thanked the Association for its

work in developing the Integrated Welfare Facility at Linton-on-Ouse which was a real benefit to all on the station.

He thanked the President, Air Marshal Sturley, for his 6 years at the helm in helping to steer the Association and wished him well for the future. He also paid tribute to Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell, the previous Chairman, for his inspired leadership of the Trustees through what had been a difficult time.

In conclusion AMP stated that the Association was beginning to find its place in the new order of the world and the challenge going forward would be to work together with all those other vital organisations in order to best serve the Royal Air Force family in the future.

AMP's speech was met with long, loud and appreciative applause.

### **ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Annual Conference Committee, Mr A Rees, moved the adoption of the Report of the Annual Conference Committee, which was duly seconded and adopted.

### **THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010**

The Chairman of Central Council, Air Vice-Marshal Nigel Bairsto addressed Conference. He stated that he was delighted to be making his first address to Annual Conference as the Chairman of Central Council. It was good to see everyone here today under the unifying causes of friendship and service, so that through our membership we could offer welfare support to the whole RAF family. He thanked everyone attending Annual Conference for all that they did in the name of the Association.

Overall 2010 had been a very good year for the Association, the main highlights being:

- the Battle of Britain Service at St Paul's Cathedral had put the Association firmly into the public spotlight
- the Wings Appeal had raised nearly £2 million
- £3.7 million in legacies had been received
- the Association had retained more Members than in recent years
- recruitment within the serving RAF had gone well
- the Association had worked closely with the RAF Community Support and the Families Federation to shape welfare policy
- with the help of our tremendous volunteer welfare support 50,000 welfare contacts with the RAF family had been achieved, either in person, or by telephone.

As part of its governance responsibilities, the Central Council had agreed a Strategic Plan for the next five years so that we could understand where future priorities lay. The Council, as the trustee body of the Association, had also begun to discuss its own role, and the skills needed amongst the Trustees to steer the Association in the future. The new Secretary General, Jane Easton, had joined the Association in September 2010 and had a clear brief, not only to manage those aspects of the Association's work which were

going well, but also to support the Trustees in the change management which was needed to lead the Association into a strong future.

Membership and recruitment was a concern, with the under 25s and over 70s making up the greatest proportion of the membership, and the average age being around 65. Efforts needed to be concentrated on the 35 to 55 age bracket for recruitment now so that we would have sufficient members to maintain our welfare work and fundraising in the future.

The Association currently had just over 70,000 members and around 480 Branches. Central Council had set a five-year target that by 2015 membership should be at least 64,500 with at least 20,000 serving personnel. That was a target for everyone in the Association to aim for. The Chairman reminded Conference that the main benefits of membership were:

- Keeping in touch – comradeship and friendship
- Providing an international network for welfare and fundraising
- Specific affinity benefits

Welfare remained one of our core activities and the Association continued to serve the RAF family from the youngest family member to the oldest veteran. The Chairman paid tribute to all HWOs and stated that their role was invaluable. Good practice dictated that they must be highly trained, so that the complexities of modern welfare provision could be met. Research completed by the Association within the last year on the present HWO system confirmed that:

- Some Honorary Welfare Officers were signalling that they would like to pass on those responsibilities to someone younger
- In some Branches succession planning had proved difficult
- HWO coverage in some parts of the country was patchy.

The Association should be very proud of the help the veterans, young and old receive from the organisation; respite care, housing, support to individuals, war pensions advice, help for the homeless. The Association was very grateful for its relationship with the RAF Benevolent Fund and all that it did to assist our organisation in its work. Our commitment to supporting Serving Personnel was as strong as ever, currently through Miles More Minutes, Storybook Wings, Contact Houses and facilities such as Internet Cafes. We know that the planned RAF redundancies may present the Association with some new welfare challenges but, as always, we stand ready to respond. The Trustees, in their strategic objectives for the next five years, were keen to ensure that the welfare services we offered continued to be relevant and provide good value for money.

The RAF Association holds the contract with the Royal Air Force for the Families Federation to do a number of very important things:

- To be on the ground, regularly talking to Serving Personnel and their families, and feeding the evidence they gather back to the policy-makers
- To lobby the RAF, the MoD and Government Ministers to try and improve service conditions

- To work closely with this Association to ensure that needs identified through their work help to influence future welfare policy.

The Chairman thanked Dawn McCafferty and her team for all their hard work in making the Federation what it was today.

Moving to fundraising, the Chairman thanked all those volunteers who in 2010 had raised nearly £2 million for the Wings Appeal, directly benefitting those who had most needed our support.

As everyone knew, the service charity sector was becoming increasingly professional and competitive, so our image and profile were incredibly important in everything we did, none more so than in the area of fundraising. In 2010 we used the Battle of Britain and Miles More Minutes themes for our fundraising and in the second half of the year the powerful images of The Blades, sporting their wonderful RAF Association livery.

