

ONE HEART

YOUR RAF BENEVOLENT FUND
NEWSLETTER

How the RAF
Family looks
out for its own

"I HAD NO CLUE
IT WAS COMING."

FLIGHT SERGEANT SAM PARSLEY
REFLECTS ON "GETTING FIXED"

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR WANTING
TO HELP OUR RAF FAMILY.



Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund



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Why Davina was
"honoured to
accept" your help



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Remembering the
brave 80 years on

HERE FOR SAM

WITH YOUR HELP



Flight Sergeant Sam Parsley has been serving in the RAF for 26 years. When he woke up one morning in 2021 feeling like a “switch” had flipped, the engineer in him wanted to “get it fixed”. He soon realised it wasn’t that simple.

Sam was used to making decisions and influencing outcomes. But a number of new uncertainties in his life, emerging at the same time, left him feeling as if his life was now out of his hands.

“I’d worked at a hundred miles an hour,” says Sam. “I’d done 14 operational tours and seen things most people never have to. And I’d done it without losing a night’s sleep. I thought I was mentally indestructible.”

Life changed overnight

“I had no clue it was coming,” says Sam. “One day I seemed fine, the next I woke up numb, except for this constant, huge anxiety – like you’re rounding a corner and there’s a lion coming for you.

“I had to declare it to my Warrant Officer because I was tasked with

making airworthiness decisions, for example if it was safe for a Chinook with faults to go and pick up 40 troops. I had to tell him I wasn’t in the right frame of mind to make those decisions.”

The doctor at RAF Odiham referred Sam to the RAF Benevolent Fund for help, and thanks to people like you, we were able to find and pay for specialist therapy for Sam.

Therapy was effective

“The way the Benevolent Fund helped was very effective and professional,” remembers Sam. “I just wanted to get fixed! But it was a slow process as the therapist built up a picture of all the things that had led to this breakdown. She helped me see it’s not normal to have so many potentially life-changing things pulling in so many directions.

“She broke my worries down into almost a flow chart. Is this a genuine worry, yes/no? Can I influence the situation now, yes/no? Could I influence it in the future, yes/no? Then we created a Plan A, B and C for different scenarios. She also helped me recognise when I’m creeping back. I’ve learned to say no to people, and I’ve learned to manage my own calm. I’m doing much better now.”



£30 could help us get specialist therapy to someone serving their country within two weeks.



£106 could give someone like Sam their first session where they realise they’re not alone and they *can* get better.

WHY DAVINA COULD SAY YES

Davina Griffiths fiercely resisted asking for help when she was seriously ill. But when her daughter Charlie turned to the RAF Benevolent Fund, she was “honoured to accept” support from our RAF Family.

Davina was married for many happy years to Caleb Griffiths who served in the RAF in the Second World War. “A happy man”, he would tell his family stories of close wartime shaves. A favourite was how Caleb was returning to England in his Spitfire with no ammunition left and low on fuel when he emerged from the clouds to find himself facing a German Messerschmitt “I thought, ‘I’m done for’ and tried to get away,” he told them. “But the German turned away from me.”

In the 1960s, Caleb was in Germany delivering a vintage car

to a family. The father had been in the Luftwaffe and soon he and Caleb were exchanging stories. Caleb told the man about his escape from the Messerschmitt and said, “I don’t know why he didn’t shoot me down”. The man said, “He didn’t have any ammunition left and was low on fuel too. I know that because that was me!”

Caleb always wanted the best for Davina. “When he was dying,” she remembers, “he said, ‘Darling, I want you to live a *full* life for the *rest of your* life. If you don’t, I’ll come round the corner and give you a poke!’”

In recognition of her husband’s RAF service

So, after Davina became very ill recently, she was “honoured to accept” our help, made possible by kind supporters like you, because she knew it was in recognition of Caleb’s service.

We were able to give Davina a riser recliner chair upon her return from hospital, and a grant to help with increased energy costs.

“Pops would be delighted that Mum’s receiving this support as a result of his service,” says his daughter Charlie.

“Darling, I want you to live a *full* life for the *rest of your* life. If you don’t, I’ll come round the corner and give you a poke!”



REMEMBERING THE BRAVE 80 YEARS ON

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Dambusters raid, one of the most daring RAF operations of the Second World War. Operation Chastise was carried out by the RAF's 617 Squadron who were especially assembled to bomb three dams in Germany's heartland.

Of the 133 aircrew who took part, 53 men were killed. Barnes Wallis wrote, "For me the subsequent success was almost completely blotted out by the sense of loss of those wonderful young lives."

The RAF Benevolent Fund has been privileged to be able to help veterans of 617 Squadron over the years, with the help of people like you who value their bravery.

Members of 617 Squadron photographed at Scampton after the Dams raid in May 1943. Crown copyright, MOD.



