

Included in this issue...

Manston.... is it still open?

F-35B Lightning visits

An Opportunity For All

AUTUMN 2016

2 great
competitions
inside!



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Why should **YOU** contact the Federation?

The RAF Families Federation is funded by the RAF but sits outside the Chain of Command as an independent organisation. We represent all RAF personnel – be they Regular, Reserve, single, married or in a partnership, together with their families.

We provide a voice for the issues and concerns you have about life in the RAF, and we have direct access to senior RAF and MOD staffs as well as Government Ministers.

To do all this, we need to hear from you on issues such as quality of life, accommodation, health, education, pay and allowances. Everyone's views and concerns are important to us.

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- We work with the RAF/MOD and not against them
- We don't undermine the chain of command; we work with them but will dig them in the ribs on your behalf when necessary
- We will signpost you to the 'best' experts to help you if required
- We always maintain your anonymity and respect your privacy
- We always maintain a fair and balanced approach

If you don't tell us, we can't tell them.

Welcome from the editor



Well, what a summer... Nick and I, here in the communications team had the task of organising our team's attendance at all of your Station families days this summer. Boy what a busy but fun time we have had! Ruth, our office manager, was probably sleeping at night not by counting sheep, but freebie bag collating or booking numerous hire cars instead.

On a personal note, this issue of Envoy marks my two-year milestone working at the RAF FF and I have loved every minute. I've managed to meet so many groups, organisations and learn so much, especially coming into the RAF community with no prior military experience. One of my most recent visits has included the Military Wives Choir's Annual Conference, held at Tidworth Garrison. Jo Wilkinson and I went armed with our exhibition stand and received the warmest of welcomes. We even joined in with the singing workshop along with Nichola, our counterpart in the Naval FF. Well, I can safely say we all left feeling quite energised. Singing really did give us a good feeling and I can totally appreciate the benefits of joining one of the choirs. Not a bad day's work for a Monday!

So, focusing back on this edition, I'm so excited to bring to you two great prizes for you to win. There is a weekend break for two nights at the Victory Services Club. A must to go to if you haven't already used it as a weekend bolt-hole. The team are all so friendly there too. You really will be made to feel special.

There is also a free Family and Friends National Railcard up for grabs. Simply use the form in this magazine to sign up to either eBULLETIN or Envoy magazine (or both as they are free!) and send your slip in to me by Friday 28th October; your details will then go into a draw to win one of the two prizes. I'll then have the fun part of informing the lucky winners who they are by Friday 4th November.

Caroline

Front Caption: Pictured is the first of the UK's F-35B Lightning II jets to be flown to the UK.
(c) MOD Crown Copyright 2016.



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Envoy – The magazine of the RAF Families Federation, published 4 times a year.

To have your FREE copy delivered quarterly to your home, email **enquiries@raf-ff.org.uk** or via our website **raf-ff.org.uk**

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Published quarterly by Method Publishing, a division of Scottish Provincial Press Limited, on behalf of Envoy

Design and Typography: © Method Publishing 2016

Editorial Matter and Illustrations: © Envoy

Printed in Great Britain by: Warners Midlands plc

Advertisement Office (UK): Method Publishing, Sutherland Press House,

Main Street, Golspie, Sutherland, KW10 6RA

Tel: 01408 633871 Fax: 01408 633876

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“ When I needed help to get back to work after being medically discharged from service, the RAF Association was there for me. ”

SAC(T) Paul Case

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Superb prizes from the Victory Services Club and National Rail in our free to enter competitions. If you don't enter you can't win!

FROM THE Director



I quite enjoy some of Jeremy Clarkson's stuff, especially the way he starts his motoring column with a story often completely unconnected to the car being tested and then manages at the end to link together the story with the car. I've been trying to work out how I might link my fabulous motorcycle trip to the Black Forest with tales of grotty kitchens, broken boilers and expensive childcare... and I've failed completely to do so, which only goes to show that Clarkson has no idea what a challenge writing this column can be. So best I just crack on.

We've been very busy over the summer period, visiting units, attending some excellent Families Days, running surveys, working to support the AF Covenant and dealing with all kinds of issues you have brought to us. Sadly, around 60% of those issues still come from your experiences of CarillionAmey (CA) performance on SFA response

maintenance and we continue to challenge both CA and DIO to perform. Please keep your evidence coming – even if CA performance is showing encouraging signs, we need to make sure they sustain it.

We ran a tri-Federation survey on the Future Accommodation Model for the MOD – if you completed it then a big 'Thank You'. If you did not, then be aware that MOD is running a FAM survey in the late summer for Service personnel to complete, which effectively gives families another opportunity to express a view by telling the serving spouse/partner what to say! Watch out for it – FAM has the potential to transform the way Service accommodation is provided and it's important your voice is heard, or you'll end up with a compromise that suits no one.

We are seeing the Armed Forces Pay review Body (AFPRB) at the beginning of October and will take

with us the evidence and views you have given us on topics ranging from accommodation (inevitably), childcare and quality of life to overseas issues and pay & allowances. We are under no illusions, and nor should you be, that public sector pay restraint is about to end but we hope that we can at least influence the AFPRB with your evidence about what matters to you and what you think is working and what is not. We'll let you know how we get on.

In the meantime, enjoy the magazine...and I cannot recommend too highly the B500 Schwarzwald Hochstrasse...cue glazed eyes and raised pulse rate. ●

Foreword by

CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF (CAS): AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR STEPHEN HILLIER

KCB CBE DFC ADC MA RAF



As the newly appointed Chief of the Air Staff, I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to everyone in the RAF Family through Envoy. I take command of the RAF at a time when we are very busy and hugely in demand on operations. Our successes and the importance of what we do was also recognised in last year's Defence Review, meaning that for the first time in generations we will be growing – new equipment and new capabilities. This is a very good starting point, but success depends on us continuing to recruit and retain outstanding people – and keeping the invaluable support of the wider RAF Family. That's why I've promised that there will be no higher priority for me and the senior leadership of the Royal Air Force than dealing with our people challenges, across the Whole Force – Regulars and Reserves, Civil Servants and contractors. I've also promised that I will be visible, engaged and connected, so that I fully understand the challenges the RAF faces, and can explain what I am trying to achieve and how we are progressing.

I'm proud to lead a Royal Air Force that is doing extremely well and with a reputation that remains second to none. I know the remarkable

part that the RAF Family plays in delivering our successes. I've had incredible support from my family throughout my RAF career and, from my own experience of 8 operational deployments and countless other detachments, I think I understand at least some of the pressures on the RAF Family – those missed birthdays, anniversaries and Christmases, the uncertainties. That experience is always in my mind. In the next edition, Elaine will be writing the Envoy foreword. I'm sure she will point out how things have looked from her perspective, including, as of yesterday, the 20th house move of our married life! ●

The RAF Families Federation is an independent organisation parented by the RAF Association



The charity that supports the RAF family

www.rafa.org.uk

Registered charity number

England and Wales 226686

Scotland SCO37673

The RAF Families Federation is supported by the RAF Benevolent Fund



www.rafbf.org

Registered charity number

England and Wales 1081009

Scotland SCO38109

News

10 things parents should know



Tax-Free Childcare is a new government initiative and due to be slowly rolled out from early 2017, replacing the existing Childcare Voucher Scheme. It will be available to around 2 million households.

MOD seals the deal



The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has confirmed the deal to purchase nine P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) for the Royal Air Force (RAF), to be based at RAF Lossiemouth.

Policy protection pledge



When Armed Forces Personnel or their families are posted overseas, they won't get any nasty dents in their UK car insurance deals as a result.

Extra support to learn overseas



Universities Minister announces changes to student funding to benefit Armed Forces members and their families. Plans will make it far easier for personnel and their families to take up distance learning.

Free Poppy Pods



Wherever you are based, these fantastic pods at The Tile Barn Outdoor Centre in the New Forest, are available for you to enjoy. Holiday or respite in a stunning wooden, solar powered camping pod.

A super speedy electronic service



With iPods, tablets and other similar gadgets out there, the new emailed versions of recorded Storybook Wings (mp3) are easy to download onto your son or daughter's device(s).

Keeping families safe



It's always a good idea to keep yourself and your Serving family member safe on social media, so here's some good help and advice to make sure your privacy settings are set correctly.

Action needed now



The Government must take decisive action now to improve the accommodation service provided to Armed Forces families, the Committee Of Public Accounts says.

Short Course Programme



The University Short Course Programme (USCP) is a tri-service scheme of courses arranged to meet the broader educational and personal development needs of Service Personnel.

Travel in London



Transport for London (TfL) provide Service personnel with free travel on the TfL network. Offer applies to Regular and Reserve personnel in issued uniform and in possession of a MOD Form 90 ID card.

Ground close combat roles



The Prime Minister & Defence Secretary welcomed the recommendation of the Chief of the General Staff, that the ban on women serving in ground close combat roles be lifted from this year.

Online game available



Wondering who is behind the life-size cardboard military figures 'invading' bases such as MOD Abbey-Wood, Merville Barracks Colchester and HMS Collingwood?

Dedicated Forces Family website



A dedicated website has launched by Devon CC makes it quick and easy for members of the Armed Forces community in the county to access key services including health, financial and welfare.

First Lightning Lands in the UK



The first of Britain's new supersonic 'stealth' strike fighters has touched down in the UK for the first time. The F-35B Lightning II jet was flown by RAF pilot Squadron Leader Hugh Nichols.

RAF Festival of Equitation



Come along if you fancy watching dressage, show jumping, cross country or polo between 24th and 25th September at RAF College Cranwell. It's the final leg of the inter-services competition.

Arrangements are ending



Child maintenance arrangements made through the Child Support Agency (CSA) will be ending between now and 2017. If the CSA handles your child maintenance, you'll get a letter.

Further details on all these stories can be found on

www.raf-ff.org.uk

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Investment in new missile



The Ministry of Defence has awarded a £411 million contract to develop a new missile for the UK's future F-35B supersonic stealth aircraft.

Report on working age Veterans

ssafa the Armed Forces charity

A 'forgotten generation' of working age Veterans, who have approached SSAFA for help, is surviving on an average annual household income of just £13,800.

New Typhoon Support deal



The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has announced a landmark 10-year support arrangement for the RAF's Typhoon jets that could see more than £500M saved and reinvested in the aircraft.

Event venue in London



The Victory Services Club (VSC) has refurbished and re-opened its El Alamein and Trafalgar Suite following a £1.5 million investment.

RAF FF out on the road



The RAF Families Federation has been out at about the many families days and other summer events being held on each station.

The RAF Whole Force



Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, addresses the Whole Force and wider RAF Family, having taken Command of the Royal Air Force.

For the younger bookworm



Children's author, Tom Palmer has a new series of aviation books out this year and if your son/daughter is a bit of an aviation enthusiast, then the last of Tom's trilogy, is available from 15th August.

Businesses visit RAF Shawbury



In the lead up to the Armed Forces Day in Shropshire, eight local businesses and organisations visited RAF Shawbury for a special behind the scenes tour.

Business Start-Up Programme



Supporting the Unsung Hero has been successfully running since 2013 and has so far been attended by more than 300 dependents of Armed Forces serving personnel, Veterans and Reservists.

Recovery Through Art



Fifteen wounded, injured and sick Service personnel, Veterans and their family members took part in The Royal British Legion's four week recovery through art project in Brighton this summer.

National Insurance credits



Accompanying a spouse or civil partner on a posting overseas could affect your ability to work and pay National Insurance (NI) contributions which could leave a gap in your NI record.

Support plan for military spouses



Recruit for Spouses (RfS) has recently learnt that it is one of only eleven social enterprises to have been accepted onto the Deloitte's three-year support programme.

Inter-Services Triathlon Winners



The 2016 Inter-Services Triathlon, sponsored this year by the Officers' Association, was held on 27th July at the Cotswold Water Park, near Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

Future of Service accommodation



Chief of Defence People (CDP) Lieutenant General Richard Nugee writes to Serving personnel about the future of Service accommodation.



