

# 128

## NEW CLUB PATRON

*His Majesty King Charles III has graciously accepted the Patronage of the Club*

## FAREWELL TO KATHRYN COOPER

*Our Club Manager to retire after 38 years of service*

THE MAGAZINE OF THE RAF CLUB SUMMER 2024

## THE FRIENDS OF THE RAF CLUB

*The network of Members supporting the Club*

## ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

*We celebrate the Centenary of the RAF's distinguished Reserve sibling*

## Honouring Noor Inayat Khan GC

*WAAF Heroine of the Special Operations Executive*



ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB  
FOUNDED 1918



ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB  
FOUNDED 1918

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

ISSUE NUMBER 95  
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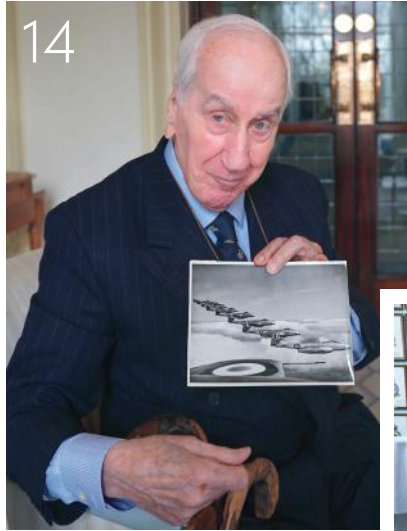
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### KEEP UP TO DATE

Follow us on our social media accounts  
and be the first to know about latest  
Club updates and offers.





ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB  
— FOUNDED 1918 —

# Membership booming, finances robust, excellent staff and a happy Club

**A**s I started to write this foreword, I was absolutely delighted to be informed by Buckingham Palace that His Majesty King Charles III has very graciously accepted the Patronage of the Club.

Since its establishment in 1918, the Club has held Royal Patronage from three reigning British Monarchs: King George V, King George VI and, until Her loss in 2023, Queen Elizabeth II. Therefore, I am sure that you will share our deep honour and pride in receiving confirmation that His Majesty will be the fourth reigning British Monarch to become our Patron.

On a more parochial level, it seems like only yesterday that I was putting pen to paper to write a foreword for the last 128 Magazine, but so much has happened in the Club and the world since then that it is difficult to know where to start.

Many of you will know that prior to COVID, the decision was made to significantly upgrade the business centre area and build a new bedroom wing for our Members to use, at a total cost of £8.5 million. This required us to commit to using our £2 million reserves, take out a £5.5 million bank loan and spend a £1 million legacy. This made us somewhat financially fragile but we were fully confident that the loan could be repaid and our reserves replenished in a reasonable timeframe, unless of course something cataclysmic and highly unlikely happened, which would deny us income – and it did!

In retrospect, was the decision to carry out the building work and spend the money correct? I am 100% certain that it was, particularly as I can report that we have fully repaid the loan and are starting to rebuild our reserves. The trick now of course is to rebuild the reserves at the right pace, not so slowly that we leave ourselves financially vulnerable but, not too quickly either as we are determined to keep the price of food, beverages and rooms at a reasonable rate for our members. After all, the Club is there for the Members and not to make unnecessary profit.

Turning now to the issues of the day. When I joined the RAF back in the late 1970s, the big worry beads were the Middle East and what the Russians were up to – particularly the concerns about nuclear conflict. As I write, I read in today's newspapers.



*"I was absolutely delighted to be informed by Buckingham Palace that His Majesty King Charles III has very graciously accepted the Patronage of the Club"*

that the headlines are – you guessed it – Middle East and what the Russians are up to.

However, we should not let that depress us too much as we have a lot to celebrate. Just looking through the articles in this Magazine, we can enjoy the piece about the Centenary of the vital Royal Auxiliary Air Force, celebrating Club Members such as Colin Bell as he turns 103, and, of course, the relatively recent visit to us by our new Queen. We were honoured and delighted that Her Majesty graced us with Her presence when she officially unveiled the portrait of Noor Inayat Khan GC (the subject of another article in this Magazine).

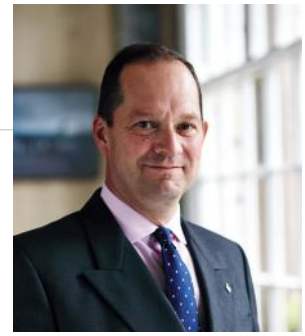
Day-to-day, I try to get to the Club as much as possible, not just for meetings but being inquisitive, I like to see, I like to see and know what is going on and to talk to the staff and, most importantly, other Club Members. I (as do my fellow Trustees will) often just wander up to people in the Club

and engage them in conversation to see how their stay or visit is going, to gauge honest opinion and views. Many have no idea that we happen to be the current Trustees but the feedback that we get is really useful. Sometimes the comments are quite tactical (such as why are there no baked potatoes in the Running Horse?) and are easily sorted. But, on other occasions, views are more profound and thought provoking, which is incredibly helpful.

Of course, there is no monopoly of good ideas amongst the Board of Trustees so I would always encourage debate and ideas from Members. Inevitably, striking a balance is not always easy – for example, some want us to tighten dress regulations and others want us to abandon them altogether. However, we do need your thoughts and, in that context, we will be advertising for new Full Member Trustees towards the end of the year by E-news. A word of warning though: Trustees are expected to put in quite a bit of effort on behalf of the Membership!

Having said all that, I do think that we are currently in very good shape. Membership booming, finances robust, an excellent staff, a happy Club and the honour of a wonderful new Patron. What more could we possibly want?

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



FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# Your home from home in Central London

**A**s we embrace the summer months, our Club (as well as our beehives') is buzzing with activity and the promise of brighter days ahead. It has been a successful year with enhancements to the Clubhouse including 11 bedrooms that were refurbished earlier this year, this time on the third floor, at the front of the building. Our next bedroom project will renovate a similar number and is planned for 2025.

Our ongoing focus to enhance Member experiences continues with the installation of two acoustic pods in the Business Suite, which provide a much-needed space for private calls. We are extremely grateful to those who left the Club a legacy which has enabled the pods project to go ahead.

Looking ahead, our focus turns to the Presidents' Room, a project for which we are currently fundraising. The Presidents' Room is in need of rewiring and renovation, so plans are underway to modernise and revitalise this area, drawing inspiration from the elegant design of the 601 Squadron Room.

2025 will see the start of a large refurbishment project of the beloved Running Horse Tavern and the basement kitchen area. Aiming to improve functionality and ambience, we will move the cooking area from the Running Horse Tavern to the kitchen which will also provide more space. We acknowledge that many Members love



*"It has been a successful year with enhancements to the Clubhouse including 11 bedrooms that were refurbished earlier this year, this time on the third floor, at the front of the building"*

the Running Horse in its current form and with this in mind, many features of the room will remain.

Our new Chief Engineer, Jorge Martens, joined us in February this year and is now intimately familiar with the complexities of the building. Jorge is identifying areas that require much work and development, ensuring that

the House Committee are regularly updated on his finds. His knowledge will help us further develop our Capital Project Plan and ensure that the building remains in the best possible state of repair.

A group of final year students from the Edge Hotel School in Colchester have worked with us, as part of their course, to produce a report titled "Sustainability and Social Media Strategy for the Royal Air Force Club". We are extremely keen to see what suggestions we can implement to fulfil our intent to become carbon neutral by 2040.

We have upgraded our Wi-Fi coverage, improving its reliability and bandwidth for business and leisure use, and have enhanced the Club's security system by updating our CCTV to include facial recognition capabilities. We are also working on a project to renew much of our computer network and upgrade our telephone lines.

The government-backed scheme, Cyber Essentials, is something we are striving to achieve, and this helps us to guard the Club against

cyber-attacks and the most common threats. This work demonstrates our commitment to cyber security and we are very grateful to the Systems Working Group for their support.

Exciting developments are also underway on the membership front, with plans for a new Club app that will function as your Membership Card and

enhance communications. Drawing inspiration from recent successful implementations at establishments like the Royal Automobile Club, we are using these insights and are eager to embrace this innovation.

Whilst all this capital project work is required, we are also extremely conscious that the Trustees wish to build reserves for the Club and we are committed to meeting their target of £6m in five years.

Through the dedication of our Events Committee and the tireless efforts of our Meetings and Events Manager Emily Moss, we have produced an excellent calendar of events for 2024. You can see some of the upcoming events highlighted in this Magazine along with the full list of events for the remainder of this year on page 23. We have introduced some new style events, which we hope will prove popular with you all.

I would personally like to thank the Board of Trustees and Committee volunteers for their work and help this year. We appreciate very much the level of commitment they all give on a voluntary basis.

Last but not least, I would like to thank



Club Manager, Kathryn Cooper, who after 38 and a half years of service, will be retiring at the end of the summer. It is hard to put into words the passion, dedication and loyalty that Kathryn has given to the Club during her time, but we will be eternally grateful. You can read about Kathryn's journey with the Club on the next page.

As we strive to be the best club in London, we must have a strong team – a team of dedicated professionals who want to learn and are equally keen to

share their experience and knowledge with their colleagues. Since I last wrote to you, our focus has been very much on recruitment and retention of the team and I do hope you have experienced the wonderful service they provide. Your feedback is important to us as it helps us to focus and identify areas where some specific training may be required – please do continue to share your thoughts with us.

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



## SIGNATURE SOURDOUGH

### Crafting the perfect Club Sandwich

In the heart of the Royal Air Force Club, a culinary masterpiece is born every week – our signature sourdough bread.

The journey started when Executive Chef Michael Dutnall organised a trip to E5 Bakehouse through the League of Club Chefs.

It was here that the Chefs honed their skills to perfect this craft and we received the lifeblood of our sourdough, the 40-year-old starter.

Through a three-day process of mixing, folding, shaping and scoring and adding a special touch of marmite, the Sourdough makes its way to the Dining Room and the Running Horse Tavern. As the key component of our Club Sandwich, our home-baked bread cushions the chicken, bacon, lettuce, egg and black garlic mayo to create the ultimate Club Sandwich.

For more culinary creations, turn to page 11.



THANK YOU

# Farewell to Kathryn Cooper

*At the end of the summer, our Club Manager will retire after achieving an incredible 38 years of service*



Kathryn celebrating her 38 year work anniversary in September 2023



Pictured with MRAF Sir Peter Harding, who passed away in 2021



Miles and Kathryn pictured in 2017 during the Centenary Building Project

including many royal visits. Particular highlights that earned a special place in her heart included Her Majesty Queen Camilla's visit in August 2023, The Late Queen Elizabeth II who visited in 2018, to a grand royal gathering in 2015 where 12 members of the Royal Family graced the Club. In 1997, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother visited the Club and Kathryn's daughter Natasha presented a posy of flowers to Her Majesty which is a particularly fond memory.

Reflecting on the last 38 years, Kathryn has seen the Club itself transform. The fabric of the building has evolved through various refurbishments, Kathryn leading many of them. She has seen the Buttery Restaurant become the Battle of Britain Suite, squash courts making way for new bedrooms, a Fitness Centre and a Business Suite, and rules adapting to the ever-changing landscape of

**K**athryn's story began as the Club's Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, a role that marked the inception of an extraordinary career with the Royal Air Force Club. Over the years, she embraced various roles, each a unique chapter in her journey. From Assistant Conference and Banqueting Manager, House Manager, Personnel and Training Manager, Assistant Club Secretary, and finally, as Club Manager from 2015 to present day.

Kathryn's willingness to explore different departments kept her engaged and dedicated to the Club throughout her career. Among all the roles she performed, one of her favourites was Personnel and Training Manager, a

department she personally established from the ground up and watched flourish over the years. Now known as People and Culture, this department is the heart of recruitment, retention and staff wellbeing in the Club. So, it is no surprise that when asked what her favourite aspect of the Club was, her answer was unequivocal – 'the people'. Whether it's the Club's cherished Members, dedicated staff, or the valued contractors, it's the human connections that have made her journey truly special.

