

ONE HEART

YOUR RAF BENEVOLENT FUND
NEWSLETTER

How the RAF
Family looks
out for its own



99-YEAR-OLD BOMBER
COMMAND VETERAN IS
LOOKING OUT FOR
THE RAF FAMILY TODAY

WE ARE SO
GRATEFUL TO
YOU FOR THE
WAY YOU HELP



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mum finds her feet



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Remembrance Day?

STILL LOOKING OUT FOR HIS RAF FAMILY TODAY



170 crews of young men in Bomber Command were shot down in one night in 1944 during the Nuremberg Raid.

When World War Two pilot 'Rusty' Waughman gives talks about Bomber Command 101 Squadron, he focuses on all the members of his RAF Family who made a difference. When people give a donation, he passes it straight to the RAF Benevolent Fund to help the RAF Family today.

"It was usually the pilot who was decorated in the war," Mr Waughman reflects. "The rest of the crew never got the credit they should have, especially the rear and mid-upper gunners who saved us so many times, and suffered for it. The ground crew on a Bomber Command station also got no credit. But without them we could never have done what we did."

The hardest night

"I knew it was going to be dangerous when I joined the 101 Squadron at age 20 but I had no idea *how* dangerous. Of course I know now that we were to become the squadron with the highest losses of the war."

The details of the night of the Nuremberg Raid in 1944 remain deeply ingrained in Mr Waughman's

mind. We were told 'The weather's not right'" he remembers, "but the operation still went ahead.

"Normally we'd fly in a zig zag to confuse the German fighter aircraft. But this time, we flew in a straight line for 265 miles. It was a cloudless night, like flying almost in daylight. The Germans sent 250 fighter aircraft to meet us and 82 of our crews were shot down in about an hour. In total, 170 crews were lost that night.

"When we got back, everybody was like zombies. Nobody spoke, we were so numb. When we went to get a meal, they'd been left on the bench with a little note saying 'Help yourselves'. The WAAF waitresses were in their rest room crying their eyes out because we'd lost so many.

The officer in charge said 'When you get your meals, all sit at the same table, don't leave any empty chairs'.

"Many years later, when I was giving a talk, a little girl asked me 'How many dead bodies did you see?' and I said 'We never saw dead bodies, only empty beds'."

Some 55,573 young men in Bomber Command were killed trying to end the war. Mr Waughman and his whole crew survived and later in life all came together again. "Curly, our engineer, has just died," he says sadly. "He was the last crew member apart from myself."

Still looking out for his RAF Family today

"Until a few years ago, I used to give talks about Bomber Command

and all those people who made a difference. When people wanted to give a donation in thanks, I've given every penny to the RAF Benevolent Fund, because the help they give is just wonderful, and the RAF Family gives so much to the country."

After we landed, the officer in charge of the mess said 'When you get your meals, all sit at the same table, don't leave any empty chairs'."

THIS MONTH IN RAF HISTORY

1931

The de Havilland Tiger Moth takes to the sky for the first time.



1939

The first German air attack of Second World War takes place over the Forth Estuary.



CARING FOR OUR OWN

RAF FAMILIES GIVE SO MUCH

When someone joins the RAF, they are going into an exciting career that can be dangerous at times, but always rewarding. For their partner and children, however, RAF life can bring with it tremendous difficulties. Thank you so much for enabling us to reach out with support.



Charlie Whitford, RAF wife and mother, says that the support she received thanks to people like you helping the RAF Family has greatly improved how she feels about the future.

Reach out with the right help at the right time



£23 could help a struggling RAF partner to find their feet, through a life-changing Thrive session at their station.

"Behind the wire, on the station, it's so much safer for kids to go out to play," says Charlie Whitford from RAF Benson where her husband is stationed. They have three children, aged 11, nine, and three.

"That's a good thing. But RAF life can also feel like living on a knife-edge. Last year, my husband went on a two-day course and didn't come home for ages: he'd been sent at a moment's notice to Afghanistan for five weeks.

"As you may know from personal experience, serving personnel can

also often be sent away for four to six months at a time, sometimes with their families not knowing exactly what they are doing or the danger they are in. As the partner left at home, you have to say goodbye and so do the children, and they don't get used to their dad going away at all, they get really emotional. I miss my husband very much too. And then you have to manage everything. When we were posted to Birmingham, there was no station, we were living in the community and were told not to tell anyone we were military, or to leave anything out around our home that would show we were, for security.

When my husband left for weeks or months at a time, I couldn't tell the neighbours why, I wonder what people thought!

"As you move station every few years, your life and friendships are upended over and over and it can make it hard to get a decent job. That affects how a lot of the partners feel about themselves, about their worth. I've seen so many marriages dissolve under the pressure."