He reminded Conference that the decision had been taken to invest in The Blades because image and profile were hugely important. Successful charities were those that managed to capture hearts and minds, not just of their own members, but also the wider public. It was estimated that about 5 million people attended Air Shows each year. The Association now had a branded aerobatics display team, which not only advertised RAFA in the air, but also came with a commentary providing key messages about the Association. It also signposted the crowds to our display area where they could meet the pilots, and gave the Association the opportunity to sell merchandise and fundraise. It was a formula that worked really well.

A further reason for establishing this partnership with the Blades was quite simply for financial return, as one of the current challenges was to widen the Association's fundraising base. At present we had high levels of legacy income, but this wouldn't continue forever. A smaller membership base in the future might make local fundraising more difficult. The direct financial benefit to the RAF Association of The Blades partnership would be £3 million over 5 years. The Chairman hoped that many of those at Conference would be attending air shows this summer and would be able to see the 'Blades effect' for themselves.

Lift-Off Lotto and the Grand Draw were being drawn under the one umbrella of Wings Lotto, to make it more obvious that they were fundraising tools for the Wings Appeal. Sponsored challenges would continue and the new Online Tribute Fund facility, along with the RAF Association Remembrance Garden, raised funds in memory of those who have served their country. Critically, fundraising efforts locally, would contribute to the £8 million needed in order to serve our membership and continue the welfare work. In setting targets for the next five years, the Trustees wanted to maximise the return received from fundraising. The target was that for every pound spent, the Association would aim to raise three pounds.

The Chairman stressed the need for communication at all levels and stated that one of the greatest challenges for our organisation was to get the key messages out to all who need to hear them. It was good to have over 600 in the hall today, but we have only a third of

Branches represented, and over 70,000 members and lots of others whom we need to influence. We needed to exploit every communication channel we could and it was vital that Delegates reported back faithfully to their Branches and take action where it was needed.

In support of the need for better communication, the Association would:

- be enhancing its website
- be providing information through Air Mail, Connect and RAF News
- be distributing the Annual Report and our strategic aims for the next five years
- be out and about in towns across the country with the METs (exhibition trailers)
- strengthen relationships with other charities and partners
- increase PR activity
- work with Area Councils and Area Offices to ensure that the Association's structures are supportive rather than tying us up in bureaucracy.

In conclusion the Chairman reiterated to Conference the key challenges that faced the Association over the coming months and, in formulating the strategic objectives, the Trustees had addressed these challenges under six headings:

**Membership** – the need to recruit and to retain members.

**Welfare** – the need to align our welfare provision to emerging demands, amongst Serving Personnel and Veterans.

**Fundraising** – reducing the dependence on legacy income, producing an agreed return on investment and broadening our fundraising base.

**People** – staff and volunteers are vital to the Association, and we need to provide training and support so they can be effective in their roles.

**Business performance** – in all activity we must be efficient and effective. We must be financially prudent and govern our activity well.

**Reputation** – our image and our public profile must be attractive and strong.

These objectives were summarised towards the end of the 2010 Annual Report and were there for the world to view. The Association had a proud history, but it was vital to have a vision for the future. In 2011 the Association was beginning to put in place changes that would guarantee the long-term health of the organisation and the Chairman would look to everyone to support that work.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2010**

In the absence of an Honorary Treasurer, the Chairman of Central Council, Air Vice-Marshal Nigel Bairsto, presented the Financial Accounts of the Association for 2010.

The Chairman paid tribute to the former Honorary Treasurer, John Harrison, as he had spent a considerable amount of time working on the structure of the Association's investments and had put in place a sound Investment Policy. The Trustees of the Association were very grateful to him and wished to place on record their thanks to him for his commitment to the Association, sound judgement and financial advice.

The Trustees had taken time to consider whether the Association should broaden its horizons in order to be able to elect the best qualified candidate to fulfill the role of Honorary Treasurer in what is a £10m income, £20m asset organisation. Whilst there may be Ordinary Members with the necessary skills it was believed advisable to widen the pool so that the Association can look elsewhere if an appropriate Ordinary Member does not put him or herself forward for election.

He set the scene by reminding delegates of the environment in which the Association operated last year. The economy had another difficult year with inflation rising, the bank base rate at 0.5%, cuts in Central Government and Local Authority spending and rising unemployment. Despite the general state of the economy the Association had not suffered financially and had been able to continue to deliver its welfare provision.

Income received in 2010 was £10.4m, £0.9m more than in 2009. Most of our income was generated from fundraising or from our charitable activities, not from government or local authority funding. Legacy income accounted for 36% of the Association's income; in real terms this equated to £3.7m, the highest amount that had been received from this source in the history of the Association. It exceeded last year's total by 800k and was the main reason for the increase in income in 2010. The Trustees were very grateful to all those people who had left us these very generous legacies. Legacy income had been one of the main factors in the Association's financial recovery over the last 6 years and the Trustees were concerned that it should not become too dependent on legacies as a major source of income in the future. One of the strategic objectives that Trustees had set was that the Association should reduce its reliance on legacy income to fund activities to £1m by 2013. In order for our income to match our expenditure we can only assume that legacy income of £1m will be received. In 2010 legacy income of £1.7m was required to break even. In order to achieve this objective the Association would need to generate income from new sources or reduce costs, or a combination of the two.