Over the years, Kathryn has been a part of some remarkable moments,

the membership and their requirements. Trustees, and staff have come and gone, but she notes that one constant remains

*"In 1997, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother visited the Club and Kathryn's daughter Natasha presented a posy of flowers to Her Majesty which is a particularly fond memory"*

– the Members. Some familiar faces from her early days still grace the Club, which is a testament to our dedicated membership.

In celebrating her time at the Royal Air Force Club, we thank Kathryn for her dedicated service. We know that many of you would like

the opportunity to thank Kathryn yourselves. Please email farewell letters of thanks to [press@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:press@rafclub.org.uk), to be presented to Kathryn before her departure. Pictures are encouraged.



MEMBER OFFER

# Book a trip to London this summer!

*Our exclusive Summer Bedroom Offer has landed!  
Available for Members only, from 22nd July to 31st August 2024*

Book a two-night stay package including the following:

- **Sumptuous Breakfast:** Start your day with a delicious breakfast for two in the Club's Dining Room
- **Prosecco Afternoon Tea:** Indulge in a delightful afternoon treat with Prosecco for two in the Cowdray Lounge

## Our Summer Packages

- **Classic Double/Twin Package price: £372.00 (Saving £99.00 per stay)**  
Includes 2 nights in a Classic Double/Twin Room, inclusive of breakfast for two people on both days and a Prosecco Afternoon Tea for two people in the Cowdray Lounge
- **Superior Double/Twin Package price: £416.00 (Saving £111.00 per stay)**  
Includes 2 nights in a Superior Double/Twin Room, inclusive of breakfast for two people on both days and a Prosecco Afternoon Tea for two people in the Cowdray Lounge

Whether you're planning a family trip or you'd like to sample the art and culture London has to offer, our Summer Bedroom Offer is tailored to elevate your experience. Don't forget that the Club is children friendly and all children receive a complimentary welcome pack on arrival.

Please note these offers are not available online. To book please email [reservations@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:reservations@rafclub.org.uk) or call us on 020 7399 1019/21.



**Terms and Conditions:** This offer is subject to availability. Packages for other room types are also available. Applicable dates: 22nd July - 31st August 2024. For Afternoon Tea, we require 48 hours advanced booking.



COVER STORY

# A heroine of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)

*Honouring Noor Inayat Khan GC MBE CdeG, the first SOE operator  
to be infiltrated into France during the Second World War*

Noor-un-Nisa Inayat Khan was born in Moscow on New Year's Day in 1914, to an Indian father and American mother. Noor was a direct descendent of the 18th century Muslim ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan. Her father was a musician and Sufi teacher, who moved his family to London first before settling in Paris where Noor was educated and later worked, writing children's books. Following the fall of France early in the Second World War, Noor escaped to England and joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Later, she was recruited into the Special Operations Executive (SOE) as an agent and radio operator.

Despite the pacifist teachings of their father, Noor and her brother decided that they could not passively stand aside as the jackboot of Nazi oppression spread

mercilessly across Europe. They decided to volunteer for the war effort and help defeat Nazi tyranny. Being a musician like her father, Noor played the harp and piano, applying the same swift dexterity, accuracy and rhythm to her Morse transmissions, impressing her instructors who described her as a 'natural signaller'. Despite this, her kind heart and gentle nature led to initial concerns about her capability to work in secret warfare. Intelligence Officer Vera Atkins insisted Noor's commitment was unquestioned and judged her ready to go. Vera would be proved right, as for over a period of more than 12 months, Noor displayed the most conspicuous courage, both morally and physically.

The purpose of SOE was to conduct espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance in occupied countries during the Second World War. In 1943, Noor was recruited to

join the SOE from the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and was one of only two members of the WAAF to be awarded the George Cross (GC), sadly posthumously in Noor's case. Alongside the Victoria Cross, the GC is the highest award bestowed for acts of the greatest heroism or the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger.

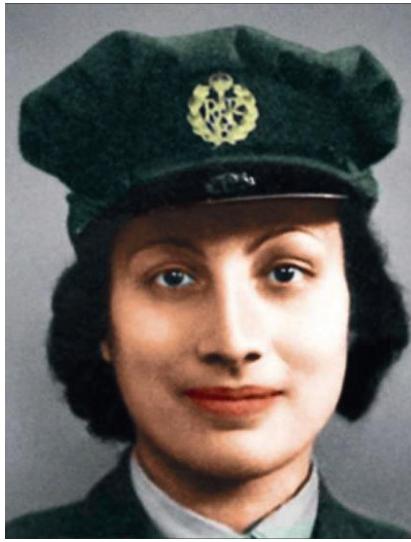
The other WAAF on whom the GC was bestowed was Corporal (later Flight Officer) Daphne Pearson, whose portrait was commissioned by the Club and unveiled in April 2024 (see article on page 16).

Noor was the first woman SOE operator to be infiltrated into France and was landed by Lysander aircraft on 16th June 1943. During the following weeks, the Gestapo arrested most of the Paris Resistance Group in which she worked. Despite the danger, Noor refused to return

**Opposite:** Her Majesty The Queen unveils the portrait of Noor Inayat Khan GC, painted by the artist Paul Brason. **Clockwise from top:** Noor Inayat Khan GC; Her Majesty The Queen and Club President Air Marshal Sir David Walker; relatives of Noor Inayat Khan GC

to England because she did not wish to leave her French comrades without communications, and she hoped also to rebuild the Group. The Gestapo had a full description of Noor, whom they knew only by her code name "Madeleine", and in October 1943, she was captured by them.

Despite brutal interrogation, she refused to give away any information regarding her work or colleagues. She was imprisoned in the Gestapo's Paris HQ, during which time she made two unsuccessful attempts to escape and was then sent to Germany for so-called "safe custody". She was considered to be a particularly dangerous and uncooperative prisoner. On 12th



*"I wish some Indians would win high military distinction in this war. If one or two could do something in the Allied service which was very brave and which everybody admired it would help to make a bridge between the English people and the Indians"*

**Noor Inayat Khan GC**

Writing before being dispatched to France, Noor said "I wish some Indians would win high military distinction in this war. If one or two could do something in the Allied service which was very brave and which everybody admired it would help to make a bridge between the English people and the Indians." Noor is widely admired for her bravery and was awarded the George Cross posthumously.

Shaik Mahmood, Noor Inayat Khan's cousin, before unveiling the portrait. Commissioned by the Royal Air Force Club, the painting depicts Noor landing via Lysander in France for her mission. The artist Paul Brason is former President of the Society of Portrait Painters whose works are held in many public and private collections, including the National Portrait Gallery. The portrait now hangs opposite the stained-glass window celebrating the contribution made by women in the service of the Royal Air Force and highlights female roles in the RAF since its inception in 1918.

September 1944, she was moved to Dachau Concentration Camp where she was subjected to further brutal treatment, then taken to the crematorium and shot. It is said that before her execution Noor shouted "Liberté". Noor's sacrifice exhibited remarkable courage, bravery and moral fortitude that undoubtedly saved many lives.

**Her Majesty The Queen unveils the portrait to honour Noor Inayat Khan GC**

On 29th August 2023, Her Majesty The Queen came to the Royal Air Force Club to honour Noor Inayat Khan GC. After being welcomed by our Club President Air Marshal Sir David Walker, HM The Queen was introduced to

Her Majesty Queen Camilla named this room formally as the 'Noor Inayat Khan GC Room' and said: "I am delighted to name this room after her, it's a wonderful painting." Following the portrait unveiling, Her Majesty joined a Reception in the Sovereigns' Room attended by members of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Air Force Club and serving female RAF personnel representing the RAF Stations of which Her Majesty is Honorary Air Commodore, and other areas of the RAF. Her Majesty was also presented with a book 'The Spy Princess - The Life of Noor Inayat Khan', authored by Shrabani Basu.

It was a privilege to host this special event to honour the extraordinary courage of Noor Inayat Khan GC.



MEMBERSHIP

# The lifeblood of our Club

*Paul Higgins, Chair of the Membership Committee, on the importance of looking after the Club's 24,000 Members*

As the founders of the Royal Air Force Club intended, the Board of Trustees today places our Members and prospective Members at the heart of its thinking – they and you are undoubtedly the Club's lifeblood. I have the great privilege of being a Trustee of the Club and I'm also the Chair of the Membership Committee. The Committee has specific responsibility for ensuring that we not only look after the interests of our 24,000 current Members and the day-to-day governance regarding admission, but that we help the Board look forward to ensure that our offer remains relevant, attractive and true to the Club's founding purpose.

The Membership Committee (which comprises Trustees, volunteer and serving RAF Club Members plus Club employees) comes together regularly to consider matters pertaining to Membership. We not only make recommendations to the Board regarding admission of prospective Members to the Club, but also do the

same when considering reciprocal arrangements with premium clubs with a similar offer across the globe. We listen carefully to the feedback from Club Members and are always happy to hear from you – unfortunately, and as I'm sure you will understand, we cannot always agree

to implement every proposal, but we will always consider them carefully and respond. We also work closely with our Events team to ensure that what is offered in the Club calendar (an average of three events per month) is of high quality, has broad appeal and is reasonably affordable within the context of London pricing.

When I took over the role as Chair of the Membership Committee in September 2023, and building on the results of the Club's most recent Membership Survey, we decided we would focus our strategic work in 2024 on a number of areas. Amongst those priorities, we continue to be keen on increasing Membership from the Serving and Reserve Members of the RAF, particularly exposing the outstanding Club opportunity to those going through training at RAF Cranwell. We are also increasingly focused on leveraging the power of information, by whatever means, to improve our understanding of what the



Membership thinks and how it uses the Club in order to guide the Board's decision making. We are also acutely aware that our Members, current and prospective, come from a very broad demographic and we and the Board continue to work hard to ensure we

create broad appeal in terms of what the Club offers.

The benefits of Club Membership are many, as you will already know. In terms of London, we offer extremely competitive bedroom and dining prices, all provided at the high end of the quality spectrum. The venue, steeped in RAF history, continues to offer the convivial but impressive 'home-from-home' in London with a range of comfortable social, meeting and business spaces within it. Members are also able to arrange their own events at the Club. To my mind, it also provides a great way of meeting like-minded folk in a simply excellent environment. So, please continue to spread the word or, if you have picked up this edition of '128' but are not a member already, do perhaps consider the Club – the terms for membership can be found on the Club website and our Membership Team would be delighted to talk to you.

*For more details on membership visit [www.rafclub.org.uk/join-club](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/join-club) or email [membership@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:membership@rafclub.org.uk).*



Kenya's Muthaiga Country Club, just one of over 50 Clubs around the world that Members have access to

## A home away from home

As a benefit of membership, the Royal Air Force Club offers reciprocal arrangements with over fifty private members' clubs throughout the world. These include clubs in the UK, Ireland, Europe, America, Oceania, Africa and Asia.

Our full list of reciprocal clubs can be accessed via our Reciprocal Brochure by scanning the QR code below. Members may request automated letters of introduction by logging in to the Members' area of our website, and browsing the reciprocal map feature. Once you have selected the club you wish to visit, simply request your Letter of Introduction online – a copy of the Letter will be emailed to you and your club of choice. A reservation or a visit can then be made directly with the reciprocal club once your Letter of Introduction has been arranged.

