

ONE HEART

YOUR RAF BENEVOLENT FUND
NEWSLETTER

How the RAF
Family looks
out for its own

"AIMING FOR PEACE WITH PTSD"

FORMER RAF POLICEMAN MICK CURRAN
ON THE MAGIC OF ARCHERY

A MILLION THANKS FOR HELPING
THE RAF FAMILY IN DIFFICULTY



Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund



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The quest of a
Dambuster's son
to know more



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Not a stranger in
the camp

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO GET HELP

Mick is extremely proud to have recently qualified as an archery judge and uses his electric chair to get around the field.



Peace with PTSD can be hard to find. But ex-RAF policeman Mick Curran is getting there after too many years, helped greatly by our RAF Family.

"It started to come out in 2010, when my body just stopped working and everything went Pete Tong," says Mick. "This huge fatigue, not being able to walk upstairs, pain... And suddenly I couldn't go up to people and speak to them any more."

Paying for serving in the Gulf War

Like many Gulf War veterans, despite being previously healthy Mick has experienced many ongoing and disabling health issues following his service. "I had to start using a wheelchair, my home had to be fitted with a stairlift, and I had to give up work."

Paying for serving his country

Mick was also diagnosed with PTSD. "I'd gone into the RAF at 17, and I did everything asked of me. But because we weren't trained to ask for help then, multiple things got

stuck inside of me. Like seeing the aftermath of an IRA attack near our camp in Germany. And guarding the coffins of British soldiers in Cyprus being sent back to their families after the Americans had killed them by mistake. We were trained to just push on. To have a drink in the bar. But like the mystery illnesses and pain, these things would not go away.

The difference you make

"By the time I reached out to the RAF Benevolent Fund, I had written my letters for ending it all," says Mick.

"They paid for me to have respite breaks with the Gulf War Veterans and Families Association where I found I could talk to people. And they gave me an electric wheelchair that's given me a life back."

Central to this new life is archery, and we have been able to give Mick a special sports chair to help.

"It's just me and the target," he says. "Everything else in my head goes away. And I find I can talk to people at archery, just like I can talk to veterans."

"The Benevolent Fund asked me to be in their team at the Veterans Games in Israel. I found myself talking to an archer from the German Air Force who told me I was with the military family, and I would be safe if I had any problems."

"Thank you for the support. It means so much."



Could you help make an electric wheelchair possible?

£20, £50, £100, £1000 – a donation towards an electric wheelchair can sometimes help to save someone's life.

THEN AND NOW, LOOKING AFTER RAF CHILDREN

Chris Henderson was 15 when his RAF father died while posted to Cyprus. The RAF Benevolent Fund stepped in to help him stay at his school in Devon, and later supported him through College, as his father would have done. But it was many years before Chris found out more about his father's extraordinary wartime service.

"When you are younger, your Dad is just your Dad," he muses. "By the time I was of an age to want to know what Dad did in the War, when I had a family of my own, he was no longer there to tell me."

Flight Engineer Bob Henderson flew with 617 Squadron, he was a Dambuster. He didn't talk about his experiences a lot but when Chris went to a Dambusters' event in 1994, he met veterans who remembered his father. Stories followed.

Joining 617 squadron: a casual affair

"In early 1943 Dad was with 57 Squadron based at RAF Scampton. His plane was grounded because his pilot had an ear infection. Hearing that a new squadron

was being formed in a nearby hangar and that a young Australian pilot, David Shannon, was looking for a Flight Engineer and a Bomb Aimer, he and fellow crew member Len Sumpter wandered over to have a look. After they all looked each other up and down and liked what they saw, they joined his crew."

After two months of intensive training, they were flying dangerously low over the Ruhr Valley in Germany's heartland dropping Barnes Wallis "bouncing bombs" on dams critical to power and steel production. They made it back to Britain: 56 young men did not. In total, Bob flew 40 operations during the War, 24 of them in 617 Squadron. In 1944 he was recommended for a Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM).