Fundraising activities such as the Wings Appeal, Wings Lotto and the Grand Draw accounted for 29% of income. There had been a growth in income from £2.7m in 2009 to almost £3m in 2010. The Chairman thanked all those that had raised money for the Association throughout the year through the very many Branch activities, including street and premises collections. He paid particularly thanks to the Newbury Branch who had donated £92k during the year from the proceeds of sale of their Branch property. Part of this money had been used to purchase the first Motorised Exhibition Trailer.

Concerning the Blades project he stated that, although the investment made began part way through the year, it had already begun to generate income from new sources towards the end of the year. It was these new sources of income that the Trustees would be looking to in the future to offset the anticipated decline in legacy income.

Total expenditure in 2010 was £8.4m, £0.7m more than 2009. Over one third of expenditure went on the costs of running the Association's Homes, some of which were jointly funded with the Benevolent Fund. The majority of the increase in expenditure was spent on charitable activities with increased amounts spent on the respite care homes and welfare support. Over the last five years the amount of money spent on welfare support had increased by nearly 90%. In 2006 the Association spent around £800k, representing 9% of total expenditure. Last year the Association spent around £1.5m, representing 19% of expenditure. The growth of expenditure in this area was in part due to the increasing number of projects in support of the Serving RAF such as Contact Houses, Storybook Wings and Miles More Minutes. In addition to this the amount invested in HWO training had increased and the Association continued to provide support to some residents at Sussexdown. It was the intention of the Trustees to increase the expenditure on welfare support in the coming years.

Overall the Association generated a surplus in 2010 of £3.5m which included movements in investments and the pension fund deficit. The net assets of the Association at the end of the year were £20.9m. This is something that we should all be proud of. The Association now had a very strong financial base on which to move forward.

Our investments were managed for us by an Investment Manager at Rathbones. The investments held by them increased from £11.8m at the end of 2009 to £14.5m at the end of 2010. This included investment gains of £1.4m, a result of the general movement in the Stock Market over the period. During the year the Association invested a further £750k with Rathbones. The Investment Committee recently reviewed the performance of the Investment Manager and was satisfied with their management of our funds and recommended to Central Council that Rathbones be re-appointed for a further period of 3 years.

The pension scheme liability reduced from £2.6m at the end of 2009 to £2.3m at the end of 2010. These figures are calculated by an actuary in accordance with accounting standards and do fluctuate from one year to another. They are based on a number of assumptions on a given day. The Trustees take this deficit seriously and have reached agreement with the Pension Fund Trustees to reduce the deficit over a number of years by paying additional sums into the Fund each year.

At the end of 2010 the level of free reserves stood at £12.9m after taking into account the Pension Fund deficit. This was equivalent to 19 months' expenditure. This meant that if the Association received no more income it could continue to operate for a period of 19 months. As part of the Strategic Review, the Trustees would consider the appropriate level of reserves that the Association should hold.

The accounts were subject to audit by Baker Tilly, and the Chairman was very pleased to report that the accounts were unqualified. The auditors had raised four internal control issues and the management had taken action to correct these. He paid tribute to the work of the Audit Committee, ably led by Beryl Dennett-Stannard. During the year they had challenged some of the decisions made by Trustees and added useful comments to various pieces of work that had been ongoing in the Association. One of the members of

the Committee was now part of the steering group looking at the review of the jointly funded Homes.

Returning to the Blades, the Chairman emphasised that the Trustees had not taken the decision to invest in this project lightly. A great deal of due diligence had been carried out to ensure that the financial projections were based on sound assumptions and that the Association had a proper legal agreement in place. The project had been discussed in great detail by the Executive Board prior to final approval by Central Council. The financial benefit to the Association through Blades-related fundraising activities was estimated at £240k in 2011 and £3m over a five year period. In the short period that the project operated in 2010, it had come within £10k of achieving target. The Chairman assured the Conference that the project would remain under scrutiny and review with regular updates being provided to Trustees by the management team.

Monies continued to be recovered by the Administrators from Kaupthing, Singer and Friedlander. During 2010 the Association received just over £1m from the Administrators, bringing the recovery to date to £2.3m, or 53% of the total. The Administrators had announced that the next payments would be made towards the end of May and that it will be not less than 5p in the £, bringing the recovery up to at least 58%. The latest outlook from the Administrators had been provided in November last year, at that time their forecast on total recovery had increased from 'no less than 50%' back in 2008 to a forecast recovery of 86%. The forecast of the level of recovery had increased each time the Administrator made an announcement, so the Trustees remain confident about the final level of recovery.

