

**AGM 2023**  
**REPORT BY BRANCH CHAIRMAN**

The main activity undertaken by the Branch since AGM 2022 was to continue the process of corporate recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. To this end, further maintenance and refurbishment on the premises was carried out throughout the year and the Committee adopted new priorities. The Committee recognised that the Branch was well-placed to provide friendship and comradeship to Branch members and beneficiaries, and to alleviate their loneliness and social isolation. Many of the items set out below were in explicit support to this.

The Branch Committee has continued to engage with Branch members by a variety of measures including frequent e-Newsletters, posts on the Branch web site, the Thursday morning Wings Café and phone calls. In the absence of an Association on-line forum for members of this and other Branches to exchange views and information, a Branch Facebook page has been created and, to facilitate use of this and other digital media, a broadband wifi service has been set up in the Branch premises. The Branch Welfare Officer also belongs to the Royal British Legion and helps coordinate welfare activities between the 2 charities. She provided support for members in the local area needing stair lifts and mobility scooters and advice on benefit entitlements.

Thursday Wings coffee mornings continued throughout the year and this weekly event continues to provide an important meeting venue for a small group of senior veterans. Additionally, the Branch Aviation History Group meets on alternate Thursdays in the Branch lounge.

The Branch held a social event to commemorate the 100th birthday of one of its beneficiaries and, in addition, held a series of ‘Sandwich Lunches’ and ran a Quiz Night – all aimed primarily at combatting loneliness and social isolation amongst Branch members and beneficiaries.

Of particular note, the Branch donated in tranches a total of over £12,000 to the Association’s project to convert its Rothbury House into a residential home for RAF veterans, gave £2000 to the Association’s Wings Appeal and continued to support the RAFA HQ OP CONNECT initiative. The RAFALO team set up a Wings Appeal display at a local government agency to highlight the work of the Branch and collect donations. This realised the sum of £325.

The Branch premises are used under a licence from the Branch by the Cheltenham Guardians from Saturday evenings until early Sunday mornings. The Guardians provide security and safeguarding services to vulnerable young people in the Cheltenham evening and night time economy. The Branch’s partnership with the Guardians is in furtherance of an approach to extend its reach further into the community, build networks, develop its influence, work closely with other charities, engage with partner organisations, raise its profile and earn community goodwill. In this, it has been very successful.

Good working relationships have been established with Armed Forces Champions at Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council. The Branch is actively engaged with the county-wide Armed Forces Covenant Partnership in a project to develop an Armed Forces Hub.

Branch members participated in local ceremonies and functions to mark Armed Forces Day, the Withdrawal From Aden and Remembrance Day. The period of National Mourning following the death of Her Majesty The Queen precluded holding the customary Parade and Service to commemorate the Battle of Britain but the Branch President and Branch Chairman joined the Chairman of the local Royal British Legion branch in laying wreaths at the town War Memorial. The RAFALO, who acts as the Branch standard bearer, together with members of the committee continued to support local military and RAF-associated functions. The Branch President and Branch Chairman participated in the unveiling ceremony for a memorial to the mixed Canadian and British crew of a Halifax bomber that crashed near Cheltenham during World War 2.

Other items to report are:

- The Branch Committee discussed resolutions for the Association Area and National Conferences and provided voting guidance to the Branch Conference Delegate. He attended both Conferences and reported back to the Committee.
- The Branch continued to employ a sympathetic policy towards rent payments from commercial and residential tenants in the RAFA premises for the duration of Covid-19 restrictions, but income was maintained for the most part from all tenants.
- The Branch Committee held regular Zoom committee meetings since Covid-19 restrictions were introduced and also held an AGM by Zoom on 3 March 2022. Subsequently, monthly Committee meetings were physical ones.
- The Branch has continued to provide financial support to local RAF Air Cadet Squadrons in the form of grants for specific projects and activities.



Mike Bryant  
Branch Chairman



**Patron: Her Majesty The Queen**  
Registered Charity 231667 (England & Wales)  
Branch Number 0400