F-35B LIGHTNING VISITS NEW HOMES FOR THE FIRST TIME

Friday 1st July 2016 marked a historic day for the UK as the future of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force combat air fleets, the F-35B Lightning, flew over their prospective 'homes'; HMS Queen Elizabeth, HMS Prince of Wales in Rosyth and RAF Marham in Norfolk.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

"The F-35Bs are the most advanced fast jets in the world. Whether operating from land or from one of our two new aircraft carriers, they will ensure we have a formidable fighting force.

"They are part of our plan for a stronger and better defence: more ships, more aircraft, more troops available at readiness, better equipment for special forces, more being spent on cyber – to deal with the increased threats to our country."

The fifth generation F-35B jets are the most advanced aircraft ever built for the UK and will be operated initially by 617 Squadron, Royal Air Force, known as 'The Dambusters' and subsequently by 809 Naval Air Squadron, 'The Immortals'. Combined, they will transform the UK's ability to project UK influence overseas.

The head of the Fleet Air Arm, Rear Admiral Keith Blount OBE, said:

"Today marks a significant milestone in the nation's return to aircraft carrier aviation and carrier strike. Both ships have been designed from the keel up to operate with the F-35B and the RAF and Royal Navy are working ever closer to see fixed-wing aircraft once more operating from Royal Navy Aircraft Carriers. I feel very proud to be part of it."

The carriers will provide over four-acres of sovereign territory which can be deployed around the world, travelling at upwards of 500 nautical miles a day. Both ships are capable of carrying up to 36 F-35B Lightning stealth jets.

Following the flypast at the QEC, the aircraft flew on to RAF Marham, Norfolk.

Air Vice Marshal Gerry Mayhew, Air Officer Commanding I Group, said:

"It was a proud and exciting moment to have the F-35B

Lightning fly overhead RAF Marham for the first time today. Alongside Typhoon, the Lightning will offer the RAF and Royal Navy a cutting edge front line strike capability and also offer the most powerful and comprehensive integrated sensor package of any fighter aircraft in history. I have no doubt the Lightning will act as an inspiration for the current and future members of both services."

In front of personnel from the Station and invited local guests, the F-35B completed a flypast, demonstrating what the station can expect when Marham becomes its home base in 2018. The Station has already started to prepare for the aircraft's arrival with work to provide the necessary infrastructure and support facilities.

Three jets arrived in the UK for the first time after a nine hour transatlantic crossing ready to take centre stage in a number of this Summer's Air Shows, principally the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire and the Farnborough International Airshow.

More information on the delivery of the UK's flagships HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales: Aircraft Carrier Alliance website: www.aircraftcarrieralliance.co.uk/



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MANSTON is it still open?

By WO Paul Gardner

The Defence Fire Training and Development Centre (DFTDC) Manston conducts various training courses for RAF firefighters, Defence Fire & Rescue Service firefighters and military and civilian non-specialists.

During 2015 about 3,000 personnel attended various courses at Manston. Add to that the six-week Netherlands Fire Service Training, RAF Regiment NBC Exercises, Major Incident Medical Management and Support Training and Joint Aircraft Recovery Team training and you will start to get the picture that Manston is still a busy, vibrant Unit.

DFTDC Manston is commanded by Wg Cdr Chris Thorpe who has a very much 'Whole Force' approach to his Unit. RAF firefighter instructors work alongside Defence

Fire and Rescue Service Instructors and contractors on a daily basis delivering the training, which is our main output.

There is a particular focus, however, on the Phase 2 RAF Firefighter Training. Last year saw 94 Phase 2 personnel graduate successfully.

In addition to Phase 2, the following courses are also provided:

- Phase 3 Promotion
- Breathing Apparatus Recertification
- Fire Behaviour
- Emergency Vehicle Driving
- Specialist Fire Safety
- Trauma/First Aid at Work
- Working at Height
- Water Rescue
- LAND project Manager Specialist courses.

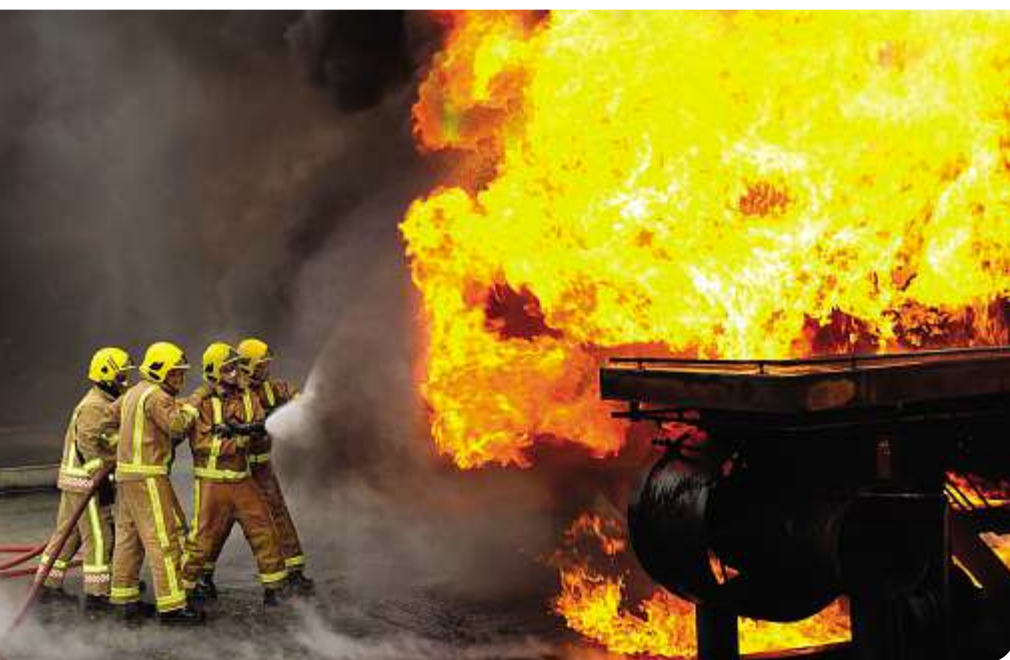
Challenges

The challenges of working as permanent staff at Manston are not small. Being located on the very tip of the Kent Coast means that we are isolated from other RAF Units; it is 2 hours to the nearest RAF Station. Welfare for personnel and families alike is challenging. With no medical or dental centre, no HIVE, no SCSO and no SSAFA presence on a Phase 2 Training Establishment means that the small number of permanent staff have to pull together to support very junior personnel whilst they are here for some 17 weeks.

Everything that happens at a larger RAF Station still takes place, just with fewer people. The Mess is a Combined Officers', WOs' and SNCOs' Mess but we still need a PMC/CMC and Committee; an Orderly Officer is required, with personnel carrying out usually two of these duties per year for a week at a time. Mandated assurance visits are conducted by Air Cmd and the Compulsory Drug Testing Team visit on a regular basis. This all requires RAF personnel to step up and cover areas that they might not be expected to on a larger Unit.

Team spirit

It is encouraging to see how members of the RAF community are always willing to help in difficult times. An example of this is the new Recruit Welfare Facility. There are very few facilities for Phase 2 personnel, particularly at weekends, with no bar on camp and no public transport, so we have converted a block into a Welfare Facility with lounges and



televisions etc. Due to the fact that we don't have a Welfare Team some of the wives have got together and recently over school holidays they and their children have painted the rooms, the Commandant's wife was busy sorting out the sheds and gardens and then RAF personnel completed the jobs in the evenings after the instructional day had finished. A fine example of the team spirit here at Manston...

As Warrant Officer here, I head up the administration side of the Unit which on most other units would be an OC BSW. Responsibilities include Welfare Officer, Security Officer, OIC SFAS, Housing, Community Support, Media and Comms Officer, so a myriad of responsibilities with a small team of two other Personnel Support staff. Often families arriving have real challenges getting children into

schooling where the Kent Grammar School system is still in place and all local junior schools are full. Many of the partners are isolated and with no pavements or public transport, strong relationships within the small Service Families Accommodation (SFA) patch are critical.

Calling on the Families Federation

As with most units, schooling, dental and medical are the main issues. Families have also recently had to fly back from Cyprus and Italy to attend appeals at their own cost to get children into schools.

Manston has called on the services of the Families Federation on many occasions trying to get schooling sorted, working with the Covenant lead from within the RAF FF. The Federation has supported the Unit also in securing upgrades of the remaining storage heating in some

SFAs to gas central heating; a great relief for the occupants.

During a recent visit by the Federation to brief the Phase 2 recruits on how it supports single personnel starting out on their careers, it was commented on how high morale is at this small Unit in Thanet. It is a fantastic place to work and offers the permanent staff of all ranks the opportunity to better themselves, which they might not get at other larger units, because they have to be diverse. An example is the SAC Pers Spt who, after only 18 months in the RAF has already attended Diversity & Inclusion, STANEVAL, Service Funds and PI courses.

So, Manston is definitely open for business.

More information on DFTDC Manston can be found on GOV.UK and is also on Twitter @dftdc1 ●





Station Football Provides An Opportunity For All

By Vince Williams, County Secretary, RAF FA

This year sees the tenth anniversary of the RAF Football Association setting up its headquarters at RAF Brize Norton after football's National Governing Body, The Football Association started to fund the RAF FA in line with other County FAs. This resulted in two full-time and one part-time staff employed at a central hub to oversee all football matters, working alongside a Board of Trustees. This set up is certainly the envy of many of the other RAF sporting associations; however

with football being the largest participating sport in the RAF it is certainly needed especially when you consider the primary workload of the football volunteer workforce.

*"It is the RAF FA'S vision to foster **Excellence**, encourage **Participation**, improve **Inclusivity** and reach out to the wider **Whole Force Community** as we move through 2016 to 2019."*

So whilst RAF football has a clear player pathway culminating with the

UK Armed Forces Teams and various RAF Representative teams including Men's, Men's U23, Ladies and Vets, it is Station football that provides individuals the foundation and opportunity to participate in football. The benefits are many, from personal fitness that also helps with the day job to developing yourself as a better footballer to providing other pathways including coaching and refereeing.

The RAF FA affiliate the RAF London League, Lincolnshire Services League, West Midlands Services League and



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Cyprus League as well as all the RAF Units (Clubs) and teams that compete in the Leagues and our other football tournaments. The work of the volunteers, both within the Leagues and at Units is vital and appreciated with regard to the on-going running of RAF Station football. So much is personality driven.

Nearly all RAF Units have a Station football team, with larger Units sometimes having more than one team. So, why not make contact with your OIC Football (via Ped Flt) and get along to Station football training? Individuals should not worry about their standard as it's all about participating and enjoying the football experience. The premier Station football tournament is the RAF Cup and last season this was won by RAF Marham who beat RAF Cosford 3-0 in the final played at Thame United FC.

The annual RAF Festival of Football sees over 400 personnel meet and compete in this ever popular indoor 5 a-side tournament. This year it takes place on Wednesday 5th October 16 at Trafford Soccer Dome, Manchester. Contact John Duff for more details if you wish to enter a Station team.

If you do not want to play but love football and still want to get involved then why not consider getting involved with your Station football committee as there are quite often secondary duties for admin and organisation duties.

Female Football

One key area that the Association is looking to improve on is the development of the Ladies game. Over the past few years the numbers of females playing football in the RAF has dropped despite an on-going increase nationally. With an increase in the numbers of females joining the Service between now and 2020 it is an ideal time for Stations to try and form Ladies teams.

OICs Football are also responsible for this area and will be fully supported by the Association. The Lincolnshire Services League, in conjunction with Lincoln City FC held a Ladies Football Day back in July 2016 and it is hoped this will become an annual event, whilst the Association strives to have an annual Ladies tournament for all Stations and even see a League set up.



