

Northolt Approach

EDITION 13, AUTUMN/WINTER 2024

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Editorial Team

EDITOR

Sgt Ellen Driscoll

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PUBLISHER

Northolt Approach is published by Lance Media Group Ltd, 1st Floor Tailby House, Bath Road, Kettering, Northants NN16 8NL
Tel 01536 334222

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Jayne Bailey
Tel 01536 334219
Email jayne@lancemediagroup.co.uk

DESIGNER

Holly Daniels
Email holly@lancemediagroup.co.uk

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Next issue...

Next edition will be Issue 14, Spring 2025.

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Night Photoshoot - see Station News, page 14

Inside...

Autumn/Winter Edition 2024



03 EDITOR'S FOREWORD

04 STATION COMMANDER'S FOREWORD

05 SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PEOPLE

07 STATION NEWS

19 SWO'S SEGMENT

20 COMMUNITY & CHARITY NEWS

22 SPORT, ADVENTURE TRAINING & FORCE DEVELOPMENT

25 PADRE'S PIECE



Remembrance - see Station News, page 7



Ex ALTO GARDA - see Sport, Adventure Training & Force Development, page 22

Welcome from the Editor

— Sgt Ellen Driscoll



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of the Northolt Approach, which again is a fantastic showcase of the huge range of activity and output that is delivered by the Station.

Commemorating the Battle of Britain and remembering those who have lost their lives in Service, the months from September – November are always poignant, offering space and time for reflection and memory. Such opportunities emerge as a key theme from the following pages, whether from the Remembrance parades attended by Station personnel or from immersion in the glorious surroundings of Westminster Abbey and St Clement Danes Church, both of which feature in this edition.

Adventurous training also features in the magazine, with the scenery of Northern Italy providing a stunning backdrop to some hair-raising climbs, 600 Sqn enjoying the Nijmegen marches, and various RAF Northolt personnel making the most of the proximity of Central London and its rich history.

The contributions from all across the Station, including news updates from the medical centre and station management squadron, community activity, the Ethnic Minorities conference and RAF Northolt night photoshoot, really sum up the energy and dedication of Station personnel. Thank you all for continuing to provide such varied and interesting contributions and for helping to celebrate the RAF Northolt community.



Station Commander's Foreword

GROUP CAPTAIN JONATHAN T W HOUGH ADC MA BSC RAF

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of the Northolt Approach. I hope that you all have had the chance to get in some summer leave during what has been another jam-packed few months.



We continue to do the RAF and the Nation proud by organising and representing at the many and varied ceremonial events, from the Air Forces' Memorial at Runnymede, through to the various Polish ceremonies, the Battle of Britain commemoration and Remembrance Day, to name just a few. Remembering our past and learning from it is one of the most important things that we do, and I am hugely grateful that so many of you volunteered to take part. There is no doubt that you have all driven this engagement back up to pre-COVID levels; indeed, with over 100 uniformed personnel marching in Eastcote, Ruislip, Harrow and Uxbridge on Remembrance Day, it was the biggest representation in living memory. As you know, I was also exceptionally keen to take the Annual Formal Reception back to previous levels, and I couldn't have been happier with what you delivered; absolutely perfect organisation and first class hosting from across the rank structure with over 250 people attending, you did the Station and Service proud and I can't thank each and every one of you enough for what you did for this event.

After supporting ceremonial activity over the Remembrance period, the King's Colour Squadron has now deployed. We wish them all the very best and extend our gratitude and thoughts to their families and loved ones over the Christmas period.

Recently, Warrant Officer Andy Harris handed over to Warrant Officer Ben Moore as Station Warrant Officer. I thank Warrant Officer Harris for the immense support that he has given everyone on the Station; his hard work pervades all that this Station achieves, and we are all better for his support and counsel. We

welcome Warrant Officer Moore to the role; his last role as OC accounts at Northolt means he is no stranger to the Station, and he has already hit the ground running. We know that we are, once more, in very safe hands.

Lastly, a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to this magazine; it is wonderful reading all your articles about the great work that you continue to do. Thank you.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PEOPLE

Battle of Britain Service, Westminster Abbey, 15 Sept 2024 Sgt Angie Luddington, 600 (City of London) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force



It was with some trepidation that I accepted the request by our Chaplain in Chief to read the First Lesson at the Battle of Britain Service at Westminster Abbey. In celebration of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force reaching its 100th birthday in October of this year, the vision of the Chaplain in Chief was to include as many Reservists as possible, so it was an honour to be asked and a request that I could not refuse.

The fact that the conversation started with 'Angie! I have a question, but the answer is going to be 'yes'', also had a lot to do with it!

600 Squadron served as a night fighter squadron with great distinction during WWII, sustaining its biggest loss on 10th May 1940 over Rotterdam. Remembering these individuals from my Squadron is especially poignant during a National Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving.