THE DIFFERENCE YOU MADE IN 2022

WE SUPPORTED
13,865
PEOPLE WITH
THEIR EMOTIONAL
WELLBEING



WE WERE THERE FOR
16,680
VETERANS AND
THEIR FAMILIES



WE WERE THERE FOR
22,874
SERVING PERSONNEL
AND THEIR FAMILIES



HONOURING YOUR RAF LOVED ONE

Did you know there's a place where you can share wonderful memories of someone in the RAF Family? It is called a Tribute Fund and it enables you to share photos and stories of a loved one and even mark an anniversary or birthday with family and friends all over the world.

It also allows you to collect donations in their memory if you would like to, including funeral donations, to support today's RAF Family.



A Tribute Fund is completely free to set up, and it is easy to do. Please visit rafbf.org/tribute or call our Supporter Care Team on **020 3928 0563** to find out more.

THIS MONTH IN RAF HISTORY

1937

The RAF Volunteer Reserve recruited its first 50 men. Nearly 800 Battle of Britain pilots came through this "citizens' army of the air".



1952

Jean Lennox Bird became the first woman to be awarded a RAF Pilot's badge, after 3000 hours of flying over 20 years.



CALLING DAMBUSTERS CYCLISTS

If you or someone you know enjoys cycling or is looking to challenge themselves this year, our Dambusters Ride could be just the thing.

Our Dambusters Ride 2023 will be incorporating places along the route that connect with the audacious Second World War operation, starting at Petwood Hotel in Lincolnshire which was once home to the famous 617 Dambusters Squadron.

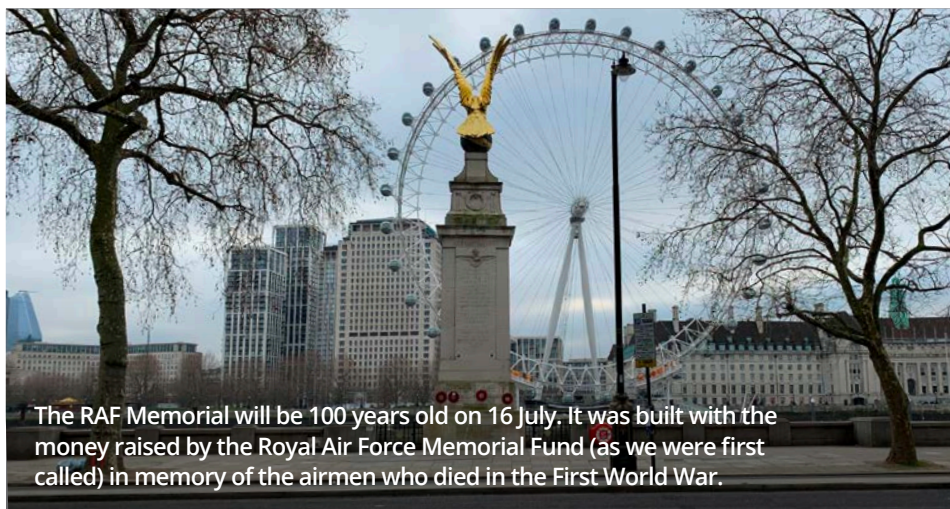
Depending on which of the 40, 80 and 100-mile routes cyclists choose, they will take in Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirby, the International Bomber Command Centre and Metherringham Airfield Visitor Centre.

The Dambusters Ride is raising

money to help people in our RAF Family who are struggling.

It will take place on Saturday 13 May, or cyclists can take part virtually on 20 and 21 May.

To find out more, please email challenge@rafbf.org.uk or call us on 075 9983 2570.



The RAF Memorial will be 100 years old on 16 July. It was built with the money raised by the Royal Air Force Memorial Fund (as we were first called) in memory of the airmen who died in the First World War.

WE'VE CHANGED SHAPE

One Heart has changed shape, from four big pages to six smaller ones. This will reduce our postage costs, with all savings going towards helping our beneficiaries.

BE THE HEART OF THE RAF FAMILY

The RAF Family and everything it stands for – protecting our country, our freedom and our families – matters to you. You have generously shown that by supporting the RAF Benevolent Fund and we are very grateful for that.

To mark what those who have served in the Royal Air Force – or a particular someone – have meant

to you, you may like to consider leaving a gift in your Will to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

We have a free Gifts in Wills Guide that shows how a gift in your Will can give people in the RAF Family the right support in their hour of need.

Visit rafbf.org/heart for more information and to request your free guide. You can also email



our friendly Gifts in Wills team at legacies@rafbf.org.uk or call **0207 307 3444**.



Any gift you send today will help make a life-changing difference to members of our RAF Family who are struggling. **The enclosed donation form makes it easy. Or you can call 020 7580 8343 or visit rafbf.org/oneheart**