The Chairman concluded by reiterating that the Association was on a strong financial footing, with sound systems in place for financial monitoring, and all Trustees received financial reports on a monthly basis. It was well documented that the recovery of the Association had been due, in part, to the high level of legacy income we had received over the last few years. New sources of income had to be found in the future to offset the inevitable decline in legacy income that the Association received. The Trustees understood the issues and would act to address them.

**ADDRESS BY CONTROLLER OF THE RAF BENEVOLENT FUND**  
**AIR MARSHAL SIR ROBERT WRIGHT KBE FCMI AFC FRAeS**

The Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund updated the Conference on the Organisation's activities during the last 12 months. He stated that the Fund faced many of the same challenges as the Association and that was one of the reasons why both organisations worked together so vigorously to overcome them. He congratulated the Association for the way it had modernised over the last 5 years and had become more relevant to today's society. He stressed the need for both organisations to publicise their messages more widely so that all the RAF family knew the roles that both RAFA and the Benevolent Fund played. He believed that there were many more members of the RAF family that were not being helped and the Association's volunteers as the "eyes and the ears" had to reach out to these people. Both organisations had to dispel the myths surrounding the organisations, such as "we only help old veterans" and it is "for Officers only" as this was simply not true.

The Fund had to be fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to achieve this they had to raise the profile, become more relevant, appeal to the younger generation, modernise and continue to seek out new projects for the serving RAF.

The Controller highlighted some of the main work of the Fund during 2010:

- £13.5m spent building and renovating 27 childcare centres on RAF Stations
- £500k spent on education
- Worked closely in mutual support of the ATC
- Supported VRT Officers and ATC injured on duty
- Multi-use games areas and youth workers planned for 29 RAF Stations
- Individual grants given to those in need within the serving RAF
- Focus on relieving the stress at “main base”
- 120 Serving Personnel benefitted from UK respite breaks
- Financial help for RAF personnel injured on overseas operations
- Benefits and financial advice at 50 CABs across the country
- Free relationship counselling through the charity “Relate”
- Support in retirement – 268 Housing Trust properties, 5 new last year
- £800k spent on mobility aids in 2010
- £2.6m given to other charities supporting the RAF Family

He also highlighted the combined work of the two organisations and thanked the HWOs for all their hard work on a daily basis. The Jointly Funded Homes provided a huge number of respite weeks, but both Executives were now looking at the Homes in an attempt to try and identify what the needs would be in 10 to 15 years time. During 2010, there were over 1200 visitors to Princess Marina House with some 4,000 breaks in total. They were now looking at providing dementia respite for those in the early stages of the disease at Princess Marina House, as the Controller believed that this would become a major factor in the years to come.

Caseworking referrals to RAFA are at 15% but the target is 25% and with continued investment in training and the IT improvements, this figure would continue to rise.

In conclusion the Controller stressed the need for continued collaboration between the two organisations in order to move forward and face the new challenges and paid tribute to the President by saying that it had been a privilege to have worked with him and he was proud of everything they had achieved together over the last 6 years.

## **RESULTS OF ELECTIONS**

### **Elected as President**

Air Marshal Sir “Dusty” Miller KBE

### **Elected as Vice-President**

Air Vice-Marshal David Whittaker CB MBE

**The following are the Area Representatives serving on Council for 2011-13**

South East & Eastern Area	Mr F Barrett MBE
Wales, Midland & South Western Area	Mr J Tisbury MBE
Northern Area	Mr G Middleton
Scotland & Northern Ireland Area	Mr J Gannon
European Area	Mr B Darke MBE

**RESOLUTIONS CARRIED**

1. (Central Council) This Conference resolves that an Ordinary, Life or Associate Member of the Association may be elected to the position of Honorary Treasurer of the Association as proposed in CC Paper 2/11 and that the governing documents be amended accordingly

*“The Resolution was carried with the caveat that this would only be enacted if a suitable Ordinary or Life Member could not be found”.*

2. (Central Council) This Conference resolves that the position of Area Treasurer be discontinued with immediate effect as proposed in CC Paper 3/11 and that the governing documents be amended accordingly

4. (St Albans) This Conference resolves that nominations for election to Branch Committees must be signed by two Members of the Branch, one of whom may be a Full Associate Member of the Branch and that Branch Regulation 26(1) be amended accordingly

*BR26(1) currently reads:*

*The notice of an Annual General Meeting shall include notification of any Officer and Additional Member elections to take place at the meeting and shall invite nominations to fill the vacancies. Nomination forms, on which acceptances of nomination by the Members concerned shall be certified, must be signed by two Ordinary, or Life Members of the Branch and forwarded to the Secretary at least seven days*

5. (Swindon) This Conference resolves that nominations for election to a Branch Club Committee must be signed by any two Members of the Branch Club and that Standard Club Rule 23 be amended accordingly