Sunday arrived accompanied by nausea, palpitations and some

over breathing – reactions usually reserved just for the fitness test!

Many years ago, when I first attended this Service, I watched in awe as the remaining 'Few' filed past me. They were so close I could have reached out and touched history. I treasure this memory. Being in the presence of such greatness is humbling. As these memories and faces tumbled through my mind, I realised speaking was not such a big deal after all.

It seems a bit daft now to have had so much anxiety! I remembered to breathe; all the words came out in the right order, and I did not fall down the steps of the pulpit. I felt immensely proud afterwards, bolstered by the acknowledgement and kind words of RAF colleagues around me. Hearing the Lancaster bomber fly overhead at the end of the Service lifted me onto a cloud where I remained for at least a week, maybe two.

CANCER RESEARCH UK

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund

Alan Peirce will be solo swimming the channel in July 2025!

Please show your support by following along with his journey!

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'Al's Solo Channel Swim'

@als.solo.channel

600 Squadron Legal Adviser goes into the jungle as part of Ex ULU WARRIOR in Brunei

Flt Lt Christopher Madden, an RAF Reservist from 600 Sqn recently took part in a 12-day exercise in Brunei. He works as a corporate lawyer and in his spare time serves as a Legal Adviser (LegAd) in the RAF Reserves.

EX ULU WARRIOR is the annual validation exercise for the Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR), held in the jungles of Brunei where the RGR are based for several years at a time in order to hone their jungle warfare skills. The RGR spent around 10 days in the jungle with 'enemy forces' provided courtesy of British Army personnel from the UK.

Flt Lt Madden was situated in the exercise control (EXCON). The EXCON comprised officers and soldiers from a variety of



British Army regiments, including the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK) who had deployed a team of soldiers to assist with the exercise.

Flt Lt Madden said: "My usual working day is in an office and so having the opportunity to spend close to two weeks in Brunei was an incredible experience. British Forces Brunei is made up of several separate bases, each very well equipped. It operates as any other British base in the UK, except it just happens to be in the middle of Southeast Asia. Given the personnel there are far from home, there is a real sense of camaraderie and a close-knit community. Sitting in EXCON and getting to see the Army planning cycle for such a large exercise up close was really interesting. I also had the opportunity to sit with an Army LegAd and discuss aspects of the Law of Armed Conflict relevant to the exercise."

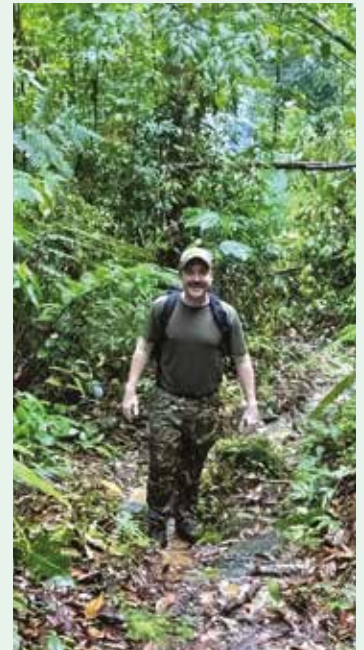
As with all military exercises, safety is of paramount concern.

Elements of 230 Squadron RAF, operating the Puma HC2, are based in Brunei and provide aeromedical evacuation support for British Forces Brunei. Flt Lt Madden spent several days with 230 Squadron and witnessed an aeromedical evacuation conducted by the Squadron.

"Flying over the jungles of Borneo in a Puma helicopter was a memory that will stay with me for a long time. The RAF provides a critical lifeline for soldiers in the jungle. Given parts of the jungle are impenetrable to land vehicles, the only way of getting soldiers out in an emergency is via air. It's not an understatement to say the RAF provides a lifesaving force in Brunei. Getting to witness an aeromedical evacuation, and the professionalism with which it was carried out, made me feel extremely proud to be an RAF Reservist."

Having joined the RAF Reserves in 2015, Flt Lt Madden commissioned last year as a LegAd with 600 (City of London) Squadron, a Royal Auxiliary Air Force unit based at RAF Northolt despite being based overseas for his civilian job.

Flt Lt Madden reflected that "The main drawback of working overseas is the distance from the UK – it makes undertaking the required annual 27-days Reservist training a little more challenging. Being able to complete a chunk



of my annual training in Brunei felt very familiar. The base there looks like most other UK bases, except with hot weather and an outdoor swimming pool! It was a real pleasure to take part in EX ULU WARRIOR and see the tenacity and determination of the Royal Gurkha Regiment firsthand. People in the UK can be confident that their Armed Forces are doing important work in Brunei by ensuring that [the UK] retains a jungle fighting capability. Crucially, the RAF provides vital support with the Puma. Seeing it in action was really the highlight of my time in Brunei."