The RAF FA Football Development Officer John Duff is currently setting up a RAF Ladies Football Database so please make contact if you wish to play or get involved with football.

RAF Football Website

The RAF Football website has news, fixtures, results, match reports, course details and other links, it can be found at www.royalairforcefa.com please contact Vince Williams if you wish to have anything Station football related put on. You can also follow them on Twitter @RAFFootball

In beautiful countryside one mile south of the small Cotswold town of Corsham – midway between Bath and Chippenham lies



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Any Service family needing short term accommodation, between postings, on retirement, for a break in the country or for Welfare reasons can stay at the Centre.

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To find out more contact your Welfare Office or telephone the Centre 01225 810358.

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Thea's Story

Sharing her experiences of living in Holland during the Second World War

By Kate Graham, RAF FF's Volunteer Editor

It's a Thursday afternoon, and after an uneventful train journey under Britain's grey July skies I find myself in Rugby. This isn't just a leisurely visit, however; I'm here to visit Thea Coleman-Tielrooy.

After ushering me through her front door with the warmest of welcomes and smiles, Thea offers me a cup of tea and an array of biscuits and we set about the task at hand: storytelling. As I was to learn, Thea has many a gripping tale to tell. Born in The Hague in the 1930s, she did more than merely experience the trials of life under the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands: her family were actively involved in the Resistance movement.

An RAF Wife

Aspects of Thea's post-war life are bound to resonate with many of *Envoy's* readers: she was married, for a number of years, to a man in the Royal Air Force. After the completion of her education she found herself on a trip to the United States to visit friends. This trip was to have more

of an impact on the next few years of Thea's life than she possibly could have imagined at the time. After exploring some of the sights America's bustling cities had to offer, she set out to return to Europe on a ship departing from New York – a ship, it transpired, that also carried her future husband – a member of the British military. Thea consequently found herself married, working as a teacher, and moving with her husband to various postings.

One such posting was in Germany, providing Thea with an opportunity to experience life alongside the German people in a new, peaceful way, and to begin to come to terms with her experiences of the Second World War.

Resisting the Nazis

At the commencement of the occupation of the Netherlands, Thea and her family – her mother, father, older sister and brother and younger brother – were living in a house not too far from Rotterdam. It provided them with a viewpoint from which to watch the ominous signs of war creep closer to home as the Nazis invaded the country. The devastating bombing of Rotterdam was the final blow; the Dutch government were issued with an ultimatum threatening the bombing of other Dutch cities, and so the country

was surrendered and the government went into exile in the United Kingdom.

As the city of Rotterdam burned, Thea and her family could see the smoke rise into the sky while standing on the balcony of their home.

Normality was suspended after that. Thea's father became involved in the Resistance; while local shops and businesses began to display discriminatory labels banning Jewish customers from the premises, the family's home became a safe haven for Jewish refugees attempting to flee the country. The family had always had lodgers and this provided a perfect façade, protecting the family and their Jewish friends from the sharp eyes of pro-Nazi neighbours.

When the Nazis were finally alerted to the family's activities, they were forced to go on the run. The months that followed presented Thea and her family with numerous hardships; while they were frequently displaced and separated they also, along with their fellow Dutch citizens, found themselves running out of food. The country was gradually starving.

Operation Manna

After eventual consent from the Nazis, the Allies were allowed, in April 1945,

to drop food parcels into the areas of the Netherlands that remained under occupation. In a mission known as Operation Manna, British pilots – assisted by other Allied forces – flew over the Netherlands and provided sustenance to the residents there. It was not a moment too soon – tens of thousands of people had already died of starvation. The pilots involved in the mission saved countless lives.

They flew so low, Thea recalls, that she could see the faces of the pilots. Last year, in 2015, she had the opportunity to see those faces again; she met the remaining thirteen crew members and thanked them wholeheartedly for the help they provided all those years ago. They, in return, described Operation Manna from the perspective of those in the air. That mission in April 1945 saw them greeted with cheers, celebration and Dutch flags, a reception that demonstrated just how welcome – how vital – their work was. It drove the pilots to tears.

The End of the War

Thea remembers precisely where she was upon hearing the news, in May 1945, that Holland was to be liberated. Cold, hungry and tired, she was curled up in her bed in Amsterdam in an apartment, she recalls, that was on the third storey up and situated at the back of the building – ideal for the illicit, dangerous task of sharing rented rooms with Jewish friends. Suddenly, the landlord knocked on the door to deliver the news the country had been longing to hear: at eight o'clock the next day, the occupation of the Netherlands would end.

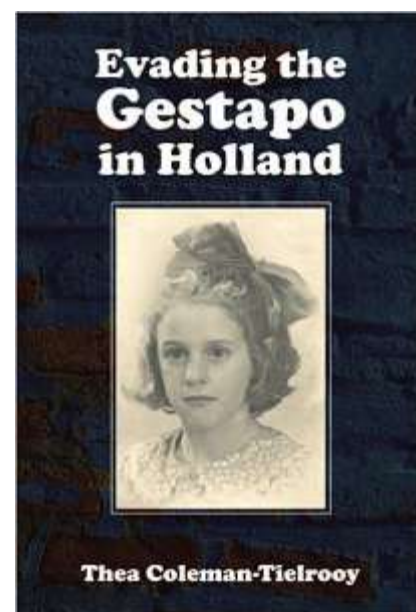
Thea and her family were giddy with excitement and wept and hugged each other. Looking through the window they saw that a number of students, no longer able to find the patience to adhere to the curfew imposed by the Nazis, had taken their jubilations to the city's streets. Until the next day, of course, this curfew was still in place – a fact made known by the soldiers present, who tragically shot a number of the joyful youths. For the Dutch people, though, there was finally hope. After what had seemed like an eternity of fear and deprivation the city buzzed with an atmosphere of anticipatory celebration.

The Present Day

For many years, Thea spoke relatively little of her wartime experiences; the memories of the stress and uncertainty she felt at the time were difficult to confront. After being approached by veterans keen to hear her story, however, she began to talk – and her schedule soon filled with people who listened to her every word. The popularity of her compelling storytelling led to a decision to compile her wartime stories into a book – a book full of gripping stories like the ones relayed to me today in Rugby. As I depart Thea's home, this remarkable woman's most poignant remark repeats itself in my mind with newfound meaning:

"We must never forget"

Special thanks to Thea Coleman-Tielrooy for sharing her story. Thea's book, *Evading the Gestapo in Holland*, is available now on Amazon. ●



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The Spitfire type he would have flown.

Two Immortal Lines...

By Ken Pike, Projects Officer, RAF HQ Air Public Relations & Media Projects

**Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;**

These two immortal lines are the start of 'High Flight', a poem penned 75 years ago by Canadian pilot John Gillespie Magee Junior, which has since become the unofficial poem of several air forces around the world, including the RAF, and a favourite of aviators and astronauts.

In August 2016 the poem was celebrated with a special service near MOD St Athan at the old RAF Llandow site in Wales where Magee was posted during the war as part of his attachment to No. 53 Operational Training Unit (OTU) before moving on to 412 (Fighter) Squadron, RCAF at RAF Digby. The Poem was recited simultaneously between America, the United Kingdom, China and New Zealand with attendees including dignitaries and families from MOD St Athan.

Magee served in the Canadian Air Force, but died within two months of writing the poem in a mid-air collision over Lincolnshire in 1941, and his grave at Scopwick



Magee's grave at Scopwick Cemetery, Lincolnshire.

Cemetery bears the first and last words of High Flight.

Magee started writing the poem on 18 August 1941, just a few months before his death, whilst he was based at No. 53 OTU. In his seventh flight in a Spitfire Mk I, he had flown up to 33,000 feet. As he climbed upward, he was struck by words he had read in another poem, "To touch the face of God." He completed his verse soon after landing.

Since then it has been read out by film stars like Cary Grant, President Ronald Reagan after the Challenger disaster, Orson Welles and many more. It is recited from memory by Cadets at the USAF Academy and appears on several headstones at the Arlington National Cemetery. It has even been broadcasted by astronauts orbiting the Earth.

Dr Jeroen Pinto, the event organiser and founder of the Gramophone Memorial Tour, said:

"A special poem that means a lot to people all over the world, especially the places where WW2 airmen were born, were educated, and were serving and now resting. In my native Holland we recite the poem at grave sites and it is widely loved. This is our chance to return the love to the poem, and when I found out that Magee wrote the poem while he was in Wales I thought it would be nice to commemorate it here."



Magee getting his wings.

High Flight

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — Wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
Where never lark, or even eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God. ●

ROYAL AIR FORCE Apprenticeships

22 APPRENTICESHIP ROLES TO CHOOSE FROM



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Becoming an Apprentice with the Royal Air Force

In the past, 16-year-olds had the option of leaving education altogether at the end of their exams. Now, a young person needs to stay in some kind of education or training until they reach 18. For many this could be staying on at school or going to college, but one option offers the best of working and a continued education. That option is an RAF apprenticeship!

Apprenticeships are the perfect way to learn and earn money as you work - offering the ideal balance between continuing education and giving money in your pocket! Once you begin an apprenticeship you will be in a real job, working three or four days a week, while spending the rest of the week in training and working towards a recognised qualification. **But what actually is a Royal Air Force apprenticeship?**

An apprenticeship in the RAF means you gain a UK-recognised trade qualification as part of a challenging and unique career. After completing an RAF apprenticeship you will have a guaranteed job in your chosen role.

Can I pick the RAF trade I want?

Apart from the money (obviously) that's the best part! You can choose your apprenticeship from a wide range of RAF job roles, including everything from engineering and cyber to hospitality and catering. Right now there are more than 20 different RAF roles which offer apprenticeships.

It's the RAF, so surely I need to go through military training?

You will need to complete two phases of training for many RAF apprenticeship roles. The first training period is Phase 1 Military Training – a 10 week course which takes place at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire.



Once you graduate and begin to wear the famous blue RAF uniform, you will begin Phase 2 Trade Training – which is the start of your Apprenticeship - teaching you the theory and skills of your trade. On average, this lasts eight months and is based in ground training schools from 08.00 – 17.00, Monday to Friday.

The training and qualifications sound great, but is there anything else in it for me?

From the very moment you start training with the RAF there's a competitive salary of £14,783 which increases to £18,305 once Phase 2 training is complete.

But that's not all – your medical and dental care is free, you will get six weeks' paid leave, further training and life-long learning, free gym membership on base and the option to go on adventurous training exercises.

To find out more about an apprenticeship in the RAF, the various roles available and the recruitment process, visit - <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/apprenticeships/>.



ACCOMMODATION MATTERS



It's been a really busy time in the accommodation world and so I thought it might be worth starting with a summary of what's happened in the last few months.

First up was the introduction of the Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) of grading for Service Family Accommodation (SFA). From our mailbag it seems that many are disappointed that charges are rising for the majority of SFA occupants at a time when the response maintenance service is having some real problems. I understand completely why people are angry but the two issues are totally unconnected. Even so, we did say to MOD that the timing was not great and that this would cause angst....

DIO's view is that the CAAS introduction has gone well, when measured by the number of actual CAAS challenges and possible CAAS appeals (around 2,000), versus the potential number of occupied SFA – around 49,000. That said, there are clearly some odd outcomes that merit review. However, we at the RAF FF have only received 24 direct requests for advice. As can be expected, the bar for a successful challenge is very high and, for the uninitiated, the guidelines are formidable. However some appeals have been upheld - so don't be put off. Remember, you now have up to 28 days from the date of Move-In to submit a CAAS Stage 1 Challenge – if you need help, get in touch. And good luck!



By Stan Brathwaite,
RAF FF Housing Specialist

Many of you will have heard about the Public Accounts Committee session and its report into Service Families Accommodation. It's fair to say CarillionAmey (CA) took a battering from the MPs on the Committee and have now been given some targets they need to reach quickly if they are to keep the contract. We have been pummelling both the DIO and CA on performance since the new contract began and it's frustrating that it has taken intervention from the Secretary of State and the Public Accounts Committee to at last get

things put right (we hope). We'll keep pummelling...