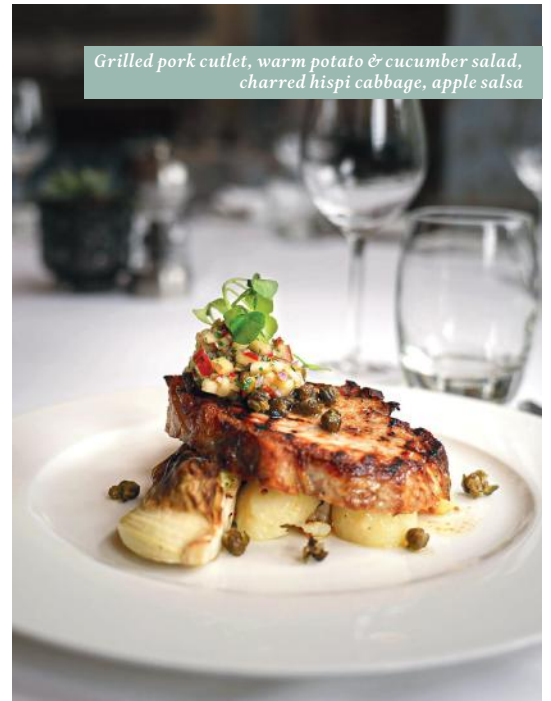
Members may request automated letters of introduction via the Club's website by visiting: [www.rafclub.org.uk/account/member/reciprocal](http://www.rafclub.org.uk/account/member/reciprocal)



Chelsea Flower Show  
Afternoon Tea



Grilled pork cutlet, warm potato & cucumber salad,  
charred hispi cabbage, apple salsa



Marjolaine entremets, caramel,  
hazelnut dacquoise milk gelato



Marinated seafood, squid,  
mussels, octopus, prawns,  
black rice, lobster mayonnaise



Grilled asparagus, wild garlic & white bean hummus,  
spring onion & hazelnut dressing



Green apple cheesecake,  
caramel sauce



Roasted cauliflower gnocchi, black garlic  
velouté, leek fondant, pickled florets

## FOOD AND BEVERAGE

# Culinary Creations

**A**t the Royal Air Force Club, we are fortunate to have a highly skilled team of chefs who continuously create amazing new dishes. Executive Chef Michael Dutnall leads this team in preparing refined and classic British meals that never fail to impress our Members and their guests, whether it is in our Dining Room, Cowdray Lounge or the Running Horse. Not only do these dishes look remarkable and taste even better, but Chef Michael also ensures that ingredients are locally and sustainably sourced whenever possible. Here's a showcase of some of the delicious dishes we have served in the past year.

To book a table in the Dining Room, visit the Club website, email [dining@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:dining@rafclub.org.uk) or call 020 7399 1020.



Slow roast pork belly, aubergine & butternut squash,  
Kare-Kare peanut sauce, asparagus & beans

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell DFC

*WWII Mosquito Pilot Flt Lt Colin Bell DFC breaks world record as he becomes the oldest person to abseil*

**A**t the age of 102, WWII Mosquito Pilot Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell DFC made history. On a mission to make a difference, Colin launched himself off the highest helipad in Europe, though having flown Mosquitos in Bomber Command Colin rightly quipped “this was only 17 storeys, I’ve been a lot higher than that in my life.”

Born in Surrey in 1921, Colin Bell joined the Royal Air Force towards the end of 1940. His flying training took place in the USA before that country's entry into the War in December 1941 following Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, following which Colin's stay in the US was extended in order to serve as an advanced single-engine flying

instructor responsible for training American and British cadet pilots. Upon his return to the UK in 1943, he converted to twin-engine Mosquito bombers and joined 608 Squadron in the elite No 8 (Pathfinder Force) Group based at Downham Market in Norfolk.

During his tour of operations, Colin carried out 50 bombing raids, all over Germany, with 13 of them over Berlin. He experienced much action and survived many close scrapes, under great stress but retold today with wit and good humor.

Over 80 years later, his remarkable adventures continue. On 14th September 2023, he set a new Guinness World Record as the oldest person to abseil by descending 280 feet down the side of The Royal London Hospital. Colin's descent

was captured on film by the BBC, and he was accompanied by the Club's CEO and Secretary, Miles Pooley, who completed the daring abseil as part of an RAF Club Staff Fundraiser for London's Air Ambulance.

Although Colin is the eldest person to ever abseil, he says he feels a bit of a fraud as, despite being a centenarian, he ‘only feels biologically 70 years old’. Colin participated in the abseil purely as a means to raise money for causes close to his heart, viewing the challenge as ‘Money for old rope’! Being outstandingly successful in this aim, Colin's charitable endeavors raised an incredible £56,000 in total between the RAF Benevolent Fund, the Royal College of Nursing Foundation and London's Air Ambulance.



**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW:** Colin preparing for his abseil; all smiles following a successful descent; celebrating his 103rd birthday at the Club in March 2024  
**OPPOSITE:** Breaking the World Record at The Royal London Hospital.



Alongside the abseil, Colin completed a three-day sponsored walk visiting places that hold special significance to his war-time service. He walked from Churchill College Cambridge to the American Military Cemetery at Madingley, accompanied by Randolph Churchill, Winston Churchill's great-grandson. On the second day, Colin visited RAF Wyton, where he underwent his conversion training on Mosquito Bombers; and on the third day, Colin walked to RAF Downham Market, Bexwell Church and the VCs Memorial.

Since retiring at the age of 99 from his career as a Chartered Surveyor, Colin has devoted his time to raising money for charities and we are proud to often be the base in which he plans such endeavors. When he is not completing daredevil challenges, Colin can often be found in the Cowdray Lounge as he is one of our most active Members, having

*“This was only 17 storeys, I’ve been a lot higher than that in my life”*

visited over 50 times in the last year.

A typical day for Colin at the Club involves firstly greeting the wonderful staff, whom he considers as much his friends as the Members, before heading up to the Cowdray Lounge to meet his guests over ‘refreshment’. Very often, at the same time he will see someone he knows and enjoy a brief catch up with them in the friendly atmosphere of the Club. He then heads to the Running Horse for lunch, the place where he says, “the best people meet”. It’s not unusual for him to then switch around and have dinner in the Dining Room, bringing the day to a close with friends over a convivial brandy.

For Colin, 5th March 2024 was no ordinary day at the Club as he celebrated his 103rd birthday, filling the Sovereign’s Room with cheers and laughter that could be heard throughout the building. Colin feels

astonishingly lucky to be turning 103 as he told us “Being in Bomber Command wasn’t the best place to be during the war, I never thought I would make it beyond 25 years old.”

Starting with Champagne in the Churchill Bar, the attendees then enjoyed a lively lunch in the Sovereign’s Room. Following several heartfelt speeches, Colin hosted an auction of a signed print of one of our latest paintings donated to the Club. This painting commissioned by Carl Lamb and created by artist Michael Rondot, depicts Colin flying the Mosquito. The auction raised over £2,700 which Colin kindly donated to the Royal Air Force Club Staff Fund.

Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell’s exceptional achievements, both in his military service and his charitable endeavors serve as a testament to the remarkable man he is, and we are very grateful for the friendship and support he has shown to the Royal Air Force Club over the years.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# Terence Devey Smith

*Sqn Ldr Terence Devey Smith, Club Member of over 70 years, recounts the Queen's 1953 Coronation flypast*

In Great British History, Queen Elizabeth's 1953 Coronation flypast and subsequent 1954 Royal Review remain two of the greatest aircraft shows in RAF history. As neither is likely ever to be repeated in that magnitude, they are sure to have marked the memories of those who took to the skies to participate in them. Among those taking part in both was 94-year-old, long-standing Club Member, Squadron Leader Terence Devey Smith, whose vivid recollections offer a glimpse into his era of flight and service.

"Twice I've flown over Buckingham Palace," Terry reminisces with sharp recollection. "I'll never forget either of them. For the Coronation flypast, we were heading towards the Palace, and from where I was positioned looking across the formation, when I glanced down I saw a figure in a white dress on the balcony. I saw the Queen! And I'm sure she was waving to me." A memory for a lifetime! That historical event nearly never happened.

British weather being famously unpredictable was as evident in the 2023 Coronation as it was 70 years prior. Terry remembers that on the day of the Queen's Coronation the flypast looked very likely to be called off due to bad weather, although the day had been chosen specifically for its best-weather forecast. The corps of pilots and their crews had been practising for weeks. Now they all waited anxiously in their crew rooms at various other bases within reach of London, as Terry and his fellow pilots of No. 56 Squadron did in theirs at RAF Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire. As Terry recalls, Air Vice-Marshal (later Air Marshal) the Earl of Bandon, AOC 11 Group and master of the airborne ceremonies, had been standing on the roof of Buckingham Palace, chain-smoking madly, under huge pressure to make the final call to go or not go.



The crews waited anxiously at their bases, suited up, helmets in hand, ready to bolt out to their waiting aircraft but fearing they'd be disappointed, told to stand down. Air Vice-Marshal Bandon was the most anxious of all. This was to be one of the most dramatic parts of the coronation activities, with 168 jet aircraft joining up to fly in three divisions above the Thames ... over London, the Palace, Her Majesty The Queen, and the massive crowds. He couldn't release the aircraft to fly if they were likely to endanger themselves or anyone else.

*"We were heading towards the palace, and from where I was positioned looking across the formation, when I glanced down I saw a figure in a white dress on the balcony. I saw the Queen!"*

All morning, heavy grey clouds hung over the area like persistent shrouds. It was pelted with rain. The miserable weather seemed endless. On and on it went, down to almost the last possible moment, when finally the cloud base began to lift almost imperceptibly. Anxious moments later, sure that the edges were lifting, even if glacially, Air Vice-Marshal Bandon calculated that the clouds would clear to the required 1,500 feet to permit safe flight and made his decision. "Go!" "And then we were then airborne," Terry said, "just as we'd rehearsed."

Terry himself had a last-minute change from his usual Gloster Meteor F8. He was asked to change to a two-seat tandem Meteor T7 in order to take the "Flight" magazine photographer, as his was the perfect spot in the squadron for capturing the formation as well as Buckingham Palace. The short-notice

change in aircraft was no problem. After all the practice, and his trust in his fellow pilots, he felt only confidence and immense national pride.

From just the age of six Terry knew that he was destined for the skies. The pivotal moment occurred when he'd joined his RAF officer father who was based in India. As mischievous young Terry explored the base he entered the hangar, the only place he'd been forbidden to go. He recalls approaching an aircraft, reaching up to feel along the fuselage of what he later learned was a Westland Wapiti. He'd reached the wing when a sudden voice made him jump. "Who are you?" Caught red-handed and

expecting to be in trouble, he could hardly believe the magical words that came next. "Would you like to sit in it?" Would!!!! The cheerful officer lifted Terry into the seat and placed his helmet on the young lad's head. As Terry put his hand on the controls he knew, "from that moment I was a pilot, it was magic". Now one of Terry's 15 grandchildren, Zachary, aged just 9, vows to take flight just like his grandfather. Terry hopes he does because, "It's a wonderful feeling to be up there with the birds."

Terry has one of the longest-standing memberships of the Royal Air Force Club, having been a Member for more than 70 years. His journey as a Member

began with a memorable encounter. Upon joining his first squadron he reported to his Squadron Leader, who asked him, "Are you a Member of the Club?". When Terry shook his head, he received a firm directive: "Right, this weekend you will go down to London and join. I'll phone the secretary to expect you." He promptly went. Having been a Member ever since, he "revels in it". He and his wife, Dot, come to stay at the Club every trip they take to London. To them it is truly a "home away from home", where they love being greeted by our friendly staff who are so clearly pleased to welcome familiar and new faces alike.



CLUB ART

# Portrait of a heroine

*On 17th April 2024, Air Marshal Clare Walton - the Royal Air Force's most senior serving woman officer - unveiled a portrait of Corporal (later Flight Officer) Daphne Pearson GC*

The unveiling was overseen by Air Marshal Dame Sue Gray, former Club Chair and serving Vice-President. Daphne Pearson was the first female recipient of the George Cross, her award of an Empire gallantry medal being converted to the GC on the latter decoration's institution in 1940. Her remarkable act of heroism occurred on the night of 31st May 1940, when she rescued the life of a pilot whose Anson aircraft had crashed with a full



From left to right: Air Marshal Dame Sue Gray, Air Marshal Clare Walton, Group Captain Jim Beldon.

bombload at RAF Detling, Kent. She made numerous attempts to save other crewmembers' lives, and protected the injured pilot by covering his body with her own as the burning bomber's payload exploded. The following morning, Daphne Pearson reported for duty without any mention of her gallantry the night before.

After the War, Daphne served in a number of roles in the UK, developing her passion for horticulture through serving in the Herbarium at Kew Gardens and running her own gardening store, before moving abroad to Australia in 1969. She

was a very active member of the VC and GC Association, returning to Britain many times over the years before she passed away in 2000. It was on one of her later visits to the UK that she met the sons of David Bond, the pilot whose life she saved and who went on to found the famous Bond Aviation Group, which was ultimately acquired by Babcock in 2014. David Bond's grandsons, William and Thomas Bond, attended the unveiling - two of 37 members of the Bond family who owe their existence to David's survival and, therefore, to Daphne's heroism.

