



# **THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION**

## **ABRIDGED REPORT OF THE 2012 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**WINTER GARDENS, BLACKPOOL**

**18 – 20 MAY 2012**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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

The Worshipful The Mayor of Blackpool, Councillor Sylvia Taylor and the Mayoress, Ms Julia Massey

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Boughton and the Borough of Blackpool for their support of Annual Conference

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

The Deputy Commander Capability and Air Member for Personnel & Capability, Air Marshal Andy Pulford CBE RAF

The Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund, Air Marshal Sir Rob Wright KBE AFC

The Commandant of the Air Cadet Organisation, 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 Deputy Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force, The Reverend (Group Captain) Jonathan Chaffey MA BA RAF

The Band of the RAF Regiment, under the direction of Flt Lt Matt Little RAF, for providing the music during the weekend

Mr Jon-Allan Butterworth

The Air Training Corps Guard of Honour – No 177 (Blackpool Airport) Squadron ACO, under the command of Flt Lt Andrew Nickson

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight for standing ready to provide the flypast

The Blackpool and South Fylde Branches of the Royal Air Forces Association for their warm welcome of the delegates and guests to Blackpool and for their support at Conference

The staff of the Winter Gardens for their helpful support, in particular Ms Carla Hunte

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2012 Annual Conference of the Royal Air Forces Association was held at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool on 18-20 May 2012. The Conference was opened by The Worshipful the Mayor of Blackpool, Councillor Sylvia Taylor. The Chairman of Conference was Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller KBE.

## **THE SILENT TRIBUTE**

The Silent Tribute to the Fallen was conducted by the Deputy Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force, The Reverend (Group Captain) Jonathan Chaffey MA BA 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.

## **PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATES**

The President awarded National Presidential Certificates, to coincide with The Queen's Birthday Honours List 2011 and The New Year Honours List 2012.

## **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 2011**

### **CHAIRMAN OF CENTRAL COUNCIL** **AIR VICE-MARSHAL NIGEL BAIRSTO**

The Chairman of Council began by paying tribute to all members of Central Council who had contributed significantly in taking the Association forward in recent years. He also stated that the Association had a very dedicated staff in CHQ, the Areas and the Homes. Their work was the oil in the engine of the Association and he thanked them for their efforts on the Association's behalf. However Central Council had determined that it was necessary to have a complete review of staffing, HR policies and prioritisation of activities. The review was considered necessary because the Central Council had recognised that without ensuring that dedicated resources were in the right areas, the Association would be unable to fulfill its strategic objectives. The Chairman believed that the membership would agree. This review was currently in the consultation stage, which was disruptive for the staff and produced uncertainty for all concerned. The Association should be proud of its staff and be aware that the process was being borne with great dignity by all. The review would be completed as quickly as possible and the results brought to Central Council this year.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Central Council, paid tribute to all of the Association volunteers who, during 2011:

- raised over £1.6m through the Wings Appeal
- invested £4.4m on welfare for the RAF Family
- provided over 50,000 welfare visits and calls to our members and beneficiaries

The strategic direction of the Association was set in 2010 and was reiterated in the 2011 Annual Review “Changing Lives” which was now available in booklet form or via the website. The strategic objectives listed in the Annual Review, especially those of Fundraising, Welfare and Membership are reviewed at each Central Council meeting. As a professional organisation the Association has an obligation to improve the way it trains, inducts and encourages its staff and volunteers. The way the organisation is run hugely influences the reputation that the charity has in the wider world. That high reputation helps us to attract and retain members, gives the Association a higher profile and allows RAFA to raise money.

Although greater detail would follow from the Honorary Treasurer, the Chairman gave a brief insight into the Association’s financial position. The background was a weak economy, which was affecting everybody in the UK. The Association needed to balance income over expenditure, RAFA was extremely reliant on fundraising and the Wings Appeal was vitally important. It was also important that the Association planned for less legacy income, an objective of the Central Council for some time, but the current economic situation had made that very difficult to achieve. Total income for the Association fell from £10.4m in 2010 to £8.5m in 2011, a loss of nearly £2m in one year. Our Wings Appeal income, which had been nearly £2m annually for the last few years, fell to £1.6m. The Chairman knew that in the current economic climate individuals were giving less and corporate sponsors (industry, commerce etc) were not as generous as in previous years. The Association also had fewer branches, and many active members were getting older and less able to fundraise as they once did. On the positive side, half of the Association’s income was spent on welfare support. Investment will continue to be made in fundraising, with the aim of achieving a return of £3 for every £1 spent.

The Chairman thanked all those who had taken the time to respond to his open letter in the last edition of Air Mail which had attempted to broach the issue of membership costs and membership income. These costs were a constant concern to the Chairman and the trustees, who had identified that the Association spent approximately £1.3m on membership annually, but only received £700k in subscriptions. That did not seem like good housekeeping to the Council. Either we are spending too much or the Association is not collecting enough in membership subscriptions. As a result, and in order to remove as much cost as possible, the Central Council had asked the Secretary General to review all administration and staffing in order to trim costs. Given that fundraising income had fallen so much, she had been asked to find savings of around half a million pounds. The Chairman stated that this was difficult, but every option had to be considered. More members would obviously help the situation and that was everyone’s responsibility, but not everyone in the Association would be in the position to attract a new member. A lot of staff effort was also being made to attract the serving RAF to join as well as Auxiliaries and Reservists.