AS1 Shishir Limbu, Accounts Flight

Hello everyone, my name is Shishir Limbu and I currently work in the Accounts Flight. I have been at RAF Northolt since Sep 2023, and would like to share my running journey so far. It all started with my first posting to RAF Marham. With little to do and being surrounded with the countryside of Norfolk there was little choice – I could sit in and procrastinate or start running!

A few runs a week progressed to a daily hobby to ultimately the opportunity to develop my mentorship skills through helping and guiding other runners with their training.

Since moving to RAF Northolt, I have taken part in several races including the Big Half 23, Northolt 10K 23, Farnborough Half 24 and the London Marathon 24. I have learnt that running is more than just moving your legs one step at a time. The training alone for the marathon

took a good four to five months with a few injuries due to lack of experience. With lessons learned throughout the journey, I managed to run 3:18:13 for my first marathon.

The biggest reason for my passion in running is challenging myself and pushing my own limits. I also enjoy the mental clarity, discipline, and resilience. I love to use running as a form to raise awareness for various charities, most recently running for Alzheimer's Society. My move to the Accounts Flight at RAF Northolt has enabled me to balance my workday and my training, with continuous support from my chain of command.



Sgt Matt Brett, AIDU

On Wednesday 25 September, Sgt Matt Brett, accompanied by FS Craig Metcalf, was invited to the Michaelmas Court Lunch at the Barber-Surgeons' Hall to be presented with the Air Cartographer of The Year Award.

The award is presented by No 1 AIDU's affiliated livery company, The Worshipful Company of Water Conservators. At the ceremony, FS Metcalf delivered Sgt Brett's citation after which he was presented with a silver water jug and certificate.

Sgt Brett is the SNCO instructor at No 1 AIDU's Phase 2 & 3 School of Air Cartography. Having taken up the post less than 18 months ago and with no prior training experience, he quickly adapted and familiarised himself to enable delivery of the Air Cartography Basic Specialisation Training course curriculum. Furthermore, at month three of his assignment he was tasked to work with the Defence Intelligence



Training Group to design the Trade Management Training course for Sergeants. This task is a challenge even for the most experienced trainers and he effortlessly rose to that challenge, creating a worthwhile course which was researched in depth, enjoyable and engaging. He brought in new technologies to help in the passage of that information, significantly enhancing the knowledge of the trainees.

His award recognised his hard work and dedication to No 1 AIDU's School of Air Cartography.



Sqn Ldr Walker



NHEROs Awards Evening – Sqn Ldr Martin Walker

On the evening of 20 November, RAF Northolt came together for an evening of celebration and acknowledgement of the best and most deserving of the Station Whole Force personnel as nominated by peers, managers and colleagues. The Northolt Heroes (NHEROs) awards ceremony was established to thank those who have gone over and above what is expected, and who have delivered outstandingly in the last 12 months.

This event was the first of its kind and will be incorporated into the Station calendar going forward. We set ourselves the ambitious challenge to make the event as sustainable as possible: permanent silver trophies were sourced from the Officers Mess, Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess, and the RAF Benevolent Fund, which were then branded up for the NHEROs whilst retaining their history on plaques or the silver itself. The trophies that were presented for the winners to take home were also sustainably sourced, and bamboo plates and other recyclable items were used for the buffet.

The night was enjoyed by all who attended and every person was gifted a memento of their participation in the form of a glass engraved with the NHEROs logo for 2024. Kind support from volunteers from across the unit helped to set up the event, an RAF Music Services ensemble played beautifully

throughout the dinner, and it was incredible to see the friends, family members and line management of the finalists all drawn together to celebrate the achievements.

We thank all the finalists who attended - their efforts have enhanced the Station community and this was the Station's way of thanking them for their contributions. However, we particularly congratulate the following winners on their success:

Station Commander's Award – For an individual who has shown exceptional leadership in support of the Station's outputs in the workplace or in a secondary duty.
Winner: Cpl V McCarthy
– No 1 Aeronautical Information Documentation Unit.

Safety Excellence – For an individual who excels in ensuring that the safety of aircraft or personnel is paramount.
Winner: Sgt R Harrison
– 63 Sqn KCS.

Best Newcomer – For an individual within their first 3 years in the Whole Force who has performed above and beyond what would normally be expected of their level of experience.
Winner: Mrs S Ungureanu
– Base Support Wing

Team Northolt Award – For an individual who encompasses the Team Northolt values by their selfless service to the



Sgt Tom McVey, winner of the Team Northolt Award

Station in support of all we do.
Winner: Sgt T McVey
– Human Resource Centre
1 / Base Support Wing

Envoy to the Community Award – For an individual who offers their time through volunteering in support of the local community.
Winner: Cpl A Ford
– Base Support Wing

It is with deep gratitude that we thank our supporters, the RAF Benevolent Fund, JetFly and Universal Aviation. Without their kind donations this event would not have been possible and it is through their contributions that we have been able to thank our Station's best and most deserving!



