

WINGS FOR  
THE KING

*Teaching our  
Patron to fly*

A MASTERPIECE  
IN GLASS

*The Royal Auxiliary  
Air Force Centenary  
stained glass window*

# 128

THE MAGAZINE OF THE RAF CLUB SUMMER 2025

THE FIRST GREAT  
AIR BATTLE

*Commemorating the  
85th anniversary of  
the Battle of Britain*

TRAVELLERS'  
TALES

*From Singapore to  
Chicago: exploring the  
Club's reciprocal network*



**ROYAL AIR  
FORCE CLUB**  
— FOUNDED 1918 —





ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB  
FOUNDED 1918

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Club updates and offers.



ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB  
FOUNDED 1918

## Full steam ahead for the Club

Welcome to another edition of *128 Magazine* – where has the time gone since my first Chair's Foreword back in January 2022?

It seems like only last month. But time stands still for no-one and much has been happening in the Club since the last time that I put pen to paper to you, with much planned to be happening in the near future. But first a quick overview of the health of your Club.

The headline is that all is well and on an even keel in the Club. Financially, we have paid off our outstanding bank loan and, as part of our risk mitigation and future-proofing actions, have developed a strong reserves strategy which, whilst ensuring that costs for Members do not rise significantly, will also ensure that we create a healthy financial reserve over the next few years, for use in emergencies. However, we are determined to avoid building this reserve too quickly as we want to minimise any unnecessary financial burden for our current Members.

Consequently, for this year, I am delighted that the Board of Trustees agreed to increase the costs of bedrooms by only 2.5% from September onwards and to not increase the cost of food and beverages at all.

In terms of current events, we are right in the middle of a major refurbishment project in our much-loved Running Horse Tavern. As a result of its popularity, the bar can become very crowded, its layout makes life difficult for Members and staff alike, and the presence of the food preparation area means that cooking odours can be an unwelcome intrusion. Perhaps more importantly, the combination of doors and steps renders the Running Horse virtually inaccessible to anyone who has serious mobility issues which, frankly, is unacceptable in 2025. In addition, the basement kitchen and much of its equipment have also reached the end of their useful life, and the repair bill for equipment failures is escalating.

The Trustees therefore decided to take the opportunity to refurbish both areas and the programme will bring these crucial basement areas to a standard that will remain functional for the next 25 years or more. The changes to the layout of the Running Horse will also offer accessibility and approximately 25% more space for Members and guests.



Having said all of this, the Trustees are acutely conscious that the Running Horse holds a special place in the hearts of many Members and, in considering potential design changes, we have been very clear on the need to preserve its character. The chosen solution draws on the heritage of the original tavern that was on site in the 1800s and we are ensuring that the artwork, while consistent with the tavern theme, will be sensitive to the history of the RAF as a fighting Service since the Club's formation in 1918, so you can expect to see some familiar items on the walls!

Whilst, as previously mentioned, Club finances are now back on a firm footing, I would

nevertheless like to invite Members to support this vital bar upgrade and kitchen refurbishment by donating to the Running Horse project. Details on how to support can be found on page 18.

Turning now to this edition of 128, I was fascinated to read the article from ACM Sir Richard Johns (my station commander at RAF Gutersloh when I was a baby Pilot Officer many, many years ago) about training The King to fly at Cranwell. Following on the theme of Cranwell, I commend to you the article about membership on page 19, and the need to constantly recruit new serving RAF officers – the key to the Club's sustainability.

That said, I was surprised, but somewhat heartened, to recently discover, that at the start of 2015 we had a total of 3,908 serving Club Members whilst today we have a total of 4,999, an increase of nearly 1,100 (some 28%) on 10 years ago. This is despite significant reductions in the size of the serving RAF.

To conclude on a personal note, the Royal Air Force Club is a very special institution to all of us and is so much more than the sum of its parts. It has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to serve since October 2021 as a Trustee and as your Club Chair. However, after nearly four years in the role, I have decided that it is time for me to stand down this summer and hand over the mantle in July to my successor, Air Vice-Marshal Warren "Bunny" James, an excellent choice to lead the Club into the future.

Thank you very much indeed for all of your support and help during my tenure, I will now enjoy looking forward to my first pint in the newly refurbished Running Horse!

**AIR VICE-MARSHAL THE HON. DAVID MURRAY CVO OBE DL RAF**  
CLUB CHAIR



## FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# A year of progress

It has been another year of progress at the Club, and I am pleased to report the successful renovation of the Presidents' Room, which re-opened for functions in September 2024. The space has been beautifully restored, featuring enhanced lighting and air conditioning, creating an elegant setting for a variety of events. We are thrilled with the transformation; please do take a moment to admire it next time you visit.

Our commitment to sustainability remains strong, and we are pleased to announce that the Club has partnered with *EarthCheck*, a leading sustainability accreditation organisation for the

hospitality industry. This collaboration will guide us in making sustainability-focused decisions across all areas of the Club, from capital expenditure to the food we serve. As we embark on this journey, we are working towards achieving Bronze Certification as our first milestone.

The main Ladies' Toilets and Changing Room (formerly the Ladies' Powder Room) on the First Floor has undergone a complete refurbishment, including the installation of a shower and an additional toilet on the lower level to provide more inclusive facilities. We have also carried out a refresh of the Gentlemen's Toilets

and Changing Room, addressing maintenance issues and giving the space a fresh look.

In a significant financial milestone, we are delighted to announce that the loan taken out for the Centenary Wing in 2018 has been repaid ahead of schedule. This achievement strengthens the Club's financial position and reflects our prudent approach to long-term planning.

The strength and success of the Club are built upon the dedication and expertise of both our Trustees and our outstanding staff. In 2024, there were several changes to the Board. In July, Air Commodore Phil Wadlow joined as Vice-

*“Our commitment to sustainability remains strong, and we are pleased to announce that the Club has partnered with EarthCheck, a leading sustainability accreditation organisation for the hospitality industry”*

Chair (Serving), maintaining the vital link between the Club and those serving in the RAF. In November, four long-standing Trustees: Air Commodore Barbara Cooper, Flight Lieutenant Ian Melia, Squadron Leader Sean O'Brien, and Honorary Group Captain Jo Salter all stepped down after nine years of dedicated service. The Club thanks them all for their tireless efforts, particularly during the challenging COVID period. At the same time, we warmly welcomed Group Captain Peter Brown, Wing Commander Gavin Poole, Wing Commander Amanda Scarth and Mr Bernie Watson as new Trustees.



In 2024, the Club's Executive Team underwent several changes, including the retirement of Club Manager Kathryn Cooper after an exceptional 38 years of dedicated service. In recognition of Kathryn's outstanding service, the Club was delighted to award her Honorary Life Membership, and we look forward to welcoming Kathryn as a Member for many years to come. Meanwhile, our staff continue to work tirelessly to deliver the exceptional service and hospitality that define the RAF Club experience. We extend our deepest gratitude to them all, as without their combined efforts, the Club would not be the thriving 'home from home' for our Members that it is today.

On a personal note, this year I am proud to be celebrating my tenth year at the Club. Reflecting on this journey, the Centenary Project stands out as one of the most significant undertakings of my tenure. Looking ahead, we are excited to embark on the long-awaited refurbishment of the Running Horse Tavern. Having remained largely unchanged for the past 50 years, this project will modernise the space, improve accessibility, and support our sustainability goals. Notably, the kitchen – which is obsolescent and increasingly expensive to maintain – will transition from gas to induction, significantly improving energy efficiency and ventilation, incorporating materials and design choices which align with our broader sustainability commitments.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all Members for your continued support and engagement with the Club: your enjoyment of the Club inspires our staff and is a key retention factor for them, so thank you for helping to create a place of work that everyone enjoys. As always, your feedback is invaluable, and we encourage you to share your thoughts as we continue to evolve and enhance our Club.

**MILES POOLEY FIH MI**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & CLUB SECRETARY



## CLUB SHOP

### The Royal Air Force Club Cognac, '20 Years Later'

For over a century, the Royal Air Force Club has been a haven for camaraderie, excellence and heritage. In keeping with this legacy, we are proud to present the Royal Air Force Club Delamain 2002 Cognac, our Early Landed offering that embodies the spirit of distinction.

In 2004, this remarkable cask of Grande Champagne Cognac was carefully chosen by the Club for its exceptional quality and laid to rest in an English cellar. For 20 years, it has aged gracefully in this unique environment, its character shaped by time, patience and expertise. Today, it stands as a symbol of refined craftsmanship, ready to finally be enjoyed by our Members.

With its pale colour, aromatic complexity and subtle balance of fruit and French oak, this limited-edition cognac offers an exquisite experience – a taste of history in every glass.

It is available to purchase by the measure from the Cowdray Lounge and Running Horse Tavern for £8.00 per 25ml, or by bottle from the Club Shop for £100.00.

#### Alain Roux's Tasting Notes

Renowned chef-patron of the three-Michelin-starred Waterside Inn, Alain Roux, describes the Royal Air Force Club Delamain 2002 Cognac:

*“Floral tones of honeysuckle and jasmine, with a touch of walnuts and mushrooms. Buttery, with notes of butterscotch, fresh almond, and a light minted finish. A very pleasant cognac.”*



Clockwise from above: Presidents' Room; Kathryn's Retirement Party; Visualisation of the Running Horse Tavern Refurbishment Project







From left: The then HRH the Prince of Wales in cockpit; the Royal visit; Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard and Prince Charles in the cockpit of a Jet Provost Mk 5

## COVER STORY

# Wings for the King

*Club Member Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Johns looks back at his experience in helping the then Prince of Wales achieve his wings*

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 1971, Flight Lieutenant The Prince of Wales received his RAF pilot's wings from the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Denis Spotswood, during the passing out parade of No 1 Graduate Entry (GE) at the RAF College, Cranwell. The occasion marked the achievement of The King's ambition, as a young man, to complete the full RAF pilot training syllabus to wings standard. Before his arrival to join No 1 GE in March that year, the then Prince Charles had accumulated some 200 hours flying

in the Chipmunk primary trainer and the Basset communications aircraft under the tutelage of Squadron Leader Philip Pinney. All to the good, but continuing to wings standard in the Jet Provost Mk 5, without fear or favour, posed new and demanding challenges, with progress dependent on passing rigorous tests in a much wider variety of flying disciplines. An operation order, issued by HQ Flying Training Command, covered all aspects of Prince Charles' time at Cranwell, with formal directives to those most closely involved with his flying training. My own

task was to train him to wings standard by 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1971, and in so doing to be directly responsible for his air and ground training in aeronautical subjects during this period. I was required to give a minimum of 80 per cent dual flying instruction, with permission to authorise my deputy, Squadron Leader John Robinson, to fly the syllabus sorties required to provide checks on standardisation and progress. To start his training, Prince Charles had first to endure two weeks of concentrated ground work, covering technical subjects, combat survival,

emergency drills and cockpit procedures. Once he had demonstrated a satisfactory level of knowledge, we set off to achieve his first solo on type. After eight hours' instruction, Prince Charles' feel for the aircraft and his growing self-confidence satisfied me that he was ready. My reward was to watch a faultless circuit and landing that impressed more than one pair of critical eyes. I did, however, have to criticise Prince Charles' taxiing: its velocity was excessive. For my pains, I was soon enmeshed in an explanation to refute Prince Charles' theory concerning the merits of fast taxiing as a means of fuel conservation – a new one on me!