And then there was the tri-service Future Accommodation Model (FAM) survey we ran for a month on behalf of the MOD. The survey wanted to hear the thoughts of Service families (not the Serving Person - that comes any time now, if not out already) about what are still broad options for accommodating military families in the future. The results will be used to refine the options being looked at but it's worth emphasising that, if FAM goes ahead, it has the potential



to transform the way families' accommodation is provided to Service families in the future. We'll keep you in the picture as FAM develops. (Use our eBULLETIN to keep you up to date... you can sign up online: raf-ff.org.uk/envoymagazine-subscribe.asp)

Visit to CarillionAmey (CA) HQ at Speke, Liverpool – Our Evidence Manager, Colin Jones, and I were invited to meet with CA to gain an understanding of the most recent measures they were putting in place to bring about improvements across the National Housing Prime Contract. It was, to say the least, impressive, upbeat and all CA staff were buzzing with excitement and enthusiasm - if this could be translated across their operation on the ground, then I would be out of a job! Sadly, I continue to field issues that were prevalent prior to the improvement plan and there is clearly some way to go still before the 'lived experience' is good enough.

Substitute SFA (SSFA) and Substitute Service Single Accommodation (SSSA) – For those of you residing in SSFA or SSSA, it is worth noting that the Mears Group was awarded the contract to manage SSFA and SSSA with effect from 01 April 16, vice HCR Ltd, so

they are in their infancy with this contract. We understand that some people have experienced problems and we'd like to hear from those of you in both SSFA and SSSA about your experiences – both good and bad – so that we can help DIO put things right where necessary by sharing your evidence with them. Email us at enquiries@raf-ff.org.uk

Additional Needs and Disabled Adaptations (ANDA) – Following many years of living with a process that was largely unsatisfactory, DIO has now ratified a revised ANDA process. Families with additional needs, or a disability, requiring adaptations to their SFA, either before they move in for the first time or as a result of changing needs whilst living in a property, now have access to a slicker and more streamlined process. We welcome this improvement, as it is one aspect of the provision of accommodation that we have long championed. We hope it will enable a much swifter turnaround for necessary work, enabling families to move into the property faster or to start benefitting from the new adaptation much sooner. There are new infographics available, one explaining the process and timeframes for families moving

into a Service Family property and another for those families already living in a property that may require further adaptations. They are both available on the CarillionAmey website at carillionamey.co.uk under the Service Family Accommodation/ Moving-In section.

Finally – We urge you to continue to contact us on any accommodation issue that may be of concern to you. Remember, silence can often be seen as satisfaction. Help us to help you influence change for your Service and your future. ●



DO YOU KNOW YOUR HOUSING OPTIONS?



Why a housing brief?

Understanding the options to make informed choices now, and knowing what financial initiatives are available for the Armed Forces – such as the Forces Help to Buy Scheme, Help to Buy ISA, Affordable Housing Schemes, Buy-to-Let, and much more.

I'm in entitled Service

Accommodation – I'll think about it when I discharge! That decision is a minimum of five years too late! SLA charge vs. a rented 1-bed flat could be as much as five times more (500%) without bills!

It's OK, my terminal benefit (lump sum) will buy a property! No – it will barely cover a deposit these days!

I've done my Service duty and entitled to Social Housing – the Local Authority will help me, won't they?

They will if they can, but Social Housing is not a lifestyle choice and is in very short supply. All applications are assessed on housing priority need. Singles, under 35 years of age will find it extremely difficult to get anything other than bedsit style accommodation. Housing for large families is not easy to get. There is just not enough social housing available. Social housing should be the last resort not the first choice option.

Are JSHAO Housing Briefs only for those on Resettlement? No, the JSHAO is the MOD's tri-service focal point to provide Service Personnel and their entitled family member(s) with civilian housing information, and access to independent financial

advice (through siiap.org) for those considering civilian accommodation at any time in their career, and for those during resettlement to assist with the transition to civilian life.

Where can I find out more

information? Attend a brief near you – the programme is available via the JSHAO webpages on gov.uk. Alternatively contact the JSHAO via email: AWS-JSHAO-Mailbox@mod.uk or telephone 01252 787574 (Mil: 94222 7574). ●

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Transitional support through PROJECT FORTIS

Project Fortis is a thriving online network, set up 3 years ago by a group of technology experts and veterans with a mission to provide men and women leaving the Armed Forces with access to contacts, support and opportunities to help them transition successfully.

The Social Enterprise was set up in 2012 by an early internet pioneer Richard Tyrie, and was originally created in partnership with BT Plc, as a way of helping BT employees (BT Buddies) provide 1:1 career support to service leavers and veterans.

Now, with several years of development and their success with BT, the Project Fortis team has been working with the NHS to provide work placements leading to many hires, and are in talks with organisations across various other sectors; all of whom want to do their bit to support the Armed Forces community, and recognise the value of the talent on offer.

“There is a growing number of people out there from various industries that are willing to give you the advice you need.”

Why Project Fortis

The team at Fortis recognised there was a growing community of people – ex-forces or civilians – that wanted to provide support to the Armed Forces community, they just don’t know where to start.

Equally, despite the obvious benefits of being able to access advice from people on civvy street, service leavers and veterans sometimes lacked the contacts that make this possible.

Tyrie says “Now that most of us walk around with Smart Phones, we wanted to make it easier to connect people that need advice with those that are keen to give it”.

He added “Another important aspect of the project is to use our community to provide the Forces family with access to unique job opportunities. Employers now fill the majority of job openings without advertising, with up to 70% of jobs being filled through informal networks. Understanding what jobs are coming up, and getting ‘introduced’ to an organisation or hiring manager by an insider can often give you the edge.

With the advent of social networks, most organisations’ approach to recruitment is changing quickly, so you need to keep abreast of these changes. It’s not as simple as reading the local recruitment ads anymore. Finding a great job is getting trickier for everyone. We felt this was putting service leavers at a disadvantage before they’d even started their transition – so wanted to fix it by helping people work together to get the job done.”

“84% of people we’ve worked with tell us the relationships they’ve formed through Project Fortis have had a significant impact on their job prospects.”

So what is Project Fortis?

At the heart of Project Fortis is **projectfortis.co.uk** – a technology platform that connects service leavers and veterans to volunteer ‘buddies’



from the business community who have pledged to offer personalised support – whether its pre-settlement, supporting transition to civilian life, or for veterans seeking a more fulfilling job role, having left the military.

How does it work?

Tyrie explains that “To access career advice and 1:1 support you just need to visit the Project Fortis website, create a simple profile, telling us about your forces background, location, and the industries you’re interested in. Then we can start to recommend contacts for you. Our focus is to connect you with people who will understand your situation, and may well have already done some of the ‘heavy lifting’ on working out how they can successfully transition.

“There is a growing number of people out there from various industries

that are willing to give you the advice you need. We already have several hundred buddies and the community is growing every day.”

“It’s quite a new concept and people are using Project Fortis in different ways; some have a specific organisation or job role in mind, and just want to connect with, say, telecoms experts - they know that’s where they want to end up. Most of the time, people are just trying to work out which sectors and roles they’re interested in, so connect with several different people at a time.”

“Sometimes people need some very practical assistance with CV writing and preparation for interviews. Increasingly though, moral support is something that people tell us they need. Going through the recruitment process is a challenge for anyone;

someone that can open up doors, and give the right amount of support, can prove invaluable in securing the job you want.”

“84% of people we’ve worked with tell us the relationships they’ve formed through Project Fortis have had a significant impact on their job prospects. This is hugely satisfying for us and we’re working hard to get more and more ambassadors on board to broaden the range of employment opportunities. We’d love to hear from any organisations that want to support the Armed Forces Family and benefit from the extraordinary talents of their personnel.”

For more information:

projectfortis.co.uk/ – 1:1 Support, job leads and industry advice.

Contact: info@projectfortis.co.uk 

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ADMIN LADY TO ► MILIPRENEUR

By Amy Nolan

I started my transition from NHS 'Admin Lady' to 'Milipreneur' in the very February of this year. It is a fairly common story amongst military spouses. We had recently moved to married quarters and whilst this had been the right decision for us as a couple, it had meant that my current job was no longer viable due to the commute. I had always wanted to work for myself using my artistic skills and my husband suggested that I should take the opportunity presenting itself and give my business, Ginger rainbow a 'proper go' for a year and see what happened. My business mission is to "make a living with my creative skills and create things that make people happy".

It's early days and I'm still working it all out as I go along, registering as self employed, figuring out marketing on social media, approaching potential customers and trying out the rather grown up sounding activity of 'business networking'. I am lucky to have an incredibly supportive husband who is cheering me on, access to amazing resources courtesy of the RAF (spousal development programme) and a place on the Supporting the Unsung Hero Dependants' Business Start-Up Programme – which I will be attending in September.

I would describe myself as an artist (still getting used to that). I offer all kinds of things from face and baby bump-painting, art sessions for kids, invite design, nursery prints, bespoke celebration graphics and handmade colouring in gifts. It's month five and I am starting to get

bookings and interest, which is amazing.

So 'Pillowcases, with love' is a product that I have developed, registered and am launching this summer. This idea came to me after sending my husband some bedding when he was out on detachment. I had been designing t-shirts and bags for children to colour in with fabric pens and thought that combining this idea with comfy bedding items would be a great way to send some love and a little bit of luxury out to a parent who was away. It is also a nice activity for children and the parent at home to do together. They went on sale from August 1st 2016.

I am still at the start of my journey. I am learning all the time; some things have worked well and others haven't. I have so much to learn and sometimes that feels overwhelming. However it is exciting as well and I feel incredibly lucky to be growing my small business and working on a long held personal dream in such a supportive community. I would urge anyone else in a similar position to go for it as well, who knows what may happen!

If you want to know how my journey pans out, this is my blog – I post once a week at rainbowllamacorncolouringclub.wordpress.com. I would love to hear from you especially if you are a military spouse!

You can stay up to date with "Pillowcases with Love" by liking Ginger rainbow on Facebook or popping over to Twitter and connecting there @mylifescrubble. ●



Ink.

A passion for design.



With over 15 years experience in the design industry and a plethora of clients, (Center Parcs, BMW and The National Trust, to name a few) I took the step over 5 years ago to set up my own business. An expertise in design-for-print and a passion for typography, layouts and publishing, I was excited to see what the future had in store for my new venture, **Ink**.

After successfully completing Business, Fashion and Graphic Design courses at Stamford College and Nottingham Trent University, I embarked on a colourful entry into the design industry by working on a selection of nationwide publications, Max Power, Shooting Gazette and Your Cat Magazine (I never knew such magazine existed until this time!). It was an exciting time for design as print and digital media were competing with one another, print had to prove its presence was still needed. In turn, this pushed us to become better.

After 5 years in publishing (and a lot of fun) I decided it would be good to try another avenue of design. I began work at a couple of high end agencies and this was where I adopted skills which I apply to my

own business today. The agency work was incredible. From pitching to 100+ people and winning national contracts, to sitting with a sole trader who wanted a suite of branding for their business, everyday was different. After successful pitches, challenging briefs and running two design offices, I decided I wanted to do this for myself. I understood self discipline was going to be the driving force for a home business to thrive, however, I never saw this as a challenge. When you do something you are passionate about and believe in, it happens naturally.

"I wasn't expecting my life to change the way it did, not just on a professional level but also on a personal note"

I wasn't expecting my life to change the way it did, not just on a professional level but also on a personal note. John and I have only been together for a couple of years, so much has happened within that time. Commitment to someone who is in the forces seemed daunting at first, I was unsure what to expect. I'm delighted to say it has honestly been one of

the most rewarding experiences and continues to be. John is incredibly supportive of the business and like his work, we wholeheartedly understand that what we do for a living, is a passion and a commitment that we both share. As long as I have access to an internet connection, I have been able to take my work with me when he has been required to be away from home. We happily spend time between our home in Peterborough (which we are currently renovating!) and RAF Waddington, where John is based.

