



**884 EREWASH BRANCH OF THE RAFA**  
**NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2011**

Registered Charity No 1076412

[www.erewashrafa.co.uk](http://www.erewashrafa.co.uk)

WINGS APPEAL REPORT

PRESENTED AT THE BRANCH MEETING ON THE 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011

BY PAT STACK, THE WINGS APPEAL OFFICER.

At the last Branch Meeting I commented that we were then in the middle of the busiest time of the year as far as Wings Appeal is concerned, and as anticipated the month since then has indeed been a busy one for us.

As far as Branch members are concerned our collections have mainly been in the smaller local supermarkets, that is to say the Co-ops at Breaston, Spondon, Ilkeston, Oakwood and Borrowwash, together with Peak Village, the larger Tesco at Ilkeston and at Asda in Sinfin. I have with me a full list of the amount collected at each of these venues, but unless you wish me to do I shall just give a summary, for to recite them all would take ages.

Before doing so however I would like to mention just two of these collections. The first was at the Co-op in Breaston. This was a collection which was arranged by Arthur Wood, entirely on his own initiative, without any involvement of the Wings team. He contacted the Co-op manager and arranged to stand collecting outside his store, and single-handedly raised £194.75. To my mind this was a truly commendable individual effort, and he deserves our most sincere thanks.

Our special thanks must also go to Phil Giles and the Cadets of 2418 Sherwood Squadron ATC. You may recall that at the last Branch Meeting I said that I was on the point of cancelling one day of the planned two day collection at the Co-op in Borrowwash because of a lack of collectors. Somewhat predictably, I think, Phil Giles came to the rescue and arranged for the Cadets from that Squadron to help out, and help they did, raising our total collected in that store to £444.29, and helping us to reach an overall total for all store collections during this last month of £2527.81

As always the rest of the local ATC Squadrons have also been beavering away on our behalf. Altogether the eight Squadrons involved have raised for us a total of £3403.36...12737.87 of which was by way of their street collections. Again our most sincere thanks must go to each and every one of the Cadets involved, their Commanding Officers, their Civilian staff, and of course, again, to their fixer, Wing Commander Phil Giles.

We now have only two premises collections left for this year. These are at Trowell Garden Centre on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October, and at Tesco in Mickleover on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. It is with great delight that for the first time at any Branch Meeting this year I do not have to plead with you, or beg for volunteers to come forward to collect, because we already have a full complement of collectors for both of these venues.

Thank you

PAT STACK

Before the business of the October Branch Meeting we welcomed Mrs. Margaret Allen, who talked about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Ian, her husband of two weeks, was killed aboard HMS Argonaut in the Falklands War. He was buried at sea, so she had no body to say goodbye to. She was supported by her GP, but it took her 2 years to improve. She now does voluntary work for Combat Stress, which was formed after the First World War – one sufferer is 92 years old.

She certainly gave us plenty to think about, and be thankful for what we have. It was a very somber start to the Meeting.

**AIR VICE-MARSHALL JAMES EDGAR 'JOHNNIE' JOHNSON**  
**COB.,\_CH.B.,\_D.SC.,\_(two Bars), D.PH. and Bar, DELL.,**  
**Legion of Merit (U.S.A.) Air Medal (U.S.A.),**  
**Order of Leopold (Belgium), Croix de Guerre (Belgium)**

Air Vice-Marshall 'Johnnie' Johnson, top scoring R.A.F. fighter pilot of the Second War, was born at Barrow-on-Soar, Leicestershire, in 1915, and was educated at Loughborough School and Nottingham University, where he studied civil engineering. In 1938 he was Chief Engineering Assistant to the Chigwell Urban District Council and, being keen on flying started flying lessons at his own expense.

That year he applied to join the exclusive Auxiliary Air Force, but was turned down on the grounds that, although he lived in Leicestershire, he did not hunt!

He then applied to join the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, a sort of working man's Auxiliary Air Force, but they had far more candidates than vacancies, and were unable to take him in.