Thereafter, work focused on preparation for the first formal progress check, due some 18 hours' flying time later. This was hard graft, as Prince Charles had to assimilate a mass of information and learn new handling techniques and procedures. It would be foolish to imply that progress was uniformly smooth. Indeed, it would denigrate his achievement, for throughout the period of intensive briefing, concentrated flying instruction and lengthy debriefs, Prince Charles stuck to the task cheerfully and willingly. General handling sorties included spirited sessions of aerobatics, maximum rate turning, fully developed spins, incipient spinning and forced landings. Prince Charles absorbed the pressure and, to my satisfaction, achieved on test an above average result.

There can be no doubt that this success marked a critical moment in the course. It helped Prince Charles' confidence and was a pleasing reward for his very hard work in the preceding weeks, which included spending a day and a half each week attending ground lectures and sustaining a polite interest in even the dreariest aspects of the ground syllabus. Instrument flying had been introduced before the progress check to allow us to fly when poor weather would have otherwise kept us on the ground. Two weeks after the progress check, Prince Charles passed the Advanced Instrument Flying Grading Test, which was necessary before moving on to more advanced syllabus exercises.

First in line was navigation, with lectures on the theory given by Flight Lieutenant Malcolm Gaynor (known as Super Nav), who flew with Prince Charles on some solo

*“Tail chasing was introduced in the early sorties and, after a demonstration, Prince Charles' handling of the aircraft was smooth but aggressive, demonstrating a wealth of fighter pilot potential.”*

exercises to provide an extra pair of eyes in the crowded air space. Here, it is perhaps worth adding that Prince Charles' own lookout astounded me as, by any standards, his quickness of eye was exceptional. That said, the continuity of instruction suffered because of bad weather and Prince Charles catching a cold shortly before he was due to take his final navigation test. After a week's delay, Prince Charles set off with Flight Lieutenant Peter Norriss to take the test that was the first of the qualifying exams. Any anxiety I felt about his outcome proved groundless. Both were smiling when they returned to my office, and so was I when I was told the result was an above average pass. In preparing for formation flying, Prince Charles was given a sharp spinning exercise as a supplement to the monthly

routine requirement. This was flown as a safeguard against the possibility of an unintended spin during tail chase manoeuvring – not unknown. The formation flying phase completed in two weeks was, from most angles, the high point of the course. Squadron Leader John Robinson led the dual sorties, I led the solo trips, and Wing Commander Brian Huxley (Chief Flying Instructor) flew the final Jet Provost to make up three-aircraft formations. After two sorties flying in echelon, Prince Charles was close to solo standard – the first hint of the exceptional standard he was eventually to achieve. But formation flying was not all harmony and happiness. While relaxed in echelon, the line astern flying was spoilt by over-controlling on the ailerons. The problem would be solved with a more relaxed approach, and Prince Charles found the solution by suddenly delivering a spirited rendition of 'Rule Britannia', followed by perfect mimicry of Noel Coward's 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen'. Thereafter, line astern flying was immaculate, but I missed the musical accompaniment on subsequent sorties.

Tail chasing was introduced in the early sorties and, after a demonstration, Prince Charles' handling of the aircraft was smooth but aggressive, demonstrating a wealth of fighter pilot potential. It was a delight to observe and share his pleasure in this exhilarating phase of training. In the last six formation sorties, he was given a most rigorous examination in close formation flying, which included steep wing overs, formation radar approaches and formation landings. His performance earned his best flying assessment of 'above average bordering exceptional'. Night flying followed the ending of the formation phase and was completed on schedule within a week. After two dual sorties, Prince Charles went off for his first night solo, before taking his night flying test with Wing Commander Huxley, flown in heavy rain and a lowering cloud base. In increasingly difficult conditions, Wing Commander Huxley judged that circuit flying was well »



handled, while upper air work was smoothly and confidently flown. A mark of 74 per cent was awarded, giving Prince Charles a pointer to the standard required in the final two tests of his flying training. The first test was to gain a White Card Instrument rating. After four sorties of satisfying industry, I was confident Prince Charles would pass. This confidence was not misplaced, as the Wing Instrument Rating Examiner, Flight Lieutenant Norman Tregaskis, awarded an above average assessment.

By now, a month had passed without a full general handling sortie. Revision before the final handling test covered the complete general handling syllabus with no problems coming to light. One airmanship problem I set during a high-level exercise had an unexpected result.

*“After completing the course, Prince Charles followed a programme of visits to front line units, to fly operational profiles in a Phantom, a Nimrod and a Vulcan, before making a parachute descent from an Andover into the sea after a day’s preparatory training at Abingdon”*

To prompt Prince Charles to start a maximum rate of descent from 30,000 feet, I simulated symptoms of hypoxia as he completed a barrel roll. After a minute of frantic twitching and slurred speech there was no reaction, so I broke off to explain rather laboriously that I was pretending to be hypoxic, so would he please fly a maximum rate descent with the appropriate drills. Prince Charles immediately answered that he thought my spasms reflected admiration for his immaculate barrel roll. A grossly inaccurate descent was then flown with much laughter, which rubbed more salt into my wounded pride.

The final handling test, taken on 8<sup>th</sup> July with Wing Commander Huxley, covered the complete spectrum of



Crown Copyright – RAF Cranwell

general handling in an hour and a quarter’s flying time. After landing, Prince Charles told me that he thought the trip had gone reasonably well - a modest assessment. Summarising his detailed written report, Wing Commander Huxley concluded with his assessment of ‘an above average performance’. Prince Charles could feel justifiably proud of his achievement, and I could not have asked for better.

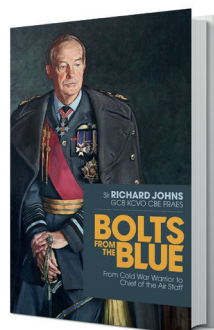
After completing the course, Prince Charles followed a programme of visits to front line units, to fly operational profiles in a Phantom, a Nimrod and a Vulcan, before making a parachute descent from an Andover into the sea after a day’s preparatory training at Abingdon. The programme was completed without incident, and Prince Charles departed for a short period of leave, before returning to Cranwell for rehearsals for No 1 GE passing out parade, which was to conclude with the presentation of his wings by the Chief of the Air Staff. Although destined for the Royal Navy, Prince Charles was assessed by

the posting board as suitable for training on the Phantom FG1 – proper recognition of a student pilot who achieved an above average standard and proved he had the potential to make a first-class operational pilot.

In the years that followed, I have been asked about my feelings concerning the instruction of Prince Charles during his course at Cranwell. It would be patently false to pretend I was unaware of any responsibility in excess of those accepted by all flying instructors in the performance of their duties. But my responsibility was shared with many others, whose encouragement and support were the foundations for the success of the exercise.

The common denominator of our individual interests was our pride in The King’s achievement as a young man, and the pleasure we gained from a privileged association. And today, for me, seeing His Majesty in RAF uniform, bearing pilots’ wings, is still something very special.

**AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR RICHARD JOHNS**  
GCB KCVO CBE FRAES  
CLUB MEMBER



Sir Richard’s autobiography, ‘Bolts from the Blue’, reflects on his illustrious career and can be purchased from our Club Shop by scanning this QR code.



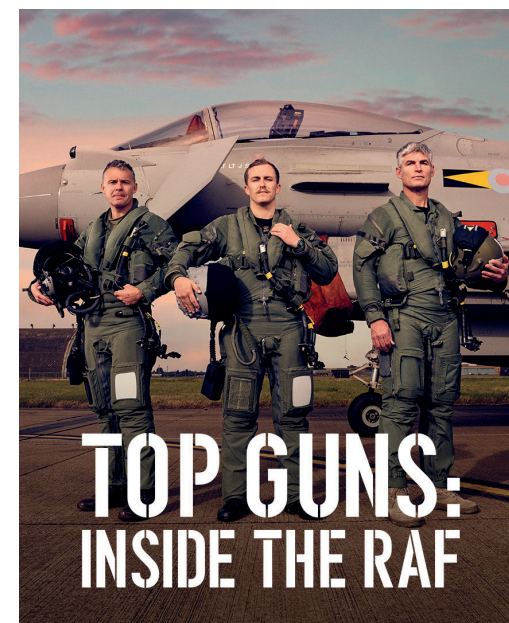
## Top Guns

*Top Guns: Inside the RAF* returned to television screens earlier this year, transporting viewers into the cockpits of supersonic Typhoon fighters and lifting the lid on the secretive world of remotely-piloted Reaper operations. Club Member Squadron Leader Dan Chorley gives us an insider view

Unlike most traditional television shows with an established script, cast and shooting locations, observational documentaries require a crew to shadow potential cast Members for weeks, acting as a ‘fly on the wall’ as they go about their daily business. This makes for more authentic television, capturing genuine moments as they happen – but it’s incredibly time intensive, with less than 1% of footage actually making one of the final six episodes. On top of this, filming within a military environment adds the complexities of operational and personnel security – with a crew who were mostly new to the RAF and the Armed Forces in general.

Understanding the many challenges ahead, a project team began planning the second series in late 2023, starting with visits to RAF Coningsby and RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire. The first series had been hugely successful – Channel 4’s best performing factual series of 2023, which made pitching the second series to RAF stations and potential contributors much easier. The production company set about meeting as many people as possible, from all backgrounds and professions, with the aim of starting filming in early 2024.

As memories of new year celebrations faded, it became clear that recent geopolitical instability was only going to intensify and that the RAF was almost certainly going to be called upon. Personnel were deployed on Operation BILOXI, a NATO air policing mission out of Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base in



Romania – very close to the Ukrainian border, where Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine was about to enter its third year. In the Middle East, Typhoons deployed on Operation SHADER – the UK’s mission to counter-Daesh, were increasingly being used for other missions in the theatre. Iranian rhetoric towards Israel was intensifying, and it looked very likely that they would imminently launch significant strikes.

Clearance was given for camera crews to head to both Romania and Cyprus to capture these events as they unfolded, resulting in extraordinary access to previously unseen frontline operations. This included Typhoons safeguarding an RAF Rivet Joint reconnaissance aircraft as it collected vital intelligence on

Russian activities in the vicinity of the Black Sea – only to be threatened by a Russian fighter.

The series also focused on the more human elements of service life. Most poignantly of all, honouring pilot Squadron Leader Mark Long, who was killed whilst flying a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight vintage Spitfire in May 2024. Camera crews had been filming with him in his day job as an instructor with the Typhoon Operational Conversion Unit, 29 Squadron, as he instructed junior pilots ‘Mac’ and ‘Cheese’ on their first Typhoon sorties, but sadly never getting to see them pass the course and make it to their front-line squadrons.

The aim of the series was to demonstrate service life in the most authentic way possible. Everyone featured in the series was a volunteer, giving up tens of hours of their time at home, during training, and on operations. Whilst it’s easy to forget on the inside, as a Member of the Armed Forces, our colleagues are doing extraordinary things on a daily basis to defend and protect the United Kingdom – at home and overseas. In an ever more uncertain world, it’s crucial we continue to tell our story in more innovative and compelling ways, reassuring the public and our allies, while deterring our adversaries – showing we are willing and ready to act when it matters most.