The portrait, painted by Paul Brason, is now on display at the Club next to its sister portrait (also painted by Paul Brason) of Noor Inayat Khan GC. Daphne Pearson GC was a Member of the Royal Air Force Club.

## Commemorating French Aviators

On Tuesday 10th October 2023, the Royal Air Force Club was honoured to host an event celebrating the enduring partnership between the Royal Air Force and the Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace. The event commemorated French aviators within the Royal Air Force during WW2.

The attendees at the Royal Air Force Club, including Club Trustees Group Captain Jim Beldon and Group Captain Al Lockwood, were welcomed by Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton KCB ADC FREng, Chief of the Air Staff, and Général d'Armée Stéphane Mille, Chief of Staff of the French Air and Space Force.

Insignias of the French Air Force and French Navy units enrolled in the Royal Air Force were presented to the Club. Alongside this,

a painting by Jame's Prunier was unveiled commemorating Commandant René Mouchotte DFC, who died 80 years ago in a British Spitfire, flying for France and fighting for a free Europe.



Commandant René Mouchotte DFC - depicting the occasion of the shooting down of the 1000th enemy aircraft over Britain by the Wing of Biggin Hill, 15th May 1943

## COMING UP AT THE CLUB

**Club Talk with Jan Leeming**  
**Free French Spitfire Hero: The Diaries of and Search For René Mouchotte**  
**Thursday 18th July 2024**  
**1830hrs - 2030hrs**  
**£45.00 Members, £55.00 guests (includes drinks and canapés)**  
**Dress: Jacket & Tie**



TV personality and Club Member Jan Leeming will talk about her search to uncover the true story of René Mouchotte, a French member of the Few.

Jan will present a talk on *The Mouchotte Diaries*, a book on the French airman co-authored with well-known Battle of Britain author Dilip Sarkar MBE.

The talk will include a screening of a short documentary about Jan's search, which started with leaving a letter in René's tomb and found her travelling to Belgium and meeting his 101-year-old sister.

## HISTORY

# “An enduring symbol of our country’s gratitude”

## *A King’s Medal for 76 Squadron’s Nuclear Cloud Samplers*

It is an incredible and epic story of risk and rigour which unfolded almost 70 years ago on the other side of the world, when 76 Squadron played a vital role in Britain’s ‘peace through strength’ strategy during the Cold War. Their task was to fly through freshly bloomed atomic and thermo-nuclear mushroom clouds – sometimes just 12 minutes after detonation – to collect radioactive fission particles so that scientists could better understand how strong the detonation was.

The largest detonation during the British Nuclear Tests took place on the Christmas Island in the 1950’s. Grapple Y – was officially recorded as being the equivalent to 300 kilotons of TNT. Hiroshima was said to be the equivalent of 15 kilotons of TNT and Nagasaki 25 kilotons of TNT. We pause here to take a breath...

Unable to say anything about their work during the British Nuclear Tests for 50 years due to the Official Secrets Act, these men are now finally being recognised for their risk and rigour in the face of something so unprecedented.

The awarding of the Nuclear Test Medal began last year. It followed a long fight for recognition by veterans and their families. The medal, which is being presented to all land, sea and air personnel connected with the Cold War British Nuclear Tests, was originally announced by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in November 2022. The Prime Minister said the medals would be “an enduring symbol of our country’s gratitude” for those involved in the test programme. “Their commitment and



Canberra B6 in front of a mushroom cloud (credit RAF Museum);  
Below: Beverly Pasquini

*“Our family were delighted and proud to have received the medal that unites all the servicemen and women who witnessed the events in Christmas Island during the nuclear testing period.”*

**Family of late Gp Capt Terry Gledhill, former RAF Club Member**

service has preserved peace for the past 70 years,” he said. “It is only right their contribution to our safety, freedom and way of life is appropriately recognised with this honour.”

The final design first revealed in July 2023 features an atom surrounded by olive branches and bears the words “Nuclear Test Medal”. The obverse bears an image of His Majesty King Charles III.

At the time, Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer MP, reinforced the important work of the British Nuclear Test Veterans stating:

“As thousands flock to the cinemas to watch *Oppenheimer*, it’s important to remember the contributions of the veterans, scientists and staff who worked on Britain’s nuclear programme. Our nuclear deterrent continues to underpin both our security and the security of our NATO allies and this new medal is a fitting tribute to all those who worked to develop this vital defence.”

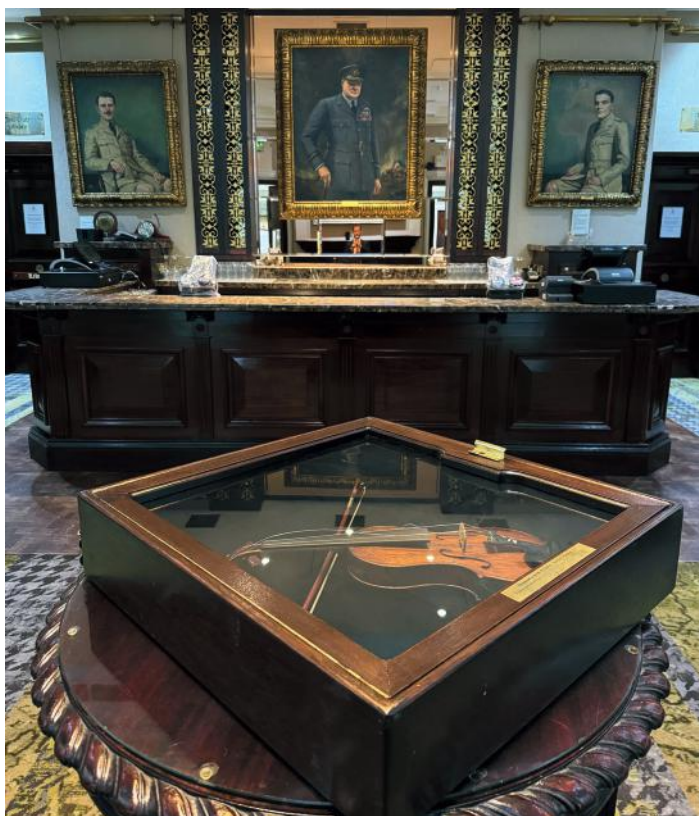
Let us hope that the work of the British Nuclear Veterans will continue to promote peace as our country today, for the first time in 60+ years, once again finds itself in a pre-war environment.

A former Club Member, Flt Lt Joe Pasquini, who passed away in 2022, sampled the Operation Grapple Y cloud and the Operation Grapple Zulu Flagpole cloud (equivalent to 100 kilo tons of TNT). His widow, Club Member Beverly Pasquini, has recently received his British Nuclear Test medal posthumously and says:

‘It is a very emotional moment to have this in my hand. Joe was always so proud of his service and what he experienced during the tests very much impacted him, and our family.’

*Presented by the Family of Flt Lt Joe Pasquini*





## HERITAGE

# The story of the Churchill Violin

*Crafted from cigar boxes and once played by Sir Yehudi Menuhin, this special instrument was taken out of its case and brought back to life by the sound of the RAF Salon Orchestra*

### The Club and the Churchill Violin

Just before Christmas 2023 a special connection was made in the RAF Club's Churchill Bar when a violinist from the RAF Salon Orchestra played the Club's historic violin made from JJ Fox cigar boxes once belonging to Sir Winston Churchill. Sergeant Emily Eastburn-Pentreath was invited to the Club to give the violin some TLC and a new set of strings. This special instrument can be found displayed in the Churchill Bar, along with a replica of one of Churchill's actual cigars. It was presented to the RAF Club by Gerry O'Brien, former landlord of the famous Churchill Arms in Kensington, which has won many 'Pub of the Year' awards and is full of Churchill

memorabilia and adorned in the summer months by flowers that have also brought fame to the pub.

Gerry O'Brien purchased the violin from an Ingles & Hayday auction on 25th October 2016. Keen to add to the instrument's colourful history, to celebrate Churchill's birthday that year,

*"After retiring from the Churchill Arms I was delighted that both were accepted by the RAF Club to be placed in the Churchill Bar and really believe that it is their rightful home"*

Gerry invited renowned London folk fiddle player and fellow Clare native Brendan Mulker to play the violin in the famed Churchill memorabilia-clad interiors of the Churchill Arms. He also showed the violin to Churchill's great grandson Randolph Spencer-Churchill. On retiring as a publican, and following his move to native Ireland, Gerry O'Brien kindly donated this unique historical instrument to the Club in 2018, our centenary year, along with a limited-edition Winston Churchill bust.

Gerry O'Brien said: "I was introduced to the RAF Club by Member Clive MacEwan, a regular at the Churchill Arms, and I was blown away by the Club itself but when I saw the Churchill Bar

The violin was presented to the Club by Gerry O'Brien, former landlord of the Churchill Arms in Kensington; Sergeant Emily Eastburn-Pentreath – the first full-time serving RAF violinist to play the Churchill violin, with the RAF Salon Orchestra

and the wonderful paintings I felt straight away that it would be the perfect home for the violin and bust. After retiring from the Churchill Arms, I was delighted that both were accepted by the RAF Club to be placed in the Churchill Bar and really believe that it is their rightful home.”

Former Vice-Chairman Air Cdre Rick Peacock-Edwards hosted a small champagne reception for the handover, and he recalls: “It was a very special day not only because of the uniqueness of the items presented, but also because of Gerry O'Brien's association with Sir Winston Churchill”.

Having previously met Gerry O'Brien through Clive MacEwan years prior, Rick fondly remembers the three of them enjoying a Running Horse Pub Lunch before giving Gerry his first tour of the Club where he was “bowled over with emotion” as they took photographs with the Churchill portrait at the focal point. After the kind donation of the violin and bust, Rick recalls Gerry's generosity and tells us “he insisted he wanted to do even more, and that led to his sponsorship of the painting of the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel le Ferne, which was commissioned by the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust. This painting now hangs in the Battle of Britain Suite.”

### About the Violin

The unique cigar box violin was made by self-taught London violin maker William Robinson (1880-1960) whose fine instruments are known for their clear rich tone and vibrant varnish. The craftsman's



mother had a friendship with Churchill's niece Clarissa Eden, wife of former Prime Minister Anthony Eden, who gifted the JJ Fox cigar boxes to her friend specifically for the use of her son, the violin maker. The violin itself is not just notable for its remarkable history, but being made from cigar boxes means its size and shape is unique. The body is much narrower and shorter than a modern instrument, and its slim body is notable for its smooth contours rather than the pointed frame that traditionally borders a violin's f-holes. Robinson, in fact, practised his craft by making over 400 cigar box instruments in his lifetime, but no doubt the historic origins of these particular boxes made this violin an especially exciting challenge for the maker. The violin has a clear and bright sound which, given its size, is surprisingly strident. The instrument features recognisable etchings of “Havana” cigar branding on its shapely back and a Winston Churchill name plate. On its completion in 1958 the cigar box violin hit the spotlight when it was played by one of the greatest violinists of all time, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, in a United States live radio broadcast.

### RAF Salon Orchestra

Two of William Robinson's violins currently belong to the RAF and are played by musicians of the RAF Salon Orchestra. The orchestra is a full-time seven-piece strings and piano ensemble, that performs for Royal, state and ceremonial occasions

across the UK and around the world. Its roots are traceable to 1937 when a number of London's finest string players were recruited for the RAF Symphony Orchestra which found eminence in the war years. As national service came to an end, the Symphony Orchestra was significantly reduced and the Salon Orchestra was established in 1949.

Today, this versatile ensemble performs in a variety of settings from intimate formal dinners to prestigious concert venues with some of the biggest names in the music industry.

In recent years the Salon Orchestra was incredibly honoured to support the Platinum Jubilee, State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, opening of the Parliament by Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla as well as many VIP receptions and dinners in prestigious locations from Buckingham Palace to Downing Street and all the way to Algeria, Italy and the Middle East, not to mention regular engagements at the RAF Club.