Giving up any hope of joining a part-time flying organisation, he joined the mounted Leicestershire Yeomanry but soon afterwards succeeded in joining the greatly expanded R.A.F.V.R., and was mobilized into this organisation at the outbreak of war.

He joined 19 Squadron at Duxford, August 1940, and then to 616 (South Yorkshire) Squadron Auxiliary Air Force at Kenley. On the day he joined this unit, in late August, they lost more than half their pilot strength, and were pulled out of the front line. The Squadron was reformed at Coltishall, Norfolk (where Johnson first met Douglas Bader) and, although he participated in the Battle of Britain, he did not claim any victories.

In the Spring of 1941, 616 Squadron moved to Tangmere, an airfield at the foot of the South Downs that had been deeply involved in the Battle of Britain the previous year. Douglas Bader led the Tangmere Wing and Johnson frequently flew number two to Bader.

The Summer of 1941 was a busy one for the Wing, carrying out fighter sweeps, low-level flights over France, as well as escorting our bombers to industrial cities such as Lille and protecting them from attack by enemy aircraft. He was with Bader when the legless ace was shot down. Johnson destroyed at least six enemy aircraft during the Summer, and in September 1941 was awarded a DFC and promoted to Flight Commander.

In the Summer of 1942 Johnson was posted to command 610 (County of Chester) Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force, first at Coltishall, Norfolk, and then at West Mailing, Kent, from where they were involved in the combined operation at Dieppe.

Six months later Johnson was promoted to Wing Commander to lead the Canadian Wing at Kenley. By September 1943 his score had mounted to 24, and he had been awarded the DSO and Bar, and the American DFC. In six months Johnson had led the wing on 120 operations and had shot down 16 enemy aircraft. As a 'rest' he joined the Ops Staff at 11 Group Headquarters, Uxbridge, and often flew in fighter sweeps and bomber escorts he had planned!

'Johnnie' Johnson was posted from Uxbridge in March 1944 to lead another Canadian Wing which was based at Tangmere. In Spitfire 9's they flew many dive-bombing and strafing attacks across France.

D-Day was not far away and, in June, he led the Wing to operate from a landing strip in the Normandy beach-head, the first Allied fighters to operate in France since 1940.

That Summer Johnson was appointed wing leader of 127 (Canadian) Wing. The German Army, protected by a formidable screen of FW190's and Messerschmitt's positioned over the Seine near Paris, was steadily retreating. 127 Wing was sent to attack and Johnson's Spitfire was hit by a cannon shell, the first time he had been hit by an enemy fighter. Luckily he managed to return to base.

Two days later Paris was liberated.

By the end of the War, 'Johnnie' Johnson had won two DFC's and three DSO's and had been credited with 38 enemy aircraft destroyed making him the top-scoring RAF fighter ace.

After the war he attended the RCAF Staff College, served with the USAF in Korea studying combat tactics, where he was awarded the Legion of Merit and the US Air Medal. Later he commanded RAF Wildenrath in Germany. In 1957 he was appointed OC RAF Cottesmore where Bomber Command's first Victor Squadron was formed. In 1960 he became SASO No 3 (Bomber) Group, Mildenhall, and three years later was nominated Air Officer Commanding, Air Forces Middle East, Aden. After a long and distinguished career, Air Vice-Marshall Johnson retired from the RAF, at his own request, in 1965 aged 49. He reverted to civil engineering and became the Executive Director of a medium-sized civil engineering building company. In 1969 he formed the 'Johnnie' Johnson Housing Trust, a charitable Housing Association, which has now completed some 1700 flats (in some 45 Homes) for elderly and disabled people.

The Trust, which started as a hobby, now has a portfolio of property worth about £20 million. It collects £1 million pounds rent annually and has a new build turnover of £4-5 million. Johnson is now the Chief Executive of the Trust, with the headquarters at Bramhall, Cheshire and Regional Offices at Sheffield and Newcastle.

He is a director of several companies.

The above article has been copied from a Programme produced by Nottingham Health Authority and The League of Friends of the Disabled celebrating the Official Opening of the Replacement Wing of the Cedars Medical Rehabilitation Unit, Sherwood Nottingham by Air Vice Marshall J.E. 'Johnnie' Johnson on Saturday July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1982.