**Watch online on the Channel 4 website, or find the series on YouTube. Head to [www.raf.click/topguns](http://www.raf.click/topguns) for more information.**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Club Member Squadron Leader Dan Chorley, led series two of *Top Guns: Inside the RAF* for the Royal Air Force. He joined the RAF in 2014 as an Aerospace Battle Manager, re-branching in 2019 to specialise in Media Operations – with his fondest moments at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland. In 2023 he left as a regular and joined the RAF Reserves, and now works for Leonardo as their Media Relations Manager based in Edinburgh.



## HERITAGE

# The First Great Air Battle

*Air Commodore Rick Peacock-Edwards CBE commemorates the 85th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain*

On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025, we will commemorate the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the first great air battle on which the fate of history depended. Victory in the Battle saved Britain from the dreadful fate suffered by so many European nations at the time of domination, subjugation and terror by the Nazis, and ensured Britain stayed in the fight, ultimately paving the way for ultimate victory. It is in no small measure, therefore, that our freedom and the way of life that we have enjoyed since World War II is due to the exploits of the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain. It is therefore one of the most important episodes in British history, and we must never forget it. As a poignant reminder, the last surviving Battle of Britain pilot, Group Captain John 'Paddy' Hemingway DFC, passed away in March 2025 at the age of 105.

### The Facts

The Battle of Britain lasted from 10<sup>th</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> October 1940. A total of circa 2,940 aircrew from 14 countries took part in the Battle of Britain and were entitled to wear the Battle of Britain Clasp on the ribbon of the 1939-45 Star: it is the rarest of all such clasps. Consequently, these aircrew, mainly Hurricane and Spitfire pilots, were dubbed 'THE FEW' by Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, and have been known as such ever since. Other aircraft involved included the Defiant, Blenheim, and Gladiator. The countries involved were Great Britain (2,342), Poland (145), New Zealand (127), Canada (112), Czechoslovakia (88), Australia (32), Belgium (28), South Africa (25), France (13), Ireland (10), USA (9), Southern



Rhodesia (3) Barbados (1), and Jamaica (1).

Alongside the 'FEW' were the 'MANY' who played a vital part in the success of the Battle. These included the ground crews who maintained the aircraft, the administrative staff who provided support, the industries who manufactured the aircraft and parts, those involved with the Chain Home Radar system that played such a vital role in extending the eyes of the aircrew and making sure aircraft were directed into the fight, the pilots of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), men and women who delivered aircraft to the front-line squadrons thus enabling aircrew to remain focused on the air battle, the Royal Observer Corps who scoured the skies, and so many more.

At the start of the Battle of Britain, the RAF was heavily outnumbered both in terms of aircraft numbers and available pilots.

The Battle of Britain can be divided into 4 phases:

- The first phase began with German attacks against channel shipping and ports.



- In Phase 2, attacks were concentrated on coastal airfields and chain radar.
- In Phase 3, the airfields in the southeast of England were the primary targets.
- In Phase 4, London became the Luftwaffe's primary target, by day and night.

Hitler's aim was to establish air superiority over the skies of southeast England before launching his planned invasion of the UK. The fact that he failed is a mark of great achievement for the heavily outnumbered RAF assets and their will and ability to fight. September 15<sup>th</sup> is known as Battle of Britain Day because it was the day on which Hitler realised that the RAF was not a spent force but continued to inflict heavy losses on his rapidly depleting number of aircrews and aircraft. Plans for the invasion were postponed.

### Leadership

Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill was the outstanding national leader during the Battle of Britain, but the two men to whom we owe the most for the success of the RAF in the Battle of Britain are: Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding (later to become Lord Dowding), Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command; and Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park (later to become Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park), the Air Officer Commanding Number 11 Group, responsible for the airspace in the southeast of England and English Channel where most of the air battles took place. Together, Dowding and Park are recognised as the architects of the Battle of Britain, and their strategic and tactical decision-making during the Battle was a major factor in securing victory. The part that they played cannot be overstated: their role was crucial. This is widely recognised, and especially by the Royal Air Force Club.

### The Battle of Britain remembered in the RAF Club

In the Battle of Britain Suite, you can see paintings and memorabilia from the period; the library includes many books about the Battle; the Club's art collection is well populated with paintings of the aircraft involved and battle scenes.

Clockwise, from far left: Photograph of Group Captain John 'Paddy' Hemingway; The Few by Michael Turner; portrait of Sir Winston Churchill in the Clubhouse; Sir Keith Park and Lord Dowding – the architects of the Battle of Britain. All paintings hang in the Club's Churchill Bar.



Also, in the Churchill Bar, on the opposite wall, you can view a large portrait entitled 'The FEW', which depicts the aerial battle over Kent and the English Channel. In the main corridor, you will find a framed depiction of the battle on which the names of The FEW are listed. Finally, every year the Club holds a dinner to commemorate the Battle, to be held this year on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2025 when Lord Piers Dowding will be the guest speaker.

### Places to Visit

There are many locations where the Battle of Britain is preserved for people to see. These include places from where the Battle was controlled, airfields from where operations were conducted, memorials, pubs where the aircrew socialised, and many more. More specifically, I recommend visits to the following: The Battle of Britain Museum at Bentley Priory, the bunker and visitor centre at the old RAF Uxbridge, the Chapel, Museum, and Heritage Hangar at Biggin Hill, the Imperial War Museum at Duxford, Kenley Airfield and, perhaps of greatest importance, the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel le Ferne in Kent on the Cliffs overlooking the English Channel.

Close to the Club, you can go on a Battle of Britain walk: it takes circa 45 minutes, starts at the RAF Church St Clement Danes, includes the Battle of Britain Monument on the Embankment of the River Thames, and finishes at Westminster Abbey. In all these places there is much to see and remember.

### A Tribute

In this 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of the Battle of Britain, it is timely that we should be reminded of the achievements of our magnificent forebears who played a major part in the long history of Great Britain. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to SO FEW'. In saying these words, neither should we forget the role played by the 'MANY' in helping make it happen.

**AIR COMMODORE RICK PEACOCK-EDWARDS CBE**  
*A Club Member and Chairman of Battle of Britain Tours*  
([www.battleofbritaintours.co.uk](http://www.battleofbritaintours.co.uk))



CLUB ART

# A masterpiece in glass

*Introducing the Club's Royal Auxiliary Air Force Centenary Stained Glass Window*

The Royal Air Force Club's stained glass window project commemorating the centenary of the formation of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) started off as a competition launched by the Club's Arts & Heritage Committee in August 2023. A partnership was formed between the Royal Air Force Club and the

British Society of Master Glass Painters (BSMGP) to launch a competition in which emerging artists were encouraged to compete. Five artists, supported by more experienced BSMGP mentors, were shortlisted, and their anonymised designs considered in April 2024 by a judging panel comprising Members of the BSMGP, the Royal Air Force Club

Arts and Heritage Committee, and the Commandant General of the RAuxAF. Each submitted design would have been a worthy winner, presenting the judging panel with a very difficult final choice. In the end, Air Specialist Class 1 (AS1) Chad Kenney's design was declared the winner.

Chad said: "I was thrilled that my design was chosen. It shows the development of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force over the last century with activities undertaken in 1924 at the top of the window, and a comparative selection of the roles played today at the bottom. I was very keen to show the breadth of trades the RAuxAF undertakes today.

*"I feel the window is a testament not just to the Royal Auxiliary Air Force over the years, but specifically to the countless individuals that have served throughout this tremendous hundred years we have been blessed to have them."*

**Air Specialist Class 1 Chad G Kenney**

Throughout the process, Chad was supported by his BSMGP mentor, Deborah Lowe, and his design has been transformed into a masterpiece in glass, which not only encapsulates perfectly the history, esprit de corps, and – as originally intended – the heraldic badge of the RAuxAF, but also adds yet another outstanding piece of stained glass artwork to the Royal Air Force Club's collection, which is becoming one of increasing national importance.

**From the maker, AS1 Chad Kenney**

"The window comprises of three zonal areas and three focal layers. The first area and layer is the RAuxAF heraldic badge. It is the centrepiece of the window, placing to the fore the organisation that the window represents. The badge's



Gp Capt Jim Beldon and AS1 Chad Kenney.



L-R: Club President, HRH, Club Chair, Gp Capt Jim Beldon, Club CEO



Chad Kenney at work



Sgt Cathy Sharples

©Sgt Cathy Sharples

wings span the full width of the pane, with the King's crown rising above the badge's central image.

The second layer displays both the inception and centennial years of the RAuxAF, using a deep yellow glass matching the gold of the badge's crown to represent a prized 100 years of service. This layer was the basis on which this design was built, giving both an interesting composition and link between the other two layers. Having a deliberately flat aesthetic helps draw the eye to the third and most important layer: the people.

The top and bottom of the pane combine the dates with personnel performing roles consistent with their eras. At the top, woven around the date of inception, I have included a multitude of iconic images from the history of the Service, including the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) operating

switchboards, a woman from the Air Transport Service (ATS) being inspected, a pilot cheekily perched on the badge, along with nurses, radar controllers and aircraft mechanics.

This isn't all from 1924: it's a transition from the Royal Auxiliary Air Force's historical roles in the top pane, to contemporary roles at the foot of the window. The rear layer transitions from a Royal Air Force blue hue to a full spectrum of colour down the window: a metaphor for the progression of time showing the modernisation of a Force born between the World Wars. Our modern trades men and women consist of firefighters, chefs, a bondswoman, RAF Regiment gunners and a photographer – one of whom, Sgt Cathy Sharples, documented my entire journey thought this metamorphosis from air cartographer with some graphic design talents to a fully-fledged stained glass artist.

## The unveiling & the Royal visit

Following the successful installation of the window in late September 2024, the Royal Air Force Club was honoured to welcome His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester on 6th October 2024 to unveil the new stained glass window. As Commander-in-Chief of the RAuxAF and President of the British Society of Master Glass Painters, His Royal Highness' presence added profound significance to the occasion.

During the visit, His Royal Highness was warmly received by Air Marshal Sir David Walker KCVO OBE, Club President, and introduced to several distinguished guests. The event concluded with a luncheon attended by His Royal Highness and other distinguished guests, celebrating the RAuxAF's rich history and contributions to the Royal Air Force. The Royal Air Force Club is proud to honour the RAuxAF and we are pleased to share this magnificent stained glass window with our Members, many of whom are Reservists themselves.

The Chair of the Club's Arts and Heritage Committee, Group Captain Jim Beldon, remarked: 'This project, which started more than a year ago, flourished from a simple brief to commission a stained glass image of the RAuxAF crest into a competition that fostered the very best young stained glass talent in the country. That the competition was won by AS1 Chad Kenney demonstrates the incredible skills that lie behind the surface of our talented Royal Air Force aviators. We are indebted to the British Society of Master Glass Painters for their dedicated collaboration in the project, and in particular to Deborah Lowe who mentored Chad. Given that His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester is both the Air Commodore-in-Chief of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and President of the BSGMP, His gracious unveiling of the window made for the perfect occasion that will long be remembered by the Club.'

We are grateful to The Beaverbrook Foundation who funded the installation of the RAuxAF window.