Sgt Eastburn-Pentreath said: “It was an honour to be the first full-time serving RAF violinist to play the Churchill violin, considering its significant history, not to mention the fact that it has been played by one of the most famous violinists in the world! I'm delighted to be here at the start of what will hopefully be a historically significant and enjoyable relationship between the violin, the RAF Club and the RAF Salon Orchestra – as we so regularly perform at the Club.”

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If you are hosting an event at the Club and you are interested in finding out more about booking the RAF Salon Orchestra, please contact the RAF Music Engagements Co-ordinator on [RAFMS-ENGAGEMENTS@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RAFMS-ENGAGEMENTS@mod.gov.uk)

You can find out more about the RAF Salon Orchestra and other RAF Music ensembles at [www.raf.mod.uk/display-teams/raf-music-services/](http://www.raf.mod.uk/display-teams/raf-music-services/) or follow RAF Music on social media.

## In pictures

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



11TH JULY & 14TH NOVEMBER 2023

### The best of: Club Gourmet Dinners

Our seasonal Gourmet Dinners showcase the Club's finest culinary skills in an intimate four-course dinner in the Library. Led by our exceptional Executive Chef Michael Dutnall, our 2023 Gourmet Dinners have not only demonstrated spectacular presentation and taste, but also the Club's commitment to sustainability.

Our summer dinner focused on our 128 Piccadilly Gin and honey produced by our hard-working bees on the rooftop of the Club. Dishes included gin-cured salmon with blood orange crème fraiche and Gin and tonic tart with honey and yoghurt sorbet. The winter dinner challenged our Chefs to get creative with food waste. The 'Nose to Tail' concept emphasised using every part of the animal creating a delicious culinary experience whilst adopting a more sustainable way of preparing food.



12TH AUGUST 2023

### Tropical Junior Officers' Dinner

Eighty JOs and Younger Members came together for a Hawaiian-themed evening of colourful cocktails, fine dining, wines and fun and games.

The dinner proceeded in typical military fashion, which those in uniform were pleased to introduce to our civilian guests, many of whom had never attended such an event. At the time of the dinner, the news was filled with reports of wildfires ravaging in Hawaii, particularly the island of Maui. Therefore, all fines handed out by the PMC took the form of donations going to the relief efforts aiding in alleviating the impact of the natural disaster.

For details of upcoming JO events, including a Wild West night, turn to page 22.



19TH JULY 2023

### In Conversation with Sean Bell & Matt Tebbutt

Club Members Sean Bell and Matt Tebbutt took centre stage for a thought-provoking discussion on the War in Ukraine. The event brought together attendees eager to explore the complexities of the ongoing conflict while also contributing to a charitable cause supporting the Royal Air Force Association.

Retired Air Vice-Marshal Sean Bell, a distinguished "Talking Head" for the UK MOD and renowned military analyst shared his insights in the discussion, skilfully facilitated by celebrated Chef and TV presenter Matt Tebbutt.



14TH SEPTEMBER 2023

## Battle of Britain Dinner with Dilip Sarkar MBE

Discussing a unique showcase of personal narratives sourced from survivors' albums, author Dilip Sarkar shed light on the unheard personal experiences of a select group of individuals from the esteemed Battle of Britain Fighter Association.

3RD NOVEMBER 2023

## Club Dinner with The Red Arrows

This fully booked event offered a unique glimpse into the world of one of the world's premier aerobatic display teams.

Wing Commander Adam Collins, Officer Commanding of the Red Arrows, was our guest speaker and he was joined by other members of his team, who delved into the captivating roles and intricate work that define the essence of this iconic aerobatic team.



TUESDAY 23RD APRIL 2024

## Club Dinner with Professor Brian Cox CBE FRS

We were honoured to welcome a very special guest speaker back to the Club, Professor Brian Cox CBE FRS. Following his sell-out Member events in previous years, once again Professor Cox, Professor of Particle Physics at Manchester University and best known as one of the UK's foremost scientists, writers, and presenters on Cosmology, enlightened a packed Sovereigns' Room - vividly bringing his accessible and entertaining brand of science to life.

He spoke on varied topics such as the future of space exploration, the formation of black holes and how scientists test for life on Mars. Following the talk, Professor Cox then answered as many questions as possible in a lively Q&A.

CLUB EVENTS

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON

Club Lunch with Jacky Hyams  
*Hurricane, the Plane that won the War*

**Thursday 4th July**  
**1200hrs – 1530hrs**  
**£65.00 Members / £75.00 guests**  
**Dress: Jacket & Tie**

One British aircraft of the Second World War has come to symbolise the indomitable spirit of the nation during the dark days of 1940, the Supermarine Spitfire. However, it was the Hawker Hurricane that shot down more than half of the Luftwaffe's raiders during the Battle of Britain. In Jacky Hyams' new book, *Hurricane: The Plane That Won the War*, the bestselling author attempts to set the record straight.

Join us for a three-course lunch with wines, followed by a fascinating talk by author Jacky, on how the aircraft was designed, built and the story of its service history.

Junior Officers' Dining In Night  
'Wild West'

**Saturday 17th August**  
**1800hrs – midnight**  
**£90.00 Members / £90 guests**  
**Dress: Mess Dress or Black tie, 'Wild West' themed accessories encouraged**

Dust off your boots, strap on your spurs, and mosey on down to one of our standout events of the year! Think great food, great wine and even better company! The night will include a cocktail reception, a delicious four-course dinner with wines and Port for the loyal toast.

If you are a Junior Officer or Younger Member and have some great ideas for what you'd like to see at the Club, please get in touch: [emily@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:emily@rafclub.org.uk)



18th September  
A one man play with  
Tim Marriott



3rd October  
Oktoberfest



*Watson: The Final Problem*  
A one man play with  
Tim Marriott

**Wednesday 18th September 2024**  
**1830hrs – 2100hrs**  
**£60.00 Members / £70.00 guests**  
**Dress: Jacket & Tie**

It's 1894. Watson is alone. His beloved wife Mary and the great Sherlock Holmes are both gone. But London seethes with false reports and rumour. It is time to set the record straight. So Watson tells his tale... a tale of long buried secrets, betrayal and death.

Join us for a one man play performed by Tim Marriott, followed by bowl food with wines, and a chance to mingle with Tim himself.

Oktoberfest comes to the RAF Club!

**Thursday 3rd October 2024**  
**1830hrs – 2230hrs**  
**£70.00 Members / £80.00 guests**  
**Dress: Smart casual with a Bavarian twist!**

Join us for an evening of fun, incredible music from The Bierkeller Boys, and mouthwatering delights. Raise a glass of beer and indulge in a buffet of Bavarian delights that will satisfy your taste buds and transport you to the beer gardens of Germany.

Ticket price includes beer, wine, German themed buffet, and entertainment.



30th October  
Club Dinner with  
Mandy Hickson

Club Dinner with Mandy Hickson  
– *An Officer, not a gentleman*

**Wednesday 30th October 2024**  
**1830hrs – 2230hrs**  
**£70.00 Members / £80.00 guests**  
**Dress: Black Tie**

At our Club dinner Mandy Hickson will talk about her book *An Officer, not a gentleman* and her incredible journey to become one of the UK's first female, fast-jet pilots.

The ticket price includes a sparkling reception, a three-course dinner with coffee, petits fours, and wine.

Children's Story Workshop  
with author Adam Baron

**Saturday 7th December 2024**  
**1000hrs – 1200hrs**  
**Dress: Smart Casual**  
**£10.00 child / £25.00 Members / £30.00 guests**

Award-winning author Dr Adam Baron will read from his latest book, *Oscar's Lion*, in what promises to be a fun and immersive family event.

The price includes a signed copy and delicious snacks, drinks and treats. Parents and grandparents are very welcome to join in.



## FULL EVENT LISTING 2024

*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

D-Day 80th Anniversary with Wing Commander Simon Footer MBE  
Thursday 6th June  
1830hrs, £75/£85

#### FULLY BOOKED

Sons and Daughters II  
Friday 14th June  
1830hrs, £80/£90

Club Talk: Britain's V-bomber deterrent: The threat to destroy Moscow and Leningrad, with Dr. Tony Redding  
Wednesday 19th June  
1830hrs, £35/£45

Wine Tasting Series with Hayward Bros – Italy  
Wednesday 26th June  
1830hrs. £40/£45

### JULY

Club Lunch with Jacky Hyams: *Hurricane, the Plane that won the War*  
Thursday 4th July  
1200hrs, £65/£75

#### FULLY BOOKED

Summer Gourmet Dinner: Junk food meets fine dining  
Tuesday 9th July  
1830hrs, £85/£95

Club Talk with Jan Leeming - *Free French Spitfire Hero: The Diaries of and Search For René Mouchotte*  
Thursday 18th July  
1830hrs, £45/£55

### AUGUST

50 Year Reception  
Sunday 4th August,  
1230hrs, 'by invitation only'

Junior Officers' Dining In Night – Wild West  
Saturday 17th August  
1800hrs, £90

25 Year Lunch  
Tuesday 20th August  
1200hrs, £60/£65

### SEPTEMBER

Club Talk and Buffet Lunch: Bombs & Bravery: St Paul's Cathedral in Wartime with Jill Finch  
Wednesday 4th September  
1200hrs, £55/£60

Junior Officers' Fireside Chat with Gp Cpt Andrew Calame MVO MBE MA  
Saturday 7th September  
1700hrs, £25/£30

Annual Battle of Britain Dinner with Air Marshal G.A. 'Black' Robertson  
Monday 16th September  
1830hrs, £75/£85

Watson: The Final Problem – A one man play with Tim Marriott  
Wednesday 18th September  
1830hrs, £60/£70

New Members' Reception and Dinner  
Tuesday 24th September  
1800hrs, £60/£65

### OCTOBER

Oktoberfest comes to the RAF Club!  
Thursday 3rd October  
1830hrs, £70/£80

#### FULLY BOOKED

Glorious Grouse Dinner  
Tuesday 8th October  
1830hrs, £75/£80

Whisky and Chocolate Tasting  
Wednesday 23rd October  
1830hrs, £55/£60

Club Dinner with Mandy Hickson: *An Officer, not a gentleman*  
Wednesday 30th October  
1830hrs, £70/£80

### NOVEMBER

Wine Tasting Series with Hayward Bros – 'Rhône Valley'  
Wednesday 6th November  
1830hrs, £40/£45

#### FULLY BOOKED

Winter Gourmet Dinner – Indian Fine Dining  
Thursday 14th November  
1830hrs, £85/£90

### DECEMBER

Children's Story Workshop with author Adam Baron – *Oscar's Lion*  
Saturday 7th December  
1000hrs, £10/£25/£30

Festive Afternoon Tea & RAFBF Carol Concert  
Wednesday 11th December  
1615hrs, £55/£65

Christmas Dinner  
Friday 13th December  
1830hrs, £70/£80

Junior Officers' Christmas Drinks  
Saturday 14th December  
1830hrs, £35/£40

Members' Christmas Lunch  
Monday 16th December  
1200hrs, £65/£75

To book for any Club Social event please 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

PROMOTIONS

# Member offers

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



## Travel in style

ASALI Designs is a British brand offering luxury leather gifts inspired by aviation and travel. ASALI started production of a small number of licensed Red Arrows gifts and collections and have now grown to include the Spitfire, Lancaster, C17, Jaguar, Typhoon, Chinook and others. ASALI is the go-to brand for anyone wanting to gift or invest in personalised luxury travel pieces that complement their years of service in the Royal Air Force.

Members can enjoy a 15% discount when shopping online (except sale items). Enter RC15 at the checkout. Delivery is FREE on orders over £150. Visit [www.asalidesigns.co.uk](http://www.asalidesigns.co.uk) or contact Mindy to discuss a bespoke piece made just for you: [hello@asalidesigns.co.uk](mailto:hello@asalidesigns.co.uk) or WhatsApp on 07974 301 843.

## Royal International Air Tattoo

Friday 19th July – Sunday 21st July 2024

Experience sights and sounds that will leave your heart racing and raise the hairs on the back of your neck as aircraft and nations descend on RAF Fairford for a festival of flight.