The Programme was signed by 'Johnnie' Johnson and is a treasured memento for our PRO Denis Price.

## **DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – EXCELLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY AWARDS 2011**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> October last Members of the Branch attended a reception at The Dome in Buxton, hosted by the Chairman of Derbyshire County Council, Councillor George Wharmby, to see George and Geraldine Lamb honoured with a prestigious award for excellent service in the community. They were nominated by the Branch Vice-Chairman Phil Giles. He was asked to give the reason for his nomination, and he responded as follows:-

My personal knowledge of this couple, and therefore my nomination, is specific to the Royal Air Forces Association. However they have devoted their whole adult life to the service of others, e.g. many years fostering children for Erewash Borough Council - supporting Ilkeston Lions throughout 80's and 90's – principal organizers of Ilkeston Carnival and were active members of the Long Eaton Militairs Marching Band.

George and Geraldine joined the Erewash Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association back in 1991, bringing with them their consuming passion to raise money for the genuine benefit of others.

Their inventiveness in raising money is remarkable, from a barn dance to a games night and they can conjure up a successful raffle at the drop of a hat. They can be found with others leading the Branch on every possible occasion, be it manning the Branch stand at community events, fund raising for our annual Wings Week Appeal, or at one of the many social activities that Members participate in, all of which are carried out with their own brand of enthusiasm.

In addition to all these activities George has been the Branch Standard Bearer for some 20 years, only standing down a couple of years ago through ill health. However, again after many years, he still serves the Branch as its Membership Secretary. Geraldine remains the Branch Asst. Social Secretary after many years in that role.

Their personal commitment has contributed greatly in keeping the Branch vibrant, with membership constantly increasing, when many other similar ex-service organizations are in decline. It is having loyal and determined Members such as these that allows the Branch to better every year the amounts collected for the annual Battle of Britain Wings Appeal with a staggering £25K+ collected in 2010. This money is then used for the benefit of those in the ex-service community who are in need of our assistance.

Now in their early 70's, and having celebrated fifty years of marriage last year, their sustained and outstanding devotion to duty and their invaluable contribution to the Royal Air Forces Association in Derbyshire is well deserving of formal recognition.

PHIL GILES

### **WELFARE MATTERS**

YOU ARE INVITED TO  
A CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING ON THE 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2011  
AT THE METHODIST CHURCH, HIGH LANE WEST,  
WEST HALLAM  
(next to the Bottle Kiln Restaurant)  
10.30am to 1.00pm  
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU

If you are living on your own, or a single Member, please come to our Coffee Morning  
If you are in need of transport please telephone Marian on 01332 677162 before 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011

There has been an excellent response to the Spring Break to Eastbourne on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> April next and arrangements are well under way. On arrival in Eastbourne a light lunch is being organized for us at the local RAFA Club.

MARIAN ROBINSON – Welfare Officer.

## **AN EMBARRASSING MOMENT**

I was a sprog Flight Engineer in final stages of training at an HCU (Heavy Conversion Unit) where I was 'adopted' by a crew from another training unit. They had air experience, I had none.

After some ground training together we were detailed to fly a Short Stirling, four engine, heavy bomber on 'circuits and landings' or in today's jargon 'touch and goes'. We had a QFI (Qualified Flying Instructor) with us.

A couple of technical points to give this story some background. The Stirling fuselage was 29 yards long. The main undercarriage was raised and lowered by hydraulic pressure, the tail wheel was similarly dealt with manually, well it was designed in the late 1930's. The position of the 'gear', as it is called now, was indicated by red and green indicators. The tail wheel was about 20 yards away from the Engineer's position in the plane.

Our first detail was under the watchful eye of the QFI, dual circuits and landings. I was not in the cockpit but sat among the gauges and switches, a short distance away so I could not observe our position in the circuit. There was always the cockpit drill over the intercom to listen to.