REMEMBRANCE



RAF Northolt personnel support local Remembrance activity in Eastcote and Ruislip



Marking Remembrance at RAF Northolt



RAF Music Services at the Cenotaph



Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall

32 SQN AWARD WINNING PARTNERSHIP

by WO Michael Henriques



32 (The Royal) Sqn and Centreline AV Ltd were presented the 1 Gp Whole Force Award at the 1 Gp Industry Awards held at RAF Waddington on 3 Oct 24. The award is for the individual or organisation that has done the most to enhance the Whole Force capability and was presented by Mr Simon Walton-Prince of Raytheon. Wg Cdr Sands, OC 32 (TR) Sqn, Mr Adam Lunn of Centreline AV, and WO Henriques, Sqn WO 32 (TR) Sqn received the award on behalf of both organisations.

The citation read: '32 (TR) Sqn and Centreline jointly operate the Envoy, delivering Fixed Wing Command Support Air Transport for senior Government and military leaders. The operating model, unique in the RAF, sees military pilots and cabin crew operate alongside civilian pilots under CAA regulations and under Centreline's Operating Certificate. The relationship has been hugely successful, with Centreline leaning in to support well beyond its contractual obligations. As a result, 32 (TR) Sqn has been able to respond to extremely short notice requests (as short as three hours between notification

and wheels up). Centreline have worked successfully to expand the operational capability of the aircraft. The most telling demonstration of the increasing flexibility of the model was in October 2023 during a sortie that would have been unthinkable on Envoy's introduction to Service just a year earlier.'

OC 32 (TR) Sqn said "I am delighted that 32 (TR) Sqn and Centreline AV Ltd have been recognised by 1 Group. Our achievements over the last 12 months have been the result of the hard work and collegiate approach of every member of each organisation, and I look forward to further success in the future."

Adam Lunn, Centreline's CSAT Contract Manager said: "We are immensely proud to receive this award which showcases the strength of our partnership with 32 (TR) Sqn. This recognition is a testament to the unwavering dedication and professionalism of our teams at both Centreline and the RAF. Together, we have created an innovative operating model that provides vital air transport services and broadens the operational scope of the Envoy aircraft. We are excited to continue this successful collaboration."

Annual Formal Reception



On 19 October 2024, RAF Northolt held its Annual Formal Reception at the Officers' Mess supported by RAF Music Services and the King's Colour Squadron.

Ceremony on a warm October evening in front of the historic Officers' Mess; a great occasion to network with serving personnel and old friends.

Station personnel hosted guests from the local community, businesses that support the Station, and many colleagues and friends who have assisted us over the past year.

The whole station pulled together to ensure the event ran smoothly, from the Air Training Corps welcoming guests at the Main Gate to the exceptional catering provided by our contractor and RAF Chefs.

The numbers returned to pre-COVID levels with over 150 guests. All enjoyed a Sunset

The Station Commander has received many letters of thanks and praise for the reception and we all look forward to repeating the success of the event in 2025.



by WO Paul Royer



The Middlesex Combined Practice

Two buildings, one team — by Cpl Iona Loughran

Across the MOD, medical centres are combining to efficiently maximise patient output. This year, RAF Northolt Station Medical Centre merged with Northwood Headquarters' Station Medical Centre to create the Middlesex Combined Practice. I sat down with acting Senior Medical Officer, Sqn Ldr Lauren Thornback, to ask her exactly what the combined practice can offer to RAF Northolt personnel.

1) What is the combining and what does this mean?

Combining means that RAF Northolt and Northwood HQ medical centres have merged their patient populations so that they function as one larger medical practice. The medical centres at each site continue to operate as normal in terms of infrastructure, however the staff will now operate as one larger team and processes underpinning governance and management will be aligned so that we function as a single medical practice.

2) Can I be seen at both practices?

Military personnel can be seen at either RAF Northolt or Northwood HQ site. We are aware that the heightened security measures in place at Northwood HQ will require patients who do not hold Northwood passes

to be processed via the guardroom. The medical centre can assist to ensure that access to the site is as smooth as possible for patients. If you are booking an appointment at Northwood HQ and do not hold a Northwood pass, please highlight this to medical centre staff at the time of booking.

3) Will this affect the pharmacy at all?

There will be no adverse effect to the provision of dispensary services to patients. Military patients will be able to choose which dispensary they prefer to use. RAF Northolt site will continue to outsource dispensing to Nu-Ways pharmacy if required. Combining will improve resilience in the dispensary, as our pharmacy technicians can cross-cover between sites during periods of absence.

4) How will this benefit the station?

Combining will benefit Station as improved access to medical care with more resilience within the combined medical team will improve force generation. Increased clinical expertise and experience within the combined practice medical team will also help improve occupational medical care (JMES reviews and routine medicals) in a world where tri-service working is becoming increasingly normal.