Themes for 2024 are: 50 Years of F-16; Pushing the boundaries in air and space; 75th anniversary of NATO and the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The RAFCTE, organisers of RIAT, are offering Club Members discounted access into the Aviation Club on Friday 19th July, at a discounted price of £138.00 (usual price £198.00), subject to availability.

Please note that a general admission ticket is required in order to buy an upgrade – these are currently selling for a limited time at the discounted Early Bird rate of £40 per person.



Visit [Aviation Club \(airtattoo.com\)](http://Aviation Club (airtattoo.com)) to purchase both your General Admission and Aviation Club tickets as one package - at checkout enter the code **RAFClub24**. If you have already purchased your admission tickets and wish to take up this offer please call Customer Services on 01285 713456 and quote **RAFClub24** when making your booking. The Aviation Club includes: on base guest car parking; private marquee, garden, grandstand and private toilets; light breakfast; two-course buffet lunch; light afternoon tea; complimentary tea, coffee, infusions and souvenir programme.



## Phyllis Court Club – Henley Royal Regatta

Tuesday 2nd to Sunday 7th July 2024

Henley Regatta is undoubtedly the best-known Regatta in the world! It is a highlight of the summer sporting and social calendar. The Regatta, with over 300 races, attracts thousands of visitors. RAF Club Members have the opportunity to buy tickets benefitting from the best views, plenty of space, privacy and excellent service at one of our Reciprocal Clubs, Phyllis Court Club in Henley-on-Thames.

There will be an array of outdoor

and indoor dining options and exciting entertainment throughout the day. On Thursday evening there will be live music on the lawn, whilst on Friday and Saturday evenings there will be a DJ set in the Long Bar.

Please scan the QR code to access the Reciprocal Member brochure and Booking Form.



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## COMMUNITY

# The Association of RAF Women Officers

*Come and join one of the most exclusive Clubs in the world!*

The Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) provides a lively and friendly social network through which serving and former-serving women officers can maintain contact with the RAF and with each other.

We recognise the particular issues faced by female officers and understand that support needs to be based on individual requirements and inclusivity. Despite full integration of women into the RAF, single gender groups are more relevant than ever. It has been demonstrated that women who are active members of groups like ARAFWO are more effective in command, have greater confidence, and are better communicators. Our goals are to support each other in social settings by:

- Creating opportunities to grow your own personal and professional network.
- Offering strong peer support.
- Sharing relevant and similar experiences.
- Gaining advice from others and be challenged in a safe and supportive environment.
- Discussing relevant topics, such as career progression, resettlement and retirement.
- Building resilience and managing work-life pressures.

All Members are kept up to date with events around the country via our monthly magazine *The Roundel*, and receive a copy of our yearbook *The Gazette*.



ARAFWO Afternoon Tea with WW2 Veterans, October 2023

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Membership is £10.00 per annum and is exclusive to all serving and former-serving women officers of the RAF, RAuxAF, RAFVR(T), WRAF, PMRAFNS, WAAF, WRAuxAF and WRAFVR who hold a Queen's or King's Commission. Visit our website [www.arafwo.co.uk](http://www.arafwo.co.uk) or contact Membership Secretary Jane Chappell: [janetwojane@gmail.com](mailto:janetwojane@gmail.com)

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## The International Club for Air Force Officers Wives (ICAFOW)

ICAFOW was formed by like-minded ladies 60 plus years ago, to support and foster good relations between wives and widows of Air Force officers, of all nationalities, serving in the United Kingdom. Our president is the Chief of the Air Staff's wife - currently Lady Knighton.

Our ethos remains the same, but the club has evolved over the years, and membership now extends to partners and other family members, including daughters, granddaughters, sisters and divorced wives. The Air Attaché partners continue the international element of the club.

We meet for lunch at the RAF Club seven times a year. Some of our upcoming speakers include a Tower of London



Female Yeoman Warner, Sqn Ldr John Peters and Her Honour Judge Wendy Joseph KC, a retired High Court Judge from the Old Bailey. Additionally, we have an annual outing to a place of interest - recent visits have included the Poppy Factory and the medieval Charterhouse.

At our Christmas lunch last year, we were entertained by the North London Military Wives Choir, who will return again this Christmas.

At every lunch, we hold a raffle with proceeds going towards an annual donation cheque to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Why not come along for a trial lunch and meet our friendly, welcoming members? You may meet some old friends and will certainly make new ones. Husbands, partners and other guests are welcome.

### SAVE THE DATES

- 2024: 10th July, 2nd October, 6th November, 4th December
- 2025: 5th February, 5th March

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

FUNDRAISING

# The Friends of the RAF Club

*"It is my privilege and pleasure to donate to the RAF Club and I shall certainly be continuing to do so for as long as is welcome and helpful. It truly is a home from home."*

Club Member & Silver Friend

The Royal Air Force Club is founded on philanthropy, conceived from the goodwill of Lord Cowdray, who wrote the first cheque for the Club's inception in 1918 to: "ensure a permanent Club Home worthy of the airmen and their brilliant and superlatively heroic work".

As a Registered Charity, any surplus from the Club's operation is re-invested to improve the facilities and services for Members, with a number of capital projects now augmented by the Friends of the RAF Club and Legacy Gifts.

It has been two years since we launched the Friends scheme and the network of Members has evolved into a wonderful group of loyal supporters. Thank you! The Friends annual levels are currently: £120-£499 (Bronze); £500-£2,499 (Silver); or £2,500+ (Gold Friends).

The Friends to date have funded the



refurbished lobby and new front doors; upgraded the audio-visual equipment in the Sovereign's Room; supported staff welfare and contributed to the renovation to the front façade - finished just in time for Her Majesty The Queen's visit in August. This year, donations will be invested in the rewiring and renovation of the President's Room which has not been updated since 1990 and also support Executive Chef Michael Dutnall's inspirational apprenticeship programme to keep culinary standards high and innovative for our Members and their guests.

Elsewhere, Legacy Gifts from our

Members, over the years, have contributed to the Centenary Wing; supported the iconic stained-glass window on the back staircase; and enabled a cost-of-living grant to all permanent staff at year-end 2022 when energy prices were at their highest; and this year have funded the stylish and practical new acoustic pods in the Business Suite. The Trustees would like to thank all those Members who have left the Club a legacy in their Will, which will help secure the Club for generations to come, and we ask that you kindly advise us so we have the opportunity to thank you in your lifetime.



## A New Buzz

The Club recently welcomed its new crop of bees who promptly buzz around the new planters containing bee-friendly plants thanks to the donations from our Hive Heroes. A new tap has also been installed as it's thirsty work making all the Club honey!

Alongside improving the Club's sustainability, the bees produced some wonderful honey last year. Featuring in our Club Gin range, the honey is also

used in a variety of dishes, from zesty dressings to sweet desserts.

Thank you to all of our Hive Heroes for their support of the Club Bees and we are planning a bee-autiful evening for our supporters shortly with an informative talk from the bee-keeper. If you would like to bee-come a Hive Hero and support the bees for a £100 donation, and receive a gift of Club honey, then please do get in touch. Thank you.



Friends of the RAF Club enjoyed an evening with Lord Peach

## Friends of the RAF Club Social Dinner with Lord Peach

21st November 2023

*“The splendid Friends’ Dinner combined the elegance and formality of a great event with the friendliness and thoughtfulness that I associate with our Club. Lord Peach spoke eloquently and seriously about defence matters and his own important career. The dinner itself was delicious and a great credit to the young apprentice chefs.”*

**Club Member & Bronze Friend**

We were delighted to host our first Friends of the RAF Club social event, in November, featuring Club Vice-President Air Chief Marshal The Lord Peach KG GBE KCB DL as guest speaker.

The Friends enjoyed a fantastic four-course Dinner planned and prepared by our talented apprentice chefs, Mitchel Homden, Denis Soloman, Essence Ajala and Jhoven-Son Navarro, supported by Executive Chef Michael who is passionate about mentoring young chefs as they start their culinary careers.

After dinner, Lord Peach gave a captivating talk, reflecting on his career spanning five decades of military achievements. Lord Peach is the UK Prime Minister’s Special Envoy to the Western Balkans and a Cross Bench Peer who has had a number of very senior appointments including Chair of the NATO Military Committee and UK Chief of Defence Staff, and it was a great pleasure to hear him speak.

We will be organising another Friends’ social event, with guest speaker, in the Autumn.

## Gold and Silver Friends’ Event

22nd April 2024



It is with great pleasure that we welcomed new and existing Gold and Silver Friends to the Club on the 22nd April 2024, kindly hosted by Club President Air Marshal Sir David Walker and Club Chair Air Vice-Marshal The Hon David Murray, so we could acknowledge our gratitude for their support. Gold Friends attended a special lunch, prepared by our apprentice chefs, in the intimate surroundings of the Library and Silver Friends gathered in the Sovereign’s Room later that evening to enjoy drinks, canapés and camaraderie, as well as the supporters’ pin presentation to new Friends.

## Thank you

The Trustees, Management and Staff thank all Bronze, Silver and Gold Friends of the RAF Club, including those supporters who wish to remain anonymous. Due to the volume of Bronze Friends, we will write to them separately to acknowledge our grateful thanks.

### GOLD FRIENDS

Capt A Budagher; Mr G Bunker James; Mr A Davis; Mr P Eddleston; Gp Capt N Gillingham; Sqn Ldr V Gupta; Mr B Haskins; Sqn Ldr M Kelson; Dr H Kendrick; Mrs P J Moore; Sqn Ldr B S Naidoo; Mr & Mrs Pheasant; Mrs P Spaight; Mrs G Summers; Flt Lt B Thompson; Mr R M Williams; Dr R Williams.

### SILVER FRIENDS

Mr A-R Ahmed; Mr M Allen; Mr M Ashwell; Dr J Ashwood; Mr & Mrs Baker; Mr C Baldwin; Mr A W Barnett; Mr S Bartlett; Flt Lt C S Bell; Mr & Mrs Bellers; Maj T Benke; Lt Col S Blair; Gp Capt J Brock; Mr C A Brockbank; Mr P Burke; Mrs E Burns; Wg Cdr A D K Campbell; Mr L Carr; Mr D Cattermole; Mrs J Claxton; Mrs D Cleaver; Mr J Cockburn; Mr B Cooper; Lord Craig of Radley; Sqn Ldr A T Crichton; Mr N Cuddeford; Gp Capt N Davis; Sqn Ldr G Day; Wg Cdr B Dibb; Dr P Dyer; Flt Lt D M Embrey; Ms A Graham; ACM Sir Michael Graydon; Mr M J Green; Ms DJ Guthrie; Mr T Hawkins; Mr D Hayler; Wg Cdr C J Hill; Sqn Ldr M J Hollingsworth; Mrs H Hoyle; Ms P Hutchinson; Mr A C Jackson; Mr D Johnson; Sqn Ldr M K Johnson; Major S R Johnston; Mr S Kassum; Flt Lt A Kay; Mrs B Keun; Mrs M J King; Wg Cdr J N Kirk; Mr E Malone; Mr A Matthews; Mr D McCullagh; Mr J McGarvey; Capt A H McKibbin; Wg Cdr T Milwright; Air Cdre R Montague; Mr P Morrell; Major G Nigro; Wg Cdr F E Parker; Mr & Mrs Price; Mr C Richardson; Mrs E Ryle; Lt J S Schaefer; Flt Lt JDR Shaw; Lt Col W T Shearer; Sqn Ldr M L Sinel; Dr A C E Stacey; Sir Donald Spiers; Flt Lt R Street; Dr I F Symes; Sqn Ldr R J Taylor; Mr N Towler; The Lady Tunnicliffe; The Lord Tunnicliffe; Wg Cdr C E Upton; Mr I L Whittle; Wg Cdr P Willmot; Mr P W Yockney.

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The Beaverbrook Foundation; The Birthday House Trust; The Mercury Foundation.