*Standard Club Rule 23 currently reads:*

*The notice of an Annual General Meeting shall include notification of any Officer and Additional Member elections to take place at the meeting and shall invite nominations to fill the vacancies. Nomination forms, on which acceptances of nomination by the Members concerned shall be certified, must be signed by two Ordinary Members of the Club and forwarded to the Secretary at least seven days before the date of the AGM*

6. (Central Council) This Conference receives CC Paper 1/11 and endorses the recommendation that Branches, on official closure, may, if they so wish, form a Registered Members' Group and that the governing documents be amended accordingly

8. (Welwyn Garden City & Hatfield) This Conference re-affirms the Object of the Association in that we are a membership organisation providing welfare through charitable means and not a charity with members

9. (Lewes) This Conference, noting the seriousness of the declining membership, requires the Executive to mount a proactive membership recruitment campaign, targeting ex-Service personnel, and that sufficient funds be allocated for this

10. (SE/E Area) This Conference, noting the responsibility of Area Councils to encourage membership recruitment and fundraising, resolves that the membership rebate each year for those on an Area HQ Roll, be allocated to the respective Area Council, to enable them to organise and promote events within their Area and that Byelaw 13(8) be amended accordingly

11. (Oxted & Limpsfield) That this Association actively seeks a change to regulations concerning street collections by an alteration to, or a replacement of, Section 5 of the Police, Factories etc (Miscellaneous provisions) Act of 1916 by which Local Authorities currently oversee street collections, so that they reflect 21<sup>st</sup> Century means of communication

12. (Central Council) This Conference, having noted CC Paper 05/11 resolves that Annual Conference 2014 be held at Blackpool 16-18 May 2014

### **SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS CARRIED AT THE END OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

This Conference, appreciating his service to the Association, invites Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell CB to become a Life Vice-President of the Royal Air Forces Association

This Conference, appreciating his service to the Association, invites Air Marshal Philip Sturley CB MBE to become a Life Vice-President of the Royal Air Forces Association

### **RESOLUTIONS NOT CARRIED**

13. (Costa Blanca) This Conference resolves that the requirement for a resolution marked with a dagger to be discussed shall be reduced from a two-thirds majority to a simple majority

### **RESOLUTIONS WITHDRAWN**

7. (Costa Blanca) This Conference resolves that clear and definitive directives be introduced into the Association's governing documents covering procedures for motions of "No Confidence" and "Censure"

## **RESOLUTIONS THAT FELL**

3. (Central Council) This Conference resolves that an Ordinary, Life or Associate Member of the Association may be elected to the position of Honorary Treasurer of the Area as proposed in CC Paper 04/11 and that the governing documents be amended accordingly

## **SEMINARS**

During Annual Conference 2011, three Seminars took place on the following subjects, Membership, Welfare Provision and Annual Conference. Each seminar was opened by the President and a précis of each is given below.

### **Membership**

The President reminded the Conference that the RAF Association was the largest single Service membership organisation in the UK and it was through the members' friendship that we delivered our welfare help and support. Last year saw the decline in membership (1.56%) as our lowest ever, but we must not be complacent. With the downturn in the economy, it was likely to be difficult to achieve similar figures this year.

There were many long-term issues that needed discussion. For instance: at what point in the future does our current structure of Areas become non-viable and when do we consider looking at joining forces with our sister organization, RAFBF? They may not be palatable questions today, but they are real, and future generations would have to grasp these issues and deal with them.

Questions were then taken from the Conference floor:

With over 1 Million ex-RAF people out in the community and, following SDSR, more to follow, how do we start to recruit these people to help the Branches stay viable?

- Branches know local community best
- CHQ run Membership Road Shows
- Encourage Branches to support Air Shows, County Shows and Family Days (over 60 events this year)
- Provide Branches with advertising material, latest information
- Help Branches portray the best image (is it up to date, professional and relevant?)
- Branch Secretaries to write to their 'dormant' members (CHQ will draft the letter for branches if they wish)
- We are developing a new website and we will provide a content managed site for every Branch if they wish (good advertising forum)
- Branch newsletter distribution
- Best practice from other Branches
- Link Branches to RAF Stations – can we extend the help from RAFALOs?

What are you doing to capture those people who are leaving the RAF either voluntarily or through redundancy and what role can the RAFALOs perform to help in this task?

- Everyone leaving receives an admin pack-up with an A4 page about the work of the RAF Association; can we provide a branded folder?
- Data protection prevents RAFALOs receiving information on leavers
- Station arrival briefs
- Advertising material, posters, etc
- Guaranteed support by CHQ membership team
- DMA visits RAF Stations to talk to RAFALOs and has a meeting with the Stn Cdr
- Yesterday each RAFALO was challenged to recruit 6 members/year (this would give 1200 new members every year, last year that was just 150)

How do we ensure that the future costs of membership are covered by the membership subscription so that all fundraising can support welfare?

