



RAFA Caduceus Branch

Volume 4 of 2025

President's Address



Welcome to our 2025 Christmas newsletter. I did not want to simply repeat my previous introductions, although my thanks to everyone supporting our Branch endures. Instead, I wanted to focus on those touched by current or former military service at this time of year:

I wrote this poem after the last Branch Committee Meeting. I guess I'd just been thinking about Christmas' past. Many parts reflect the feelings me and my family have had when I've been away over Christmas'. I've always been aware that it is not just the person who is deployed who is trying to cope but your partner, children and wider family who worry about you and the dangers you are facing. One particularly upsetting but memorable Christmas was when my daughters were at junior school and we had to have Christmas several weeks early as I deployed just before so that someone else could get home for Christmas. We all remember it vividly. The days following it we were all 'walking on eggshells' awaiting MT to pick me up and take me to the armoury and then the airhead.



Christmas is a time
of glee
Families gather so merrily
But some are scared and unsure
If they'll see their loved one who's left these shores.

Those away for country and King
May pause and think of those carolling
They may taste fear and pray to above
They hope to return to those they love

Those at home try to be merry
All their neighbours are so cheery
But behind closed doors is lots of worry
Will their loved ones be home in a hurry?

In far off lands life can be so scary and create ghosts
Last letters to loved ones they hope never go in the post
Whilst letters from home are highlights of the day
It's Jesus's birthday, keep us safe we pray

If we're lucky we go home, no injuries, relief
Hugs and embraces from loved ones we seek
Everything seems fine, duty is done
But memories are vivid and can linger on

If you're lucky to be home, not abroad or alone
Remember those away from their family home
You could be there in the future, or been there in past years
Christmas tears can be full of joy or because of fears

So as we focus on Christmas and a New Year
Please remember those who are not here
Those departed, lost, deployed or on duty
You matter, not forgotten by your service community

Wishing you all the absolute best for 2026 and I hope to see you at our AGM or later in the year at other Branch gatherings.

Air Cdre Steve Kilbey (Retd)
President of the RAFA Caduceus Branch

Chairman's Report



Well, what a few weeks since our last newsletter! An amazing time for the Branch and its members. Firstly, myself, former Chair Andy Ormston and branch member Emma Ludlow have been recognised by the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance for being veterans doing good work on behalf of fellow veterans!

Our contingent marched at the Cenotaph and we now begin preparations for our 2026 group. Plans are well underway for AGM 2026 when the Branch will celebrate its 10th birthday. Details are in a separate part of the newsletter.

Last but by no means least we had our new Kings Crown Standard dedicated at the RAF Church, St Clement Danes. There are more comprehensive details later in the newsletter.

The Branch were invited to attend the RAF Medical Services Symposium at RAF Cranwell., giving us a great opportunity to present not just what RAFA offers, but give Branch specific examples to our serving personnel and encourage membership of the Branch.

Finally our Christmas boxes are winging their way around the world. This annual show of support for our "out of area operations" professionals is a thing we are rightly proud of and the feedback is that they are well received by the recipients.

We continue to go from strength to strength and grow our numbers. Without your continued support, all that we do wouldn't be possible. I would personally like to thank the committee for their ongoing commitment , and to you, our members, for your continued participation in the Branch.

May I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year .

Nec Aspera Terrent

Paul M Newton
Co-Chair RAFA Caduceus Branch
Tele 07739422789

Go Fund Me



As many of you will know, every year we send out Christmas boxes to our RAF Medical Services colleagues who are detached to forward operating areas over Christmas as well as our members aged over 75. But with increasing costs, we need your help. Do you know a business that would sponsor our Christmas boxes or donate items we could include? If you do, please get in touch. We are also asking members if they will share

details of our Go Fund Me appeal via their social media so we can reach as many people as possible who might be able to donate. Thank you. <https://gofund.me/6f158d3a>

EASYFUNDRAISING



Don't forget you can sign up to Easyfundraising and raise money for us whilst you shop - all at no cost to you. From holidays and travel to your supermarket shop, everything you buy donates a % to the Branch.

Sign up using the QR code displayed on page 14.

Ties and Scarfs

You can now purchase a Medical Branch tie and/or scarf on our branch website using PayPal.



Ties cost £17.50 and includes the Caduceus emblem.



Scarfs cost £18.50 and include the Caduceus emblem as shown in the image.

