

## Update to Supporting Trusts RAF Centenary Edition Spring 2018

**To mark the centenary of the Royal Air Force, on 1 April 2018, Lord Trenchard celebrates with us the airmen and airwomen who have given so much for their country. Thank you for standing side by side with them.**

It is my great pleasure to write for this Update to Supporting Trusts, commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Air Force.

My grandfather, Hugh Trenchard, the first Viscount Trenchard, often called the Founder of the RAF, became its first Chief of the Air Staff on its formation on 1 April 1918.

The new service was revolutionary: it sought its officers and men from all backgrounds, with my grandfather wanting the very finest people for the fledgling force, whether they were the sons of dukes or dustmen. It was not their background that was important, it was their ability.



Right from the start, he believed that there is a responsibility to care for members of the RAF Family who are in need. And so in 1919, he set up a small fund to provide welfare assistance – the RAF Benevolent Fund, which would sit at the heart of the RAF Family.

That role has not changed in 99 years and the Fund continues to stand side by side with the RAF. From its modest beginnings in 1919, the Fund has grown to become the leading welfare charity for the RAF, assisting 54,600 family members in 2017.

During my time as Chairman of the RAF Benevolent Fund, from 2006 to 2013, I had the opportunity to see for myself the outstanding work the Fund does for the RAF Family. From my previous involvement as a Trustee I already knew that this was no ordinary charity. It has something very special: a real sense of belonging and caring for one another. Because if we don't support our own, who will?

I will always hold the Fund in great affection and I am honoured, as its Deputy Chairman, to continue working with them to achieve great things. Thank you for all you do to help the RAF Family persevere through the most challenging times.

Your generosity provides a vital lifeline to those who find themselves facing severe difficulties. The centenary of the RAF is a chance for the nation to reconnect with the airmen and airwomen who defended this country in its most perilous moments, to honour their dedication, commitment and bravery, and to reflect on how these qualities endure in the RAF today.

In an appeal on behalf of the Fund in 1951, Winston Churchill reminded the nation of 'the debt we owe' to those who served in the RAF during World War II. On this 100th anniversary, it is wonderful to see the nation come together once again to acknowledge the debt we owe today, just like our forebears did all those years ago.

My grandfather would have been proud to see how the Air Force he founded has worked with its Benevolent Fund through such difficult times. I thank you most sincerely for the support that you give.

The RAF has always had an extraordinarily strong feeling of pride and loyalty – esprit de corps – and with that pride may come a reluctance to ask for help. The RAF Benevolent Fund is here to help the entire RAF Family – veterans and dependants, and our current service personnel and their families.

This help is growing in response to evolving needs, often in increasingly complex welfare concerns. I am delighted that some of these are highlighted in this Update.



Hugh Trenchard  
3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Trenchard of Wolfeton DL

## Join the celebration!

Come and salute the RAF centenary at events across the UK

**16-20 May**

National Aircraft Tour at Cardiff City Hall Gardens

**10 June**

RAF Cosford Air Show

**6-9 July**

National Aircraft Tour at Horse Guards Parade, London

**10 July**

RAF100 Parade and Flypast at The Mall, London

**13-15 July**

Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford

**4-5 August**

National Aircraft Tour at Newcastle in Northern Ireland

**25-27 August**

National Aircraft Tour at Victoria Square, Birmingham

**1-2 September**

National Aircraft Tour at Glasgow Science Centre

**15-16 September**

National Aircraft Tour at Cathedral Gardens, Manchester

Find out what's on in your local area at:  
[raf.mod.uk/raf100/whats-on](http://raf.mod.uk/raf100/whats-on)

## Helping Mr and Mrs Scott

Since they met in 1944, Nancy (Nan) and Owen Scott have faced some incredible challenges together. For their latest test, however, they needed some extra help.

Owen and Nan first met on the dance floor at their local town hall in Loughborough, Leicestershire. It was the height of World War II, and Owen having trained as a flying boat pilot in the USA, was completing his conversion training to heavy bombers at RAF Wymeswold. In that moment, they couldn't have imagined the unique situation that the war would put them in.

Nan joined the RAF soon after, as a radar operator. She became responsible for plotting Owen's bombing runs, which meant she knew exactly where he was going every time he took off, and the dangers he faced there. "Mum never likes to talk about those times," their daughter, Toni, says. "Unlike Dad who was happy to recount his stories on film and national TV."