- Cost to run membership for 2010 was £1.423m
- Income from Membership for 2010 was £608k
- Therefore net cost was £815K, not acceptable, we have to address this
- One contributory factor is Life Members (there are just over 27,000 of them) – if each was paying today's rate of subscription that would bring in an extra £486k
- Fully appreciate that many Life Members do contribute voluntarily each year (to support fundraising etc)
- Could we raise membership fee – a negative move, members would probably reject this move
- Could we cut costs – yes, and we are looking at that as part of the review of all of our business
- Looking at ways of reducing cost of Air Mail without reducing the quality
- Want more people to transfer to direct debit to pay their subscriptions – easier and cheaper to manage
- Internet communication must be the way forward to reduce costs – appreciate many of our elder members not internet equipped but in time this will change
- One of the reasons we have developed a strategic plan, just printed and here for all to see, is to address these types of issues

The loss of members through natural causes is around 230/month; bearing in mind the average age of our Branch Members, what are you doing to help Branches survive in their current format?

- This is linked in with one of the Resolutions to be heard later this afternoon
- If Branches are unable to form a Committee through lack of volunteers they have to close the Branch
- We are proposing a recognised structure that will give Branches an alternative to formal Branch closure
- The Registered Members Group (RMGs) is a social group, and it recognises the activity that many closed Branches are already undertaking
- The RMG keeps a presence in the local community and it provides us with a communications link
- Many people will not be prepared to travel to another Branch location

- Some RMGs may still wish to collect for Wings Appeal or do some HWO work
- If the RMG was able to find people who would be prepared to form a Committee then it could revert to being a Branch
- All we are doing is recognising what happens already and providing more support to the Branches and an easy means of keeping in touch with them

Branch Delegates from the Bognor, Erewash and Luxembourg Branches all spoke on this question and emphasised the need to capture the serving RAF to join the Branches. Director of Membership & Areas recognised the difficulty and stated that in their early careers the individuals would not play such an active part within the Branch structure, however there would be a better opportunity when they were older. He further stated that everybody needed to try as hard as possible to recruit new members from the community.

Another suggestion from the Luxembourg Branch was recruitment at the work place and those companies that were aviation based, a point noted by the Director of Membership & Areas.

Central Council recently approved the work by an outside company (Arizona Group Limited) to help with advice on the running of our clubs – what progress has there been and what are the likely outcomes?

- Progress has been good with four of the five clubs
- Received the initial report from Arizona Group Limited yesterday
- This is a reputational issue and Central Council agreed to allow the Association to fund the work by AGL for only five Clubs
- We would then have enough experience to help other Clubs
- If help was rejected and the Club continued in debt, they would be reminded of their Trustee responsibilities, and permission to trade under the Association's name could be withdrawn
- AGL are part of the CRL contract for the RAF's 15 Stations and bring a wealth of experience and purchasing power, and they have vast experience in running Clubs

What is being done to bring other groups into the Association, similar to the way we brought in the Tactical Communications & Weapons Group?

- We are looking at the option of putting a proposal to the membership about a 'Young RAFA' section of the Association – this would be aimed at the ACO (including Air section of CCF) for 13-17 year olds. Details yet to be worked out regarding subscription, but in general it would be internet-based to keep the costs down and a key requirement would be an e-mail address
- Similarly, we will be talking to the Headquarters University Air Squadron in order to approach the 14 UASs
- RAF Reserves is another avenue and we are hoping to be able to present to that group at their Annual Conference in November
- Other similar groups that are finding difficulties in the current climate would also be the subject of our interest.

## Welfare

The President began by stating that the Association should be proud of the welfare it provides to the RAF Family but the changing and increasing needs, especially over recent years, had presented the Association with challenges.

The seminar would focus on two major welfare challenges that face the Association:

### Welfare Volunteer Structure

To put it simply, the challenge was the fact that the demands placed on the welfare structure were ever increasing, whilst at the same time the welfare volunteers were decreasing. The Director of Welfare had visited every Area Office to discuss welfare coverage and from that had been able to produce a map showing that in some areas coverage was at best patchy and in some case no coverage was possible. The Association had more HWOs over 80 than under 60 years of age and although we are very proud of them, we were asking too much of them to keep bridging the gaps. Ideas were needed to help alleviate the pressure on the current HWOs and the following discussion points/suggestions were received from the Conference:

In response to a question from the Apollo Branch concerning the training of Overseas Area HWOs, the Director of Welfare stated that funding was available to train these individuals.

The Oxford & District Branch representative suggested that with the introduction of the CRB check in England and Disclosure Scotland some individuals may have been put off becoming an HWO for the Association. In response, the Lead Member for Welfare on Central Council stated he believed that it was right for those HWOs attending Level 1 training to be CRB checked. The Association needed to be confident that those dealing with vulnerable individuals on a welfare basis were fit to do so, as it could have a serious reputational impact on RAFA were things to go wrong.