However, the Chairman did not feel that the gap between expenditure and income would be closed significantly. He had been asked many times about Life Members paying more towards membership costs and he informed Conference that those who had responded to his letter in Air Mail had, in the main, been positive about being asked to pay a little extra towards membership. The Chairman gave information on the breakdown of membership costs which showed that a great deal went on staff costs and that was why it was important to carry out a staff review. Currently the membership loss rate was around 215 people a month, but the good news was that the Association did attract a high percentage of RAF new entrants, although this would slow down as SDSR takes hold. However the Association did have a membership demographic gap around the 45-65 year old category and further effort must be made to attract these individuals. In conclusion on membership the Chairman stated that the Association must plan to cover the cost of membership with subscriptions, give more help to Branches, increase the appeal of clubs, analyse the needs of the membership and assist the initiatives being looked at by the W, M & SW Area Chairman, John Tisbury, and the Director of Membership & Areas, Bob Hounslow.

Moving to welfare the Chairman stated that the key element was the contact base provided by the Association and particularly the work of the HWOs. The usage of the Respite Care Homes, which were jointly funded by the RAF Benevolent Fund, continued to be monitored as to the level of use and the needs of those seeking respite. The aim was to develop a long-term plan for providing relevant and cost-effective respite services. It had been agreed with the Benevolent Fund that a plan for the future would be produced by the summer of 2014. Other welfare initiatives included:

- Advice for veterans
- Sheltered housing
- Support for those who become homeless

The Chairman paid special tribute to the HWOs for all the valuable work they carried out on behalf of the Association.

The Association also helped those serving members of the RAF family, and provided practical support in a number of very valuable ways in the form of:

- Telephone cards for those on operations
- Recorded bedtime stories for those with children
- Refurbished MOD accommodation for families apart to spend time together
- To provide specialist Employment Advice to those transitioning out of the service because they are wounded, injured or sick
- Working very closely with RAF Community Support and the RAF Benevolent Fund to see how we can further improve the life of serving personnel given the operational tempo and changing nature of military life

The RAF Families Federation continued to provide vital evidence on family issues to support RAF policy development. This year they would be working through some of the issues that are of greatest importance to families such as pay, conditions, how the SDSR is affecting service life and how families were being supported. The Chairman of the Families Federation liaises closely with influential groups and individuals and helps to get

the voices of the RAF Family heard at the highest levels. The Chairman congratulated the Chairman of the Families Federation and her team for their professionalism and dedication over the last few years in ensuring that the voice of serving personnel and their families was heard.

Fundraising, through the Association's brand of the Wings symbol, is well recognised, and the Association aims to raise about £2m annually from the appeal which, as Conference was aware, was a real challenge at present. The Association offers the Wings Lotto, Prize draws and new Lotto card machines in pubs, which have shown significant initial success. The Fundraising and Events teams constantly engage with the young and fit (and the not so young and not so fit) to undertake sponsored challenge events for the Association. This was a real growth area for fundraising, with relatively small amounts at present, but important in terms of engaging young supporters.

The Chairman briefed Conference on the Blades project. He stated that two years ago with Wings collections, legacy income and donations from industry under constant pressure, the Council decided to try a new form of fundraising, based on the activities associated with an aerobatic display team, The Blades, branded with the Wings logo, and performing and running sponsored challenges for the Association, across the UK and Europe. Many of those that had seen the Blades perform would agree that they were a remarkable and very skillful display team. However, as there had been less money in the economy, The Blades, along with the rest of the charity sector, had found it very difficult to attract large sums from corporate sponsors. What the Blades have been able to achieve was to take the Wings brand to new audiences, not just at RAF Association events, but 365 days a year. Taking into account the exposure The Blades bring the Association from advertising and promotion, there was good value in the partnership. The Central Council were disappointed that it had not been as successful as they had hoped and for 2012 they had set some tough fundraising targets for Blades events this year, and everyone would be working hard to achieve them.

All charities needed to work hard to communicate their messages, not only by using the more traditional methods but by using social media such as Facebook and Twitter, especially when attempting to get the message across to the young. The Association had a strong message in that it offered a wide membership network which gave friendship and practical support to the whole RAF Family. The Association also told the stories of those whom the Association helped, which in turn would hopefully inspire others to join, to volunteer, to fundraise and to assist with welfare.

One of the main avenues of communication was Air Mail, and whilst accepting that it could always be improved, the Chairman believed that it was a vital communication tool and appreciated by many.

The Chairman briefed Conference on the Council's decision to suspend the Executive Board for 12 months. The Council, in taking a much more active responsibility in the way it conducted its business, had noticed that there was a communication difficulty between the Executive Board and Central Council. After reviewing the current situation at a recent meeting, the Council took the decision to suspend the Executive Board in the belief that it was better to focus on a single governance body. The Chairman did not consider this

change a threat to the running of the Association; far from it, he believed that it would bring the Council closer together to tackle the main challenges – membership, recruitment and costs.