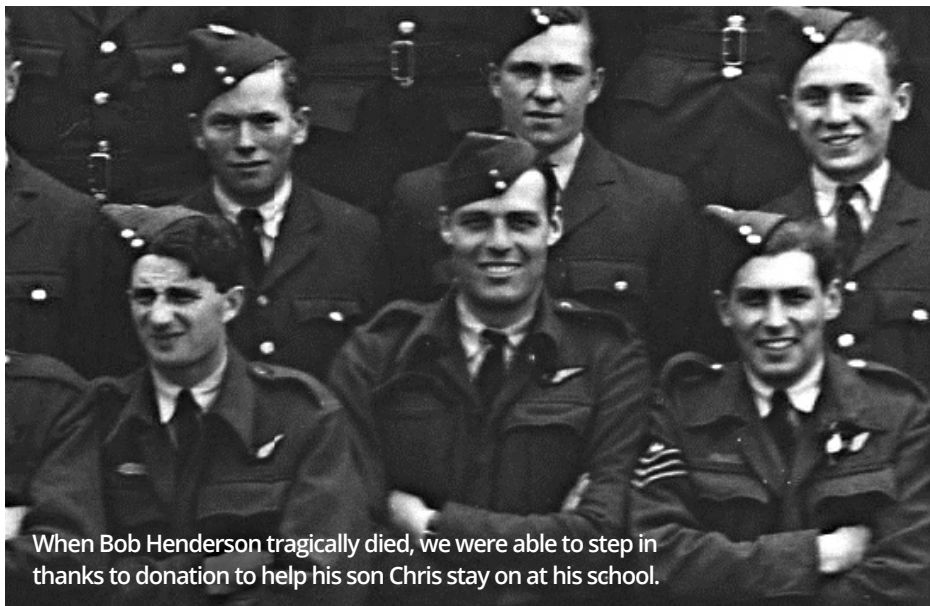
Supporting Chris for his Dad

After the war, he stayed in the RAF, and Chris went to a grammar school with a boarding house for children with parents posted in the services or abroad. When Bob suddenly died in Cyprus in 1961, the RAF Benevolent Fund stepped in to support his family emotionally and financially, just as we do today when someone dies in service.

// For several years growing up I wanted to believe he was really just on a secret mission somewhere."

"The Fund supported me throughout my education. They paid for my boarding house so I could remain at my school, sports kit when I was training to become a PE teacher, and they helped me through college.

"Without that help from the Fund, I would not have been able to achieve what I have today. I will be forever grateful. They do a fantastic job supporting RAF personnel and their families and I look to return that support wherever I can. I'm now also a proud member of the RAF Benevolent Fund's Bomber Command Memorial Upkeep Club, helping to remember the 55,573 airmen who lost their lives serving with Bomber Command."



When Bob Henderson tragically died, we were able to step in thanks to donation to help his son Chris stay on at his school.

FINDING FRIENDSHIP AGAIN WITH YOUR HELP

Something wonderful happened on Hayling Island in June, thanks to the help of people like you. A group of RAF veterans and partners of RAF veterans shed crippling loneliness and isolation and found friendship again.

"Being stuck indoors day after day is soul destroying," says RAF Observer Corps veteran Alice Judge. "The RAF Benevolent Fund has been there when I have been at my lowest and they have picked up the pieces." This summer, thanks to our supporters, we were able to invite Alice to join a Group Break, designed to help people get away and find friendship with like-minded people.

Hayling Island on the South Coast echoed with memories of RAF service, as people breathed out and connected with stories and laughter.

"When you're part of the Forces, it's like one big family," smiles Alice. "So meeting up, even if you haven't met before, you feel like you're not a stranger in the camp."

Someone to open the door

RAF veteran Colin Childs, who was in the group with Alice, says "I had an absolutely wonderful time. The company of other people

and being able to discuss our problems with one another is very beneficial."