Welfare



The Christmas period is fast approaching and while for some it's the most wonderful time of the year, for others it's a very challenging time for various reasons. Mental health during the festive season can be impacted by various factors. While it's a time of celebration it can also amplify feelings of loneliness and stress. Christmas can be very difficult for those that are not in contact with friends or family members due to various reasons. This could be due to bereavement, whether it's recent or some time has passed. Divorce, separation and relationship break ups also may affect how much you see loved ones at Christmas. Feelings of loneliness can feel much more difficult at this time especially when there are lots of images of families and friends together. The Royal Air Forces Association and the RAF Benevolent Fund

can provide assistance in a number of ways to those who are struggling with these issues and need support.

Connections for Life: Fighting loneliness with friendship.

RAFA run the Connections for Life programme where you can be matched with a friendly volunteer who will offer a listening ear, providing a friend when you are feeling alone. This service provides support to serving personnel, veterans and families. Frequency of calls depends on your preference and can be changed at any time. If you want to find out more information on Connections for Life please get in touch by phoning 0800 018 2361 or by email friend@rafa.org.uk

Mental Wellbeing Courses: Finding it Tough

RAFA run online mental wellbeing courses also known as Finding it Tough course. These are tailored for veterans, their partners and family members. There is also a Finding it Tough course tailored for partners and family members of serving personnel. Participation will be in small, confidential groups. These courses can be booked online and there are always a number of dates available. Visit findingittough.rafa.org.uk to sign up or to find out more information. Or you can contact the team on 0800 018 2361.

RAF Benevolent Fund: Listening and Counselling Service

The RAF Benevolent Fund supports serving personnel, veterans and their families, providing a listening and counselling service that offers support for a range of difficulties including stress, anxiety, loneliness and isolation, low mood and bereavement. This service includes a dedicated assessment of your needs and up to eight sessions of counselling with a trained therapist. The options include telephone, webcam or face to face sessions. There is access to a free 24 hour emotional support helpline and free membership to Headspace, providing access to guided mindfulness exercises. This is a self referral service and information can be found by visiting rafbf.org/get-support/emotional-wellbeing/listening-and-counselling-service or phone 0300 222 5703

RAF Benevolent Fund: Family and Relationship Support

The RAF Benevolent Fund can fund up to six family counselling sessions with Relate for serving RAF personnel, veterans and their families. These also include separated parents, children and step families attending together or at different times. The focus is on the family system and improving relationships within the family.

Support is also offered to married, living together, separated, divorced, and same sex relationship counselling. Up to six free counselling sessions are offered with a trained Relate Counsellor for serving RAF personnel, veterans and their families. For more information please contact the RAF Benevolent Fund on 0300 222 5703 or 0300 102 1919.

If you have any questions on welfare, either on any of the subjects discussed here or any other welfare issue please email John.radnedge@hotmail.co.uk

John Radnedge
Branch Welfare Officer

Air Cadets



2458 Shipley & Baidon Squadron



At the annual Sqn dinner event which took place on 12th September, the RAF Caduceus Branch Presidents Shield was presented to Cadet Cpl Grey for his outstanding dedicated work to fundraising.

"We are extremely proud of Cpl Grey. He turned up for every fundraising event the Sqn held throughout the year including wings appeal. It was therefore fitting that this shield is justly deserved and he is an example to others for his dedication to the Sqn and the RAF family" said Branch ACLO Robbie Cormie.

2458 Sqn raised a total of £408.91 for Wings appeal this September. Thank you 2458 Sqn.

Robbie Cormie
ATC Liaison

Out and about



Eddie Hill at Blenheim
Gardens on VJ Day.



Andy and Emma receives the Veterans Alliance Veterans Awareness Accreditation as well as the Defence Employers Award. In addition they raised £1086 for the Not Forgotten charity.



Paul receiving his Veterans Aware accreditation.



Paul and Mark at the RAF MS symposium

Cenotaph 2025



Mark at the Cenotaph



Maxine at the Cenotaph



This year was a mixed bag for the Cenotaph, as unfortunately there were several drop outs for a variety of reasons.

I would like everyone to be aware that there is a great deal of time and effort undertaken to secure places at the Cenotaph. If our numbers dip, our allocation for the following year is reduced. If you apply for a place PLEASE ensure you book time off work, agree plans with the family/friends/significant others & work with the Branch about any changes in circumstances in a timely manner.