Ethnic Minorities Conference

As the Ethnic Minorities Network Events Coordinator, I had the pleasure of organizing the Ethnic Minorities Conference here at RAF Northolt on 1 & 2 October alongside my fantastic co-ProjO, Flt Lt Zhaira Kausar.

With the theme 'Leadership: Empowering our People' the event brought together a diverse group of attendees, from RAF senior leaders to newly trained AS1s, along with insightful external speakers.

The Conference was not just an event; it was a vibrant platform for fostering connections and encouraging dialogue on important issues.

A Day of Inspiration & Collaboration

The day started with opening remarks from RAF Senior Leadership figures: Gp Capt Hough, RAF Northolt Station Commander; AM Lloyd, DCAS; Air Cmdre Fashade; WO Subramamiam, WORAF, and the EM Network Chair Sqn Ldr Aopare, who emphasized the importance of representation and inclusion in driving change. The keynote speeches were particularly inspiring, highlighting stories of resilience and determination from Ethnic Minority leaders.

Our guest speakers included AS1 Morse who spoke about his Romani heritage; Veterans Wg Cdr Patel & Flt Lt Patel shared

their experiences in the RAF; while Daniel Harris & Amy Smith discussed their neurodiversity journeys. Additionally, the RAF Families Federation highlighted their important work supporting Service Personnel and Flt Lt Morgan & Sgt Small presented on Ethnic Minority representation in RAF sports. Kandice Chimbiri, author of children's books on Black history in Aviation, was also present and shared her story.

Workshops and panel discussions were at the heart of the conference, designed to equip participants with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate their careers effectively. Topics ranged from Immigration Advice, Employment Policy & also an OJAR/SJAR workshop and a progressive Leadership panel.

Evening Celebration: Music & Culture

The evening dinner was the highlight of the two day conference, featuring live music from RAF Music Services that set a lively atmosphere. Guests were treated to the infectious rhythms of Steel Pan player LCpl Kavel, who brought an island vibe to the evening. In a fun twist, I also led a Greek Zorba masterclass where the band performed live, encouraging everyone to join in and dance – a fantastic way to bond and celebrate our diverse cultures.

The night continued with an array of world



music, creating an inclusive environment that reflected the diversity of our attendees.

Looking Ahead

The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing eagerness for future events and ongoing engagement with the network.

In summary, this year's Ethnic Minorities Conference was a remarkable success, highlighting the power of unity and empowerment in leadership. As we reflect on the event, Flt Lt Kausar and I are excited about the future of the RAF EM Network and the role we all play in driving forward its mission.



by Cpl Mikaella Theodoulou



RAF Northolt has a new Memorial Garden

by Lisa Bennett



A new Memorial Garden has been created at RAF Northolt. It sits northside in between Station Headquarters and the Air Cadets HQ, and is immediately visible as you walk in via the North Side Guard Room.

The idea of a memorial garden at RAF Northolt was first discussed towards the end of 2023. The first thing we had to decide was where the garden was going to be situated. Once we decided this, we then set to work designing it. Martin Szober from Vinci, and myself, Lisa Bennett from Estates Flt, put our heads together and came up with the design we have

now: we hope you like it! It has three benches surrounded by lavender bushes, daffodil and tulip bulbs which will come up in the springtime, a hebe in the centre of the garden, and of course, poppies.

This will be a place for people to come and sit, contemplate, and just relax with their own thoughts.

The work was carried out by Tivoli, who are the gardeners that work on the Station. Many thanks to David Allaway and Mohamed Shire for all their hard work.

We would also like to thank Dave Kemp from Kemps Construction for the donation of a bench.



No 1 AIDU Dedication Service

On 16 October 24, personnel from No 1 AIDU attended St Clement Danes Church in Central London, for a service dedicated to the installation of a new No 1 AIDU crest on the floor of the church.

by ASI Connor Jones



Construction of St Clement Danes Church was completed in 1682 by the architect Sir Christopher Wren. The building sustained considerable damage from Luftwaffe bombing raids during the Blitz but with help from the RAF it was restored in 1958. Historic items in the church include the Grand Organ (donated by the United States Air Force) and the Lectern (a gift from the Royal Australian Air Force). The floor of the church is inscribed with crests of over 900 RAF Commands, Groups, and Stations. No 1 AIDU's

crest was added to the floor in 2023 after exceptional fundraising efforts by AIDU personnel. To fund the cost of the £1,500 crest, Cpl Wright and Cpl Burrows began raising money in 2018. Multiple small events and challenges were undertaken, culminating in the creation of "Steel Summits", a gruelling challenge in which participants attempted to scale the height of Mount Everest by ascending London's Gherkin Tower 50 times within 12hrs. This challenge has become an annual No 1 AIDU



event; numerous personnel have attempted to reach the height of Mount Everest, raising vital funds for the RAF Benevolent Fund. The efforts of Cpls Wright & Burrows, with assistance from the RAF Benevolent Fund, raised the required funds for a dedicated No 1 AIDU crest to be installed.