In conclusion the Chairman reiterated that the main message of his presentation was that the Association was in danger of spending more each year than it raised in income. Savings had to be made and that was the top priority for both the Central Council and the Secretary General. The Association needed to look at how to maximise income and how to fundraise more effectively. The Association had to find new donors and there may be a need to increase the money brought in from subscriptions, but there had to be realism about the climate in which it operated. 2011 had been a challenging year, the economy is in recession and the challenge continues to create an Association fit for purpose for many years to come.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE 2011 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS** **HONORARY TREASURER - WING COMMANDER PHILIP TAGG RAF (RTD)**

As this was his first presentation to Annual Conference, the Honorary Treasurer (HT) took the opportunity to introduce himself and began by saying that his appointment coincided with his retirement last September after a 35-year career in the RAF. With the exception of his first 10 years in non-commissioned service as an RAF Policeman, he spent the remainder of his career as a Commissioned Officer in the Secretarial specialisation of the Administrative Branch.

In a variety of personnel management roles he served in the UK, Europe and in several operational deployments. He was acutely aware of the need for strong welfare support mechanisms in the Service, but often more importantly, outside the Service to provide ongoing support to families and dependants when and where it was required. This was why, on retirement, he had volunteered for the role of Honorary Treasurer - to maintain a proactive interest in the Association's finances and investments such that it retained a strong financial position in order to discharge its aims.

A copy of the Report and Financial Statements had been circulated to Branches prior to the Conference. The document was in two parts: The Trustees' Report which provided information about the structure, governance and activities of the Association, and the Financial Reports. The HT stated that the Chairman of Council had already presented the work of the Association in 2011, so his presentation would concentrate on the information contained within the Financial Reports.

He began by reminding Conference that 2011 had been marked by many significant world events such as the earthquake in Japan, the overthrow of regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, the demise of Osama Bin Laden and President Gaddafi of Libya, and new governments in Italy and Spain. Sovereign debt had been downgraded in many countries and financial markets were preoccupied with problems in the Eurozone.

In the UK the bank base rate had remained at 0.5% and it was now over three years since the base rate had changed, which was unprecedented in recent times. In addition, people

in the UK had faced increasing prices and high levels of unemployment. Everybody had been affected by this financial environment in one way or another.

The Association had built up a reasonable level of reserves to weather downturns in the economy. While the poor state of the UK economy in 2011 did impact on the financial results of the Association, it did not lead it to reduce the level of services provided to those in need of welfare or to the membership at large.

In 2011 the total income received of £8.5m was £1.9m lower than in 2010, a drop of 18%. The major difference was the fact that legacy income of £1.8m was £1.9m below 2010. This was the lowest level of legacy income received by the Association since 2004. Those who attended Annual Conference last year would have remembered that the Chairman of Central Council recognised that legacy income had been one of the main factors in the Association's financial recovery, but that the trustees were concerned that the Association should not be too dependent on legacies as a major source of income in the future. This concern was borne out by legacy receipts in 2011. One of the strategic objectives that trustees had set the Association was that it should reduce its reliance on legacy income to fund activities to £1m by 2013. In the current economic climate that was a tough target and may have to be reviewed, given the reduction seen in other sources of income in 2011. However, it was still something that needed to be achieved within the next 3-4 years.

The next major source of income was The Wings Appeal which had generated £1.6m; £0.4m (18%) below 2010. This money was raised through activity within the Branches and the Association was always very grateful to all the volunteers who year after year raised money through many different fundraising initiatives.

2010 was the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain which raised the Association's awareness with the general public, and which possibly resulted in a higher level of income being generated. Research had indicated that in 2011 donations to all charities were, on average, 12% lower than 2010. Therefore some of the reduction in the Wings Appeal in 2011 was not unexpected and when the economy improved we could see an improvement in overall donations to charities.

However, declining membership and branch numbers, together with reduced reliance on legacy income highlighted the challenge for the Association to seek to generate income in new ways. It was for that reason that, as the Chairman had already explained, trustees took the decision to enter into partnership with The Blades in 2010. The HT confirmed the partnership was under constant review by trustees and subject to stringent targets in 2012 that needed to be met by both parties to the Agreement. Income from other fundraising activity had increased in 2011 by £0.3m from £2.2m to £2.5m. This has been achieved from sponsored challenges and activity at Air Shows, some of which was linked to the work with The Blades.

Moving to costs, the HT reported that the £8m expended in 2011 was £0.3m less than in 2010. Over half of the expenditure was on welfare support which included the cost of the Respite Care Homes, the sheltered accommodation, the Area Welfare Officers as well as HWO training, Storybook Wings and Contact Houses.

Fundraising costs represented 28% of total costs. All charities needed to spend money to achieve a return and the Association achieved an overall ratio of income to expenditure which was within the fundraising benchmark of 3:1, ie. for every £1 spent, £3 was raised.