**If you would like to find out more about the Friends of the RAF Club, becoming a Hive Hero or to discuss leaving a Legacy to the Club then please contact Director of Fundraising Claire Dakin on 020 7399 1082 or email [claire@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:claire@rafclub.org.uk). Thank you.**

## CLUB SHOP

# New additions!

### William Edwards China 'Heritage Mug'

In 2018, William Edwards was commissioned by the RAF to create a collection to help celebrate the RAF 100. This led to the idea to commission our own mugs for the Club's Centenary in the same year. The original mugs were the Club Crest, Façade and Club Pattern mugs, with each piece hand-decorated bearing the inscriptions "Celebrating 100 Years, 1918-2018" and the RAF Club logo. Some of the most popular designs later becoming a permanent staple in our Club Shop.

Past limited editions of mugs, made available to our Members, were released to commemorate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 and His Majesty King Charles III's Coronation in 2023. These sold out within weeks.

The design for the new Heritage Mug (pictured), available in the Club Shop in July, was inspired by our iconic wallpaper pattern, which can be spotted throughout the Clubhouse.



### Thermal Steel Water Bottles

These double lined insulated water bottles will keep your drinks cold for up to 24 hours and hot for up to 12 hours, making them perfect for any season.

Engraved with a Club logo and available in navy blue and light blue Club colours. Size 500ml, price: £25.00

### RAF Club Ties

Our new line of Club ties come in three designs: Original Striped, Maroon and Purple (with RAF Club logo). Woven in pure silk and supplied in a presentation sleeve, they incorporate classic colours inspired by our sophisticated Clubhouse.

Available to Members only. Price: £35.00

Visit our Club Shop now and elevate your Club experience to a whole new level! <https://shop.rafclub.org.uk/collections/all>

## The face behind your Club Shop orders

Meet Mike Dedoncker, our Senior Hall Porter and the friendly face behind your Club Shop purchases. Hailing from the south of France, with a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, including a stint at the prestigious Sanderson Hotel, Mike's attention to detail and dedication to customer service are second to none.

Whether he's ensuring your orders are

promptly delivered or providing assistance with a smile, Mike has been an integral part of our team for almost two years. Next time you're at the Club, be sure to say hello.

For any Club Shop enquiries, please contact [shop@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:shop@rafclub.org.uk)



CLUB GIN

# Sip into Summer

*Introducing our new Limited Edition 128 Piccadilly 'Pomelo Summer Gin', infused with honey from our roof-top bees*

Over the past three years, the RAF Club's collaboration with the award-winning Berkshire based Hawkridge Distillers has been a partnership of increasing success. Our beautifully crafted 128 Piccadilly London Dry Gin has become a firm favourite of our Members, making one of the best G&Ts in the West End! In 2023, the King's Coronation Limited Edition Gin completely sold out within 2 months, and our Orange & Clove Gin has been a festive favourite for some time.

As summer approaches, our team has worked with the distilling team at Hawkridge to design an exciting new, seasonal, fresh citrus gin which is already available to Members in the Club bars and for sale in our Club Shop at £55.00.

Through this limited summer edition project, Hawkridge produced 250 bottles of our new 128 Piccadilly Pomelo Summer Gin. This carefully hand-crafted spirit provides a delectably fresh and exotic twist to our beautiful gin range, and is infused with our Club's rooftop honey for a touch of luxury. On the nose, the aroma of freshly-cut Indonesian honey pomelo balances beautifully with our traditional juniper-heavy gin base. Transporting you to the tropical climates of the spice islands, this is a beautiful and fresh citrus gin to be savoured. Drink with a premium mixer, garnished with a slice of pomelo or pink grapefruit and a sprig of fresh mint, or neat over ice. Sit back, relax and enjoy!

As our bespoke spirit range grows and we continue to build a unique offering to our Members, our partners at Hawkridge are moving into a new home in Berkshire. In what is possibly one of the most beautiful distilleries in the



country, the 128 Piccadilly spirit range will now be produced in Hawkridge's converted 17th Century barn. Managing Director at Hawkridge, Phil Howarth said "If making beautiful spirits isn't already a lovely way to make a living, to be able to do it here and be inspired by a building like this is truly wonderful. We hope that our clients will take as much pride in having their spirits produced here as we have in making them."

At the new distillery, Hawkridge has

*"This carefully hand-crafted spirit provides a delectably fresh and exotic twist to our beautiful gin range"*

also set up a new gin school in which visitors will learn how to design and produce their own gin. Using custom designed 5L personal stills, Hawkridge's master distillers will teach on the history and the science of distillation. Each "student" will then distil their personal recipe and take home their very own 70cl bottle of craft gin. Hawkridge offers RAF Club Members a reduced price for gin school visitors – Use code RAFLUBGIN15 when booking at [www.hawkridgedistillers.com/experiences](http://www.hawkridgedistillers.com/experiences)

128 Piccadilly Pomelo Summer Gin is available for sale in our Club Shop at £55.00 <https://shop.raclub.org.uk/collections/all>



#### CLUB STAFF

## Behind the scenes

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

### Young talent

Congratulations to our talented Apprentice Chefs who competed at the International Salon Culinaire awards at the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering event at the ExCeL London on 25th March 2024. Mentored by our Executive Chef Michael Dutnall, Club apprentice chefs Jhoven-Son Navarro, Denis Soloman and Essence Ajala achieved gold and silver awards in the Skills Theatre section.

### Chef honoured

Michael was shortlisted for Chef of the Year at the Foodservice 'Cateys' 2023. We are very proud of his incredible achievements, both as a Chef and as a leader for his team here at the Club.

### RAF Knowledge Workshop

Trustee Group Captain Jim Beldon took on some extra duties to develop the Club staff's Royal Air Force knowledge and

understanding of the Club's membership. The talks covered a brief history of the RAF, its roles, personnel, RAF ranks and the connection between the RAF and the Club.

### Wine and Spirits training

Seven of our Food & Beverage team members successfully completed the Wine & Spirits Course level 2 in August 2023. Since their training, our team are proud to utilise their new-found expertise in day-to-day service and have since introduced Wines of the Month in our Dining Room. With thanks to our

*“We are very proud of his incredible achievements, both as a Chef and as a leader for his team here at the Club”*

**From left:** our talented Apprentice Chefs, our LAA Cycle team, Chefs at the Foodservice Cateys, our People and Culture Team and the Charity Bake Sale

Member, Flight Lieutenant Tom Hawkins, for part sponsoring this initiative.

### Staff Charity Committee

Formed in 2022, this volunteer group of RAF Club staff organise team social events and initiatives for our chosen charities.

Five members of the RAF Club team cycled from London to Brighton on 10th September 2023. To support the initiative, the Committee organised an in-house bikeathon in the lobby as staff collectively cycled over 100 miles. The combined efforts raised over £2,500 for London's Air Ambulance.

This year, the Committee has chosen to support a local cause and fundraise for Central London Samaritans. On 14th July 2024, five Members of the RAF Club team will be running the ASICS 10K.

## CHARITY

# “A dog called Endal who saved my life”

*We were honoured to welcome the founder of Hounds for Heroes, Royal Navy Veteran Allen Parton – and his service dog ET – to hear his inspiring story which led him to start the charity that provides specially trained assistance dogs to injured and disabled personnel of both HM Armed Forces and the Emergency Services*



In the history of human-animal bonds, only a few rival that of Allen Parton and his loyal canine companion, Endal. Allen's journey, marked by resilience, love, and a profound connection with service animals, led to creation of Hounds for Heroes, a beacon of hope for veterans facing physical and emotional challenges.

Allen's life took a drastic turn when he suffered a traumatic head injury while serving on active duty during the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. The injuries left him bound to a wheelchair, unable to recollect half of his memories and even the recognition of his own family. Additionally, he grappled with an inability to process emotions, leaving him estranged from the life he once knew and in a state of despair both physically and psychologically.

In a twist of fate, Allen's wife, Sandra, who worked with an assistance dog organisation, introduced him to Endal, a one-year-old yellow Labrador retriever. Endal was failing his assistance dog training due to health issues and behavioural challenges, making him unfit for his intended role. However, destiny seemed to intervene as Allen and Endal crossed paths.

“He had health problems and a

huge attitude problem, but when he saw something on the floor by my wheelchair, he trotted across the training centre, picked it up and put it on my lap.”, says Allen.

“This was a dog that didn't do anything for anyone, so when he didn't get a reward or reaction from me, he was trying his hardest to please me. This is when the brain switched on and I smiled for the first time in a long time!”

### Becoming a full time companion

Endal went on to become Allen's full-time companion, helping him 24/7 with every aspect of his life. At the time, Allen was unable to speak and, in the years that followed, he and Endal learned to communicate through sign language.

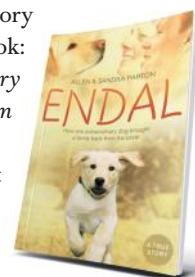
In this remarkable union, Allen found not only a faithful companion but also a catalyst for his own healing journey. Endal's unwavering dedication and intuitive understanding transcended the barriers of Allen's disability, igniting a

spark of hope and resilience in his heart. Their bond became the cornerstone of Allen's transformation, empowering him to reclaim his independence, rebuild his life, and eventually pay forward the gift of companionship and support to fellow veterans in need through the establishment of Hounds for Heroes.

He even helped Allen to reconnect with his family, and in 2002 Allen remarried his wife, Sandra, with Endal as the Best Man. Among other distinctions, Endal was described as "the most decorated dog in the world", including "Dog of the Millennium" and the PDSA Gold Medal for Animal Gallantry and Devotion to Duty, the highest award available to an animal.

You can read Endal's full story in Allen and Sandra's book: *Endal: How One Extraordinary Dog Brought a Family Back From the Brink*.

To learn more about Hounds for Heroes visit [www.houndsforheroes.com](http://www.houndsforheroes.com)



**LIFE AFTER ENDAL:** As sad as the passing of Endal at the age of 13 was, his legacy continues through two of his successors, all named in Endal's honour. EJ, Endal Junior, was mentored by Endal for 11 months and stepped up to the plate when Endal passed away. After EJ's passing in 2022, at the age of 14, ET (Endal the Third) now continues Endal's incredible work alongside a Golden Retriever called Rookie.

## HISTORY

# Royal Auxiliary Air Force

*As the Royal Auxiliary Air Force marks its 100th anniversary, we look at the importance of volunteer service in the RAF*

The Royal Auxiliary Air Force is the reserve element of the Royal Air Force whose members contribute by dedicating their spare time service to the defence of this country. It can trace its roots back to the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) and Special Reserve founded in 1924 to provide trained personnel who have supported the RAF wherever it is deployed.

The first squadron, No. 502 (Ulster), was established in May 1925. Initially, all AAF identities were firmly fixed to the cities, counties and regions of the UK, and other squadrons were formed later that year in Glasgow, London and Edinburgh.

The founder of the RAF, Lord Trenchard, believed the Reserves should capture a sense of adventure and that spirit was very much in evidence from the earliest days when, in 1933, two pilots of No. 602 (City of Glasgow) Sqn, were the first to fly over Mount Everest.

The guiding principle from those early years remains unchanged: training men (and later women) in their spare time to become an effective part of the wider RAF when required.

As well as the then AAF, another part-time arm, the RAF Voluntary Reserve (RAFVR) was set up in 1936 to increase the number of pilots who might be needed in any future conflict. When war came in 1939 the AAF and the RAFVR became part of the full-time RAF.

AAF Squadrons went on to play a pivotal role in the Battle of Britain. The AAF provided 14 of the 62 squadrons in Fighter Command and were responsible for around 30% of the accredited enemy 'kills' as aerial combat victories were known at the time.

As the war progressed, so their battle honours multiplied. No. 502 (Ulster) Sqn was the first to use radar to locate and sink a U-boat. No. 616 (South Yorkshire) Sqn became the first British unit to operate jets when it began



to fly Meteors in July 1944 under the command of a pre-war Auxiliary pilot.

In 1947, the AAF's achievements in the war were honoured by the prefix "Royal" conferred by His Majesty King George VI.

In those post-war years, the now Royal Auxiliary Air Force expanded to a strength of over 9,000 and included 20 fighter squadrons. They returned to their pre-war homes, where they were issued with the powerful, later versions of the Spitfire, followed by Vampire and Meteor jets forming part of the UK's Cold War air defence.

Sadly, the bulk of the RAuxAF was disbanded in 1957 when it was predicted that missiles would largely replace aircraft and that the remaining fighters would be too sophisticated for part-time pilots.