The take-off went well. On hearing "undercarriage up", I was off down the fuselage like a jackrabbit. Cranking the tail wheel up took some effort, observing the red indicator, back up to my position, checking the two red undercarriage indicators, and call up over the intercom "three wheels locked up skipper". Not a word in reply, but I kept on listening to the cockpit drill between the two pilots. So on hearing "undercarriage down" I was off down the fuselage to start the cranking and checking in reverse.

Everything seemed to be going well in my department. I was enjoying the experience as I called up "three wheels locked down skipper". This time the QFI answered with a terse "You will have to be quicker than that Engineer, we have landed and are half way down the runway".!!!

Why do the words 'surplus to requirements' spring to mind. One of those embarrassing moments I would rather forget but never can.

It didn't take long for me to get the hang of reading the cockpit drill as we continued our training and were passed ready to commence operational duties, but on Lancasters, a much different machine.

## **ANON**

### **YOU LOVERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MIGHT ENJOY THIS**

There is a two-letter word that perhaps has more meanings than any other two letter word, and that is "UP". It's easy to understand UP, meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list, but when we awaken in the morning why do we wake UP?

At a meeting, why does a topic come UP? Why do we speak UP and why are the officers UP for election, and why is it UP to the secretary to write UP a report?

We call UP our friends. And we use it to brighten UP a room, polish UP the silver. We warm UP the leftovers and clean UP the kitchen. We lock UP the house, and some guys fix UP the old car.

At other times the little word has real special meaning. People stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses. To be dressed is one thing, but to be dressed UP is special. And, this UP is confusing: A drain must be opened UP, because it is stopped UP.

We open UP a store in the morning, but we close it UP at night.

We seem to be pretty mixed UP ..... about UP! To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of UP look the word UP in the dictionary.

In a desk-sized dictionary it takes UP almost 114<sup>th</sup> of the page, and can add UP to about thirty definitions. If you are UP to it, you might try building UP a list of the many ways UP is used.

It will take UP a lot of time; but, if you don't give UP you may wind UP with a hundred or more.

When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding UP. When the sun comes out we say it is clearing UP. When it rains it wets the earth and often messes things UP. When it doesn't rain for a while things dry UP. One could go on and on, but I'll wrap it UP for now my time is UP, so ..... it is time to shut **UP!**

## THE BRANCH PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT

### August 25<sup>th</sup> – The Annual Band Concert

A capacity audience, and another resounding success for the Branch.

This year we had the honour to host The Central Band of the Royal Air Force, and they didn't disappoint. We also had the privilege of hosting The Lord Lt of Derbyshire, Mr. William Tucker, and his wife Jill, and The Mayor of Erewash, Councillor Keith Miller and his wife, and the MP for Erewash, Miss Jessica Lee.

### August 31<sup>st</sup> – Stanton-by-Dale

Our Annual pilgrimage to St Michael's Churchyard to remember the aircrew of the Stirling Bomber who lost their lives when their aircraft crashed on the outskirts of the village, exactly 64 years to the day. The Memorial Service was conducted by Canon Ian Wooding, and the Poppy Wreath was laid on behalf of the Branch by Mr. Laurence Thorpe. The Standard Bearer was Mr. George Lamb.

### September 8<sup>th</sup> - Branch Visit to RAF Benson

Larry once again organised a splendid visit to RAF Benson. On arrival we were met by our host for the day WO Guppy, who escorted us to the Conference Room to discuss the day's itinerary, and for a most welcome cup of coffee and biscuits. He then issued us with our visitors' passes and camera passes (this was a first) as members with cameras had them checked for security reasons before leaving the Station. For reasons unbeknown to us we were asked to take an early lunch in the Officers' Mess before taking a tour of the Station. Our first visit was to the 78 Merlin Helicopter Squadron Headquarters. We were greeted by Flt Lt Andy Beason who gave us a run down on the activities of RAF Benson and his role as second in command of the Station.

We then visited the hangers to see the Merlins being serviced, and we were allowed to go on board these huge aircraft. I asked Andy about the costs of the Merlin, to which he replied about £35 million or 44 million Euros. Our Chairman Ray thanked Flt Lt Beason and presented him with a RAFA banner.