## CLUB ART

# Badges of honour

Since the publication of last year's 128 Magazine, the Club has been fortunate to receive several important additions to its collection

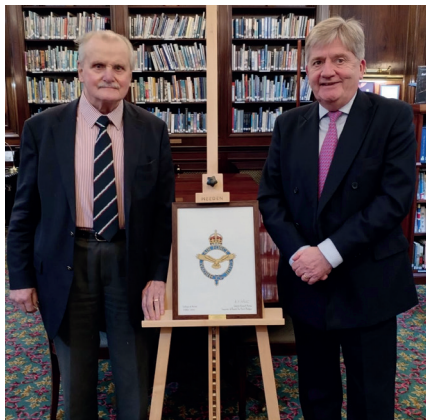
Our assembly of heraldic badges continues to grow, with 560 badges now on display in the Club. Several important additions to the collection were made in 2024, including a number of Royal Air Force Regiment badges which now form part of the impressive display at the end of the Club's main corridor. In June, the Club was honoured to receive three new badges belonging to Czechoslovakian Squadrons that formed part of the wartime Royal Air Force, with the badges of 310, 311 and 312 Squadrons joining that of 313 Squadron, which was already on display. The presentation enjoyed a very high profile in the Czech Republic, whose delegation to the Club included their Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Mrs Marie Chatardová, and the Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General Karel Řehka. The Club was also honoured – as at so many of its events – to host a guard of honour from the Air Training Corps – the cadets on this occasion coming from 312 (City of Canterbury) Squadron – the enduring namesake of one of the Czechoslovakian Squadrons, and a further example of



**Above:** Badges of 310, 311 and 312 Squadrons joining that of 313 Squadron (bottom right).  
**Below, left to right:** The Presentation of the Czechoslovakian Badges; Left to right: Wg Cdr Michael Gilbert pictured with the Club Chair, AVM The Hon. David Murray

the Club's ongoing commitment to, and engagement with, the Royal Air Force's next generation.

Other artistic highlights of this edition of 128 Magazine include a look at the creation of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) stained glass window



(see pages 12-13) and Hazel Morgan's exceptional portraits of Air Chief Marshals Lord Dowding and Sir Keith Park, the RAF's key commanders during the Battle of Britain (see pages 10-11).

Lastly, in early 2025, the Club bade farewell to Wing Commander Michael Gilbert after many years of service as a Trustee, Member of the Arts and Heritage Committee, and Club Archivist. The Committee also expressed its gratitude to Mandy Shepherd and Air Commodore Rick Peacock-Edwards, who made way for new Members Grant Lewis and Aubrey Dawson, bringing valuable expertise in art curation, restoration, and valuation. Overall, this has been an exceptional period for the Club's art collection, with promising acquisitions on the horizon.

**GROUP CAPTAIN JIM BELDON MBE**  
CHAIR OF THE ARTS & HERITAGE COMMITTEE

## LIBRARY

# Step inside...

In the Churchill Bar are two doors that lead into a special world, apparently unknown to many Members: not Narnia, but the Club's library!

The shelves hold some 3,500 books covering the history of the RAF and its aircraft from the First World War to current operations, as well as air power and an extensive range of biographies and memoirs. There is also a section devoted to lighter reading and fiction, for those seeking a break from matters aeronautical. And yes, Biggles does appear on the shelves!

A team of volunteers manage the library, with one or more usually present on Wednesdays from between 1100hrs and 1500hrs. They will be very happy to help you find the books you require, and – contrary to the stereotype – rarely frown on talking! The library catalogue is available online at <https://www.rafclub.org.uk/library> and also on the computer at the far end of the room. The books are arranged into broad categories to enable browsing.



*“The shelves hold some 3,500 books covering the history of the RAF and its aircraft from the First World War to current operations”*

A diagram showing the location of these categories is on the library desk.

Club Members can borrow books, using a simple form found on the library desk; the normal loan period is one month, and loans can be renewed if necessary. Simply contact the library

via [library@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:library@rafclub.org.uk). Similarly, we welcome offers to donate books, but please check the library catalogue to ensure that we do not already hold the volume(s) in question.

Please note that for the duration of the Running Horse Tavern refurbishment project (1st June to early-September), the Club will be utilising the Library space as an alternative venue. The 'Library Bar' will be open daily and serve drinks & food, operating an informal dress code.

# The Annual Friends of St Clement Danes Concert

**Thursday 27th November 2025 from 1830hrs**

RAF Club Members are invited to a wonderful pre-Christmas evening full of beautiful music from The Central Band of the RAF and St. Clement Danes Choir in the stunning surroundings of St Clement Danes Church on The Strand in London.

**Book your free ticket by emailing: [concert@fscd.org.uk](mailto:concert@fscd.org.uk)**  
Registered Charity No. 1048757, the Band plays by permission of the Air Force Board of the Defence Council. Donations to the church can be made at the door on the night.  
Refreshments will be provided.





## FUNDRAISING

# Friends creating a lasting legacy

*'Belonging to the Friends of the RAF Club gives me an opportunity to enable greater improvements to be made to the facilities of the Club for the benefit of everyone, continuing the legacy of excellence and service which we all enjoy.'*

Club Member & Silver Friend



### Black Tie Gala Dinner with General (RET) T. Michael Moseley, USAF, KBE 9th April 2025

We were delighted to welcome General (RET.) T. Michael Moseley, USAF, KBE, to our Friends of the RAF Club Spring Gala Dinner, hosted by Club Chair, Air Vice-Marshal The Honourable David Murray CVO, OBE, DL, and Club President, Air Marshal Sir David Walker KCVO, OBE, DL.

Over 70 Friends joined us for an entertaining and insightful evening, as fellow Club Member General Moseley reflected on his 40+ year military career and his tenure as the 18th Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force.

During his service, General Moseley was

responsible for planning and executing joint and coalition air and space operations across numerous global conflicts. These included operations against Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan (*Operation Enduring Freedom*), counterterrorism efforts along the Horn of Africa and in Yemen, and campaigns in Iraq (*Operation Southern Watch*, *Operation Northern Watch*, and *Operation Iraqi Freedom*).

*"The Club's wonderful staff fielded a great event. General Moseley is a true Anglophile - it was a pleasure to meet him."*

As the senior Airman in the U.S. military, overseeing the organising, training, and equipping of over 700,000

personnel across Active Duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Civilian sectors, General Moseley offered rare insight into the intersection of American security, defence, and policy—perspectives made even more relevant in light of recent global events.

Members were truly privileged to hear his candid and humorous recollections, particularly his experiences working closely with British counterparts. The 'special relationship' between the USAF and the RAF is indeed alive and well!

We extend our sincere thanks to all the Friends who joined us. These events are a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow Members and celebrate the generosity of those who support the Club throughout the year.



Left to Right: Apprentice chefs at work, Refurbished Lobby and Club's front doors.

## The Friends of the RAF Club

The Royal Air Force Club was founded on philanthropy—its inception in 1918 made possible by Lord Cowdray's initial donation to "ensure a permanent Club Home worthy of the airmen and their brilliant and superlatively heroic work."

Today, the Club remains true to that mission. As a Registered Charity, any surplus from day-to-day operations is reinvested into improving facilities and services for all Members. Thanks to the Friends of the RAF Club and Legacy Gifts, numerous capital projects have come to life.

It's hard to believe it's been five years since we launched the Friends scheme to recognise Members who supported the Club's fundraising efforts during the pandemic. That network has since grown into a loyal and valued community. So far, Friends have supported projects such as:

- Refurbishment of the lobby and new front doors
- Upgraded AV equipment in the Sovereigns' Room
- Renovation of the Club's front façade
- Rewiring and refurbishment of the Presidents' Room
- Staff welfare initiatives, including our chef apprenticeship programme



Legacy Gifts have helped to:

- Complete the Centenary Wing
- Install the iconic stained-glass window on the back staircase
- Provide cost-of-living grants to staff in 2022
- Install acoustic pods in the Business Suite in 2024, supporting Members who work remotely from the Club

For 2025, our fundraising efforts will focus on extensive building works, accessibility enhancements, and the refurbishment of the beloved Running Horse Tavern.

We're also proud to announce our new **Care & Compassion Breaks**, launching summer 2025. These funded one- or two-night stays will offer rest and respite to serving officers and their families facing welfare issues or illness. Nominated by Station Commanders, recipients will enjoy:

- Accommodation and meals
- Afternoon tea and welcome gifts
- Children's activity packs



## Acknowledgements

The Trustees, Management, and Staff thank all Bronze, Silver, and Gold Friends of the RAF Club. Special thanks to those who wish to remain anonymous.

*Note: Due to the high number of Bronze Friends, we will reach out separately to express our gratitude.*

### GOLD FRIENDS

Lord Beaverbrook, Flt Lt N A Bishop, Capt A D Budagher, Mr G Bunker-James, MRAF Lord Craig of Radley, Mr A A Davis, Sqn Ldr G R Day, Gp Capt N K Gillingham, Sqn Ldr V Gupta, Ms D J Guthrie, Dr T Hudson, Sqn Ldr M Kelson, Dr H Kendrick, Mrs P J Moore, Sqn Ldr B S Naidoo, Mr A V Pheasant, Mrs M E Rex, Mrs P Spaight, Mrs G Summers, Flt Lt B A W Thompson, Lt Col R Williams, Wg Cdr P S Willmot

### SILVER FRIENDS

Mr A Ahmed, Mrs B M Aked, Mr M Allen, Mr M L Ashwell MBE, Prof M Bagshaw, Mr W A Baker, Flt Lt C C Baldwin, Mr A W Barnett, Mr S D Bartlett, Mr S P Battley, Gp Capt K R J De Belder OBE, Mr A W Bellers, Mr R H Belton, Dr T Benke, Lt Col S Blair, Gp Capt J Brock, Mr C A Brockbank, Mr A D K Campbell, Mr L H Carr, Mr DJ P Cattermole, Wg Cdr K Claxton, Mr J H Claxton, Mrs D M Cleaver, Mr J Cockburn, Mr B Cooper, Mr A T Crichton, Mr N A Cuddeford, Gp Capt N J Davis, Wg Cdr B Dobb, Wg Cdr A T Dolman MBE, Dr P V Dyer, Flt Lt D M Embrey OBE, Mrs M A C Foot, Mrs K H Foster, Mr P R Gorman, Ms A Graham MBE, Mr M J Green, Mr B Haskins, Mr T R A Hawkins, Mr D Hayler MBE, Mr C J Hill, Mr M J Hollingsworth, Mr J M V Horsman, Mrs H Hoyle, Mr M J Hunter, Mr A C Jackson, Mrs M T Joel, Mr D G Johnson, Sqn Ldr M K Johnson AFC, Mr S R Johnston, Mr S Kassum, Flt Lt A G Kay, Mrs B Keun, Wg Cdr J N Kirk, Mr E A Malone, Miss V L Marshall, Mr A P Matthews OBE, Mr D P McCullagh, Mr J McGarvey MBE, Mr D T P Milwright, Wg Cdr P Morrell OBE MVO, Mr G Nigro, Mr F E Parker, Mrs S Parsons, Wg Cdr R T Popple MBE, Mr N E S Price, Mr T Price, Mr C H Richardson, Mrs E M Ryle, Mr J S Schaefer, Lt Col W T Shearer, Mrs A S Sherrington





## Celebrate the Running Horse at Home

### Limited Edition Tankards – Your Running Horse Memento

Members are invited to support the Running Horse fundraising project by purchasing our new one-pint Pewter Tankards, designed to celebrate the British alehouse tradition. These beautiful, limited edition items are the perfect present for anyone who has enjoyed a night or two with good company in the Running Horse!

Featuring the Club crest and a British maker's mark, each tankard is gift-boxed and priced at £95.00, including a £50.00 donation to the Running Horse project. Along with new artworks, proceeds will help fund a display fitting for the trio of original 18th-century pewter tankards discovered in previous renovations, including one which belonged to James

Standen, the Landlord of the Running Horse 1826-1827.

