



ROYAL AIR FORCES Association

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THETFORD AND DISTRICT BRANCH

No. 996

The Thetford and District Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association was officially formed on 22nd May 1950.

It usually holds 'Branch Meetings' on the second Tuesday of each month at the Sergeants' Mess RAF Honington, commencing at 19.30 hrs (7.30 pm). The meetings are open to all members and potential members of the Branch. With RAF Honington being an operational unit any member not having an access pass to RAF Honington is required to contact the Honorary Secretary so that arrangements can be made to allow access for the meeting.

In addition to holding regular meetings, Branch members meet for an informal lunch once a month, usually on the third Friday of each month. The lunch is in the Sergeants' Mess or in the Norfolk Terrier. Details can be found in the bi-monthly Newsletter or on the Branch Website.

Branch Social Evenings are held four times a year and generally are informal events which allows the members to mingle with other members and guests and to generally get to know one another. The December event is a more formal Christmas Dinner.



Stanton RBL Fun Day



Barnham Fete

Throughout the year the Branch takes part in various activities related to the general public and where possible has an Information Stand at various locations, Stanton RBL Fun Days, Stanton Primary School Open Day, Brandon Country Park, Barnham Fete and RAF Honington Families Fun Days are regular venues. The Stand is manned by volunteer members and their spouses.

A Branch event held each year is a Remembrance Service held at St. Ethelbert's Church East Wretham, which commemorates the Czechoslovak and Polish Servicemen buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Plot. The Airfield at East Wretham was a satellite of RAF Honington in the Second World War and the bomber Squadron

which operated from East Wretham was originally formed at RAF Honington. The service is conducted by the Branch Honorary Chaplain and attended by representatives of the Czech, Slovak and Polish Embassies. This service is held on the Wednesday prior to the Armistice Parade and Service. After the service the members and guests have refreshments in the Village Hall. The service is always well supported by the local residents.



The Branch is also represented at the annual Armed Forces Day by having the Branch Stand in the Market Place. The Branch Standard Bearer takes part in the annual ceremony as part of Armed Forces Day, conducted by the Thetford Branch of the Royal British Legion.



The Branch takes part in the Royal British Legion Parade and Service held in November to commemorate the Armistice. A wreath is laid on behalf of the Branch. Members of the Branch together with other ex-Service Organisations and local Youth Organisations fall in and then march through the town to the Market Place. After the service the parade marches back through the town, past the saluting base. In the afternoon of the same day a contingent from the Branch attends a similar service at Bridgham.



One of the biggest events in the calendar is the Annual Wings Week, which commemorated the 'Battle of Britain'. The Thetford and District Branch collect in the towns of Attleborough, Brandon and Thetford, on the designated day, and if possible provides an Information Stand on the Market Place in Thetford. There is always 'giveaways' for the children. A regular feature of the Thetford Town collection is the presence of members of the Royal Air Force Regiment collecting on behalf of the Branch.

The Wings Appeal and Wings Week is climaxed by the Branch holding a Battle of Britain Remembrance Service held on the designated Sunday at St. Cuthbert's Church, Thetford. The Service is conducted by the Honorary Branch Chaplain. Each year the Battle of Britain Remembrance Service is attended by the Thetford Town Council, headed by the Town Mayor. Guests include representatives from the United States Air Force, the Royal Air Force and local dignitaries. The Town Council also provides refreshments, in the Guildhall, after the service.

A great supporter of the Thetford and District Branch is No.1109 (Thetford) Squadron, Air Training Corps. The cadets collect for the Wings Appeal by 'Bag-packing' in the local supermarket. They also provide a great deal of the logistical support needed to provide the Information Stand at various local events. The Branch is represented on the Squadron's Civilian Committee and where possible the Branch will support any function sponsored by the Squadron, such as Enrolment Parades and Open Evenings. We believe that the training the cadets receive and the discipline provided will make them better citizens.

From time to time the Branch acts as hosts to Organisations and local parties visiting RAF Honington. Visitors are met at the Guardroom and taken to the Sergeants' Mess where refreshments are available. At this point there is a briefing and then they escorted to the Station History Room. A presentation on the history of RAF Honington is made and the visitors can browse the many photographs available. This is followed by attending a Trainee Gunners Graduation Parade. Then lunch followed a guided tour of the RAF Regiment Museum. The visit ends with a refreshment stop in the Sergeants' Mess. Finally, each visitor is presented with a signed commemorative certificate. If an Organisation has been part of the visit a special Certificate is presented to the Organisation. As part of the visit, Organisations can if they so wish, place a wreath at the RAF Regiment Memorial Garden.



The Branch publishes a bi-monthly Newsletter, in February, April, June, August, October and December. As well as reporting items from Central Headquarters the newsletter contains information on past, present and future branch events together with appropriate photographs. The Newsletter is distributed to all members and further copies are made available in the Sergeants, and Officers' Messes and the Community Centre. The Newsletter has been awarded several prizes in the past few years.

A branch website is being constructed and will be available in the near future. Look for www.rafathetford.org.uk

In 2010 a "Garden of Reflection" was constructed at RAF Honington and since it's construction the Thetford and District Branch has carried out regular maintenance of the site. Planting bulbs and generally keeping the area tidy and where possible free from weeds. Members can often be seen attending their "Janker Wallahs" fatigues.



One of our members resides in Jefferson County, Wisconsin. He is also a member of the Jefferson County Veterans Association, and through him contact was made with the Jefferson County Veterans Association and since that date, there has been an affiliation with the Veterans Association. Copies of the Branch Newsletter is regularly dispatched so that contact can be maintained.

Further information regarding membership call Bill Neve on 01952 718445.

For general information regarding the Branch contact the Branch Chairman, John MacPherson on 01842 751613 or the Honorary Secretary, Ray Towler, on 01842 765399 or by emailing ray.towler@btinternet.com

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