



Captain's Quarterly Update

April 2024



The first of the AFC Quarterly Newsletters since I took over – a tradition that JP instigated that I intend to keep up. I owe JP a huge thank you for such a thorough handover – and I know if I come up with any random questions, he will do his level best to answer swiftly. A fantastic Captain – and from January onwards, any errors are all my own!

Those of you who attended the Christmas Lunch will know that my intent for 2024 was to provide you all with occasions to enjoy each other's company. Yes, we want to support our charities and raise funds, but we also want to build friendships and support networks. The early years of this decade deprived us of so many opportunities to do that face to face, so I would urge you all to try and attend at least a couple of the social occasions we are arranging this year if possible. You are all busy people, so I recognise that it can be a challenge – but have a look at the range of dates and opportunities in the list attached to this newsletter and perhaps some might be an option for you. There are some key dates in May, June, and July.



Maria - Captain

Fellowship

Firstly, thank you to the 2024 Committee for their contribution to our Club. In Spring meetings, we have discussed how we best manage engagement with all members - to make sure the aims and activities of the Club reflect the wishes of members in the best possible way.



To help do this, **Mark Axon** has joined the Committee as Strategy Lead and will lead a committee session focussed on member engagement and will be personally engaging with members. Thank you, Mark!

In addition, the Membership Secretary **Martin Neidermeyer** will be issuing a survey developed via Committee to allow those who prefer the option of feeding in their views via this route.

As ever, there have been a range of significant achievements by AFC members this quarter. In January we heard that Founder **John Fay** had gained membership of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St Andrews. Some people spend decades attempting this, such is the draw of the home of the golf. John has of course been making use of his membership already!



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Richie Piper was installed as the Master of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots in March – the largest City Livery company in London. A huge accolade that I look forward to hearing about more when we next meet.

And finally – congratulations to **Ian Bartholomew** (Barty) after his acceptance into the English Seniors Golf Society – open only to those who play off a handicap of under 5. Currently playing at under 2, it seems his place is safe!

Forum

A big thank you to **Jamie Hunter** and **Sean Bell** for the March Air Power session on the security situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Lots of engagement and questions which was great to see. Thanks also to the members who responded to the Poll on this – we know that there was also strong interest in sessions on the threat in Pacific, and a Ukraine war update so this has given us a great steer for later in the year. And lastly a thank you to **John Lyle** for contributing to the thinking to shape the sessions and produce a shortlist for members.



Other areas that have driven a strong dialogue have included the growth in GPS denial, and – inevitably – defence spending and the reality of what might be needed to face the multiplicity of current threats.

Club members were also able to take up the offer from the RAFBF for a visit with Colin Bell DFC to the special and unique Mohne Dam replica at BRE Garston (near Watford) in February. This is a unique 1:50 scale model, that was used by Barnes Wallis in the development of the bouncing bomb: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1020749?section=official-list-entry>

Fundraising

You will all know that the Committee took the difficult decision in January to cancel the JET Dinner. Whilst a significant number of tables had been sold, an event of this nature is a challenge to deliver without an additional level of sponsorship. The Committee believed this sponsorship would be available, but it became clear that it could not be achieved. With some Club funds committed already, we were in the position that the only way to go ahead would be to commit a much larger sum. This was too much of a risk to carry and could have put the Club in an untenable position – hence the decision to cancel being made. A lot of work had gone into the project from all involved, including the team from JET. We know from the charities we work with that these are challenging times for fundraising. This doesn't mean we won't continue in our endeavours, but we acknowledge those headwinds. The Committee will give you an update on fundraising totals at the mid-year point.

AFC Falklands Islands Expedition for the RAF Benevolent Fund



On 4th February I waved off **Paul Belham, Bill Holloway, Stuart Hulley, Ian Revell, and Martin Wintermeyer** as they boarded their flight at RAF Brize Norton, after months of training and preparation for the adventure of a lifetime. With the aim of raising funds for the RAFBF listening and counselling services, they set themselves a huge physical challenge of walking along the route used by British forces during the Falklands War, whilst also learning about the history of the conflict and representing the families of veterans by a series of acts of remembrance at various key points. This amazing expedition proved to be emotionally, physically, and mentally arduous, but ultimately hugely rewarding. From the warm welcome of the Falklander Islanders and British forces currently

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stationed down there, to the nearly £20 000 raised for the RAFBF, the trip was memorable in every way. Thank you to those Club Members who supported in a variety of ways – as well as the sponsorship of many (including some hugely generous personal donations) – I also include **Yaz Chowdhury** who saw them off from the Falklands, and **Richard Ellis** for providing the tee shirts. The Club is hugely proud of the massive effort that this team put in – and if you haven't yet donated and wish to, the link is here: <https://rafbf.enthuse.com/pf/april-fools-club-b93e3>

AFC Volunteer Support

Your time can be as valuable as your money! Thank you so much to those members who joined in to make calls to veterans through their support to the RAFA Outreach effort in March – the difference this makes can be seen at the link below:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rafassociation_a-huge-shoutout-to-all-the-amazing-volunteers-activity-7182338787505537024-FpbB?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios

In addition, you will have seen the email with the letter from Air Marshal Sir Baz North thanking the Club for the donations following the Christmas Lunch.

Club members also stepped up to support the RAFBF in providing their time to deliver some consultancy support – thank you **Will Packard** and **Skip Butterworth**.

Fun



This quarter I was delighted to meet a range of members in York for informal drinks in the Tap. Arriving via train from locations across the north, we congregated for a fabulous evening with much laughter. Please join the next Members Drinks – Tuesday 21st May 6 30pm onwards in the Running Horse Bar, RAF Club!



A number of members attended the RAFA Lords and Commons Dinner Branch dinner in late February. We gathered for a drink before processing to the House of Lords....

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Members also gathered in Cheshire in March (left), where discussions including the (now fully booked) trip to Normandy in April. More on this in the next newsletter!