Help support a unique piece of RAF Club history whilst raising a toast to good times and special memories!

Scan the QR code to pre-order your pewter tankard for collection in September.



**To donate to the Running Horse project in another way, please contact Charlotte Gray, Director of Fundraising and Member Engagement at [charlotte@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:charlotte@rafclub.org.uk).**

## Thriving Hives at 128 Piccadilly

Thanks to our generous Hive Heroes, the Club has hosted two colonies of industrious European honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) on the rooftop for several years.

In early April, Club Beekeeper Paul Youthed conducted the first spring inspection. While one hive did not survive the winter (a common occurrence) the other is thriving and expanding, and now repopulated the empty hive.

With around a five mile flight radius, our bees feast on nectar from London's Royal Parks and gardens, producing a truly Mayfair-exclusive honey!

Club honey is featured in menus and cocktails; to sample your own mini-pot at home, pick one up from Club Reception while stock lasts.



## Gifts in Wills

From June, Members can access a complimentary Will Writing service, available through a nationwide network of over 1,000 trusted local solicitors.

With 2/3 of adults either having no Will in place or an old, out of date Will, this service is designed to ensure this essential piece of administration is expertly taken care of.

Having an up-to-date Will prepared by a solicitor is the best way to ensure that your future wishes will be carried out. It is also the perfect way to leave something to help preserve the RAF Club for future generations of serving and former serving officers.

A gift costs nothing in your lifetime and makes a difference for years to come. Please consider supporting your "home from home" by leaving the Club a gift in your Will.

**To take advantage of this new service, with a face-to-face local appointment guaranteed, simply email [charlotte@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:charlotte@rafclub.org.uk) to learn more. Further details can also be found online at [www.rafclub.org.uk/supporting-club](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/supporting-club)**



## Support the future of the RAF Club

For more information on making a difference through donations, legacy gifts, or joining the Friends of the RAF Club, please contact Charlotte Gray, Director of Fundraising & Member Engagement, at [charlotte@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:charlotte@rafclub.org.uk) or call 020 7399 1082.

## MEMBERSHIP

## Let's spread the word

*Air Cdre Paul Higgins, reports on a busy year for the Club Membership team*

The Membership Committee, comprised of Trustees and other volunteer Members, comes together up to 6 times a year to ensure that, in policy and governance terms, membership matters are dealt with swiftly, carefully and fairly in the best interests of the Club and its 24,500 Members. Much of the vital day-to-day membership work is, of course, carried out by our excellent, full-time Club team, with the Membership Committee acting as a bridge to the Board of Trustees where higher-level matters might be concerned.

This time last year, I outlined some strategic priorities which the Membership Committee set for itself, so I thought it worth providing a quick update on these.

We have made progress in encouraging officer Members of the Regular and Reserve RAF to join (or rejoin) the Club, though there's always more to be done since we recognise this group as the vital foundations of our future membership. We are regularly getting good numbers of trainee officers at the RAF Officer Training Academy to commit to joining us once they have graduated and we offer reduced subscription fees for their initial years of service to encourage them to retain their membership. Our serving Club representatives on the RAF stations and in wider Defence provide a very important link to the RAF officer community; not only do they promote the benefits of the Club and what goes on within it, but they also provide highly valuable feedback and ideas which the Membership Committee and Board are able to benefit from. Additionally, the Board of Trustees recently approved the Membership Committee's proposal to extend the existing 'Tour of Duty' offer to allow cumulative time deployed away



The Club Membership Team and RAF Cranwell Graduation Crown Copyright – RAF Cranwell



*"I know many of you do tremendous work in advertising the Club's superb benefits, so do please keep spreading the word; a personal recommendation goes a long way!"*

(not just continuous, one-off blocks of time) to now qualify – the scheme, which has been very well received, offering 50% discount on Club's accommodation in the 12-months following deployment, so, if you are serving, please consider accessing this tremendous benefit.

We continue to listen to our Members since, whilst our numbers are encouragingly strong, we are not complacent – we are fortunate to have an enormously wide and rich demographic so there is no shortage of input, for which we are grateful. From a membership perspective, we are also taking every opportunity to leverage (and improve) our data so as to understand trends and decide how to respond to them. Strategically, and as a Board priority, we are now looking well ahead to understand what the Member pool from which

we draw currently might look like in the future, what other societal and economic factors we might need to consider and how, in the interests of our Club, its vital purpose and ethos are maintained.

A couple of other points if I may. Our existing Members are an essential part of our outward information campaign. I know many of you do tremendous work in advertising the Club's superb benefits, so do please keep spreading the word; a personal recommendation goes a long way! Beyond the obvious benefits such as terrific value accommodation and dining in London, an exclusive events programme and excellent spaces in which to hold your bespoke events, two others bear emphasis. Firstly, and it perhaps becomes more obvious after life in the Service (it did for me!), the Club is a first-class place to network – whether that's for business or pleasure, it's pretty hard to find somewhere else in London where those with a common background can meet and cultivate relationships so convivially. Secondly, reciprocal clubs across the UK and the World are carefully chosen to ensure they offer like-for-like facilities to Members, so please do consider using them – they are often in iconic locations and represent excellent value for money.

I hope to see many of you in the Club in the coming months; alternatively, I am always happy to hear your thoughts and take your feedback on membership matters via [trustees@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:trustees@rafclub.org.uk)



**AIR COMMODORE  
PAUL HIGGINS (RET)**  
CLUB TRUSTEE & CHAIR  
OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE





## RECIPROCITY

# Travellers' tales

*The Royal Air Force Club offers reciprocal arrangements with over fifty private Members' clubs throughout the world. Here Members share their positive feedback from recent visits*

**University Club of Washington**  
1135 16th Street NW, Washington,  
DC 20036, USA  
[www.universityclubdc.com](http://www.universityclubdc.com)

Founded in 1904, the University Club of Washington, DC, is a prestigious private city club near the White House. William Howard Taft, who later became President of the United States and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was the Club's first president.

Reflecting the timeless Parisian architectural style, the clubhouse – affectionately known as the 'Mansion on Sixteenth Street' – boasts a brick and brownstone exterior and a cobblestone circle drive that leads to its entrance on Sixteenth Street.

Today, the Club serves distinguished leaders in business, government, and the arts and its facilities include 59 bedrooms, dining venues, rooftop deck and sports lounge, banqueting rooms, business centre, library, fitness centre, heated indoor pool, two squash courts and a Spa.

**Squadron Leader J Gavin Turnbull**  
**Club Member**

"My wife and I visited The University Club of Washington with our son and daughter-in-law for dinner.

The club is very well appointed, and everyone was very helpful and friendly. We were certainly made to feel at home, which was easy to do as the Club has a very similar feel to the RAF Club.

We were lucky enough to be there during happy hour and were able to enjoy the Founders Bar before our meal. We ate in the Grille Room which had a very good menu, and the food was excellent.

All in all, this was a very good visit which we all enjoyed and we would highly recommend the Club if you are in Washington."



**University Club of Chicago**  
76 East Monroe Street, Chicago,  
IL 60603, USA  
[www.ucco.com](http://www.ucco.com)

Originally founded in 1887 by a small group of university graduates hoping to foster an appreciation of literature and the arts, the University Club of Chicago continues to uphold that tradition, while offering so much more. It's where artists, entrepreneurs, civic leaders, authors and professionals from every industry come together to learn, celebrate and connect.

Overlooking Lake Michigan in the heart of downtown Chicago, the Club directly faces the city's urban landmark, Millennium Park, a unique venue for strolling and viewing works by world-renowned artists, architects and designers.

Their facilities include restaurants, bars, bedrooms, fitness facilities, swimming pool, squash courts, library, business centre, outdoor terrace, art gallery and events spaces for private hire.

**Mr William Yorath - Club Member**

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the University Club of Chicago during my visits last year. One of the highlights of my visit was spending time at the Gallery Bar, which offers an incredible view overlooking Lake Michigan. I also had the opportunity to relax in the living room bar with my friend and University Club member.

On another occasion, I brought family along, and they were equally impressed by the warm welcome and outstanding service."

**The British Club, Bangkok**  
189 Suriwongse Road, Bang Rak,  
Bangkok, 10500, Thailand  
[www.britishclubbangkok.org](http://www.britishclubbangkok.org)

The British Club is an oasis of calm and tranquillity in the heart of bustling Bangkok, providing a relaxing atmosphere for a wide range of sporting and social activities while remaining a popular venue for a business lunch or convivial drink.

The clubhouse features the casual Verandah Café, which offers an extensive mix of local and western dishes, and the Mountbatten Room, for a more formal dining experience.



**The Tanglin Club, Singapore**  
5 Stevens Road, 257814, Singapore  
[www.tanglinclub.org](http://www.tanglinclub.org)

Founded in 1865, the Tanglin Club became a cornerstone of Singapore's European social scene. Located in Claymore since 1866, it flourished as a hub for leisure, hosting grand balls and sports like squash and tennis. The Club was 'repurposed' during the Second World War, but rebounded post-war, maintaining its prestige. Today, with over 4,000 members from 70+ nationalities, it remains an inviting oasis for relaxation and rejuvenation while its ambience still evokes the grace and charm of the past.



**Wing Commander Trish Preston-Whyte**  
**Club Member**

"I was aware that being a Member of the Royal Air Force Club provided the opportunity to visit reciprocal overseas clubs but I had not given it much thought until a chance conversation with a gentleman in the Cowdray Room one evening. He explained that he had no link to the RAF Club other than he was visiting on a reciprocal arrangement. I remember at the time thinking how wonderful it must be for this gentleman to be able to enjoy all the facilities and ambience that our Club has to offer whilst visiting London. I thought that it could be something I could try out when I am on my travels which is something I am fortunate to do often.

So when I recently travelled to the Far East, I thought I would just give it a try and test out the system. The RAF Club website has an extensive list of reciprocal clubs so when in Bangkok, I first identified the reciprocal club that I wished to visit and then emailed them directly to ask if it was possible; a letter of introduction from the RAF Club was required. On emailing the RAF Club, they pointed me to the Reciprocal Area of the website (under Membership) where it is all done automatically...it was so easy!!

During my visits I found out that each club had slightly different requirements to be accepted; a must is your RAF Club Membership card, as is the letter of introduction, but The Tanglin Club in Singapore, for example, wanted evidence of your flight itinerary to prove that you are not a resident using the facilities. The number of days that you can use the clubs is also limited so it's a good idea to be precise on the exact day(s) you wish to visit rather than putting a block number down (if you wish to use again in the year).

I would thoroughly recommend using the reciprocal clubs; I found them to be an oasis of calm in the busy cities I visited. The amenities do vary and not all do accommodation; I stayed in one location overnight, had lunch in The British Club in Bangkok and had cocktails in The Tanglin Club in Singapore. Overall, they were all of a high standard and very comfortable with excellent facilities at no extra cost. I will certainly be taking my RAF Club Membership card on my next travels as who knows where it will take me."