The HT stated that the cost of membership was significant and had already been a topic at Area Conferences and within Air Mail. The trustees were conscious that there was a need to keep all costs under constant review and the Chairman had discussed this in his presentation. As part of the work that was underway on staff costs, the HT was involved in the process of reviewing staff salaries and he was also a member of the Job Evaluation panel which would look at the grading and salaries of all posts within the Association over the coming year. All areas of cost would be scrutinised in the next round of budget preparation for the financial year 2013.

At the end of 2011, the Association had net assets of £19.5m, £1.4m less than last year. So although there had been a surplus of income over expenditure, other factors, largely outside our control, resulted in the Association reporting an overall loss for the year. Investments had decreased in value over the year by £0.8m and the size of the pension fund deficit had increased by £0.7m. Neither of these results were out of line with the results of other organisations whose reporting year ends on 31 December.

Monies that were held with Kaupthing Singer and Friedlander (KSF) when they were placed into administration in 2008 were still being recovered. The Association had just received an eighth dividend of 10p in the £, bringing the recovery to date to 73p in the £, or £3.2m. A further dividend was expected before the end of 2012, the administration of KSF was likely to continue to 2015, so final recovery levels were not known at this time.

The accounts had been subject to audit by the auditors, Baker Tilly, and the HT was pleased to report that the accounts were unqualified. The auditors raised one issue around internal control, and management had taken action to address this issue.

The HT thanked the Audit Committee who reported formally to the trustees twice a year. Until she stood down at the end of 2011, the Committee had been led by Beryl Dennett-Stannard. Sqn Ldr Dean Gibson had now taken the Chair. Beryl and the rest of the Committee had not shied away from challenging the trustees and the HT had no doubt that they would continue to do so. He thanked Beryl for ably leading the Audit Committee for the last three years as well as being a member of the Committee for nearly five years.

In conclusion the HT stated that the Association remained in a healthy financial position with free reserves of £10.5m, equivalent to 16 months' expenditure. He had enjoyed his first few months as Honorary Treasurer and looked forward to facing the challenges over the coming months.

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY COMMANDER CAPABILITY AND  
AIR MEMBER FOR PERSONNEL & CAPABILITY  
AIR MARSHAL A D PULFORD CBE RAF**

AM Pulford began his address by stating that it was a privilege to be addressing the RAF Association at their 2012 Annual Conference and thanked the Chairman for his kind opening words. He brought with him the apologies of the Chief of the Air Staff who was attending the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Military Muster in Windsor Great Park with over 2,000 other Servicemen and women, and 70 RAF aircraft in attendance, paying tribute to HM The Queen.

AMP believed that the previous 12 months had been the most demanding time in his 36 years of service in the Royal Air Force in terms of the RAF's involvement in, and support for operations. The quick reaction force of Typhoons were still as busy as ever with weekly contacts with the Russian Air Force as well as being ever alert to intercept constantly straying civilian aircraft. He paid tribute to the many Search & Rescue and EOE Teams up and down the country who were busier than ever helping to save many lives each year. The Falkland Islands, 30 years since the conflict, were still protected with many RAF assets and personnel to ensure that there was no repeat of the events of 1982.

Afghanistan remained the top priority for Defence, and would do so for the foreseeable future. It is a most dangerous place and the RAF's personnel are playing a key role at Camp Bastion, where daily air movements are as busy as Manchester Airport. AMP paid tribute to the air-bridge at Camp Bastion, where the RAF sustain the lifeline between Afghanistan and the UK, with over 24,000 personnel and 4 million tonnes of freight recently being moved within a 2-month period; a huge effort which can easily go unnoticed. A most vital role was being played by the CASEVAC crews, the Merlins, Chinooks, C17s and Tristars with the medical staff who were delivering state of the art medical support from point of injury to hospital.

In Libya, 2,500 personnel had been involved in delivering safe air space over that country within 36 hours. Tornados from Lossiemouth and Marham, operating out of Marham, had conducted bombing missions with a round trip of over 3,000 miles, the longest out of the UK since WWII, which had a truly campaign-changing effect. Although other countries had taken part, it was the RAF that proved the critical factor in the Libya campaign, a fact that this country could be proud of.

Despite the requirements at major events this year, with over 3,000 RAF personnel involved in this year's Olympics, it is still very much business as usual for the RAF in 2012. The RAF is in the process of transformation, in line with SDSR, of saving money and becoming more efficient. **AMP was now fully engaged in reducing the service from 40,000 to 33,000 personnel by 2015.** This was to be achieved by less recruiting and by redundancy, from volunteers if at all possible. AMP hoped that the second tranche of redundancies would be the last and the majority leaving would be volunteers.

The Future Force 2020 equipment programme planned for the future RAF was good news, and the new joint strike fighter in its revised form is a state of the art fifth generation fighter. The Typhoon was coming of age, especially after its performance in the Libyan campaign.

The Voyager, the new tanker, was now in service and its number would be increased over the next few years. The trick challenge with all of this new equipment coming online was to ensure that the manpower was available in 2020 to operate and maintain the aircraft.

AMP reported good news on Reserves where he was looking to double the trained strength of the RAuxAF between now and 2015, with 3 new Squadrons being raised around the Country. As the RAF footprint was shrinking, it was vitally important that the Reserves and Cadets kept a presence in all areas of the Country.