In his RAF career, eventually becoming a Flight Lieutenant, Owen flew 32 missions as a Lancaster bomber pilot and was awarded the DFC. His missions included Dresden, Berlin, Cologne and Hamburg, and he was involved in Operation Manna in Holland and repatriated prisoners of war from Italy. To say he had a few close shaves would be an understatement.

"He got hit by flak and his engines caught fire. Once, a large 'cookie' bomb was stuck in the bomb bay and couldn't be jettisoned. He and his crew were offered two options by flight control – bale out over the sea or return to England and attempt to land! The crew unanimously and courageously voted the latter. Fortunately, it was a happy landing. On their final mission an engine packed up on take off, yet they still continued to the target."



Nan and Owen married in 1946. They raised four children together and, now that they are in their nineties, they depend on the care of their family.

Recently, Nan and Owen went through a stressful time when the outgoings on the flat they had lived in for 25 years became a real struggle. They loved their home and had so many happy memories stitched into it. The thought of being forced to move out was unbearable.

"They are very proud people," Toni says, "and were reticent to ask for help. The RAF Benevolent Fund is the only kind of help they felt comfortable with." Donations have helped Nan and Owen through this time of financial worry, and they were able to stay in their home.

### Your Impact on RAF Veterans in 2017

- 94% of all veterans helped rated the quality of our service as either 'excellent' or 'very good'
- 95% said the comfort of their day to day living has improved 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'
- 89% said they use their mobility or care equipment every day or most days
- 84% of PMH guests reported their emotional wellbeing was positively affected by their stay

## A birthday present he'll never forget

When Henry Conway turned 6, he got a birthday present he will always remember – the chance to meet Battle of Britain veteran and RAF Benevolent Fund friend, Stan Harthill.



It all began when young Henry was watching TV with his parents. The latest RAF Benevolent Fund advert, featuring Stan, was showing, and Henry was so moved, he decided to make a donation as part of his sixth birthday present. “We really think it’s special that he wanted to do this,” his mum, Elizabeth, said. “We’re just really proud of him.”

When Stan heard about Henry’s donation, he invited Henry and his family to his home. Henry was thrilled to be able to meet a real World War II veteran. He listened wide-eyed as Stan told him about his experiences as an RAF airframe fitter, and his adventures in the war.

Now 97, Stan recently found himself struggling to pay the maintenance charges on his flat. Thanks to RAF Benevolent Fund supporters’ generosity, we stepped in to help, whilst assisting Stan to access additional benefits, including a £3,000 increase in his annual income, and more than £4,900 in backdated payments. All this has given Stan the greatest gift he could wish for... the chance to spend his last years in his own home.

Stan said it was a pleasure to meet the charming and intelligent young Henry, our youngest supporter. “I was deeply moved to hear about Henry’s donation, so to be able to thank him personally is simply wonderful!”

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## ‘We would be lost without you’

Sergeant Steve Lawrence’s wife lives with multiple sclerosis. When her condition worsened, our voluntary income meant we were there to give them both the support they needed.

For Steve, joining the RAF had been a long-held ambition – he’d been dreaming of a career as an Air Force engineer since the age of 14. Now, as he approaches his 23<sup>rd</sup> year in service, his dedication to his duty has been repaid by the RAF Benevolent Fund.

“Life is far from easy for Laura,” Steve explains, “as she suffers from primary progressive multiple sclerosis. This means that each time her condition deteriorates she has to adjust to a new ‘normal’. She now finds walking any long distances difficult and could eventually need a wheelchair permanently.

### Your Impact on Serving RAF in 2017

- 88% of transitioning RAF reported an improvement in their job searching skills
- 88% said their partner relationship communication has improved
- 84% feel better at managing conflict



“We first received support from the Fund when Laura had to have three separate brain surgeries. I was faced with the reality of a big financial bill while I stayed close by to support her. We received a grant to cover the costs of accommodation and travel.

“When Laura and I were forced to buy our next house without stairs, the Fund were on hand to make it as accessible as they could for both of us. The adaptations to the house have given Laura more freedom and independence, allowing her to relax. Recently, they also allowed me to complete a course of relationship counselling. It’s helped me in my role as Laura’s carer so I can best support her and our relationship.

“It sounds like a cliché, but a huge weight was lifted off our shoulders thanks to the RAF Benevolent Fund. We would be absolutely lost without the help they have given us.”