**For more information, to view our full list of reciprocal clubs or to obtain automated letters of introduction, visit [www.rafclub.org.uk/reciprocal](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/reciprocal)**



## INSIGHT

# A Milestone for Miles

*We sat down with our Chief Executive & Club Secretary Miles Pooley to reflect on his remarkable 10-year tenure at the Royal Air Force Club. Since joining the Club on 1st June 2015, Miles has overseen a period of growth, transformation, and resilience—guiding the Club through both exciting developments and challenging times. In this special Q&A, he shares his proudest moments, lessons learned, and his vision for the future.*

### How did your career in hospitality begin?

My interest in pursuing a career in hospitality began at the age of 12, while studying Domestic Science at school — I made a great Victoria sponge and first considered becoming a chef. I later leaned towards hotel management, leaving school at 16 to study for a diploma in hotel and catering operations at Westminster Hotel School. Whilst at college I spent three evenings a week working in McDonalds, to help fund my living costs, and then during the holiday periods I worked at hotels in Cambridge. At 18, I joined the Connaught Hotel in Mayfair as a commis waiter, working my way up through to more senior roles in the restaurant, before then spending a year in the kitchens of a luxury hotel in Switzerland. I then returned to the Connaught and in total spent nine years there which included fulfilling several management roles.

### What has been your most memorable moment at the Club?

It has to be in 2018 when the late Queen Elizabeth II came to open the new wing, unveil the stained-glass windows commemorating women in the Air Force over the past 100 years, and also unveil her portrait. This was truly



unforgettable and so very special.

Interestingly my second most memorable moment came just a few weeks after I joined the Club in 2015, when the Royal Air Force commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain. As part of this, the RAF had arranged an event at the Club, hosting seven members of the Royal Family — including Prince Philip, who famously told the photographer to “just take the f’ing photo”.

### Looking back over the past decade, what do you consider your proudest achievement at the Club?

Without question this was being so heavily involved in the Centenary project; the demolition of the two squash courts and the construction of the additional 17 bedrooms, the Fitness Centre and new Business Suite. This was not only a particularly complex project, having to do this within a landlocked site, but also the disruption to the Club over a two-year period was a significant challenge to manage.

### During your tenure at the Royal Air Force Club, what has been your main focus?

When I first joined the Club, I was of the view that it required a fresh approach. Some of the public rooms were quite tired and the staff required a lot of focus, to

ensure that we were extending the level of hospitality that I expected. Over the first five years, prior to the pandemic we remained very focused on ‘reaching new heights’ in every area that could have a positive impact for the Members. We have always been very conscious to ensure that we continue to raise the profile of the Club with the hospitality industry and this is predominately to assist with the recruitment and retention of the staff.



Opposite: With wife Louisa and daughters Mabel and Amelia  
This page: Elevating our Dining Room offering and service;  
The Royal Visit in 2015; hosting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2018.



### What has been your biggest challenge while at the Club?

The biggest challenge has to have been the Pandemic, working with the Trustees and the management team to get through this, was a particularly difficult time for the Club. Needing to substantially reduce the workforce at all levels, having the pressure of the repayments on the Centenary loan and with the lack of any reserves was exceptionally tough. We stayed open throughout, and I am incredibly proud that with the support of the Members, the Club recovered quickly.



### How do you foster a strong workplace culture at the Royal Air Force Club?

First and foremost, it's about creating an environment where my colleagues and I want to come to work, rather than feeling like we must. It's about treating people how I would like to be treated myself and leading by example.

I also believe it's important to have fun at work; building rapport with every employee here is incredibly important. I see all my colleagues as an extension of my own family, and I know how much our Members appreciate that.

### What advice would you give to someone looking to build a career in hospitality?

Seek out work experience opportunities across two or three sectors within the

industry and start developing your CV. This will also ensure it's an industry you do want to pursue a career in. What's great is that there is so much variety in the hospitality industry and no two days are ever the same.

Try and connect with a hospitality professional who could be a mentor

*“building rapport with every employee here is incredibly important. I see all my colleagues as an extension of my own family, and I know how much our Members appreciate that”*

for you. Ideally on a structured programme with someone who can share their experiences, guide you and also introduce you to others within the industry. You should be prepared to start working from the grass roots and then seek opportunities to interact with senior management and offer to be involved in working groups like employee engagement activities. Demonstrate your enthusiasm, commitment and give your best every day.

### What is your life like outside of the Royal Air Force Club?

Very much family-oriented — my wife Louisa, who also works at another London club, and I have been married for 34 years. We met when I was 19 and we have two daughters; Amelia, the eldest got married last year, and Mabel, is getting married next year.

So yes, very family oriented. I also enjoy DIY and often get roped into a lot of decorating and gardening, especially at my daughters' homes.

When it comes to sport, I enjoy walking, cycling, tennis and swimming — trying to stay as active as possible, which isn't always easy in this industry, especially commuting in and out of central London.

### Looking ahead, what exciting plans for the Club would you like to achieve?

The Running Horse renovation is the most exciting project for this year and will benefit all Members once completed. We very much look forward to its re-opening in early September.

At some stage in the future, I would love to create an outdoor space for the Club. But in the meantime, our focus needs to be on sustainability — improving the systems we use to collect as much data as possible, continuing our ongoing bedroom renovations, and making a number of essential back-of-house improvements over the next few years, particularly in some of our other kitchen areas.



## In pictures

For photo galleries featuring the following events and more visit [www.rafclub.org.uk/news](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/news)



5TH SEPTEMBER 2024

### Celebrating our TV Chefs with Matt Tebbutt

The Royal Air Force Club held a very special event to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our Pastry Chef, Gerol Nulud, and former Executive Chef, Michael Dutnall MCA. A huge credit to the Club, the duo reached the finals of *Bake Off: The Professionals* on Channel 4 last year, and we couldn't be prouder!

The evening commenced with a look at Gerol and Michael's time on the show, followed by an exclusive interview conducted by none other than TV chef and a Club Member, Matt Tebbutt from

*Saturday Kitchen*. Members and guests were treated to insightful stories and behind-the-scenes anecdotes as Gerol and Michael shared their journey through the competition.

Following the engaging interview and an exciting Q&A, attendees had the opportunity to mingle with the stars of the evening. Especially for the occasion, Michael and Gerol recreated two of their showpieces from the series, which attendees admired before savouring an array of exquisite creations crafted by our talented chefs.



24TH SEPTEMBER 2024 & 11TH FEBRUARY 2025

### New Members' Dinners

We were delighted to welcome two groups of new Club Members, along with their Proposers, Seconders and guests at these biannual events.

Attendees were treated to a drinks Reception, allowing guests to meet each other before being invited to take part in a tour of the Club led by our Membership Team. After the tours concluded, attendees enjoyed a delicious three-course dinner with wines, hosted by our Club Trustees, Wing Commander Paula Willmot MBE & Air Commodore Paul Higgins, who both sit on the Membership Committee.



31ST OCTOBER 2024

### Club Dinner with Mandy Hickson

We were honoured to host a fantastic Club Dinner featuring Mandy Hickson, one of the UK's first female fast-jet pilots and author of the memoir '*An Officer, Not a Gentleman*'. It was an evening to remember as Mandy shared the remarkable story of her path to the cockpit of a Tornado GR4.

The event was hosted by a former Club Trustee, Honorary Group Captain Jo Salter MBE, another pioneering figure in the Royal Air Force.

Mandy captivated the room with tales of her journey—from piloting the Tornado GR4 on the front line to her post-RAF role in aviation. It was a memorable night celebrating resilience and the courage to break boundaries.



25TH JANUARY 2025

### Burns Night Dinner

Our Members and their guests celebrated the life and work of Robert Burns, "the national poet of Scotland," at the Club's annual Burns Night Dinner.

Guests enjoyed a Champagne Reception followed by a three-course meal, accompanied by wines, whisky, and a variety of performances throughout the night – including the *Address to the Haggis* (piped in by Pipe Major Willie Cochrane), *The Immortal Memory*, *A Toast to the Lassies*, and a rousing rendition of *Auld Lang Syne* to end the evening.

A special thank you to our Chieftain for the night, Squadron Leader Geoff Day, for putting together such an exciting programme of speakers and musicians.





13TH MARCH 2025

## Cocktail Tasting

We were delighted to have been joined by Salman Ullah, Assistant Food & Beverage Manager of the Sheraton Grand London Park Lane (our Piccadilly neighbour), who hosted an evening of cocktail making and tasting in the Churchill Bar.

Our Members and their guests were treated to fizz and canapés, followed by demonstrations on how to make two seasonal cocktails, with a chance to taste each drink afterwards.



## Gourmet Dinners Showcase

Celebrating the creativity, precision, and passion of our talented chefs — fine dining elevated.

9TH JULY 2024

*Summer Gourmet Dinner*

## Junk Food meets fine dining

An evening where comfort food and gourmet cuisine collided. Our guests enjoyed a gourmet menu that combined the nostalgic and familiar tastes of junk food with the elegance and precision of upscale cooking.

Our team of chefs, crafted a bespoke four-course menu featuring The New Yorker, Lobster & Truffle 'Mac & Cheese', Buttermilk chicken and Knickerbocker glory.



22ND APRIL 2025

## Club Dinner with Rugby Legend Brian Moore

This fully booked event offered Members a unique insight into Brian Moore's rugby and broadcasting career. The ex-Harlequins, Nottingham, Leeds, and England rugby player joined Members for dinner, discussing his journey—from studying law at the University of Nottingham to playing in the 1991 Rugby World Cup final against Australia.

Since retiring, Brian has become a highly respected media commentator, known for his forthright views and engaging style. He shared insights into his playing days, his transition to the media, and the evolution of rugby. The evening included a drinks Reception, a three-course dinner with wines, and port.



14TH NOVEMBER 2024

*Winter Gourmet Dinner*

## Indian Fine Dining

An unforgettable evening celebrating the vibrant flavours of India. Set against the elegant backdrop of the Club, the evening began with an inviting champagne reception in the 601 Squadron Room, paving the way for an intimate dining experience in the Library.

Our dedicated kitchen team crafted an exquisite four-course menu that masterfully showcased the essence of Indian cuisine. Guests savoured each dish with perfectly paired wines and Kingfisher, a premium Indian lager, to enhance the experience. Highlights of the evening included monkfish served with coconut lentil dahl and samphire pakora, followed by a refreshing mango lassi palate cleanser. The main course featured a Deggi mirch cutlet lamb, paired with pulled lamb shoulder biryani and lamb "Osso Buco" masala, served with tangy tamarind chutney. The culinary journey concluded with a bun maska pudding with caramel cardamom custard and mango, complemented by the sweet notes of Château Haut-Fonrousse, Monbazillac.



8TH MAY 2025

## VE Day 80th Anniversary Dinner

The highlight of this year's VE Day 80 commemorative events was a Club Dinner with our very own Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell DFC BEM AE. The 104-year-old veteran and former Mosquito pilot delivered an inspiring address following a champagne reception and three-course dinner. Colin shared his remarkable WWII experiences, including 50 bombing missions over Germany. His courage, humility, and wit deeply resonated with all, making the event a heartfelt tribute to his generation's sacrifice.



15TH APRIL 2025

*Spring Gourmet Dinner*

## Refined 70s Classics

Our team of chefs took the attendees on a culinary journey through the 1970s, re-imagined for today's discerning palate!

With classic dishes such as the Prawn Cocktail, Tournedos Rossini, Lemon Sorbet & Limoncello and Baked Alaska; this exclusive four-course menu celebrated the era's iconic dishes with a modern twist.