From the late 1970s to the 1990s, the RAuxAF gradually grew again with RAF Regiment, Movements and Aeromedical





Above: Band of the RAuxAF.  
Left: RAuxAF personnel carry out lateral flow testing in Eccles during COVID-19.  
Opposite: AAF Ground Crew servicing a Hurricane

squadrons formed – some taking part in the First Gulf War of 1991. By 2000, more squadrons had re-formed and the Second Gulf War of 2003 saw over 1,000 RAF reservists mobilised.

There was further growth between 2013 and 2016, with more RAuxAF squadrons across the UK being re-formed. Amounting to a 30% expansion of the RAuxAF, eight new units were created, including one specialising in cyber and the Band of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

The RAuxAF provided an ever-greater contribution to UK operations overseas, with hundreds taking time off from their civilian jobs to serve in Afghanistan. A range of roles were filled, including RAF Regiment gunner, Aeromedical, Logistics and Media.

The RAuxAF was fully involved in the great ceremonial events of recent times including the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the sombre occasion of her funeral and the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

Today people are joining to lend their expertise in such diverse fields as medicine, media, intelligence, music, cyber and even space as this year sees the first RAuxAF Space Flights stand-up to support the work of UK Space Command.

The truth of Trenchard's vision 100 years ago can be seen through the RAuxAF's great achievements and unstinting service in peace and war. The courage, skill and sense of adventure shown by its members from its history are matched by the men and women who give up their spare time to serve in the RAuxAF of today.

*Wg Cdr Howard Leader*

*RAF Media & Communications,*

*HQ Air Command, RAF High Wycombe*

## COMMUNITY

# The Lady Grover's Fund

*Supporting Military Officers and their Families since 1911*

The Lady Grover's Fund (LGF) is open to all serving, reservist and former officers of the three military services and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Members can access financial grants towards the costs of unexpected illness or injury for themselves or their family members.

### A pioneering woman

The Fund was the brainchild of a pioneering young Scottish woman, Lady Grover - who identified the need for a scheme to support military wives with the cost of their medical treatment. Born in 1868, Helen Grace Lawrence met her husband, Captain Malcolm Henry Stanley Grover, in India where her father was posted as a civil servant. In 1891, Helen became Lady Grover through her marriage to Captain Grover, who reached the rank of General and was knighted in 1911. Their son, Major General John Grover, led the 2nd Infantry Division in Burma between 1941 and 1944.

Stationed in India in the early 1900s, she quickly identified an inequity that existed between the financial support available to help British officers cover their medical costs and the little to no support available for their wives or female dependants. The UK's National Health Service (NHS), did not come into being until 1948. In the years preceding its founding, British officers serving in India had to cover all their own medical treatment costs. However, whilst there were schemes available to help officers offset these costs, there

were no equivalent schemes for their wives or female dependants.

Lady Grover was deeply inspired by the need to address this and to create a scheme for officers, primarily of the Indian Army, to allow them to meet the costs of hospital and nursing expenses arising out of the illness of their dependants. By 1911 she had established the Officers' Family Hospital Fund. This subscription scheme provided sufficient funds to reserve hospital beds at the Florence Nightingale Hospital for Gentlemen in London. For a small annual subscription, all treatment and medicines were covered but patients were required to pay for their own laundry and for surgery, an extra guinea was payable.

Only a year after establishing the Fund, she sadly died. Her husband, General Sir Malcolm Grover – then the Army Department Secretary



to the Government of India – was invited to become president in her place. The committee renamed the fund the Lady Grover Hospital Fund for Officers' Families in her memory. In the following years the Fund developed and grew. Regiments were able to subscribe on behalf of their ladies, and the Fund was opened to Chaplains and Naval officers in India. In 1923, it was extended to retired officers and widows. Although General Sir Malcolm Grover retired from the Army in 1919, the Fund remained close to his heart and he was responsible for building up its resources and enlarging the scope to include officers serving anywhere in the world.

Membership starts from £55 per year. For more information and how you can join and benefit from becoming a member, visit: [www.ladygrover.org.uk](http://www.ladygrover.org.uk)

HERITAGE

# The church dedicated to the RAF

Visit and explore St Clement Danes, the Sir Christopher Wren designed church with a 1,000 years of history

**S**t Clement Danes sits on the border of two cities, where Fleet Street meets the Strand. It's surrounded by so much history, that it's easy to get distracted and wander off down one of the narrow streets that stretch into Temple, Covent Garden or the City and Lincoln's Inn.

If you resist that urge and come inside the island church dedicated to the Royal Air Force, you will be rewarded with a unique glimpse into the depth of faith, service, and sacrifice. If you happen to come in on a warm summer's day, you will also be rewarded with a cool and quiet atmosphere that will sooth away some of the stresses inherent in walking around London.

St Clement Danes has been a place of worship for centuries and as the name suggests it claims its roots to the time when the Danes invaded England and made their new home on the banks of the Thames. It has also claimed its place in the 'Oranges and Lemons' rhyme, the famous bells surviving the Blitz better than the surrounding walls.

If all you do is walk on the outside, pay attention to the deep marks that can still be seen on the north side, closest to LSE. Much was

*"There is a helpful map at the back of the church if you are looking for a specific station, squadron or association badge"*

lost the night St Clement Danes burnt down in 1941 but its rebirth was a worthy one and the dedication to the RAF in 1958 symbolic of the role the RAF had in turning the tide of World War Two.

St Clement Danes has a deep place in the hearts of those who have come to know its history and the value of the heritage held within its walls. The Books of Remembrance are one of the newest and living pieces of that legacy, dotted in-between the large Wren-windows.



The pages are turned every day and new entries are less frequent but still Book XI was added not too long ago.

To anyone who has served in the RAF, and those who have a deep interest in military history, make sure you look down on the floor. You will not be able

to avoid all the slate stone badges. They form a sea of large and very regular black pebbles when you look from above. There is a

helpful map at the back of the church if you are looking for a specific station, squadron or association badge.

While you are in the gallery, take time to examine the details of the modern stained glass window above the altar and look back to the organ, paid for by the members of the US Air Force (and their families and friends). For the few scattered remnants of pre-RAF history, do look out for the plaque commemorating Samuel Johnson's favourite seat. The writer, who

conceived the concept of the dictionary, was a regular attendee of St Clement Danes in the 18th century. Another famous name associated with the church is former Rector William Webb Ellis, who picked up the ball and ran with it... thereby inventing rugby in 1823.

The Friends of St Clement Danes were formed in 1976 to support the very fabric of the building, which is very much a working church with regular services, weddings, christenings, and funerals. The Friends run an annual concert and we warmly invite you to attend (Thursday 28th November 2024) as it is an excellent opportunity to listen to beautiful music in a stunning setting. We look forward to welcoming you at St Clement Danes.

For more information:

[www.stclementdanesraf.org](http://www.stclementdanesraf.org)

You can join the Friends of St Clement Danes here: [www.raf.mod.uk/what-we-do/our-history/st-clement-danes-church/friends-of-st-clement-danes/](http://www.raf.mod.uk/what-we-do/our-history/st-clement-danes-church/friends-of-st-clement-danes/)

INSIGHT

# Planning your perfect day

*Step into the world of wedding wonders with Emily Moss, our Meetings & Events Manager. As a seasoned expert in crafting memorable moments, Emily offers invaluable insights into the latest trends for the year ahead and shares her wisdom on planning the perfect celebration*



## What colour palettes/themes will be most popular in 2024 city weddings?

I expect we will see a surge in light colour palettes this year following Pantone's colour of the year Peach Fuzz, that brings a feeling of tenderness. With Blush weddings expected to dominate, I imagine we will see many weddings with a light, elegant and traditional aesthetic that would be perfectly complemented by our historic Clubhouse.

## Have you already seen new emerging trends for 2024 weddings?

There has already been a strong environmental focus emerging; couples are incorporating sustainable elements, with eco-friendly décor and locally sourced florals. We have seen the effects of this first-hand with clients seeking us out due to our sustainable kitchen practices where our Chefs locally source ingredients without sacrificing quality.

## What season do you think will be most popular for weddings in 2024?

Especially in London, we anticipate more autumn weddings this year. London's charm is heightened by the warm autumnal tones, and opting for a historic indoor venue such as the Royal Air Force Club alleviates any concerns about the UK's unpredictable weather.

## What's the first step a couple should take when finding a wedding venue?

Defining your vision and priorities. Whether it's a grand ballroom or intimate garden setting, clarifying your preferences sets the tone for a focused search tailored to your dream celebration.

## What is the most common mistake couples make when planning their big day?

Underestimating transport logistics. Account for travel times between venues, especially in London, to ensure a seamless flow and avoid unnecessary stress.

## Do you have an expert top tip you'd like to share with our readers if they're looking to host their wedding in Westminster?

Draw inspiration from the regal surroundings and opt for a theme centred around British elegance. Incorporate classic elements like fine China, ornate candelabras, and floral arrangements

inspired by traditional English gardens for a timeless celebration.

## How do you create special moments for weddings at the Club?

We take great pleasure in hosting someone's special day. From the moment you enquire, you will be allocated a dedicated and experienced Event Executive who will guide you through the planning process right up until the day of the event. Our aim is to take any stress out of the experience, and for it to be memorable and enjoyable for the happy couple! We work with a handful of trusted suppliers so can offer valuable advice on anything from chair covers, to flowers, to cake makers, to live musicians and beyond. Our historical Club house is a stunning setting for any type of celebration.

## How many times would you recommend a couple see wedding venue options before they book?

Twice to see the space in different lights and ensure they are confident in their decision.

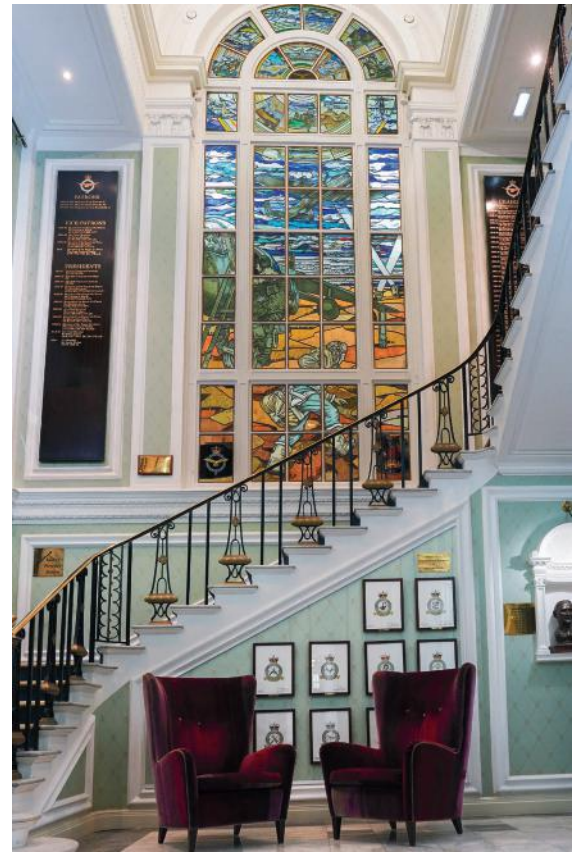
## Currently, what is the lead time for wedding bookings?

Currently, the lead time for wedding bookings is around 12 to 24 months. To secure preferred dates and vendors, couples are encouraged to plan ahead, with earlier bookings ensuring a stress-free and well-executed celebration.



For information about holding your wedding at the Club, please contact the Meeting & Events Team on 020 7399 1004/5 or email [meetingsevents@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:meetingsevents@rafclub.org.uk). Please scan the QR code to browse our beautiful wedding brochure.





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

There is no better way to give something back to the RAF Club than to help others enjoy it in the future. Leaving a Legacy can make a lasting difference and perpetuate your memory to future generations of Club Members as well as being a tax efficient way of donating from your estate, however large or small the donation.

*"Both my wife and I have had the Club in our Wills for many years. We much admire your efforts to keep the Club going as well as possible in these troubled times."*

Club Member, Australia

For further information please contact [claire@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:claire@rafclub.org.uk)



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