Our group went on to meet Flt Lt Dusko Frost of 33 Squadron Puma Helicopters for a similar tour and presentation.

### September 15<sup>th</sup> – Battle of Britain Dance.

Only 38 Members with their guests attended out of nearly 300 Members and associates.

What a disappointment. Godfrey Graver played some lovely music that was just right for this event. Jo from Risley Park put on a very good buffet – the only thing missing was Members. Fortunately our Cadets turned up in great numbers to make the evening a little more enjoyable.

Needless to say the event was a financial disaster, with a loss of over £100.

Please remember to support these events – your Committee Members work very hard to try and please everyone, in particular on the social side.

### September 17<sup>th</sup> – Anniversary of the Battle of Britain – Rolls Royce Heritage Centre.

A Service of Commemoration by Erewash Branch Royal Air Forces Association and Derby City Council was held at the Rolls Royce Heritage Trust Centre in Derby, in the presence of Councillor Les Allen, the Mayor of Derby City and his guests.

The Battle of Britain Service was conducted by the Very Revd Dr John Davies DL, the Dean of Derby.

President Ron gave the address, George was the Standard Bearer, and a wreath was laid by our Chairman Ray.

### September 21<sup>st</sup> – Visit to Eden Camp

I did not attend on this occasion, but I understand it was a very good outing, and blessed with good weather

DENIS PRICE

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

10 <sup>th</sup> November 2011	AN ORGAN RECITAL presented by organist Phil Brown at Risley Park Inn – Commences 7.30 pm – Tickets	£ 7.00
5 <sup>th</sup> December 2011	CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING, Methodist Church West Hallam – 10.00am to 1.30pm - see full details in this Newsletter	
7 <sup>th</sup> December 2011	RAF CRANWELL – CHRISTMAS CONCERT Coach leaves Risley Park 5.15pm Tickets obtainable from Larry (night – 01332 874667	£15.00
5 <sup>th</sup> January 2012	BRANCH MEETING – Risley Park – 7.00pm	
6 <sup>th</sup> January 2012	AFTER CHRISTMAS DINNER DANCE at Risley Park 7 – 7.30pm Menu slips and non-returnable deposit of £10.00 due by November Branch Meeting – for further information contact Larry Meeting Inight	£21.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2012	BRANCH MEETING - Risley Park – 7.00pm	
8 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – Risley Park – 10.30am	
5 <sup>th</sup> April 2012	BRANCH MEETING – Risley Park – 7.30pm	
23 <sup>rd</sup> to 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2012	SPRING BREAK TO EASTBOURNE	

THERE WILL BE NO BRACH MEETING IN DECEMBER

## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN**

What has happened to the past year? It seems to have gone by so quickly.

I would like to express my thanks to all who have worked so hard, in so many different ways, to ensure the continued success of 884 Erewash Branch of the RAFA.

At the time of writing the final figures for this year's Wings Appeal are not yet available, but the signs are very promising for a successful outcome, which is a great achievement in the current financial climate. Thank you so much for all who have worked so hard, either behind the scenes or rattling collecting boxes, and generally persuading the public to put their hands in their pockets for our cause.

We have again enjoyed great days out to various locations, together with the holiday in Weston-Super-Mare, which was a resounding success, and as a result of which the Welfare Officer is organising another holiday next year to Eastbourne. Neither must we forget the Wings Appeal Concert at Trent College – once again a sell-out.

On your behalf I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking the management and staff of the Risley Park Inn for their support over the years. We appreciate it very much, and trust our relationship continues into the foreseeable future.

Again, thank you all for your support of our Branch. I wish all of you and your families a Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

RAY NOBLE

AND FINALLY – Thank you to all who have contributed to the Newsletter over the past year. I hope you have found the contents of interest, and will pass on to me anything you feel would be suitable for inclusion in the future.

Just a reminder – the 2012 subscriptions are due in the New Year, and know George Lamb will be pleased to receive them.

May you all have an enjoyable Christmas, and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

EILEEN JOHNSON - Newsletter Editor