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## WAAF trailblazers

In January a team of seven female personnel from RAF Odiham joined former WAAF and WRAF members at a week-long celebration of 100 years of women in the RAF at our respite home, Princess Marina House, in Rustington.

The group gave a presentation to the former servicewomen at the care centre, before a special gala dinner. The evening was the highlight in a week of activities to celebrate 100 years of women in the Armed Forces, specifically the RAF.

Ann Simons, a former WRAF nurse who served during the 1970s, said: “I totally enjoyed my time in the air force. I think this week is marvellous and I have already made a couple of friends. It is absolutely beautiful here, I love being by the sea. They treat you so well here.”

Sergeant Audrey Burleigh, from RAF Odiham, said: “We are delighted to be part of these celebrations and it has been great to meet the WAAF and WRAF veterans. Many of the women served during World War II and were the trailblazers of their generation, paving the way for women, like me, who serve today.”

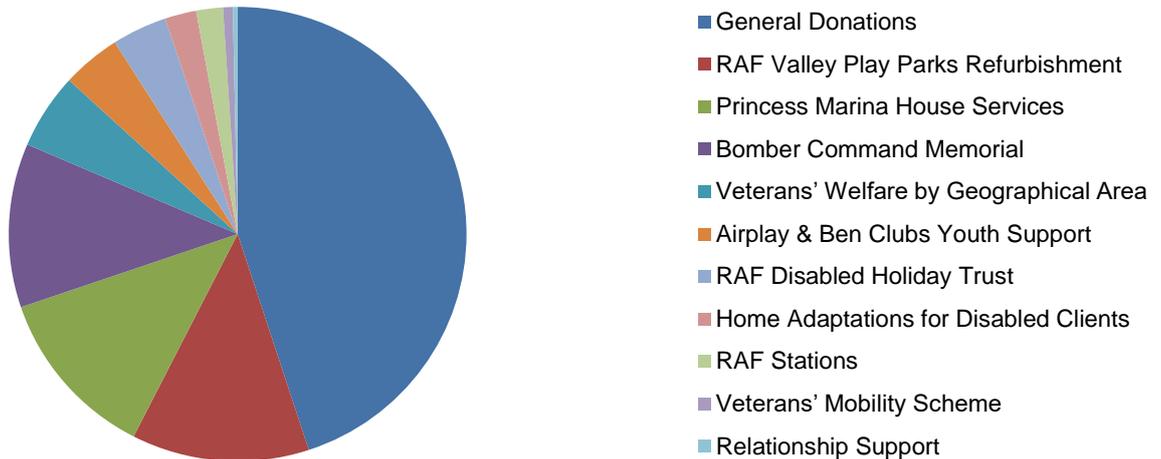


General Manager Shirley Steeples said: “Personnel at RAF Odiham are wonderful supporters of Princess Marina House and the work we do here, so it seemed fitting they should join us in these celebrations. We had a wonderful week of reminiscing about past service and also celebrating the contribution women have made throughout the past century.

“Of course our guests will have enjoyed a programme of events we prepared, but I know what they were most looking forward to was rekindling the companionship and comradeship they enjoyed as serving members of the WAAF and WRAF.”

## Thank You

The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund is extremely grateful to its Supporting Trusts. In 2017 you generously awarded grants for a broad range of welfare, as well as the endowment fund for the Bomber Command Memorial. Many Trusts continue to support us with general donations, allowing the charity greater flexibility to respond to need.



We look forward to celebrating with you the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Air Force, followed by the RAF Benevolent Fund's own centenary in 2019. A number of events are being held, ranging from the RAFBF Awards to public celebrations across the country.

The Trust Team also regularly hosts individual meetings, including attendance at the charity's fortnightly small grants committee in central London, offering a chance to see first-hand how tailored support is given to each member of the RAF Family.

We are keen to host more and, if preferable, are happy to pay Supporting Trusts a visit, which is sometimes a more convenient arrangement for you. All of us at the RAF Benevolent Fund would be delighted to meet with more Supporting Trusts, in whatever way suits you.

Importantly, we would be grateful to know if you wish to see more reporting on the impact you are enabling. Do get in touch to update us. And, if there is anything in particular that you are interested in receiving as part of renewed applications, please let us know.

The RAF Benevolent Fund's engagement of Supporting Trusts forms part of our overall focus in centring our fundraising on the Supporter and their preferences, and underpins our efforts to raise more funds for the welfare of the entire RAF Family.

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