## CLUB EVENTS

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON

**USAF Dinner**  
**Thursday 14th August**  
**1830hrs – 2230hrs**  
**Members: £90.00 /**  
**Guests: £95.00**  
**Dress: Black Tie**



In recognition of the tremendous support the US Air Force Membership give to the Royal Air Force Club, we are delighted to offer our USAF cohort the opportunity to dine together on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2025. This event will offer a chance to rekindle old friendships, network and enjoy their enjoy like-minded company, all in the wonderful setting of the Royal Air Force Club.

Join us for a sparkling reception, followed by a three-course meal with matching wines, alongside a yet to be announced Guest of Honour.

Non-USAF Members are of course welcome to join.

**25 Year Lunch**  
**Thursday 21st August**  
**1200hrs – 1530hrs**  
**Members: £60.00 / Guests: £70.00**  
**Dress: Business Formal**  
**(formerly Jacket & Tie)**

We have the great pleasure in inviting all Members who joined the Club in 2000, to attend this annual 25 Year Reception & Lunch taking place on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August, to celebrate your continued support of the Club.

In recognition of this remarkable achievement, those attending will receive a complimentary 25-year tie or a silver 25-year brooch. The lunch will include a talk on the history of the Club and the



changes you would have seen happen in the past 25 years.

To celebrate this special milestone, we will start the day with a sparkling reception followed by a three-course lunch with wines. Members with 25+ years of seniority are also welcome to attend with guests.

**Junior Officers' Dining In Night**  
**– 'A Night at the Circus'**

**Saturday 6th September**

**1830hrs – midnight**

**Members: £90.00 / Guests: £90.00**

**Dress: Mess Dress or Black Tie,**

**"Circus themed" accessories encouraged**

Roll Up, Roll Up for a night of Circus Delights! You are once again invited to join us for a circus-themed evening. The night will include a cocktail reception, a delicious four-course dinner with wines and Port for the loyal toast.

**Club Talk and Buffet Dinner**  
**with Mark Aedy and**  
**Penny Willcocks –**  
**'From Biplanes to Fast Jets'**

**Wednesday 15th October**

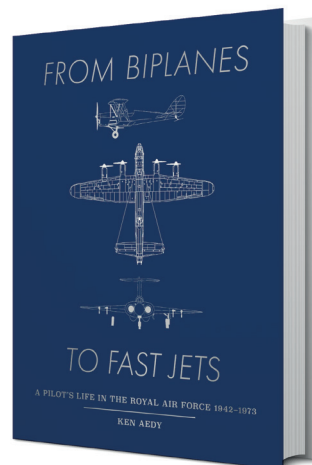
**1830hrs – 2100hrs**

**Members: £55.00 / Guests: £65.00**

**Dress: Business Formal**

**(formerly Jacket & Tie)**

A fascinating Club Talk with Mark Aedy and Penny Willcocks who published their father's memoirs, detailing his remarkable life of service. They remain faithful to their father's narrative but adding photos, illustrations, maps and context to the events he witnessed. *From Biplanes to Fast Jets* was launched at the Royal Air Force Club on 29 May 2024, when Ken would have been 100 years old. The talk will be followed by a buffet dinner with wines.



**Club Talk with Dr Stuart Eves**  
**– 'Mysteries of the Solar System'**

**Wednesday 26th November**

**1830hrs – 2030hrs**

**Members: £35.00 / Guests: £45.00**

**Dress: Business Formal**

**(formerly Jacket & Tie)**

Our space missions have taught us much about the corner of the universe in which we live, but they have also revealed much that remains mysterious. Come along on Wednesday 26th November to find out what we still don't understand about the solar system. In addition to the talk, there will also be the opportunity to see three meteorites which date from the very beginning of the solar system 4.5 billion years ago, which are the oldest objects you're ever likely to hold! The talk will be followed by drinks and canapés.

**Christmas Dinner**

**Thursday 18th December**

**1830hrs – 2230hrs**

**Members: £70.00 / Guests: £80.00**

**Dress: Black Tie**

Come and join the Christmas celebrations at the Club. Start your evening with a Champagne reception followed by a sumptuous three-course Dinner with festive twists, specially created for this occasion by our fantastic Christmas team. Guests will have the chance to get into the festive spirit by enjoying a sing-along with a Choir during the dinner.

## FULL EVENT LISTING 2025

*Details of events taking place at the Club this year.  
 Keep up-to-date via [www.rafclub.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/whats-on) or  
 by following the Club on its social media channels*

### JUNE

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Sons and Daughters II 2025**

**Friday 13th June, 1830hrs**

**£85/£95**

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Champagne and Truffle Dinner**

**with Christophe Prieux**

**of Gardet Champagne**

**Tuesday 17th June, 1830hrs**

**£110/£120**

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Wine Tasting Series with**

**Hayward Bros: Portugal;**

**Douro Valley wines – with a**

**refreshing splash of Vinho Verde**

**Tuesday 24th June, 1830hrs**

**£40/£45**

### JULY

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Club Safari Dinner with the**

**In & Out and Army & Navy Clubs**

**Wednesday 2nd July, 1830hrs**

**£95/£95**

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Summer Gourmet Dinner –**

**From Farm to Fork**

**Tuesday 15th July, 1830hrs**

**£85/£95**

### AUGUST

**50 Year Reception**

**Sunday 3rd August, 1230hrs,**

**'by invitation only'**

**USAF Dinner**

**Thursday 14th August, 1830hrs**

**£90/£95**

**25 Year Lunch 2025**

**Thursday 21st August, 1200hrs**

**£60/£70**

### SEPTEMBER

**Junior Officers' Dining In Night –**

**'A Night at the Circus'**

**Saturday 6th September, 1830hrs**

**£90/£90**

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Club Dinner - 85th Anniversary**

**of the Battle of Britain with**

**Lord Piers Dowding**

**Friday 12th September, 1830hrs**

**£75/£85**

**New Members' Reception**

**and Dinner**

**Tuesday 23rd September, 1800hrs**

**£60/£70**

### OCTOBER

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Autumn Gourmet Dinner –**

**Glorious Grouse**

**Wednesday 8th October, 1830hrs**

**£85/£95**

**Club Talk and Buffet Dinner**

**with Mark Aedy and Penny Willcocks**

**- 'From Biplanes to Fast Jets'**

**Wednesday 15th October, 1830hrs**

**£55/£65**

### NOVEMBER

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Wine Tasting Series with**

**Hayward Bros: Bordeaux:**

**'The epitome of classic'**

**Thursday 6th November, 1830hrs**

**£40/£45**

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Winter Gourmet Dinner –**

**Open Flame Cooking**

**Tuesday 11th November, 1830hrs**

**£85/£95**

**Club Talk with Dr Stuart Eves –**

**'Mysteries of the Solar System'**

**Wednesday 26th November, 1830hrs**

**£35/£45**

### DECEMBER

**FULLY BOOKED**

**Festive Afternoon Tea**

**& RAFBF Carol Concert 2025**

**Wednesday 10th December, 1630hrs**

**£60/£65**

**Christmas Lunch 2025**

**Monday 15th December, 1200hrs**

**£65/£75**

**Christmas Dinner 2025**

**Thursday 18th December**

**£70/£80**

**To book for any Club Social event**  
**visit: [www.rafclub.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/whats-on),**  
**email [events@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:events@rafclub.org.uk) or call**  
**020 7399 1081**



## CLUB SHOP

# New additions!

### RAF Club Cocktail Shaker Set

Whether you are a seasoned Mixologist or just enjoy the occasional Martini, this cocktail shaker set is the perfect match.

Comes in a black gift box with the Club logo engraved on the shaker and jigger.

Each set contains the following:

- 600ml Shaker with a mirrored finish
- Measuring Jigger with 25ml and 50ml capacities
- Hawthorne Strainer
- Muddler
- Stirrer

Box: H 29cm x L 27cm x D 10cm

Shaker: H21cm x L9cm x D9cm

Price: £50.00



### RAF Club Leather Coasters (Set of 6)

Practical and stylish, our leather coaster set engraved with the Club logo will add charm to any coffee table. Perfect for gifting.

- Six individual coasters in tan leather
- Leather case to hold coasters
- Diameter of coasters: 10 cm, Height: 3.3 cm

Price: £35.00

### RAF Club 100% Silk Scarf

The scarf's exquisite design features the colours of our Original Members' tie, Club crest and 'Per Ardua Ad Astra' motto along the edges.

Made of 100% silk, the scarf drapes gracefully, elevating your style to new heights. Whether you're attending a special event, a dinner party, or simply want to add a touch of refinement to your everyday look, our new Club Scarf is the perfect choice.

Dimensions: 90cm x 90cm

Price: £55.00



## PROMOTIONS

# Member offers

*Take advantage of these latest discounts, specially curated for our Members*

### The Henley Royal Regatta at Phyllis Court Club

Tuesday 1st – Sunday 6th July 2025

The Henley Royal Regatta is renowned as the highlight of the summer sporting and social calendar. With over 400 races taking place on the river, and thousands of spectators watching from the banks, the Thames becomes a stage of sporting excellence with Phyllis Court Club, one of our Reciprocal Clubs, sat overlooking the finish line.

Royal Air Force Club Members have the exclusive opportunity to purchase tickets and watch the spectacle from Phyllis Court – benefiting from their spacious lawns, world-class service, and unparalleled views of the action!



This is in addition to a bounty of delightful dining options, both indoor and al fresco, and an exciting schedule of live entertainment. Alight with music and festivities, Phyllis Court is the beating heart of the Regatta – the perfect place to drink it all in.

Please scan the QR code to access the Reciprocal Member brochure and Booking Form. Booking forms must be sent to [ticketoffice@phylliscourt.co.uk](mailto:ticketoffice@phylliscourt.co.uk) together with a Letter of Introduction.



### Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT)

Friday 18th July – Sunday 20th July 2025

We are delighted once again to be able to offer RAF Club Members an exclusive 30% discount for Aviation Club enclosure tickets for Friday 18th July at RIAT - the Royal International Air Tattoo. To take advantage of this offer, please purchase tickets from the RIAT website.

Please scan the QR code to book the tickets for the Aviation Club and apply the code RAF2530 to gain discount.\*



Techno Zone®, where kids and adults can experience the latest tech in the world of aviation.

For more information on this year's airshow, please visit [www.airtattoo.com](http://www.airtattoo.com)

RIAT is put on every year in support of the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust (RAFCT), which exists to inspire young people across the UK, from age 5 to 25, to fulfil their potential in air, space and technology, and to promote the RAF.

The security of the nation depends on people who are STEM-aware and are

able to think critically and at ease with science, technology, engineering and maths. RAFCT is committed to reaching 500,000 young people with STEM educational engagements by 2026.

For further information about the RAFCT charity and its work, visit [www.rafct.com](http://www.rafct.com)

\*This offer will apply to both adult and child Aviation Club tickets and is limited to six tickets per transaction. Note general admission to the event will also need to be purchased to take up this offer. Members will need to provide proof of Membership on arrival at the Aviation Club along with their tickets.



## CLUB STAFF

# Behind the scenes

*The latest news from the people that make our Club tick*

### Bake Off: The Professionals

Congratulations to our Pastry Chef Gerol and former Executive Chef Michael: the dynamic duo who were runners up in the final of Channel 4's *Bake Off: The Professionals* Series 9.

They created the most amazing culinary showpieces, competing against some of the nation's finest pastry chefs, making us all at the Club very proud.

### Katariina Reissaar appointed the Club's Director of Operations

Many of you may already have had the opportunity to meet Katariina, who officially stepped into the role of Director of Operations in August 2024, following Kathryn Cooper's retirement as Club Manager.