Pressure on the serving personnel of the RAF and their families had never been greater and they needed as much help as possible. Projects like Miles More Minutes and Storybook Wings had proved very popular with serving personnel and AMP thanked all those who had raised money in order to help others. Contact Houses had also proved to be very popular and had helped individuals to see loved ones on a far more regular basis. The employment of a consultant to help individuals gain further employment following injury was a positive step forward and would greatly assist those looking to make the transition away from the Service.

AMP stated that if the Chief of the Air Staff were here today he would say that he was incredibly proud of, and humbled by, the members of the RAF Association who continue to play a very active part in helping the whole of the RAF Family. The future of the RAF was bright, albeit smaller, and would be more potent and capable, with truly world class equipment coming into service over the next few years. Most of all it would be a Royal Air Force that we could be justifiably proud of. He hoped the Association was as proud of the part the RAF was playing in Afghanistan, the Falkland Islands and the UK as the RAF was proud of the part that the Association played in giving to the RAF Family.

**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 advised that this would be his last Conference as he retires from the position of Controller in July and hands over to Air Marshal Chris Nickols, who has recently retired from the RAF. The work of the RAFBF began in 1919 with the donation of one shilling to an airman for boots and accommodation, spending a total of £700 in that year. This year it was anticipated that the Fund would spend £23m on essentially the same task. He stressed that collaboration and cooperation were vital for the Benevolent Fund and the Association as sister charities to work together in fulfilling their common aim. With an RAF Family estimated at £2.4m, those pressures of financial hardship, injury and separation that were relevant in 1919 were still with us today so the work of both organisations would still be required for many years to come. Some of the current work that the Fund was involved with was a debt advice service in conjunction with the RBL, providing fast track advice for veterans when they visited a Citizen's Advice Bureau, and since its opening they had taken on nearly 40,000 cases with benefit recovery and debt write-off totalling nearly £104m. Sir Rob gave an insight into the Spectrum of Care provided by the Fund which included:

- Childcare
- Education
- Youth Activities
- Serving RAF
- Family Support
- Transition from Service Life
- Support in Retirement
- Relationship Counselling

Whilst the Controller acknowledged that the Fund worked with many organisations, he reiterated the fact that both of our organisations worked the closest and had to continue to work closely together. The Association had to be the “eyes and ears” to assist the Fund in identifying those who needed help and assistance. He paid tribute to the Association’s HWOs who continued to train and become better qualified in order to take on more cases from the Fund. He assured Conference that there was always a great deal of interaction between the two charities at all levels including at trustee level.

Joint initiatives included:

- Joint collecting boxes (RAF Stations)
- Joint presentations to RAF entries
- Joint Homes (4000 respite breaks)
- Contact Houses at RAF Brize Norton
- Newcomers Club at RAF Halton
- Joint Sponsorship/Support for RAF Widows
- Joint Sponsorship of RAF Jubilee celebrations at Windsor Castle
- Welfare Officers
- Recovery pathway
- Casework – ‘Heart and Eyes and Ears’ – Working Together!

The Fund had taken on guardianship of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London, which would be opened on 28 June by HM The Queen. This memorial would honour those of Bomber Command who had played such a key role during WWII. The Fund had initiated a fundraising campaign with a target of £1.5m, to seek donations for the maintenance of the memorial in future years.

In conclusion, Sir Rob reiterated that both sister charities must continue to work together for the benefit of the whole of the RAF Family.

The President, Sir Dusty Miller, paid tribute to the work that Sir Rob had achieved during his tenure as Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund and presented Sir Rob with a leaving gift on behalf of the RAF Association.

**ADDRESS BY THE COMMANDANT OF THE AIR CADET ORGANISATION**  
**AIR COMMODORE BARBARA COOPER**

Prior to her address the Air Commodore showed a video to Conference on the many varied roles and activities in which the Air Cadets were involved. The Air Cadet Organisation (ACO) comprised 45,000 teenagers aged between 13 and 19 involved in 1,000 Squadrons across the Country. Approximately 10,000 were involved in the RAF Contingent within the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) located at 200 schools. Alongside the cadets, the organisation was managed by 15,000 volunteers and a small number of salaried staff. Overall her organisation totalled 60,000 individuals which, with the three Services drawing down, represented the combined total of the RAF and the RN! The organisation was not a recruiting organisation, although that had been one of its original aims, but there were many youngsters who wanted to join the Services and they see the ACO as an excellent way of enhancing their chances of succeeding. The biggest benefit was societal and, with 1,000 Squadrons up and down the country, you were never far from an ACO presence. The cornerstone of what these Squadrons were doing was producing responsible young adults for the future and that was being achieved in abundance. Last year the ACO Best Squadron competition was won by Swansea, in an area of high unemployment and many social issues. Despite this, the Squadron is doing wonderful things with their cadets, including opening up their HQ in the evenings and at the weekends in order for them to have somewhere to go. Cadets develop leadership skills, teamwork and respect, not only for themselves but for others around them and this is the value of the ACO.