Around 80 Whole Force personnel from No 1 AIDU attended the dedication service conducted by the Resident Chaplain Revd. Mark Perry. The service began with all present viewing the Royal Coat of Arms located on the ceiling, with its Latin inscription which translates to:

Christopher Wren built it 1682

The thunderbolts of aerial warfare destroyed it 1941

The Royal Air Force restored it 1958

This was a lovely opening to the service, emphasising the importance of the church and its relationship with the RAF and those in attendance. During the service several No 1 AIDU personnel delivered powerful readings, with AS1 Grimston highlighting the significant history of the church and the unit with a captivating speech. The service allowed an opportunity to step away from work and reflect on No 1 AIDU's history and its importance to the operational capability of the RAF. Once the service finished, personnel had space to walk around at their leisure, taking time for reflection and of course, those social media photos, before returning to RAF Northolt.

St Clement Danes Church is a living memorial to Royal Air Force Men and Women who have given their lives whilst serving. No 1 AIDU receiving a dedication service here was a truly special event. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day, with this being the first time many had visited the church. The dedication service brought personnel together to take pride in their roles as Air Cartographers; through their efforts a piece of No 1 AIDU will forever be etched into history at St Clement Danes.

Annual Mass at St Clement Danes Church

On 10 October 2024 our Station Chaplain, Padre Dave Skillen, in his role as Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain of the Royal Air Force, hosted his annual Mass at St Clement Danes Church followed by the annual dinner at the RAF Club.

The aim of the day is to thank all those who have contributed in some way to the Catholic mission in the RAF over the last year, and to celebrate and show case this richly proactive work for the good of the RAF Whole Force community.

Padre Dave said, "yet again the day went off very well and it was a great joy to be with so many positive members of our wonderful community. I am grateful to Bishop Paul Mason (Bishop of the Forces), Padre Giles Legood (Chaplain-

in-Chief), Air Vice Marshal Simon Edwards (Director People), Group Captains Jon Hough and Neil Towers (CO Northolt and Northwood HQ respectively) and to so many more who came along to the day."

Station Management Squadron CATERING HIGHLIGHTS

by Fg Off Holly Collins



The past season has been incredibly busy for the Catering Flight. Catering Flight sits within Station Management Squadron, comprising five AS1s, two JNCOs and one Sgt.

Catering is currently the most deployed trade in the RAF, with a JNCO chef expected to go OOA every eight months. Over the past couple of months alone, chefs here at RAF Northolt have returned from deployments to the Falklands and Latvia.

At Station level, we have contributed to every event over the past couple months, including Battle of Britain dinners in the OM and WOSM, the AFR, CAS' Commendations and 32 (TR) Sqn Families Day. It gives us the opportunity to showcase skills we may not employ on a day-to-day basis when working alongside the Aramark contract.

Some of our personal highlights are providing 'Jim's Jackets' at the Night Shoot and setting up a field kitchen for the Air Cadets summer camp. We also catered

for the CO's Cup in August out of the same field kitchen, whipping up burgers and flatbreads.

In other SMS news, FS Rob Evans joined us in August and our new Stn Adjt Plt Off Manser-Jeffery started in September, fresh from MIOT at RAF Cranwell. WO Taylor is now FGEN'd overseas and Flt McGarvey is deployed overseas as a DAO. We wish them all the best in their deployments.

For any catering or HESTIA contract RFIs, please don't hesitate to contact Sgt Jim Sharples or Fg Off Holly Collins.

Station Operations: Night Photoshoot

by Philip Dawe, RAF Northolt Heritage projects, and AS1 Joseph Charles, Station Operations



RAF Northolt hosted the 31st instalment of the bi-annual Night photoshoot on 3 October. These events were first started in January 2009 to raise funds for the restoration of the Grade 2 listed RAF Northolt Sector Operations Building, also known as Building 27 or the Sir Keith Park Building.

The aerodrome played host to a variety of aircraft for the event. In total, 13 aircraft were on display, including some station-based assets, the F900 Envoy, A109 and three London Air Ambulance aircraft. Thank you to 12 Sqn, RAF Coningsby for sending a Typhoon FGR4, and to the French Air and Space Force for a pair of PC-21s from their training school at Cognac and a Xingu from the European Military Airlift School at Avord. Other standout visitors included a Eurofighter Typhoon from 29 Squadron at RAF Coningsby, a DC-3 Dakota Skytrain operated by Aero Legends, as well as a 99Sqn C-17A and a C-47A "Drag Em Oot". A brief visit from a C17 Globemaster out of Brize Norton was no doubt heard in all corners of the Station!