I have met some incredible friends and colleagues of John's along the way who have welcomed me with open arms. All the worry and fear of entering into military life has slowly diminished with the incredible support that we have around us.

Ink is now flourishing with new clients. Many are in the arts, sports, and local authority sector which I feel proud to work alongside. Over half of our clients have worked with **Ink** since the beginning and i'm honoured they treat me as an extension of their team.

I'm looking forward to what the future has in store, both for **Ink** and for John & I.



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Stamp Duty Land Tax: Higher Rates For Additional Properties

Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT)

is paid when property is bought or transferred in the UK, however from 1 April 2015 SDLT no longer applies in Scotland but has been replaced by the Lands and Buildings Transaction Tax. More information about this can be found at revenue.scot/land-buildings-transaction-tax.

So what happens if you are thinking of buying additional properties to that of the one designated as your 'family home'? From 1 April 2016, the rates for Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) increased if you buy an additional residential property in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The higher rates will be 3% above the standard rates of SDLT but will not apply to purchases of property under £40,000 or purchases of caravans, mobile homes or houseboats. It will also apply if you own an existing property outside of these countries (see Zoopla's Q&A below) – so be careful!

The SDLT rates for additional properties purchased as from 1 April 2016 are:

Purchase price	SDLT
up to £125,000	3%
£125,001 to £250,000	5%
£250,001 to £925,000	8%
£925,001 to £1.5 million	13%
over £1.5 million	15%

Replacing your main residence

– You won't pay the higher SDLT rates if the property you are buying is replacing your main residence and that main residence has already been sold. If you buy a new main residence but the sale for your previous main residence is delayed you'll pay the higher rate as you still own two properties.

However you will be able to get a refund for the amount above the normal SDLT rates if you sell your previous main residence within 3 years. A refund must be claimed within 3 months of the sale of the previous main residence or within 12 months of the filing date of the return, whichever comes later.

If you already have two or more properties, and you sell your main residence, you won't have to pay the higher rate if you buy a new main residence within 3 years.

Joint purchases or partnerships – If you are purchasing any properties jointly with other people and any of them already own one or more properties, you'll need to pay the higher rates. If you're married or in a civil partnership, buying a property and your spouse or civil partner already owns a property you may still be liable to the higher rates. But you may be able claim a refund if they then go on to sell it.

Zoopla has put together a good Q&A page explaining exactly how the new SDLT will affect you. The full Q&A is available from www.zoopla.co.uk. Some examples are:

Q. Who has to pay it?

A. Anyone who is buying additional residential properties, for example a holiday home or buy-to-let, within England, Wales, Northern Ireland and – under a separate announcement in the Scottish Government's Budget – in Scotland too.



The surcharge applies even if the home you already own (or part-own) is overseas. So, if you have a ski chalet in Bulgaria and are buying your first home in the UK, you'll still be stung with the extra tax.

Q. How much does that translate into?

A. As an example, if you are buying a second home with a purchase price of £300,000, just the extra 3% Stamp Duty would equate to £9,000 (3% of the entire price). This is in addition to the £5,000 regular Stamp Duty bill on a home of this value, making the total payable an eye-watering **£14,000**.

To get an overall Stamp Duty figure on a second property, work out the regular cost first then calculate 3% of the purchase price and add the two figures together.

Q. What happens if I've split from my partner but my name's still on the deeds of our home?

A. If you are separated or getting divorced and want to buy a new home to live in but your name is still on the deeds of your previous home (which is NOT being sold), this will constitute buying an additional property which means the 3% surcharge will initially apply. However, if you go onto sell your share of the home back to your former partner within **36 months** of completing, HMRC will provide a full refund.

Q. What if I inherit my property?

A. No Stamp Duty is payable on properties that are inherited, so the 3% premium will not be relevant. However, if you have inherited a property and go onto purchase a second home without selling it, you will be hit with the surcharge.

The March 2016 Budget did hold some reprieve on inherited properties however. The Government confirmed that a small share (50% or less) in a single property which had been inherited within the **36 months** prior to buying another home (which would otherwise attract the 3% surcharge) will NOT be considered as an additional property.

Q. Do plots of land count?

A. Just like regular Stamp Duty, the 3% loading will only apply to purchases of residential property. A plot of land (even if it will subsequently be used for a home) is not counted as residential, so the surcharge will never apply.

Similarly, if you already own a plot of land and are buying an additional property, it will not be considered for purposes of the higher tax. ●



Source references:
gov.uk,
zoopla.co.uk

Your guided tour of childcare changes

Tax-Free Childcare is due to begin rolling out in early 2017. The existing Childcare Voucher Scheme will close to new entrants in April 2018.

Sodexo

A reputation for reliability. With over 10 years' experience of running Childcare Voucher Schemes, Sodexo is a financially stable provider who you can rely on.

Don't forget older children

Parents can claim for children up to the age of 12 with Tax-Free Childcare, but up to 15 years of age with the current Childcare Voucher Scheme.



Parents get extra savings with employer run childcare vouchers

Members of Sodexo's Childcare Voucher Scheme receive exclusive special offers on holidays, childcare and family days out, helping working families save more.



Salary sacrifice could help child benefit

Salary sacrifice schemes can allow you to replace taxable earnings with non-taxable benefits such as childcare vouchers. If this reduces your salary to less than £50K you will be entitled to full child benefits.



Parents administer Tax-Free Childcare rather than their employer

Parents will need to update their details or confirm they are correct every 3 months.



Eligibility

There are certain requirements that parents need to meet to be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare. Parents should check these before they consider switching schemes.



66% of parents are better off with childcare vouchers

In a survey of more than 7,500 working parents, 66% are more likely to be better off with childcare vouchers than they would be with Tax-Free Childcare.



Time is running out

Parents who take childcare vouchers now will have the choice between the two schemes when Tax-Free Childcare comes into effect. Act now and start saving!

Visit MODChildcare.co.uk to sign up now and start saving!

For more information on the changes to childcare vouchers and how you could be affected, visit tax-free-childcare.info

Contact us at mod.af.childcare@sodexo.com or call us on 0800 066 5075



From the youngest child to the oldest veteran, the RAF Benevolent Fund supports the RAF family with everything from disability, injury, financial hardship and youth support to living independently and providing dignity in retirement.

Please donate today at www.rafbf.org/donate to help us continue supporting RAF veterans, serving personnel and their families in need.

If you or a family member need our support call us on **0800 169 2942** or visit www.rafbf.org/help



**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**



NEW ARMED FORCES COVENANT CHAMPIONS – THE ‘MISSING LINK’

By Sqn Ldr Karl Parfitt,
HQ Community Support

A new network of Armed Forces Covenant Champions has been introduced on RAF stations to help spread the word about how the Armed Forces Covenant is supporting personnel and their families as well as how they can report instances where the Covenant is not working for them.

Being part of the Armed Forces community can mean that a degree of choice is removed from Service personnel and their families so the Armed Forces Covenant was introduced in 2011 by Government to help tackle any negative effects of military life brought about by Service mobility. Since then, a great deal of work has been done to ensure that personnel and their families as well as Reservists, Veterans and the bereaved are treated fairly and get access to public and commercial products and services.

‘The Forces Help to Buy scheme has been hugely successful with some £100 million of loans being provided across all ranks’

Despite the Armed Forces Covenant being established some 5 years ago, knowledge about its existence, how it works and its many achievements remains only modest. A recent survey confirmed that 73% of personnel have heard of the Armed Forces Covenant, however only around half claim to know anything about it. The figure underlines that communication remains the ‘achilles heel’ of the Covenant and more needs to be done to ensure that Service communities are aware of the many commitments that have been introduced as well as creating an environment where disadvantage due to service is being confronted.

Worryingly, if our people are unaware what the Armed Forces Covenant is about then they might equally be unaware of the individual initiatives that have been introduced under the umbrella of the Covenant. Since its launch, focus has been on helping members of the Armed Forces community providing support in a number of areas including education, family well-being, starting a new career, healthcare and home ownership. For example, the Forces Help to Buy scheme has been hugely successful with some £100 million of loans being provided across all ranks, for both married and single personnel, since its



introduction in 2014. Yet many people might not realise that the scheme is an Armed Forces Covenant initiative introduced, in part, to help with the demand for greater stability, including access to home ownership, and an improved ability to exercise choice in the way that members of Service communities wish to live their lives. Other recent achievements have included:

- Introduction of the Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme to give an advance of salary to fund the cost of a deposit for those wishing to rent a property privately.
- Waiver of the 3-month residency requirement for claiming Jobs Seekers Allowance for Service families returning from overseas.
- Funding from a £20M budget to improve childcare facilities for Service families at 40 locations in the UK and Cyprus.
- 3 top mobile phone providers agreed to adopt flexible approach for families accompanying their Service person overseas.
- Covenant can support spouse/partner's in their career progression. There are specific initiatives under the Armed Forces Covenant to support spouses and partners in fulfilling their career ambitions.
- Most recently, on 25th June it was announced that Armed Forces personnel posted overseas will be able to keep their motor insurance No Claims Bonus for up to three years

and not pay cancellation fees if they are posted overseas at short notice.

'....every RAF Station now has its own Covenant Champion who will work to raise greater awareness about the Covenant and help ensure that our people are treated fairly'

The missing link

With all that the Covenant has achieved and continues to bring, the importance of reaching out and communicating those successes to all parts of the RAF community was obvious. The missing link was at station level where there was no one individual managing the flow of information to and from the local community. The answer was to introduce a network of Armed Forces Covenant Champions to provide an essential link at a local level. This means that every RAF Station now has its own Covenant Champion who will work to raise greater awareness about the Covenant and help ensure that our people are treated fairly.

To prepare them for their new role, a series of roadshows were held around the country in April and May to provide nominated Champions with greater

knowledge about the Covenant and to outline their key responsibilities. The new Covenant Champions have a broad remit but essentially they will be required to plan and implement local information sharing activities to raise awareness about the Covenant and communicating the latest news about Covenant commitments and initiatives that are of particular interest to RAF personnel and their families. They will also provide a point of contact to answer questions on the Covenant or, where necessary, escalate issues of disadvantage that cannot be resolved locally.

While the establishment of the Armed Forces Covenant Champions represents a positive step forward both in raising greater awareness and in providing a framework for capturing matters of disadvantage due to RAF service, it does not remove the responsibility from individuals to challenge any instances where it is felt that the Armed Forces Covenant is not working for them. Naturally, there must be some management of expectation here; there are finite resources and the Armed Forces Covenant cannot be all things to everybody – it is not about individual benefit but more about being treated fairly in line with the general population. However, if you don't ask.....!

To find out who your Armed Forces Champion is, ask at your HiVE, check your Station Intranet site, look out for the posters around the unit, or contact the RAF FF and they can put you in touch. ●



RAF COMMUNITY SUPPORT UPDATE

By WO Phil Chadwick

In this edition I wanted to mention two places which are available for RAF personnel and families to make use of. I'm also highlighting a new initiative by the Royal Air Forces Association to help with 'contact visits'.

The Nuffield Centre, Anglesey

The Nuffield Centre at the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre (JSMTTC) Indefatigable provides affordable accommodation for Service personnel and their families on the banks of the Menai Straits, Anglesey in North Wales. Only a minute's drive from the A55 and A5, access is easy and the Centre is an excellent base for exploring the coast and mountains of North Wales. Accommodation at the Centre includes family rooms (en-suite with a shared kitchen area) at £25 per night, dormitory rooms at £7.00 per person per night and a campsite with pitches from only £10 per night.

