

ONE HEART

YOUR RAF BENEVOLENT FUND
NEWSLETTER

This is what
your donations
make happen

PARTICULARLY PERILOUS.

RAF REGIMENT VETERANS

NEED OUR HELP

WE ARE SO
GRATEFUL TO YOU
FOR SUPPORTING
MEN AND WOMEN
ON THE FRONTLINE



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Mentoring Afghan
soldiers nearly cost
Luke his life



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"Infantrymen's
injuries" come back
to bite



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Pay tribute to
someone in the
RAF Regiment

80 YEARS ON THE FRONTLINE

Those who serve in the RAF Regiment face particular danger on operations. The “boots on the ground” of the Royal Air Force have been patrolling hostile terrain to defend air bases, aircraft and air personnel since 1942, sometimes with lifelong consequences.



You may know the brave “infantrymen” of the RAF as “Rock Apes”. Or you may simply recognise them as the heavily armoured gunners on foot patrol you see on the news, as they venture up to 30km from base to prevent attacks and protect their colleagues.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone and Mali, Bosnia, Kosovo, The Falklands, Northern Ireland, the Second World War... the RAF Regiment have risked life and limb every time in the face of danger.

HELPING PEOPLE TO DECOMPRESS AT RAF HONINGTON

RAF Honington is the main home of the RAF Regiment, where serving personnel and their families constantly face the challenges of fractured home lives due to operational tempo.



We have therefore been very pleased to be able to use donations to refurbish the station’s Children’s Centre, and Honington social club, which had become rather dilapidated. Single personnel are now gathering there, in the relaxing new surroundings, as a break from their single rooms, and families are enjoying the lovely surroundings they deserve for downtime together.

Celebrating the opening of the newly refurbished social club at RAF Honington.

CELEBRATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE

RAF REGIMENT

1945:
85,000
PERSONNEL IN
240
SQUADRONS

2022:
2,420
PERSONNEL IN
14
SQUADRONS

1,850
REGULAR SERVING
PERSONNEL IN SIX
REGULAR SQUADRONS
570
RESERVISTS IN EIGHT
RESERVE SQUADRONS

22
BATTLE
HONOURS
AWARDED

SERVED IN CONFLICTS
AROUND THE WORLD

HERALDIC BADGE
Crossed No.4 Lee Enfield rifles encircled by an astral crown

MOTTO
Per Ardua: 'Through Adversity'

KNOWN AS
'Rock Apes'

ROYAL WARRANT
Founded on 1 February 1942 by Royal Warrant signed by King George VI. Its role was to “seize, secure, and defend airfields”

THIS MONTH IN RAF HISTORY



1913

King George V approved *Per Ardua ad Astra* as the official motto of the Royal Flying Corps

1953

HM The Queen presented her Colour to the RAF Regiment in Buckingham Palace

WITH THE RAF REGIMENT ALL THE WAY

The roll call of people who have served in the RAF Regiment, and consequently have needed help from the RAF Family after medical discharge, is a long one. Three Regiment veterans explain why.



MENTORING AFGHAN SOLDIERS NEARLY COST LUKE HIS LIFE

When RAF Regiment gunner, Luke Wigman, mentored a group of six Afghan soldiers on his second tour of Afghanistan in 2011, his life changed forever.

“We were working beside US Marines, patrolling villages to win hearts and minds,” says Luke. “There was a building where it was suspected that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were being made. So we went to have a look.

“The lead man went into the building with a metal detector to check for IEDs. He called ‘Clear’. I was fourth in and immediately stepped on one. The explosion was deafening. Everyone hit the floor. As the dust cloud settled, I realised it was me who was wounded. My trousers had been blown off, my rifle and radio blown away. And I was looking down at my knee bone and shin bone.

“The system is incredible when you’re injured. I was in surgery within an hour, and back in Birmingham for more surgery within 24 hours.”

Making a future with your help
Luke worked hard at his rehabilitation, but after two and half years had to accept that he would never be able to go on operations again due to his injuries, and accepted medical discharge.

Since then, people just like you have enabled us to help Luke in three very different ways.

“The first thing was to help me retrain for life outside the RAF,” says Luke. “I did an advanced driving course, funded by the Ben Fund, and went on to work for the East Midlands Ambulance Service.

“A few years later, I was in hospital again for months because of my injured leg, and received a grant to cover the travel expenses for my wife Nikki who visited every day to keep my spirits up.

“Then last September, they helped me to get proper compensation for my injuries. The appeal took four years, but I now have a medical pension for the rest of my life, which is truly life-changing for my family.

“I appreciate the exceptional support so much. It means everything to know someone’s got your back.”

“INFANTRYMEN’S INJURIES” COME BACK TO BITE

When Eugene Conlin left military service at 40, he didn’t know quite how much the effects of his time in military service would come back to affect his life.

“I left the Regiment with ‘infantrymen’s injuries’ – my knees, hips, back,” says Eugene, now 71. “Although I went on to be a motorcycle instructor for 14 years, they had to lift me off my bike at the end because of the injuries.