Helping non-serving partners to Thrive

Charlie was therefore relieved two years ago to see an advertisement

at RAF Leeming for Thrive, a course of five sessions, created by the RAF Benevolent Fund to help partners of serving personnel get back into the workplace.

"It had such a massive impact on my self-esteem and what I could do for myself," she says. "It gave me confidence and some sense of control over my life again, it was so good. Seeing the improvement that was possible with the right help made me want to become a counsellor. I'm two years into the training now. I can't thank you enough for this help."

THE ENDURING EFFECT OF THE HELP YOU GIVE

RAF reservist nurse, Joanna Martin, saw her life change in an instant 17 years ago when she broke her back while training. From her adapted bungalow that kind donations from supporters enabled her to move into back then, she reflects on how this shaped her life from there.

"How can I look after myself? How can I drive again? How can I ever play sport again, I can't do anything."

Those were things that were running through my mind when I was told I would never walk again" says Joanna.

"When the RAF Benevolent Fund said they could help, I thought they were talking about giving me a hand bike so I could exercise my arms. I was blown away though by the breadth of the help they offered. I'd managed to buy a bungalow but it needed lots of adaptations for me

to live independently, and they stepped in paid for all of them.

"Without that, I would have had to have carers for everything. But instead, I now drive, I look after myself, I do sport, I travel. In fact, I've just come back from Zambia. All because I had the right set-up to come home to from hospital 17 years ago. Thank you!"



Joanna Martin, an RAF reservist nurse, at her home which was adapted with your help.

ALL DOWN TO YOU

MARKING REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

If you would like to mark Remembrance Sunday with a donation to help RAF veterans and serving personnel through the RAF Benevolent Fund, you can be sure your gift will be used carefully.

Two members of our staff, who have both served themselves, reflect on what this means to them.

"The formal Act of Remembrance provides a focus to recognise the sacrifice of those who went before us, reconcile the events we have witnessed and gain strength

through our unity," says Wg Cdr Neil Sturtridge RAF, our Area Director of Central/North England & Wales.

Wg Cdr Neil Tomlin, our Head of Engagement, feels "It is a time to remember colleagues from all three services who were lost

along the way and the families who were left behind. But also a time to reflect on the dedication of those with whom I work now in the RAF Benevolent Fund, and the generosity of all who support our RAF Family. Without you this work would not be possible."



WE WILL GREATLY MISS OUR PATRON

All at the Fund were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of our Patron Her Majesty The Queen and send our condolences to all the Royal Family at this sad time.

Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliot, Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund, said: "As our beloved

Patron, Her Majesty inspired our work daily. Her Majesty knew only too well the sacrifices of a lifetime of service, in her own service to the throne, but also in her close relationship with all of her Armed Forces. She was steadfast in her commitment to the Royal Air Force, and we were honoured

Her Majesty chose to become our Patron back in 1952."

If you would like to add your own dedication to Her Majesty to the special page we have set up, please visit [RAFBF.dedicationpage.org/rememberingthequeen](https://rafbf.org/rememberingthequeen)

IT FEELS GOOD TO HAVE YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER

Did you know that friends of the RAF Benevolent Fund are eligible to use our free services for making or updating your Will?

- Farewill is an online and telephone free Wills service and is reviewed by a professional Wills specialist. Please visit at farewill.com/rafbf-web to make your Will online.

Or you can call direct on **020 4538 2378**. Please mention that you have come via the RAF Benevolent Fund.

- The National Free Wills Network puts you in touch with a solicitor. You simply complete your details at rafbf.org/nfwn and someone will come back to you.

- Our only request is that you consider including a gift in your Will to honour our RAF Family and help those in need in the future.

- If you have any questions about either service or about how the RAF Benevolent Fund uses gifts in Wills to support people in the RAF Family in great need, Samiha Sharif is here to help.



SEND A CARD, MAKE SOMEONE SMILE

There's nothing like receiving a card from a friend you haven't seen in ages. Make this the Christmas you get back in touch, with an RAF Benevolent Fund Christmas card.

You'll find our Christmas card selection and order form enclosed with this newsletter. We really hope you like them.



OUR CHELSEA GARDEN MOVES TO BIGGIN HILL

If you weren't able to visit the RAF Benevolent Fund's inspiring garden at Chelsea Flower Show this year, you now have a second chance. It is being rebuilt at a permanent location next to the Lookout Café at London Biggin Hill Airport, so you can combine it with a touch of plane-spotting too!

For information about the date of the unveiling or to plan your visit go to bigginhillairport.com



You can contact Samiha on **0207 307 3444** or at samiha.sharif@rafbf.org.uk



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**