If you've never been to the Isle of Anglesey before, it is a beautiful part of Wales and is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its coastal path, which is 125 miles long, follows most of the island's coastline and passes through farmland, coastal heath, dunes, salt-marsh, and a National Nature Reserve.

For more details, including how to book any of the accommodation mentioned above, please visit the Nuffield Centre website here: nuffieldanglesey.org.uk/



SCC admin building.

The Services Cotswold Centre

The Services Cotswold Centre is located in Corsham, Wiltshire and comprises 60 self-contained chalet style homes providing short-term transit accommodation to Service personnel and their families, particularly during the transition to civilian life. In May this year the Management Board* of the Services Cotswold Centre agreed to extend the eligibility to stay there to single Service personnel. This welcome move recognises an increase in the requirement for short-term accommodation for single personnel leaving the Services.

Charges for using the Services Cotswold Centre are very reasonable and the site has a primary school, community centre and fitness suite. Full details, together with a booking form, are available from the website below: gov.uk/government/publications/services-cotswold-centre

*The Management Board is made up of representatives from the three Services under the direction of Colonel Army Welfare Service.

RAFA's Help with 'Contact Visits'

For many years the Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA) has helped RAF

personnel who are separated from their children host contact visits with those children by helping to furnish and decorate unit contact houses. However, we know that not all units have a contact house and even if they do, they are often fully booked. To this end, in May RAFA initiated a scheme where RAF personnel who are unable to access a contact house can be reimbursed some of the costs for a contact visit. This assistance is only for individuals who are separated from their dependent children and the number of contact visits which will be supported is limited to 4 per year. Individuals who book themselves into a hotel can be reimbursed up to £25 per night for a 2-night contact visit on up to 4 occasions per year. On completion of a proforma and proof of your stay (hotel receipt in your name), RAFA will then reimburse you up to the £25 limit.

If you have any questions about this process, please get in touch your unit HR or call me on 01494 496344. ●

LOOKING BACK ON THE INVICTUS GAMES

The 2016 Invictus Games were held in Orlando, Florida at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex from 8 to 12 May. The Royal British Legion looks back on the part the organisation played, sharing a couple of RAF stories.

The UK delegation to the 2016 Invictus Games was delivered by a partnership comprising The Ministry of Defence, Help for Heroes, and The Royal British Legion.

The Legion specifically supported the friends and families of the 2016 UK Team as part of its work to recognise the vital and valuable contribution that family and friends make to the recovery of wounded, injured or sick Service personnel and veterans. The Legion's support ensured that every participant could enjoy the support of their loved ones out in Orlando.

One such individual is Nikki Flood. Nikki, 23, is the partner of former SAC Luke Wigman, 29, and they live in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Luke took part in the Invictus Games in both 2014 and 2016, having been seriously injured in an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2011.

He represented his country in the London Invictus Games in 2014, winning the 1500m gold medal, and in the Orlando Invictus Games, where he retained his gold 1500m title, as well as bringing home bronze in the 400m.

Nikki clearly remembers the first time she met Luke. It was one week after the 2014 Invictus Games and he was wearing his ambulance uniform with his gold medal around his neck. Both Nikki and Luke work for the East Midlands Ambulance Service; Nikki is

a paramedic and Luke is an Emergency Care Assistant.

Nikki and her Dad Richard both went out to Orlando to cheer on Luke. Following the 2016 Invictus Games, Nikki said: "The Invictus Games in Orlando was one of the most amazing experiences we have ever had. The comradeship and atmosphere of the whole games was just incredible. Being able to meet other families was truly inspiring and it was fantastic to see how much we were all appreciated and rewarded throughout. We can't thank the Legion and everyone else involved enough, for all their non stop hard work and allowing us to be part of this brilliant event."

Another supporter out in Orlando was Ann Phillips, 76, mother of Andy Phillips, 50, a former Junior Technician. Andy won a gold medal in the 2014 Invictus Games for archery and a bronze in the 2016 Invictus Games. Ann went out to Orlando with her grandson John.

On her return to the UK, Ann said: "The Invictus Games in Orlando 2016 was another memorable experience. From the moment we arrived in Manchester airport until the moment we arrived back we were very well looked after & helped, especially by the Legion Staff.

"It was fantastic in Orlando to see all the athletes walking around in shorts & T shirts, all the nations and religions mingling happily and peacefully-and the competitors not worrying about their scars, missing limbs & prosthetics being visible. The best thing at the games is the informality, the family atmosphere & the way everyone is cheered until they finish their event. Roll on Toronto!"

britishlegion.org.uk 





**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**

“FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE RAF BENEVOLENT FUND HAVE BEEN A SHINING LIGHT IN OUR DARK DAYS”

Learning of his daughter's cancer diagnosis confirmed Sqn Ldr Phil Holdcroft and his wife Beth's worst nightmare. Isla, their youngest daughter, now had a gruelling fight on her hands to overcome leukaemia and endure the aggressive treatment that would follow.

The family's journey began when, concerned that their daughter seemed to be continually unwell, Phil and Beth took her to their GP in the summer of 2014.

Phil, 36, explains: “Being beckoned into a hospital interview room and having our hearts ripped apart by the devastating news of Isla's diagnosis was indescribably tough. I felt anger, denial and numb all at once. It seemed so unfair that Isla, a beautiful 22-month-old bundle of happiness and joy, should be dealt such a cruel blow. It took 36/48 hours for the news to fully register, but we knew immediately that we must be strong for her and give it everything we had to get her through it.”

Beth, then working as a primary school teacher, gave up her job to become Isla's full-time carer, attending hospital

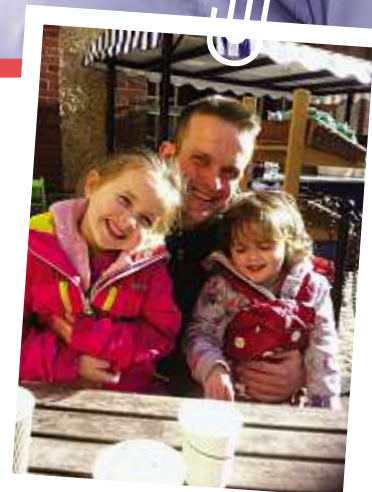
appointments and treatment for Isla was their number one priority.

Phil, who works at RAF High Wycombe, added: “Overnight we went from being a two wage-earning family to a single wage earning family. It was a critical time to lose such a big chunk of our income and placed a considerable strain on the family.

“That was when we approached the RAF Benevolent Fund, who were able to help out with a grant to fund things like travel to hospital and staying away from home whilst Isla was an in-patient. Support from the RAF Benevolent Fund helped ease the pressure during a very vulnerable period, allowing us to focus wholly on Isla's needs.”

During the course of Isla's treatment the family have ridden a rollercoaster of highs and lows, from the heartbreak of seeing her spend last Christmas in hospital, to the joy of finally being able to celebrate Isla's remission.

At the peak of treatment, Isla underwent aggressive chemotherapy and several operations and still undergoes daily, gentler chemotherapy to keep her well.



To add to her discomfort, Isla's cancer diagnosis came just a month after Phil and Beth, 36, learned she had hip dysplasia (dislocated hip) which would need an operation. In a cruel twist of fate, Isla's operation came in the midst of her treatment for leukaemia and required a 12-week stint in a hip spica – a pair of deliberately paralysing, high-waisted plaster trousers. Once healed, Isla began the process of learning to walk for the third time.

Phil said: “While Isla's end of treatment date is not until October 2016, and she will have to wait until 2021 until she is officially ‘cured’, we allow our minds to believe we will get there, while remaining firmly focused on the next step ahead.

"Isla's illness hasn't altered our priorities but it has given us a unique viewpoint. I liken it to the moment when military folk return from a tour of duty, where everything is vivid and life feels incalculably precious. When Isla is well, we treasure every single moment.

"Yes, we worry. But we are no longer scared. With the support we are blessed with, and the amazing care Isla receives, we remain utterly optimistic that Isla will win her 'challenge for a lifetime'."

The RAF Benevolent Fund supported the Holdcroft family with a grant to cover the costs of travelling to and from hospital appointments and staying overnight with Isla. As the RAF's leading welfare charity, the Fund supports serving and retired RAF personnel in their hour of need.

Paul Hughesdon, Director of Welfare and Policy, said: "Life can change in an instant when an unexpected illness takes hold but the RAF Benevolent Fund stands ready to help where we can.

"Whether it is dealing with major life events, adapting to changes in circumstances, or paying for unexpected expenses due to a serious illness or a death in the family, those who are in need can turn to the RAF Benevolent Fund when they need it most and we will do all that we can."

Phil added: "The RAF Benevolent Fund has been incredible,

approachable and supportive. Certainly for myself there was a bit of a stigma attached to accepting help. As servicemen we are institutionalised to be self-sufficient and able to just cope. But at no point did we feel degraded by the experience – we just felt completely supported."

For more information visit:
rafbf.org or Twitter @RAFBF



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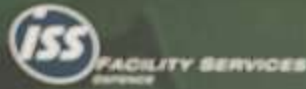
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TIME FOR TONI TO LOOK FORWARD



**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**
The charity that supports the RAF family

Three weeks after her 28th birthday, mother-of-two Toni Dagnall suffered her second debilitating stroke in two months. Toni had previously served in the RAF (along with husband Gary) and was a communication systems project manager at MOD Corsham when she had her first stroke in March 2008.

Now with an improved medical prognosis and practical help from the RAF Association, Toni can do a great deal more to look after herself, her family and her home, thanks to a grant towards vital alterations.

The future looks brighter, but it took time to come to terms with her first stroke. "It happened one evening and my face went numb. It was all a bit of a blur after that."

Toni thought she would be back at work in days and that people understood when she spoke, though her words made no sense. Toni and Gary's daughter and son, then aged nine and seven, also struggled to understand what had happened to their mum.

Toni's speech seems fine now but the strokes left her with no feeling down

her left side, poor balance, mobility issues, aphasia and dysphasia (struggling to find the right word or using the wrong word), memory problems, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and chronic pain in muscles and nerves where she otherwise has no feeling. Doctors investigating why such a young woman should suffer strokes discovered a previously undiagnosed hole in her heart. After a successful operation, the prognosis for avoiding further strokes is good.

But the family's terraced house in Bristol proved challenging, and a move to be closer to her own extended family led them to Lancashire. The house seemed more suitable, but the tiny downstairs bathroom had no room for a wheelchair, so constant falls often sent Toni back to hospital, and she suffered burns cooking in the unsuitable kitchen.

Toni and Gary's daughter had been diagnosed with Asperger's, chronic depression and psychosis, so kitchen sharps as well as Toni's powerful medication had to be put into boxes and locked in the car, because there was nowhere else secure.

A council grant application for home adaptations proved a dead end when the local council asked for a £75,500 contribution. But several friends suggested the Association and Gary, with 23 years' RAF service, was already a member.

The Association sent an occupational therapist, and an Association Welfare Officer applied for a grant from the RAF Benevolent Fund for Toni, to make the house safer and easier to live and work in.

Improvements included an enlarged, disabled friendly bathroom, new kitchen with lowered oven and easy-to-open cupboards and drawers, lowered, larger light switches and widened, repositioned doors.

"It's so much easier," beams Toni. "The improvements have made a massive difference – and I haven't fallen over in the bathroom since they've been done."

This is just one example of how the RAF Association helps members of the RAF family. By joining the Association, you can help us to be there for people like Toni and her family. Simply visit rafa.org.uk/join to find out how. ●

DOMESTIC ABUSE, THE RAF AND YOU

By Sal Davidson, MCO,
RAF Honington

A quick online search on domestic abuse will throw up all manner of information, from charities and organisations set up to assist victims, to the statistics which show this issue remains prevalent across all sections of our society in the UK.