“Now I walk small distances on crutches, like to the car. But it’s only thanks to this mountain trike from the RAF Benevolent Fund that I can go everywhere outdoors. My ‘machine’, as everyone calls it, is also a good talking point when I’m out.!!”



Eugene Conlin paying his respects at a funeral of a member of the RAF Regiment.

Eugene served in the Middle East and Cyprus, and looking back says, “When my youngest son died while I was serving, overnight half the money for his funeral was raised by the Squadron. I really value how in the RAF Band of Brothers, everybody looks out for everybody.”

“YOU’VE MADE MY LIFE MORE LIVEABLE.”

Determination to find a way through difficulty is part of the RAF make-up. Since Andrew Harrop left the RAF Regiment in 1988, his resolve to keep living a decent life with progressive Multiple Sclerosis has seen him get a degree, then a Master’s and, when Multiple Sclerosis “overtook” his new career as a teacher, a PhD.


“I’m almost a quadriplegic now,” says Andrew, 63, “though I can move my left arm a bit.” That “bit” is enough to control a special wheelchair, which we have used your donations to provide Andrew with. “Without your help, I don’t know what would have happened to me,” he reflects. “You’ve made my life more liveable.”





Andrew has 24-hour carers living in with him, and is now writing a book to tell people about his time in the RAF. “It’s taken four years,” he says, “as I can’t use my hands well and my carers have to help. It really keeps me going.”

“My trousers had been blown off, my rifle and radio blown away.”

Injuries sustained in service can cause trouble for years afterwards

 **£25** could pay for a welcome care package for an RAF veteran during a long hospital stay, showing them they haven’t been forgotten.

 **£70** could go towards an adapted wheelchair for an RAF veteran with very limited movement, to help them make the most of every day.

 **£450** could provide a disabled serviceman with a whole year of getting out and about with a mountain trike. It’s a lot we know! But just in case there’s someone out there...

OUR RAF FAMILY

INDIVIDUALLY AND AS ONE

YOU ARE MAKING SUCH A DIFFERENCE

Here at the RAF Benevolent Fund, we are constantly humbled by how committed people are to ensuring we always have the means to help RAF veterans in great difficulty.

Q. How do I add a little bit to my monthly donation?

We have been receiving quite a few calls recently asking this question, for which we are very grateful. Our Anna Mulholland can help you.

- You can call Anna on **020 7580 8343**, 9-5 Monday

to Friday, who can organise this over the phone for you. No form to fill in.

- You can email Anna at **hello@rafbf.org.uk** to ask for a form to be emailed to you for printing out and sending back to us.

- You can write to Anna at the address below, or email her, to ask for a form in the post.

If you give by Direct Debit there is no need to contact your bank. We can take care of everything if you would like to do this. If you give by Standing Order then it's best for you to ask your bank direct.

ENJOY OUR FIRST GARDEN AT RHS CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW



If you love gardening, you might like to look out for our first garden at Chelsea Flower Show from 24 – 28 May.

It is being created by award-winning designer John Everiss, whose father Stan was a navigator on Stirling bombers during the Second World War, and was shot down over France. Hidden by resistance fighters, he was guided over the Pyrenees and reunited with his family four months later.

"The opportunity to highlight the work the RAF Benevolent Fund does is a privilege for me and my team," says John.

Left: RAF veteran Reg Lawrence, 89, discussing the garden plans with Flying Officer Edgar from RAF Queen's Colour Squadron. Reg grew and sold plants when he was younger.

Cyclists raised nearly £200,000 last year to help members of our RAF Family in need.



LOVE CYCLING, LOVE THE RAF FAMILY

Raising money comes most easily when combining it with something you love. If you or someone in your family is a keen cyclist, our Dambusters Ride could be just the ticket.

There are two ways you can take part. Join our 60-mile or 100-mile route in Lincolnshire, the home of the Dambusters, on 14 May. Or do your own 60 or 100-mile route anywhere in the world on 7-8 May. You can find out more at rafbf.org/ride.

A LOOK BACK AT OPERATION SILKMAN

WATCH THIS!

The RAF Regiment is creating a series of videos to mark its 80th anniversary. As they become available, you can watch them at rafbf.org/operation-silkman

PAY TRIBUTE TO SOMEONE IN THE RAF REGIMENT

As part of the RAF Family's marking of the courage and sacrifices of the RAF Regiment on its 80th Anniversary, we have created an opportunity for you to pay your own tribute for all to read.

Simply go to rafbf.dedicationpage.org/reg80. Or if you have a Smartphone, point your camera at the QR code opposite and the RAF Regiment Dedication Page will come up on your phone. We look forward to seeing you there!



Any gift you send today, large or small, will help make a life-changing difference to members of our RAF Family. **The enclosed donation form makes it easy. Or you can call 020 7580 8343 or go online: rafbf.org/oneheart**