The world economic situation has greatly affected the ACO; both the SDSR in 2010 and 2015 had several unintended consequences for the organisation. With the reduction in the number of RAF Stations it presented a challenge because they looked to the RAF to parent, clothe and administer the ACO. Another draw on facilities will be the proposed increase in the number of Reservists who will also need to use the training estate resources of the RAF at the same time as that of the ACO. The biggest impact of SDSR on the ACO so far has been the Voluntary Early Release Scheme for the Civil Service; about three-quarters of salaried staff who managed the ACO were Civil Servants and the organisation had lost a great many of them, along with their expertise. The Air Commandant received her funding from the RAF and she, like the RAF, received reductions to her budgets which had meant a decrease in civilian staff. Despite the cuts, the cadets were still enjoying themselves and it was up to the Air Commandant and her staff to ensure that they felt as little of the impact as was possible. The pinch was being felt by her adult volunteers, without whom the organisation would not exist, and it was one of her main priorities to look after their welfare to ensure that they could continue to do the job they love.

This Government is very keen on youth organisations like the ACO and you could see why, with youth unemployment at over 1 million and the way that her organisation grew responsible young adults, the cadets were already part of the Big Society of which the Prime Minister was such a supporter. The organisation would also play a role in the National Citizen Service which the Government planned to launch within a couple of years. The Air Commandant knows she can rely on internal support but also looks outwards to other organisations that she feels she can do business with. She was very pleased to

persuade Sir Stuart Rose, the ex CEO of M&S to join the ACO formally to give his expert guidance and support. Industry had also been approached to explore ways in which companies could assist the cadets achieve employment in high calibre areas. The Air Commandant was also pleased with the help and assistance of the RAF Association and delighted that they had given approval that all members of the ACO were entitled to receive welfare support. Both the Air Commandant and the Secretary General had been working closely together to identify any mutual benefits going forward for both organisations. The Wings Appeal had always been synonymous with the cadets but they had been looking to see what else we could be doing to our mutual benefit. Two initiatives had been highlighted; one was that the ACO and their supporters would become involved in the Wings Lotto by sharing the responsibility and profits, the other one was the initiation of a Junior Membership of RAFA for the cadets; further work had yet to be completed by both organisations but the Air Commandant was a supporter of the proposal as new blood in any organisation is always a positive step. There was already a good relationship between the two organisations but it was important to always look at new ways and ideas on how to bring them closer. The proposed idea of Junior Membership would help to cement and formalise the already good relationship that both enjoyed with each other. She encouraged Branches of the Association to go out and talk to their local Squadrons if they did not already do so in order to find out how closer links could be forged.

The President thanked Air Commodore Cooper for her insight into the Cadet Organisation. He added that it was the Air Cadets' loss that Air Commodore Cooper was to step down from her role in July and, on behalf of the Association, he presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

### **Flying Scholarships Awards**

#### **35 Hour Flying Scholarship Winner**

Cadet Flight Sergeant Fiona Ross – 229 (Farnham) Sqn

#### **12 Hour Flying Scholarship Winners**

Cadet Flight Sergeant Kiera Chapman – 473 (Hartlepool) Sqn

Cadet Sergeant Ian Hasted – 233 (Persore) Sqn

Cadet Flight Sergeant Eleanor McBrien – 1116 (Woodley) Sqn

Cadet Warrant Officer Alex Sansom – Loughborough Grammar School CCF

## **RESULTS OF ELECTIONS**

### **Elected as Honorary Treasurer for 2012-15**

Wing Commander Philip Tagg RAF (Rtd)

### **The following eight Elected Members will serve on Central Council for 2012-14**

Mr B Bertram MBE  
Mrs J Boothman  
Mr S Graham  
Mr J Lee MBE  
Mr W McCann  
Mr I McEnnis  
Dr B Pattison OBE  
Mr A Poole

### **The following are the Area Representatives serving on Council for 2012-13**

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 R Chandler BEM
European Area	Mr B Darke MBE

## **RESOLUTIONS CARRIED**

1. This Conference approves, subject to the completion of due diligence by Central Council, a new category of Junior Membership of the Association for members of the Air Cadet Organisation between the ages of 13 and 17 and that the governing documents be amended accordingly
2. This Conference resolves that RAFA members coming together in the spirit of The Association's Object may, if they so wish, form a Registered Members' Group and that the governing documents be amended accordingly
3. This Conference instructs Central Council to review Membership costs with a view to bringing the Membership subscription fee in line with the cost of membership administration and report its findings to Annual Conference 2013

**(In accordance with Rules of Procedure 5, the SE/E Area requested that consideration be given to amending Resolution 3 to read:**

**“This Conference instructs Central Council to review the cost of membership administration and report its findings to Annual Conference 2013”)**

This amendment was carried by Conference and the Resolution in its new form was carried.