Branch Standard blessing at Saint Clement Danes Church

A crisp November morning saw members of the Caduceus Branch attend St Clement Danes, the Church of the RAF, on The Strand in London for the blessing of our new Branch Standard. The service was led by Wg Cdr Ashley Mitchell, with the blessing being carried out by the Chaplain in Chief AVM Charles LeGood who is also the current RBL Chaplain in Chief. The standard, which we won in a competition held by Newton and Newton Flags Ltd, was paraded by our Standard Bearer, Kelvin Kettley and escorted by Sqn Ldr Amir Khan, Cpl James McNulty-Ackroyd, Flt Sgt Emma Wilkins, and AR Amy Williams, with Sqn Ldr Emma Kerslake acting as the Parade Marshall. Readings were given by AM Claire Walton and AVM Dave McLoughlin and prayers read by Air Cdre Darren Ellison, Prof Andrew Hartle, Robbie Cormie and Paul Newton. The RAF Association was represented by both Air Cdre (R'td) Alan Opie the SE&E Area President & Jenna Walters the Branch BMO. The Branch is incredibly grateful to all who gave up their time to attend this event and make it an exceptional day for everyone. We were lucky to have service from the 1960s to today represented and a broad spectrum of the trades & professions present.







If you have an idea for a future Caduceus Branch event please email rafacaduceusbranch@gmail.com

More pictures in the Branch website Gallery.

AGM 2026

This year will be a milestone for the branch! We'll achieve our 10th Birthday! Cue: Happy Birthday to us...

We will be returning to our original 1st meeting place, where the Gang of 6 got together & formed the Branch,



Grimsby, Cleethorpes & District RAFA Branch
5 Alexandra Road
Cleethorpes
DM35 8LQ

The meeting will take place on the afternoon of Saturday 14th March 2026 with a cross RAFA Branch event in the club in the evening.

There are several hotels close to the venue, but the best value seems to be:

Premier Inn
Meridian Point
Cleethorpes
DN35 0PN

This is 5 minute drive from the venue and we will arrange taxis/car shares as needed.

The proposal is to meet at the RAFA Club in the afternoon for our AGM, retire to the hotel to check in, eat an early dinner at the Premier Inn and then back to the RAFA Club for a social evening.

If you would like to attend our AGM or any of our other events, but need support to do so, please do not hesitate to contact John Radnedge, our Welfare Officer. We want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to join us.

If you would like to attend the AGM please send you details and confirm which hotel you will be staying in to the Secretary

rafacaduceusbranch@gmail.com

Everyone is welcome.

Don't forget, the Branch are always looking for willing volunteers. If you are interested in getting involved, please email the Secretary to register interest. You could be the future Chair, next fundraising wizard... all our current Branch Officers would welcome help and can support you to see if you'd like to take on a position permanently.

Editor



May I take this opportunity to wish a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2026.

Talking of 2026 can I ask that you visit our branch website. Given the number of branch members, interest in the site is low. If there is any way you think the site could be improved I would welcome your suggestions.

In addition you are welcome to contribute to the newsletter Please email Ray at rafagloucester@gamil.com

Website

Have you visited our branch website? <https://www.rafamedicalbranch.co.uk/>

Ray Bunnage
Communications Officer

Social Media



Our public page can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/RAFACaduceusBranch>
To join our private branch members only group search 'RAFA Caduceus Branch Group' request to join and answer the questions.



@rafacaduceus



@rafacaduceusbranch



You can always email us at rafacaduceusbranch@gmail.com

Branch Volunteers

Steve Kilbey – President

To be elected - .Service Representative

Paul Newton - Chairman rafacaduceusbranch@gmail.com

William Morris – Treasurer

Vivienne Newton – Secretary rafacaduceusbranch@gmail.com

John Radnedge – Welfare Officer john.radnedge@hotmail.co.uk

Ron O'Hare - Fundraising & Wings Appeal

Mark Denton—Membership caduceusmembership@gmail.com

Emma Wilkins—Branch RAFLO

Kelvin Kettleby – Standard Bearer

Ray Bunnage – Communications Officer rafagloucester@gmail.com



Humour

The old man was sitting on the examining table in the doctor's office, having his hearing checked. The doctor poked his light scope in the old man's ear and said, "Hey, you have a suppository in your ear!" "Rats," said the old man. "Now I know where my hearing aid went."