Feeling the click

After a period of isolation, social confidence can be on the floor. But Group Breaks have their secret ingredient. "You can start a conversation and suddenly there's something where you just all click," says veteran Neil Green. It is that RAF connection. "It doesn't matter where we have been in the world – we've all had similar experiences in the RAF."

Wherever possible, we try to bring people together from similar locations so when the break is over, they can stay in touch and keep building their friendship. Thank you so much for making this possible.

**// You feel like
you're not a stranger
in the camp."**

Alice



DUTY ENDURES, AIRCRAFTS CHANGE

When 2,945 aircrew defended Britain from July to October in 1940 in the Battle of Britain, it was the first battle fought entirely in the air. It was also Nazi Germany's first major military defeat.

The courage, sense of duty and sacrifice of RAF pilots were breathtaking and the aircraft in which they flew and fought look so vulnerable today.

Fast forward to the present day, and a new combat aircraft is being developed to ensure we are ready to defend ourselves in a modern world. Tempest is being developed by a partnership between the Ministry of Defence and industry and the new aircraft is expected to be in service in 2035.



- It could be both crewed and flown remotely
- There will be less reliance on a single physical dial or screen in the cockpit; displays will be in front of the pilot's eyes through virtual reality
- Eye-tracking will measure the pilot's fatigue and mental stress
- Weapons will include missiles that intelligently collaborate in packs or swarms using kinetic and non-kinetic effects, missiles that can fly at hypersonic speeds and in the future potentially directed energy weapons like lasers
- It will have a 'spiders web' of integrated sensor capability that sits across an aircraft, giving the pilot an unprecedented operational view

With your backing, the RAF Benevolent Fund will continue into this future and always be here for the RAF crews who protect us.

MOMENTS FROM RAF HISTORY

1919

The War Cabinet decided to give 100 surplus aircraft to each dominion in the Empire and to India. This paved the way for Australia, Canada and South Africa to establish air forces.



1932-1935

Sir Alan Cobham inspired a generation of boys to join the RAF during the Second World War with his National Aviation Day Display, popularly known as "Cobham's Flying Circus".



A DEDICATION YOU CAN SHARE

The loss of a loved one can be overwhelming, and it is often difficult to decide how best to commemorate the life of a person you dearly miss.

At the RAF Benevolent Fund, we can provide that opportunity. A Dedication Page helps to bring together friends and family from all over the world. Share messages and memories of your loved one, and treasure photographs from their life. All are welcome to create a Dedication Page, whether or not your loved one served in the RAF.

To set up a page, please visit **lovedonesmissed.memorypage.org/dedication** or scan the QR Code below with your smartphone to go straight to the website.



REMEMBERING THE FALLEN ON 12 NOVEMBER



At 11am on Sunday 12 November, like you we will all be falling silent for two minutes as we remember those lost in war serving our country. For many people in the RAF Family, it will be deeply personal.

"The example of the wartime generation remains an inspiration for those who served afterwards," says RAF veteran Rob Bugden.

"That generation included Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who was Patron of the RAF Benevolent Fund.

"At the same time, the RAF Benevolent Fund looks to those who have served in more recent conflicts, no matter how long ago, or who may be serving still, who urgently need help. The Fund is right here for them, like they were for me."

FREE WILL WRITING SERVICES FOR THE RAF FAMILY

It feels good to have your affairs in order. The RAF Benevolent Fund has partnered with two services to help members of our RAF Family write or update their Will for free.

All we ask is that you consider adding a gift to the RAF Benevolent Fund so that we can help serving and retired RAF servicemen and women facing great difficulties in their lives.

- **Farewill** can be found at **farewill.com/rafbf-web** or you can call **020 4538 2378** and ask for a call back.
- **National Free Wills Network** is reached by emailing **legacies@rafbf.org.uk** or calling **0300 102 1919** and we will refer you to a solicitor in your area.

For more information, and to find out which service may be



best for you, please contact the friendly Gifts in Wills team on **0300 102 1919 or email **legacies@rafbf.org.uk**.**



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****