The evening saw over 350 visitors to RAF Northolt who engaged with Station personnel, charities and committees in one of the Hangars before gaining access to the aircraft. Representatives from the RAF Museum, London Air Ambulance Charity, 600 Sqn, 32 (TR) Squadron and the Junior Ranks Committee participated in the event, raising awareness and selling merchandise alongside some of our visiting aircrew.

For the first time we ran a photo competition amongst those photographers that attended. The winning photograph by Ross Bremner adorns the front cover of this edition of the **Northolt Approach**. Huge thanks to all RAF Northolt staff that supported the event, ensuring its success.

Plans for the next photoshoot in March are already being drawn up. RAF Northolt Night Photoshoots are open to everyone, held on the first Thursday of March and the First Thursday of October every year; get the dates in your diary now!



Photo competition: highly commended, 12 Sqn Typhoon FGR4, taken by Frank Grealish from Ireland



Photo competition: commended - 12 Sqn Typhoon FGR4, taken by James Chapman from Peterborough



Photo competition: highly commended - 99 Sqn C-17A, taken by Nick Soan from Hastings

600 (CITY OF LONDON) SQUADRON ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

ANNUAL TRAINING WEEK

Between 14-20 October 2024, 600 (City of London) Squadron held an intensive week of training.

The training serials included opportunities for the aviators to brush up on individual readiness and mandatory training; undertake development opportunities in leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, wargaming and human factors skills; receive briefings on the RAF Benevolent Fund and British Forces South Atlantic Islands; and undertake a Force Development visit to the Imperial War Museum.

The Squadron's role is General Support, so the skills and experience are broad across the four specialist flights: Cyberspace, Intelligence, Air and Space Operations, and People Operations. Squadron personnel all have careers outside the RAF so these opportunities to train together are vital not only to brush up on military skills but also to build the esprit de corps which is so important to Service life.

Wg Cdr Steve Duddy, Officer Commanding 600 Sqn,

said: "It's such a privilege to lead the fantastic aviators that make up 600 Sqn. To see their outstanding teamwork and dedication to the Service played out over a week of dynamic and extensive training is a real pleasure. 600 Sqn are motivated, fit and ready to support the Regular force with whatever is required."

AS1 Kean Noon, a Cyberspace Communications Specialist who has been on 600 Squadron for two and a half years, said: "I attended the whole week of annual training which has been excellent. I really enjoyed the force development which included a visit to the Imperial War Museum. It gave me a fantastic insight into the history of warfare and because members of the whole Squadron were together, allowed us time to build better relationships. The visit also gave me an opportunity to reflect on why we are in the RAF. In my civilian career I am a cloud computing engineer and I have found that the exciting opportunities in the Reserves have been a real complement to my job; benefitting my self-confidence and fitness."



OUT AND ABOUT WITH

**600 (CITY OF LONDON) SQUADRON
ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE**



24 – 30 JUNE 24

During Armed Forces Week, 600 (City of London) Squadron supported multiple events around the City and further afield including the RAuxAF Centenary at the National Memorial Arboretum, Armed Forces Day in the City and the 12 Bridges Challenge.



600 Sqn at Capel-Le-Ferne Battle of Britain Service



Members of 600 Sqn attended the annual Battle of Britain Memorial Service at Capel-le-Ferne, and as a Battle of Britain Squadron, paraded their Squadron Standard as part of the Service.

Members of the Sqn relax on the 600 Sqn-dedicated bench after the Service. From Left: Sgt Gary Drake, Wg Cdr Steve Duddy, Flt Lt Jonathan Rymel, Flt Lt Rich Little and Sgt Doc Loosley.

D-Day 80

600 Sqn Executive Officer, Squadron Leader Alisa Rebbeck and her husband FS (ret'd) Andrew Carter were invited to experience D-Day 80 celebrations in Portsmouth. Commemorations on the day included a concert, a Red Arrows and Typhoon flypast. Their Majesties The King and Queen were in attendance for the momentous occasion.



RAF Music Services



Performance at the Guards' Chapel

*RAF Music Solo Competitions
at Regent Hall, London*



Performance at Stirling Castle



Northolt Annual Formal Reception

SWO's Segment

– WO Ben Moore

As I write my first article for the *Northolt Approach*, I am now into my third week as Station Warrant Officer and I can honestly say it's been amazing. A huge thank you to everyone who I have met so far congratulating me on my appointment. It goes without saying that another huge 'thank you' must go to my predecessor, Warrant Officer Andy Harris, who is due to leave the Service in the next few months. On behalf of us all we wish him well for the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate Flight Sergeant Rob Pugh on his recent appointment as Deputy Station Warrant Officer. Rob will be in the role for the next 6 months (rotation) supporting me and the Command Group. His support and experience (as an ex-KCS FS) has already proved

invaluable during our annual Remembrance commitments, where we paraded over 100 uniformed personnel at Eastcote, Ruislip, Harrow and Uxbridge to pay their respects. In addition, Music Services and King's Colour Squadron paraded in London and at the Royal Albert Hall for the Festival of Remembrance. It is safe to say that 'Team Northolt' was very well represented – thank you to everyone involved and those who supported behind the scenes; none of this is possible without the support from MT, Mess Staff, Accommodation, Clothing Stores, to name but a few.