9. This Conference, having noted CC Paper 1/12 resolves that Annual Conference 2015 be held at Eastbourne

### **RESOLUTIONS NOT CARRIED**

4. Due to the ever increasing expenditure and decreasing membership of the Association, this Branch proposes that Life Members be asked to cover the cost of receiving the Air Mail magazine

7. This Conference resolves that Rule 6 be amended so that the Association can express support for any organisation or cause that is relevant to the RAF Family

8. This Conference resolves that a full and comprehensive set of minutes of Central Council meetings be made available to all Branches

### **RESOLUTIONS WITHDRAWN**

5. This Conference resolves that all future Wings Appeals shall be called “The Battle of Britain Wings Appeal” and that all Wings Appeal equipment and marketing will show this

### **RESOLUTIONS THAT FELL**

6. This Conference resolves that all future changes to the name of “The Battle of Britain Wings Appeal” must be approved by Annual Conference

### **MEMBERSHIP SEMINAR**

During the Saturday afternoon of Annual Conference, a Membership Seminar took place led by Central Council Member and Area Chairman for the Wales, Midland & the South West, John Tisbury. He began by stating that membership was the most important challenge facing the Association; without members the aims of the organisation could not be achieved. To do nothing was not the answer: to achieve new membership the Association needed to be forward looking, innovative and dynamic. Each Delegate had been given a copy of the Central Council’s Membership Matrix which contained a number of initiatives which had been identified. It would be added to over time. To help Conference understand the issues a number of speakers had been invited to give their thoughts. Bullet points are given below:

#### **Flt Lt Dave McRitchie RAF – RAFALO**

- RAFALOs understand the problems of recruitment and are trying to help
- Focus on the fact that RAFA is a charity, rather than a “what’s in it for me” attitude when promoting membership. As a charity you have to be modern, relevant and visible
- The charitable aims are sometimes more relevant than becoming a member for the current serving
- Better publicity material needed for promotion on RAF Stations

- The branding is considered a success; make more use of it
- More corporate and local stories, eg. support for Jon-Allan Butterworth, help to get the message out
- RAFALOs to communicate stories to the PR department at CHQ
- Use video rather than leaflets to promote the Association
- The Connect magazine is a useful communication tool

#### John Allison – Northern Area Chairman

- He is the Station's Civil RAFALO at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, part of the RAFALO team
- Priority was to ensure that the Association was embedded on RAF Linton-on-Ouse
- Works closely with the RAFA's North East Welfare Office
- Carries out new arrival briefings on RAFA, particularly the membership aspect
- Regular article in the Station magazine, goes to all Branches in the Northern Area
- Works closely with RAF Community Support
- We need to deliver a stronger message to the RAF and Air Cadets
- Budgeting for RAFALOs is difficult; Branches could be asked for contributions
- RAF Stations always very grateful for the support they receive from Branches
- Branches have contributed to Contact Houses, fencing for play areas & Wi-Fi
- The aim should be to have a RAFA member embedded on each RAF Station

#### Bob Hunt – European Area Chairman

- Provides support to a membership of over 2,500 in the European Area
- Own Branch membership has increased considerably since formation in 2004
- No panacea for the Association's ills
- Own unique difficulties for Area – fluctuation of the Euro and re-sale housing market
- Value of the pound has had a dramatic effect on real-time pension values
- The economic situation is having an effect on recruitment and retention of members
- Adopted countries of ex-pats tightening up their ability to help with social services
- All European Branches working very hard to reduce their lapsed member numbers

#### John Tisbury – W, M & SW Area Chairman

- RMG concept has helped in keeping a RAFA presence in his area where it would previously have disappeared
- Lost 5 Branches in 2011 but 3 continued as RMGs
- They remain engaged in welfare and fundraising but most importantly friendship
- Virtual Branches will grow in the future
- His Area will continue to be at the forefront in the development of concepts to increase and retain membership

### Barry Furness – SE & E Area Chairman

- In 2011 Area Council decided to have a membership drive by writing to every Branch Chairman with the challenge to recruit 6 new members. The result was that over 400 new members joined the Association
- Two excellent RAFALOs on his Area Council, which greatly assists the membership drive
- Area will continue to seek out new members wherever possible

### Bob Chandler – S/NI Area Chairman

- Cited the Ayr & Prestwick Branch which was unable to rent out its club to non-membership organisations
- As a result income down by £6k per annum, club unlikely to survive
- 100% of members who attended EGM supported the Committee's regeneration plan
- Initial "Hearts & Minds" campaign informing local area of club, its aims and services
- Media plan initiated – newspapers and local radio, local politicians were lobbied and all offered their support
- Donations were given which secured the club for the next 12 months
- Local community and members assisted to give club a much needed facelift
- Reviewed all refuse contracts resulting in a saving of over £1950 and now receive a small income for recycling
- Local Council gave club an unoccupied shop for one week in the town centre to publicise the work of the RAF Association and in particular the local Branch and club
- Formed a partnership with Prestwick Community Council to the benefit of both
- Club sponsored local event and in return received exclusive licence to sell alcohol on Gala weekend. Club took five times their average takings and more importantly 54 new members. Club asked to organise the 2012 Jubilee Celebrations in the town
- New income – by utilising the space capacity within the club, it has meant that the vast majority of the club's utility bills are now paid for
- Same business principle was used at the Dumfries club which is now also becoming successful
- RAFA Clubs are a vital asset to the Association
- Awareness campaigns will be more successful if tailored to the local community

### Jayne Morley – Treasurer of the **WRAF Branch**

- **Formed from being a group on Facebook with over 1,000 members**
- Regular contact online – meeting each other for the first time at RAFA events
- Proud of the WRAF Branch
- Will continue to seek new members
- This is an ideal vehicle for Squadron Associations etc who are finding it difficult to run themselves

John Tisbury thanked all the speakers and asked all members to send in their ideas on membership recruiting - there was no such thing as a bad idea at this stage! He spoke about the need to recapture lapsed members as it was far easier than trying to recruit a new one. Area Offices had been asked to forward to Branches a list of lapsed members so that they had the address details in order to follow up.