In a recent Parliamentary Briefing Paper¹ statistics from 2014/15 showed that an estimated 1.3 million women and 600,000 men were the victims of domestic abuse. It also estimates that 27.1% of women and 13.2% of men had experienced (any) domestic abuse since the age of 16 - equivalent to an estimated 4.5 million female victims and 2.2 million male victims between the ages of 16 and 59.

Evidence gathered by domestic abuse charity Women's Aid, suggests 2 women are killed by their partner or ex-partner each week, 3 women commit suicide as a result of domestic abuse each week and 30 women will attempt suicide as a result of domestic abuse each week. That's 260 preventable deaths every year.

Domestic abuse does not fall within a particular age, race or social demographic and although women are far more likely to be victims, men suffer too. Anyone can be a victim from celebrities such as Rihanna, who suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her then boyfriend Chris Brown in 2009, to the young wives in our community to the Senior Aircraftman living in the block.

The RAF is a reflection of the society from which we recruit and sadly, if it happens out there, it happens in the Service as well. Domestic abuse is a problem, so what is the RAF doing about it and how can you help a friend, relative or yourself break free from the cycle?

The term "domestic abuse" covers a wide range of behaviours including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and as of December 2015, includes the acts of coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic abuse happens within an intimate or family relationship and applies to everyone over the age of 16.

Domestic abuse can be hidden by the nature of the crime and until recently some forms of domestic abuse weren't even classed as a crime. Service lifestyles can complicate the problem. Families move often, the availability of policing and welfare support differs across the RAF, the victim may be scared about losing their home and family income or the possible impact on the perpetrator's career prospects if offences are reported. For these reasons, the Service lifestyle can often stop victims reporting abuse and ultimately leaving an abusive relationship.

For many years the Ministry of Defence treated domestic abuse as a private life issue but this has changed recently with the release of a tri-service policy (JSP 913) on





domestic abuse and sexual violence which puts the responsibility firmly back on stations as a command issue. Within JSP 913 it states: "The Ministry of Defence is absolutely clear that it does not tolerate domestic violence, domestic abuse or sexual violence."

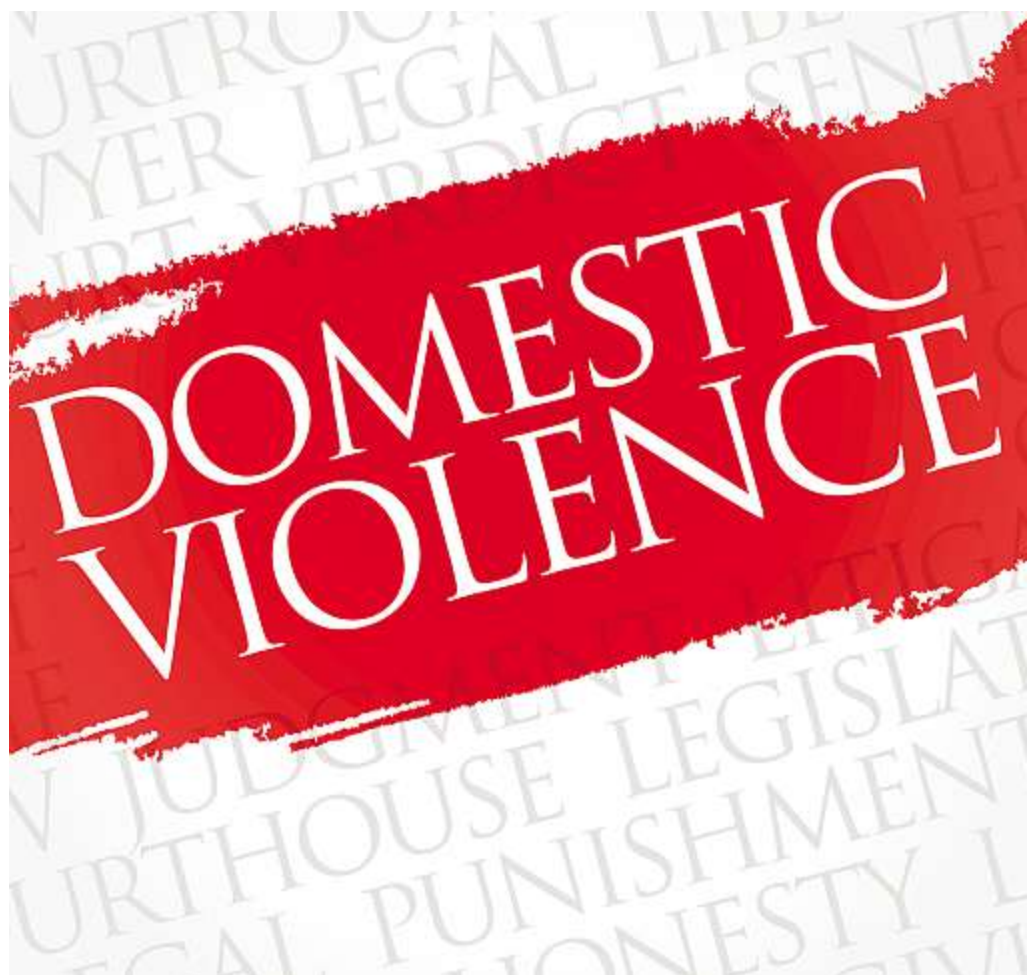
The policy continues: "Domestic abuse is not tolerated, nor is it treated as a private matter and all reported instances, allegations or reasonable suspicions of domestic abuse will be investigated fully. Victims will be listened to and taken seriously."

If you or a friend or relative are a victim of domestic abuse, you can seek help from your local police force by dialling 101, or 999 in an emergency. You can also contact the RAF Police on your station. All RAF policemen and policewomen have undergone domestic abuse training and work closely with the civilian police. They are able to provide advice and help put you in touch with local domestic abuse services. The civilian police will normally take the lead on any criminal investigation but RAF Police will support them.

The RAF has their own social work service on most stations working under the SSAFA banner and you can contact them for advice and support. Local numbers are published on their website ssafa.org and the out of hours number is 020 7463 9358. There are several charities that are able to offer

help and advice including Women's Aid (womensaid.org.uk) for female victims, The Mankind Initiative (new.mankind.org.uk) for male victims, Broken Rainbow UK (brokenrainbow.org.uk) for LGBT victims and Respect (respect.uk.net) which offers advice and support to the perpetrators.

Domestic abuse may be a hidden crime but there is help out there. Don't suffer in silence and if you, a friend or relative is a victim of domestic abuse please seek advice from either the police or welfare agencies. Even if you choose to stay with your partner, we can help keep you and your children safe and secure in complete confidence. ●



SKILLS FOR LIFE AWARD



SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR SUMMER 2017

By Sally Ryder-Taylor, The Outward Bound Trust

The Outward Bound Trust has been helping young people unlock their full potential, while gaining new skills, confidence and resilience, for 75 years. To celebrate this anniversary and thanks to the generosity of The Trust's donors, they are offering 100 scholarships for their Skills for Life Award in summer 2017.

The Trust's adventurous and challenging outdoor learning programmes equip young people with valuable skills for education, work and life and help them become more confident, more effective and more capable at school, college and in the workplace.

What Is The Skills for Life Award?

It is a unique 19-day personal development summer course for 15-19

year olds which develops essential skills to help them stand out in an ever more competitive world and assist them with the transition into adulthood, be that further or higher education, training or directly into employment.

It is geared towards developing confidence, emotional intelligence, leadership, communication and team-working skills. Highly trained and experienced Outward Bound® instructors use the dramatic and challenging landscapes of either the Scottish Highlands, Lake District or Snowdonia to embed these skills through participation in physically and socially demanding activities such as hiking, climbing and overnight camping expeditions.

Each participant will receive 1:1 personal coaching sessions, gain a

reference from their instructor and develop their very own 12 month action plan to help them continue their progress and achieve their personal goals following the Award.

Applying for a Scholarship.

100 scholarship places are now available for a Skills for Life Award course during summer 2017. To be eligible for a Scholarship, young people must:

- Be a UK resident/passport holder
- Be aged between 15-19 years on the start date of the course
- Be able to raise the remaining balance of the course fee.





Fatima's Skills for Life Award

Fatima Al-Habib from Birmingham achieved her Skills for Life Award last summer. Fatima described herself as: "a bit lazy since I didn't know what I wanted to do in the future and therefore had no motivation to succeed".

Fatima wasn't interested in sports and had never been camping, factors which might have been a challenge, but Fatima flourished, surprising herself. After the course, she said: "It is challenging in so many more ways than simply completing the expedition, but at the same time it is an invaluable way to motivate you for the future as it assures you that you are capable of more than you think."

Each Skills for Life Award Scholarship is worth up to £824 (50% of the total course fee). The total amount awarded to each scholarship place is not based on financial circumstance; each application will be assessed on

the individual's appetite for personal development through outdoor learning based on the strength of the answers provided on their application. All applications are subject to standard T&C's including

medical screening and enrolment criteria.

Apply for a scholarship for 2017 and receive more information by visiting: **obtrustscholarships.org** ●

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BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

By Mrs Mj Valley, HIVE Service Delivery Manager

We are very proud of the RAF HIVE service we provide to the Chain of Command and the 'Whole Force'.

Our Mission Statement is *"You ask, We answer"*. Our service ranges from deployment support to basic information requests.

As HIVE we understand that the needs of the tri-service community changes and in recent years we have progressed to accommodate this with HIVE Facebook and Twitter pages providing you with access to instant information on your smart device. You will find that most of our HIVEs have dedicated Facebook pages which provide up to date information on the local community, discounts and the RAF, but we are still there to provide that friendly face and individualised service for you. We understand that moving to and from new areas is a daunting feat whether you are moving as a family or an individual; we have the information on local services such as schools, doctors, dentists, takeaways, taxis and even vets in those areas to try to make it easier for you.

Our HIVEs deal with anything and everything, no task is too big or too small, as we say 'you ask, we answer' if

we don't immediately know the answer we will find someone who does.

A HIVE Information Officer (HIO) does not know what she/he will be asked on a daily basis and some of the questions run...

From the bizarre...

"Hello, I am up a crane at the moment and the wind is strong can you advise me if it is due to get worse, if so then I will come down...?"

'I'm going on holiday for a week; I've brought my hamster in for you to look after for me?'

'I'm moving tomorrow and my 20ft Boa Constrictor has escaped; do I need to let anyone know if we can't find him?'

'I need to speak to someone about changing the flight pattern, it was ok before but I've had a baby now and the planes wake him up when they go over, there is an empty field a few miles over, could they go that way instead?'

To the emotional...

A lovely lady that had been using the Community Centre came in and asked if I could witness her marriage, her partner had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and they had decided that they wanted to get married

that day and needed two witnesses. It was the grooms Birthday and they wanted to surprise their family later that day. As you can imagine it was a very emotional and humbling experience but I was honoured to be able to help her'.

As the title says **'Beyond the Obvious'**, we are never sure what is going to walk in through the doors of a HIVE office, but our HIOs are always there to help, listen, provide information, or direct you to the services you need.

You can find details of your nearest HIO at;
raf.mod.uk/community/support/raf-hive-information-service/

Our main Facebook page is RAF HIVE. 



VICTORY SERVICES CLUB



Victory Services Club is a prestigious military members club in the heart of London, near Oxford Street, Marble Arch and Hyde Park. As the only tri-service club in London solely for the Armed Forces, it is proud to welcome all military ranks and ages.

The Club offers free membership for all serving personnel, great value accommodation in Central London with prices starting from just £47 per night, exceptional dining spaces including the newly refurbished Club Dining Room, The Grill, Coffee Bar and Lounge Bar.

In addition, the Club also offers event space for hire with a capacity for up to 300 delegates.

As a registered charity, supporting the military community lies at the heart of the VSC's objectives and the Respite

and Welfare Breaks scheme is one that the Club feels very passionately about. The Respite and Welfare Breaks are intended to provide a morale boosting and restful break in the capital for personnel who have been injured during Operational Service, or have encountered a significant welfare issue.