The Driffield Branch Delegate was concerned that at present they did not have an HWO and a large area of country had no representative. In response the President stated that everyone needed to work together to find new individuals to fill these vital posts.

The Benalmadena Delegate wanted to place on record his thanks for all the hard work of the HWOs both in this country and overseas.

### Respite Care Homes

The President opened the discussion by stating that the Jointly Funded Homes provided excellent services for those who use them. Unfortunately as the veteran membership ages, fewer people are using the Homes and the cost of operating them continues to rise. A review of the Homes suggests that over the next 5-10 years the demand for respite breaks in their present form will diminish. A joint review has been conducted by both the Association and the Benevolent Fund, and was now being considered by our Trustees through a review team.

The Director of Welfare stated that the subject of the Homes was an emotional one in that those who used these facilities valued them very much, as well as the fact that they were also used as a beacon for fundraising by many of the Branches. However, the fact remained that they were extremely costly to operate and occupancy was decreasing. Many people who use the Homes were now single, having lost their partners, but the majority of the rooms were twin/double, so even though all the rooms were full, the Homes were only half full!

The President of the Costa Blanca Branch was not surprised at the figures quoted and suggested that the Association needed to decide if it wanted to manage care homes or provide respite care. Sussexdown was a prime example in that it was now managed by a professional organisation but the Association had privileged access to it. RAFA should consider doing the same with the other Homes, using the money that would be saved to provide people across the UK with care close to where they live so that there would be far less travel involved and importantly their families could visit them whilst they were having their break.

The Delegate from Costa Blanca informed the Conference of a scheme available to them in their local area where they could join a "Help Association" which enabled individuals to have one week's free respite care for a nominal sum. He encouraged other Branches to look and see if anything similar was available to them in their local areas.

In response to a statement from the Shoreham Branch concerning the fees at Sussexdown for respite care compared to Princess Marina House, the Director of Welfare stated that Sussexdown did not give any subsidy and therefore people who went there actually paid what it cost to provide that high level of care. One of the reasons why our Homes cost so much to operate was due to the amount of subsidies that were given. If funds did not have to be used on the maintenance of the buildings then a lot more money would be available to buy into local respite care.

The Leigh Branch had concerns that if other Homes across the country were used to provide respite care, the RAF ethos that was so important in the Jointly Funded Homes would be lost. In response the CC Lead Member acknowledged that the ethos was important for the current generation that used the homes, but there might be other ways of providing a similarly positive experience for the future.

A RAFALO suggested that one of the Homes could be re-profiled so that it could be used by today's generation of serving RAF personnel returning from operational theatres. The Malcolm Apartments at Rothbury House were a good idea and thought should be given to running a similar project for the serving personnel of today.

In response the Director of Welfare stated that discussions had taken place with Community Support a couple of years ago on this theme, and a Home was made available and although it was advertised no takers came forward. She concluded by stating that if a need for this type of facility could be established she believed that the Trustees would look favourably on this type of suggestion. The President believed that the Families Federation, as evidence gatherers, would be in a position to investigate as to whether this

type of facility would be used by Serving Personnel. The Association had to remain relevant and meet the demand.

An HWO believed that the fact that both Richard Peck and Flowerdown were not particularly wheelchair friendly and may put some people off from visiting the Homes. He was also of the opinion that the Homes were not advertised enough.

In response to a question from the Leigh Branch, the President confirmed that local, Branch support to transport guests to the Homes was welcomed.

The Scotland & Northern Ireland Area Chairman stated that many of his clients from Northern Ireland found it very difficult travelling to the mainland and so tended to use the respite facility provided by the RBL in Northern Ireland.

The Benevolent Fund Representative on Central Council informed the Conference of the success of Seacot House which had been created by the Benevolent Fund specifically for young Service Families and had been equipped to meet that need. It had proved to be very popular and, as such, they had bought a second property. The Joint Review of the Homes had short and long term measures that would all need to be addressed. The proposed long term measures had a five year timescale and with nearly the first year gone, the organisations would have to move quickly on this subject. The President reiterated that the proposals contained in the Joint Review of Homes paper had not yet been agreed by the RAF Association's Trustees, as further discussion with Areas and Members would have to take place first.

The President thanked all those who had contributed to the debate and assured Conference that David Whittaker and his team would consider all views prior to making recommendations to the membership on the way ahead for the Jointly Funded Homes.

### **Annual Conference**

The President began by stating that the Annual Conference Committee had been tasked to review Conference, its structure, the numbers attending, the venues, the entertainment, in fact every aspect of the weekend. But we should not lose sight of the fact that Annual Conference is a Delegates' Conference and it belongs to the Branches.

As the Association moved into the future we it should consider "what we want the Association to be and how we promote it". One of the biggest public gatherings the Association has is its Annual Conference, and there is nothing better than seeing the Standards flying as we all proudly march behind them and the RAF Band.