In conclusion he reiterated that membership was the most important issue facing the Association and we all had a part to play. It was important that the Association was still around to provide welfare when the younger generation needed help.

He left the delegates with three actions:

- Complete and return the proforma with your good ideas on membership recruiting
- Track down lapsed members
- Contact other Branches and ask them to come to next year's Conference

### **PRESENTATION ON THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT** **CHAIRMAN OF THE RAF FAMILIES FEDERATION, DAWN McCAFFERTY**

In opening, the Chairman of the Families Federation (CFF) stated that the Families Federation had been concerned with the Armed Forces Covenant for the last few years. In 2008 the Labour Government published the Service Personnel Command Paper which highlighted the issues that impacted on serving personnel and their families and veterans. Probably for the first time it highlighted the responsibilities of other government departments and devolved administrations rather than it just being a Ministry of Defence (MoD) issue. Although this was a Service Command Paper, it was only relevant to England because Scotland, Northern Ireland & Wales, whilst committed to the principles of this work, were doing it in their own way.

Following their election, the coalition administration committed themselves to rebuilding the Armed Forces Covenant, with the Prime Minister promising to enshrine it in law. The two key principles are:

- No disadvantage as a result of service
- Special treatment where appropriate (for the bereaved and seriously injured)

CFF belongs to the Covenant Reference Group which is Cabinet chaired with advocates from all key government departments and devolved administrations along with external members from the ex-service organisations. CFF's role, along with other external members, is to call the government departments to account, ensuring that they deliver.

The Armed Forces Covenant was published in June 2011 and contained statements setting out the key principles, defining the Armed Forces Community, giving the scope of the Covenant and the obligations of the three key parties of Nation, Government and Armed Forces Community. A more detailed breakdown of the Covenant can be found in "The Armed Forces Covenant Today & Tomorrow" (available online). This document sets out the specific action required in the core areas of Service Personnel, their Families and

Veterans. The Welsh had produced their document “Package of Support” in 2011 and the Scottish version was being developed.

The interim report was published in December 2011 and was deliberately very detailed, covering all aspects of the Covenant commitments. Key areas for families and veterans were:

- Terms & Conditions of Service
- Healthcare
- Education
- Housing
- Support after Service (Pensions, Wounded, Sick, Compensation Scheme)
- Recognition (Armed Forces Day, Veteran’s Card)
- Mental Health Pilots
- Prosthetics

CFF briefed on Community Covenants which were part of a scheme to enhance recognition of the Armed Forces in the community and create partnerships between civilian and military organisations. They were aimed at serving personnel, their families and veterans and were being signed across the country with senior military officers as co-signatories. One of the benefits was that there was a £30m fund over 4 years available for those who had signed a Community Covenant. Feedback to CHQ and CFF is that service providers at local level are often ignorant of the Covenant.

The Grimsby & Cleethorpes Branch, led by their Chairman Bill McCann, had a Community Covenant signed on 11 November 2011 which had evolved from a RAF Association led Armed Forces Day event. The Covenant had been signed by a host of dignitaries including the Mayor, local councillors, tri-Service representatives as well as the RAF Association’s President, and had the backing of local educational and health providers.

### **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Vote of Thanks was given by Sgt Gail Evans and the following were thanked, in addition to those already mentioned at the start of this report:

The Blackpool Combined Division of St John Ambulance

Blackpool Audio Visual for their technical support

The Lancashire Constabulary for their support over the weekend, in particular PC John Brooks

The Chairman of Conference, Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, for overseeing the “business end” of Conference and the Chairman and Members of Central Council

The Annual Conference Committee for their 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 Conference Organiser, Mrs Margaret Duff

On completion of the Vote of Thanks, the President, on behalf of the RAF Association, paid tribute to those Central Council Members who were stepping down from their positions. Each was given a small memento for their work:

Mrs Jean Conlon  
Mr John Allison  
Mr Jim Gannon  
Mr Taff Stone  
Mr Brian Wilkie

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)

If you wish to listen to the presentations by The Chairman of Central Council, the Honorary Treasurer and the Chairman of the Families Federation they are available at the Association's website, [www.rafa.org.uk](http://www.rafa.org.uk) as well as a copy of this Abridged Report.

### **VENUE FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2013**

The RAFA Annual Conference 2013 will be held in **Eastbourne between Friday 10 and Sunday 12 May 2013.**

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

Conference Office contact details:

RAFA Conference, PO Box 316, Leyland, PR25 9AX  
Telephone/Fax 01772 600211  
e-mail: [margaret.duff@rafa.org.uk](mailto:margaret.duff@rafa.org.uk)