One of the Respite and Welfare guests expressed their appreciation of their recent break, "Me and my family really enjoyed our stay at the VSC. We found the staff very friendly and welcoming. It has been nice to get away for the weekend as it helps take our minds off

the situation. We especially enjoyed our trip to the Zoo".

Respite & Welfare Breaks include the following:

- Two nights' accommodation
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Tickets to a top London attraction

Club Secretary, Air Commodore Nigel Beet commented, "We are very proud to provide free Respite and Welfare Breaks at the Victory Services Club. Utilising our modern and refurbished facilities, we can provide single personnel, couples and their families with a free weekend in London, as part of the serviceman or woman's

recovery from injuries or welfare related events. This unrivalled offer in London reflects our commitment to supporting the military family and we are pleased to play a part in helping our service personnel and their families during a difficult period".

How to apply

These can be applied for by Service Charities as well as UK Armed Forces Unit Welfare Officers and Recovery Staff.

To find out more information, please contact respites.welfare@vsc.co.uk or visit the website:

<http://www.vsc.co.uk/how-we-help/respites--welfare-breaks>



WIN A 2 NIGHT STAY IN LONDON FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

You could win a 2 night stay at the VSC for 2 adults and 2 children, including breakfast both mornings and an evening meal in the newly refurbished restaurant.

To win

Simply sign up to an Envoy magazine subscription and/or our weekly eBULLETIN (both are free!) – using the slip overleaf stating which prize you would like to

win and we'll enter you into the draw. Closing date is 28th October 2016.

For all reader prizes: Competitions are open to all readers of Envoy, except employees of RAF FF and their families, its publishers, printers and anyone connected with the competitions. Only one entry per household per prize. **Your details will not be passed on to any organisations.●**

WIN A FREE FAMILY AND FRIENDS RAILCARD FOR A YEAR!

National Rail has kindly donated one Family and Friends Railcard to one lucky reader from Envoy magazine.

- Normally costs £30 per year
- A card for families travelling with children aged 5-15
- Up to four adults and four children can travel on one card
- Get a third off for adults and 60% off for children on most rail fares.

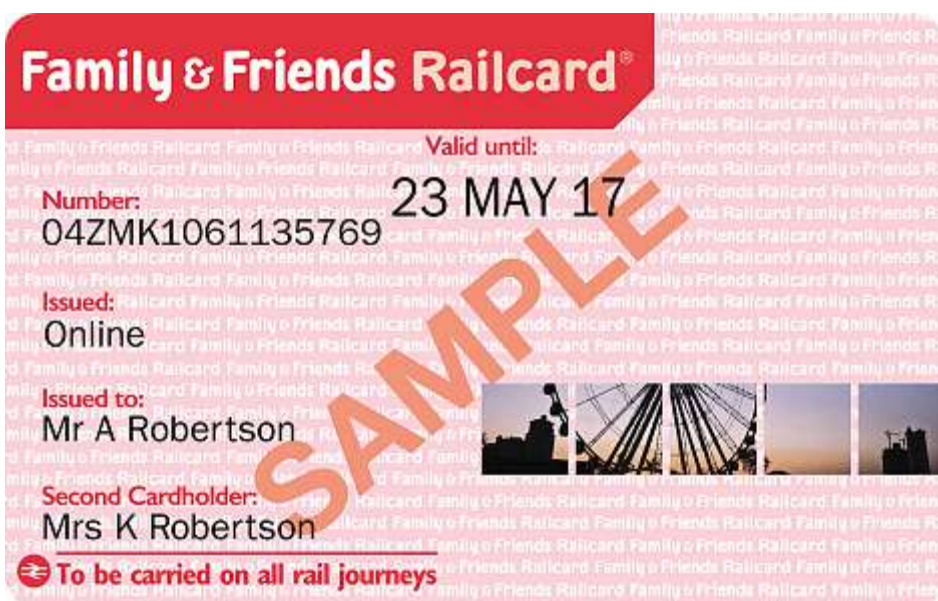
How to enter

All you have to do is simply sign up to the RAF Family Federation's weekly eBULLETIN or quarterly Envoy magazine, (both are free) using the slip below - and we'll enter you into the draw.

Closing date for entries is
28th October 2016.

About National Rail's Family and Friends Railcard

With a Family & Friends Railcard you'll enjoy 1/3 off rail fares for up to 4 adults and 60% off for up to 4 children



between 5 and 15. Plus you can have two adults named on one card, so when one cardholder isn't using it, the other can.

Your Railcard doesn't just save you money on travel. It saves you money with the Railcard's partners too – on theme parks, museums, hotels and more.

To find out more:
familyandfriends-railcard.co.uk/

For all reader prizes: Competitions are open to all readers of Envoy, except employees of RAF FF and their families, its publishers, printers and anyone connected with the competitions. Only one entry per household per prize. Your details will not be passed on to any organisations. ●

Envoy Magazine Competition

By signing up to receive our FREE weekly eBULLETIN and/or quarterly Envoy magazine, you will be entered into our prize draw to win:

Mark which prize you'd like to enter – you can only choose one!

- ☐ Weekend Break
☐ Railcard

Envoy Magazine (your home address):

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And/or

eBULLETIN:

Email:

Please send your slip in to:

Caroline Woodward, RAF Families Federation,
13-15 St Georges Road, Wittering,
Peterborough PE8 6DL by Friday
28th October. The draw will take place on Monday 31st October and winners will be notified by Friday 4th November.

We like to look after our families, keeping safety in mind and so we will not share your details with any other organisation.



Plane Sailing at RAF Marham

By Melanie Pattenden

The recent opening of the new playground and skate park was a great success at RAF Marham – Oak Avenue Play Park. The park was officially opened on the by Air Vice-Marshal Gary M Waterfall CBE RAF and children from the local schools came to try out the new play area. Although a rather grey day the equipment stood out with vibrant coloured units and colourful safety surfacing on the floor.

The children enjoyed playing on the colourful pirate ship, steering the boat into more sunny seas while others enjoyed sliding down the duel slide or climbing up sky high on the other adventure play unit. Encouraging development through play has always been a focus for playground equipment company Monster Play @ Caloo.

Working with RAF Marham the main aim was to completely refurbish the current site and install large play units that could accommodate lots of children and enhance their imaginations through play. It was a

priority that at least one unit could accommodate Wheelchair users to make play accessible for all within the refurbishment. New fencing was required around the site and the existing play area was to be converted into a separate Skate Park aimed at Teenagers, making sure equipment provided was for all age groups.

An assortment of equipment was installed including two fantastic adventure play units, the 'Oakley Estates Supermax' aimed at older children containing 11 activity areas including a duel slide, net climber and rope ladder and alongside, the 'Clipper Pirate Ship' for younger children with 14 activity areas with ships wheel, climbing ramp, fireman's pole and OXO game. These two units are Gold Award products for encouraging communication, sensory, physical and cognitive skills through play. All Monster Play equipment has been rated by leading Childhood Development expert Dr A.Gummer, against the National Curriculum, meeting developmental and skills requirements for children.



Cradle and flat swings, Rock N Cross see-saws, an accessible whirl and a new skate park were also installed to provide additional and more traditional opportunities for play. Completion time only took four weeks which also included laying new safety surfacing around each piece of equipment alongside furniture and fencing for the whole site.

The project was a complete success and the client was very pleased with the final outcome. The community now has a public space to visit daily, children can develop and learn across all areas of the play equipment enabling them to enjoy and explore new apparatus as they grow. ●



RAF BANDS SHOWCASE 'BEST OF BRITISH'

This autumn will see the curtain raised on the RAF bands' prestigious annual concert tour which this year showcases the Best of British Entertainment.

The tour, which will visit 15 venues across the UK, will begin at the Royal Hall, Harrogate on Friday, October 21 and end at the Lighthouse Pools on December 11.

From *Hancock's Half Hour* and *The Two Ronnies* to *James Bond* and *Phantom of the Opera*, some of our greatest home-grown entertainment milestones will be celebrated through the evocative music they are so fondly identified with.

Featuring popular theme tunes from iconic BBC radio shows, the finest pop music from across the decades and rousing numbers from the stage and screen, audiences will enjoy an evening of first class entertainment performed by leading musicians from the Bands of the Royal Air Force, as seen at the Festival of Remembrance and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

Entertainment of a more traditional nature will also feature, including *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*, *O Fortuna* from *Carmina Burana* plus a special


Royal tribute to mark the Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday. And it wouldn't be an evening with the Bands of the RAF if you didn't hear a selection of rousing British military marches, this year's tour featuring *633 Squadron*, *Those Magnificent Men* and *The Dambusters March*.

The RAF's leading vocalist Sqn Ldr Matt Little will be joined on stage by West End performer Sarah Francis for a special tribute to British musicals and popular entertainment – from *Oliver!* to Matt Monro. Tour compere will be the voice of *Strictly Come Dancing*, Alan Dedicoat (except Nottingham and Manchester, BBC broadcaster Ken Bruce; and London, TV personality Gaby Roslin).

Tour organiser Tina Outlaw said:

"We've brought together a superb programme of music that will reflect the Best of British Entertainment. The evening will be a wonderful reminder of the rich seam of talent that has kept us laughing, singing and, occasionally, a little tearful over the years."

Sponsored by BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin, the concert tour will visit: October 21, Royal Hall, **Harrogate**; Oct 23: The Sage, **Gateshead**; Oct 26: The Anvil **Basingstoke**; Oct 27: Colston Hall, **Bristol**; Oct 30: Wycombe Swan, **High Wycombe**; Nov 1: Cadogan Hall, **London**; Nov 6: Marlowe Theatre, **Canterbury**; Nov 18, Bridgewater Hall, **Manchester**; Nov 19: Royal Centre, **Nottingham**; Nov 20: Symphony Hall, **Birmingham**; Nov 30: Congress Theatre, **Eastbourne**; Dec 1: Cliffs Pavilion, **Southend**; Dec 3: **Ipswich** Regent; Dec 4: Theatre Royal, **Norwich**; Dec 11: Lighthouse, Poole.

For ticketing details and further information, visit rafinconcert.com 





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The Royal Hospital School

Simon Lockyer, Headmaster

The Royal Hospital School was founded in 1712 in Greenwich, London, to 'improve navigation' through education and, as it prepared boys for a life at sea, many went on to become explorers and pioneers of their time.

We are immensely proud of these historic links and discovery, exploration and challenge continue to shape our ethos. The traditional values of loyalty, commitment, courage, respect, service and integrity have underpinned the School's core aims and philosophy from the very beginning. 300 years later, they are still as relevant to the education we provide as they were then.

Today the Royal Hospital School is set in 200 acres of Suffolk countryside overlooking the Stour Estuary and it is a leading independent, co-educational boarding and day school providing a full and broad education, fit for the modern world.

We inspire our pupils to have the courage and commitment to be ambitious for their futures, whichever path they choose. Everyone can achieve the most exceptional things but we are all different. That is why we focus on the individual, getting to know every one of our pupils and finding out what motivates them.

We challenge pupils of all academic abilities, steering them to look beyond the moment, and beyond the confines of the classroom, and to approach life with an open and receptive mind. It is through thinking creativity and taking initiative that they learn to establish, and work towards, their own personal goals.

By understanding a young person's strengths, and what he or she might find more difficult, we can help them to make the right choices at the right time, navigating them through their critical, formative years and ensuring their education becomes the foundation for happiness and success.

It is this unique blend of a values-driven education with the focus on individual challenge and appropriate guidance that enables our pupils to develop into self-reliant, socially responsible adults with enviable open-mindedness and resilience, so sought-after by employers and important in life.

The Royal Hospital School – Navigating Success

For more information, please contact Kate Evers, Registrar, on 01473 326163 or admissions@royalhospitalschool.org or visit www.royalhospitalschool.org



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oshsch.com/admissions

or contact the Registrar on:

01384 817325

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