The Chairman of the Annual Conference Committee posed the following questions:

- Is Conference giving the Delegates and visitors what they want?
- Is the Association itself getting all it can out of its annual gathering?

and asked those in the hall to share their thoughts and ideas about the future of Annual Conference.

It was suggested that more emphasis should be concentrated on the social elements of Annual Conference with the majority of business being conducted by post so that it would include more Branches. This in turn would just leave major change resolutions for Annual Conference to debate. This was tempered by another Delegate who, whilst applauding the idea of doing some business by post, suggested that you may lose the ability to actually understand what the Resolution means if it is not debated on the floor of Conference.

A member from W,M & SW Area suggested that buffets be provided at the Friday and Saturday functions.

In response to a question from the President on the ways Delegates had been instructed to vote on the various Resolutions, 50% had received instructions from their Branches and 50% were free to make a decision after listening to the debates.

The Penarth Branch Delegate suggested having guest speakers, such as military figures who, for example, had just left an operational theatre, to attend Annual Conference and speak on their experiences.

A RAFALO believed that some of the language used sounded like a 1970s TUC Conference and needed to be updated and less formal. Conference also needed to move away from Resolutions and have more briefings on current events by CHQ Directors and Council members, in order to update everyone on the current thinking of those who manage the Association.

The President believed that too many Resolutions of a routine nature were discussed at Annual Conference and his own view was that if an Area could not support a Resolution then it should not be discussed at Annual Conference.

The Chairman of Council appealed to the Conference that Resolutions brought to Annual Conference should be on issues that would bring about substantive changes to the organisation. Conference should have the capacity to deal with important issues prior to them becoming a crisis.

The Aylesbury & Halton Branch Delegate suggested that the stalls be open to the public in order to attract publicity and new members.

In conclusion, the President thanked the Conference for their thoughts and asked that if they wished to convey any other ideas they might have, to Brian Hartley at CHQ on [brian.hartley@rafa.org.uk](mailto:brian.hartley@rafa.org.uk)

## VOTE OF THANKS

The vote of thanks was given by Sgt Wayne Swiggs and the following were thanked:

The Worshipful The Mayor of Eastbourne, Councillor Carolyn Heaps and the Borough of Eastbourne for their support of the Conference. The staff of the Devonshire Park Centre & Winter Gardens, for their very helpful support, and in particular Ms Gill Trubshaw, the Centre's Events Organiser.

The Eastbourne Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association, for their warm welcome of the Delegates to Eastbourne and for their support of Conference.

The Air Training Corps Guard of Honour – No 54 (Eastbourne) Squadron ATC, under the command of Flt Lt Lisa Wright.

The Sussex Division of St John Ambulance.

The Sussex Police for their support over the weekend, and in particular Ms Tracy Warmington, Planning & Logistics Officer.

Mr David Weeks, Parking Team Manager, East Sussex County Council, who supported the Association by kindly arranging special parking permits for Delegates.

East Sussex Disability Association, in particular, Wendy Hiscox & Mark Kelner who organised the shuttle bus service throughout the weekend.

The Central Band of the Royal Air Force, under the direction of Sqn Ldr Chris Weldon RAF, for providing the musical backdrop to the weekend.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, as ever, for the impressive flypast.

The Chairman of Conference, Air Marshal Philip Sturley, for overseeing the "business end" of Conference and for keeping everyone in line and the Chairman and Members of Central Council.

The Annual Conference Committee for their "behind the scenes" organisation of Conference, under the Chairmanship of Mr Taff Rees.

The National Standard Bearer, Mr John Kirkpatrick, and all Area and Branch Standard Bearers, under the watchful eye of the Parade Marshal, Mr Pete Stockdale.

The staff of Central Headquarters and the Area Offices for all their hard work in the lead up to, and during the Conference weekend.

The Conference Organiser, Mrs Margaret Duff.

On completion of the Vote of Thanks, the Chairman of Council, on behalf of the whole Association paid tribute to Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell, and thanked him for all his hard work as Chairman of Council and Vice-President for the previous 6 years. He also paid tribute to Air Marshal Philip Sturley on his outstanding contribution as President for the previous 6 years, both were presented with gifts.

Immediately before the closing ceremony, the Presidential Chain was passed from Air Marshal Sturley to his successor, Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, to loud acclaim.

### **VENUE FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012**

The RAFA Annual Conference 2012 will be held at Blackpool Winter Gardens between Friday 18<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

### **MAKE YOUR DIARY ENTRY NOW!**

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Photographs taken over the conference weekend are available on CD by post from "Yorkie" Kay, 29 Huntershaw Way, Darlington, DL3 0SE. UK and EU Members should forward their name, address and telephone number along with a cheque for £5 made payable to: S M Kay. Non-EU members should write for details of shipping costs or email [contact@kayzone.com](mailto:contact@kayzone.com).

A full transcript of the President's Address and the Chairman of Central Council's Address are available from the Secretary General at RAFA CHQ.