She has gained extensive experience, mainly in hospitality, having lived and worked across three continents, including the USA and Malaysia. Prior to joining the Club in 2023 as Front Office Manager, she most recently held the same position at Leonardo Hotels in Birmingham. Katariina was awarded the prestigious 'Acorn Award', which each year recognises top 30 professionals under the age of 30.

### New Executive Chef

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Elliot Plimmer as the Executive Chef. Elliot brings a wealth of experience, having developed his skills in some of the finest hospitality settings. His impressive career includes



Welcoming Chef Elliot



University of Greenwich visit



Katariina and Miles



Staff Charity Committee

training under Gordon Ramsay at The Savoy Grill, overseeing client dining at Deutsche Bank, serving as Head Chef at ACE Hotel and Harrods Dining Hall, and, most recently, serving as Executive Head Chef at The Royal Overseas League Club for the past three years.

We are excited for Elliot to have joined our team and are confident that his expertise will continue our tradition of culinary excellence.

### Student Visit

In April 2025, the Club was delighted to welcome students from the University of Greenwich for an insightful discussion about careers in Private Members Clubs and the various opportunities available within the hospitality industry.

During their visit, students enjoyed engaging talks from our CEO Miles Pooley, our Director of Operations Katariina Reissaar, and our Director of People and Culture Rachel Matthews, who shared their personal experiences, career backgrounds and the core values of the Club before embarking on a guided tour of the Club.

### Apprentice Chefs

We are incredibly proud that the following three apprentice chefs have completed their Commis Chef Apprenticeships at Capital City College: Denis Soloman, Essence Ajala, and Jhoven-Son Navarro.

We would also like to thank those involved with our fundraising scheme, the 'Friends of the RAF Club'. The donations that we receive will part-sponsor our inspiring Chef Apprenticeship Programme, helping us to train as many chefs as possible and keeping our culinary standards high.

### Staff Charity Committee

In 2024 the Committee's chosen charity was the Central London Samaritans, who provide emotional support to anyone in distress. Through various initiatives, the Club staff raised over £2,000.

Further efforts throughout the year included hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning, collecting warm clothing for Wrap Up London, and celebrating Christmas Jumper Day.

This year, our chosen charity is The Passage, one of London's largest resource centres for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The charity offers access to GPs, dentists and podiatrists, alongside café-style meals, showers, changing facilities, laundry services, and a "shop" where those in need can select donated essentials such as clothing and toiletries.

The team's decision to support this charity stems from a growing awareness of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness, particularly in and around Mayfair, something many of us witness firsthand on our daily commute.

## COMMUNITY

# Then and Now

*International Club for Air Force Officers' Wives*

In 1960 Chief of the Air Staff's wife, Lady Althea Pike, formed a group for serving and retired Royal Air Force Officers' wives to meet and stay connected. Such a club would also include the wives of foreign and Commonwealth air force officers and air attachés serving in the UK.

Since then, the International Club for Air Force Officers' Wives (ICAFOW) has expanded to include female officers serving in the Royal Air Force and officers of the complementary women's Services as well as daughters, sisters and divorcees.

Members meet regularly for informal lunches with guest speakers, held throughout the year at the Royal Air Force Club. These are occasionally complemented by visits to places of interest. The upcoming themes for the remaining 2025 lunches are:

- **16th July:** Talk on Sue Ryder – 'A Life Lived for Others'
- **1st Oct:** Hounds for Heroes with Alan Partridge
- **5th Nov:** Professor Brian Cox
- **3rd Dec:** North London Military Wives' Choir



Top Row: Robbie Hall, Ruth Bourne, Ruth Barnwell and Dorothea Barron. Bottom Row: Patricia Owtram, Elizabeth Green and Marie Scott

## WWII veterans share their stories or International Women's Day

The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans hosted a special event at the Club in March to celebrate International Women's Day. The gathering brought together veterans, serving RAF personnel and Taxi Charity supporters to honour the extraordinary contributions of women in military service.

Guests heard first-hand accounts from two remarkable Second World War veterans, Dorothea Barron and Ruth Bourne.

Ruth served at Bletchley Park, where she worked on Alan Turing's groundbreaking 'Bombe' computing machine, playing a crucial role in breaking the German Enigma code. Dorothea, a visual signaller, recounted her own experiences of vital communications work.

### The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

Run by volunteer London black taxi drivers, the charity arranges free trips (for veterans from all conflicts) to the Netherlands and France for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts and social events across the UK.

To find out more or to donate, visit [www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)



February Lunch with Squadron Leader Jon Bond - Red 1 from the Red Arrows

For further information regarding Membership, please contact their Membership Secretary Denise Heath at [denise@theheaths.org.uk](mailto:denise@theheaths.org.uk)



## Three Small Boys

Ralph Barwick, Will Harrington and Ian Selwyn-Yates met for the first time in 1954, in the playground at their senior school in North London.

Since then, the 'three small boys' have contributed around one hundred and fifty years' service to the Air Training Corps, and meet regularly at the Club for a drink and to playfully remind one another of their adventures.

**FLIGHT LIEUTENANT IAN SELWYN-YATES RAFVR(T) (RETD)**  
CLUB MEMBER



Top: 296 (Stoke Newington) Squadron ATC Summer Camp, RAF St Mawgan, 1960. Above: 63 Years later – Ian, Ralph and Will (seated) celebrate their 80th birthdays. Also pictured are Allan Manning and Tony Quy



## MEMBER STORIES

# Per Ardua 21

*Return to the Atlantic for the 'World's Toughest Row'*

**T**wenty-one years ago, two RAF Regiment officers had the crazy idea to row across the Atlantic Ocean. The adventure saw them overcome challenge after challenge, completing the voyage with a single set of unbroken oars, a barely functional boat, and emergency rations running low.

Fast-forward to 2025 and the original two crew Members, now supported by an additional officer, are preparing to return to the ocean to take on the unique challenge of crossing an ocean in a rowing boat - The World's Toughest Row. This time, the team comprises Air Commodore Matt Stowers, Squadron Leader Mark Jacklin and Group Captain Andy Calame. With an average team age of 56 years and therefore potentially(!) more maturity and life experience, the trio is gearing up for what could be their most demanding challenge yet.

This time around, they are aiming to complete the crossing in under 50 days - though the ocean will have a vote in that, with weather conditions playing a major role in the final time. The race is physically brutal: rowing two hours on, two hours off, around the clock, the trio will row in excess of 1.5 million oar strokes during a race and each rower will burn in excess of 5,000 calories a day. From their previous experience, they know the toll it will take - over 12 hours of daily rowing leads to inevitable blisters, abrasions, and body-wide wear and tear. Still, they believe their experience will help them face the grind with teamwork and, occasionally, good humour.

However, there's a new hazard they're particularly dreading: Marlin strikes. In recent races, there has been a growing number of incidents involving Marlin fish



Left to right: Air Commodore Matt Stowers, Squadron Leader Mark Jacklin and Group Captain Andy Calame.

piercing the hulls of rowing boats while chasing prey that shelter beneath. These strikes have caused serious breaches requiring urgent in-water repairs - often during rough weather conditions.

Preparation for this challenge has been intense. The team has received expert advice from Liverpool John Moores University on diet and health,

*"Our first crossing was an intense and emotional journey that tested our physical and mental limits. What we anticipated to be a 50-60 day adventure became 78 days. We completed the journey with a single set of oars, a barely functional boat, and emergency rations running low. Despite these challenges, our resolve to complete the journey was unwavering."*

and unlike their original low-tech attempt, this crossing benefits from substantial upgrades. The boat is now equipped with advanced technology, including AI-assisted weather forecasting and route planning, thanks to support from Vivanti. In a unique twist, Gieves & Hawkes are helping the crew remain stylish and comfortable, even in the cramped confines of their ocean vessel. BAE Systems and Renaissance Services in Oman have also provided valuable sponsorship.

As they head west, the team will be raising money for various RAF charities,

with the goal of giving back to the community that has shaped their lives and careers. They are also supported by the Ulysses Trust, aiming to inspire younger generations to embrace physical and adventurous challenges - proof that age is not a barrier to ambition or performance.

The crew will set off on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025 from the race village San Sebastián de La Gomera, Canary Islands. Heading to Nelson's Dockyard in Antigua, where they hope to arrive safely, swiftly, and in one piece.

The team is actively seeking additional sponsors and welcomes support from the wider RAF family and beyond. For those interested in following their progress, tracking will be available at <https://www.worldstoughestrow.com/the-atlantic/>. Should you wish to get in touch about sponsorship, Andy Calame is the point of contact at [andycalame@gmail.com](mailto:andycalame@gmail.com).

With the support of the Royal Air Force Club, *Per Ardua 21* is not just a race - it's a tribute to friendship, endurance, and the unshakable spirit of the RAF Regiment. However this journey ends, one thing is certain: it will be an unforgettable adventure.



## Celebrate those special moments at the Royal Air Force Club

The RAF Club offers a wide range of versatile function rooms suitable for every occasion. From large meetings and conferences to Squadron Reunion dinners, intimate family gatherings to large cocktail receptions, we've got the space for everything.

Steeped in history, this glorious Grade II building in the heart of London offers rooms with striking original features and artwork and provides a unique ambience for your special event.

The dining is always exceptional and the Club's usual excellent service can be expected each and every time.

Visit [www.rafclub.org.uk/meetings-events](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/meetings-events) and take a look at what we have to offer.



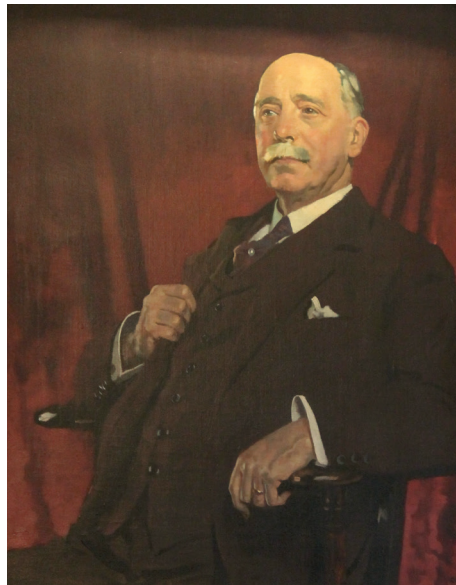
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— FOUNDED 1918 —

Full details on rates, menus and availability can be obtained from the Meetings & Events Team on 020 7399 1004/5 or email [meetingevents@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:meetingevents@rafclub.org.uk).

The Royal Air Force Club,  
128 Piccadilly, London, W1J 7PY

[www.rafclub.org.uk](http://www.rafclub.org.uk)





# Leave a long-lasting gift to your *'home from home'*

"There can be no better way to give something back to the Club that we have loved, than to help others enjoy it in the future."

The Royal Air Force Club is a uniquely special place that captures the esprit de corps of the Royal Air Force and its shared history. Rich in memories, good times spent with family, friends and fellow Members, we celebrate the endeavours of great men and women, whilst also looking to the future.

To help preserve its future for generations of serving and former serving officers, please consider supporting your 'home from home' by becoming a Friend of the RAF Club or leaving a donation or legacy.

For further information on how you can help make a difference, please contact Director of Fundraising and Member Engagement, Charlotte Gray at [charlotte@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:charlotte@rafclub.org.uk) or call 020 7399 1082.



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