People have always been my priority and providing opportunities for our people to develop, showcase talent and fulfil aspirations is what motivates me most! From you, all I need is honesty; please let me know what is working and what needs improving but always ask yourself



"what can I do to make things better?" As we go into the Christmas period, I look forward to getting out and about visiting you all and hearing your news and how I can support you. As the social calendar ramps up for the festivities that are on the horizon, I ask you all to look out for one another; be careful but at the same time, enjoy yourself – you deserve it!

Remember – my door is always open.



SCSO's
Patch

Hello from The Link and the SFA Patch.

Winter has certainly arrived and as I write this there are flurries of snow and the temperature is a little chilly. Now is a great time to test your heating and hot water and report any problems to the Pinnacle National Call Centre on **0800 031 8628**.

Talking of reporting, please remember, as a polite reminder, to report everything however minor you feel it may be. For example: street lights, flooding on roads and other repairs required on the SFA estates: 0800 031 8628

I recognise there are increasing issues in the play parks and I constantly work with DIO to resolve these. Again, may I ask that if you see an issue, you report it on 0800 031 8628. The more we highlight, the more traction we should generate.

So the main theme of this article is REPORT, REPORT, REPORT. I am the conduit between Pinnacle, the residents, the Station and Vivo but I need your help to highlight all the issues on the estate and within your property. Please follow the process before you call me as I cannot directly take up your case until it has failed. The number is 0800 031 8628.

Finally, Christmas in The Link is Wednesday 11 December, including a visit from the RAF Benevolent Fund, music from the Salon Orchestra of RAF Music Services, and free sausage or bacon rolls.

I'm available on my work mobile: 07825 906502; email Paul.Royer342@mod.gov.uk or old-fashioned letter through the post if you feel you have any enquires about SFA applications, works services, anything housing related, or if you just feel like a good rant or chat. Whatever makes you feel better, and the coffee is always on here! Until the next edition...

WO Paul Royer, SCSO

Parent Support Group – Coffee morning and First Aid course

by Cpl Mikaella Theodoulou



On Tuesday 15 October, our Station Parent Support Group hosted another delightful coffee morning at The Link. Designed for parents who have recently returned to work or are on parental leave, the event was a warm and inviting space for sharing experiences and advice.

Fellow Station parents served as welcoming hosts, ready to address any queries or concerns that new parents might have. With representatives from HR, Med Centre, PED flight and SSAFA, attendees had the perfect opportunity to gather invaluable information while enjoying delicious coffee and cake.

We always encourage partners and line managers to join, and invite children to the soft play to foster a supportive community that extends beyond just parental roles.

MINI FIRST AID

A Mini First Aid course at The Link was another event proudly organized by the Station Parents Support Group and fully funded by RAF Northolt. Expertly led by Nicola McKenna, the course aimed to equip parents with essential lifesaving skills.

Participants delved into a variety of critical topics, including CPR techniques, responding to choking incidents, and the best

practices for managing bumps, bruises and burns. The course also covered febrile seizures and provided crucial information on recognizing the signs of meningitis – knowledge that could make all the difference in an emergency.

The interactive format allowed participants to practice skills in real-life scenarios, ensuring they felt confident and prepared. Feedback from attendees highlighted the course's practical approach and the engaging teaching style of Nicola, who made learning both informative and enjoyable.

The Station Parents Support group is excited to continue offering this valuable training biannually, reinforcing the importance of readiness and awareness in our community. Keep an eye out for future dates and join us in enhancing safety and confidence!



32 (TR) SQN

Families' Day 2024

by Flt Lt Robert Saddler



On 17 August 2024, 32 (TR) Sqn hosted our families and those of our commercial partners at the Officers Mess at RAF Northolt for a Families Day to express our thanks for their support over the previous year. The weather was very kind and enabled us to deliver the full programme of outdoor events.

During the day the children (and more than a few adults!) were entertained by Auntie Julie, a local children's entertainer who had the kids rapt with spinning plates and other circus-style tricks and games.

Clear Air Turbulence, a band led by the son of a Sqn member, played a selection of hits whilst families ate the excellent barbecue lunch provided by Chefs from RAF Northolt. A bouncy castle and the BFBS ice cream van were also on hand and proved particularly popular!

The main event of the day was the opportunity for families to go flying on either the

Envoy business jet or the A109 helicopter. The Envoy flew out to the east of the airfield, climbing up to 9000ft, granting excellent views of the capital for all the passengers. The A109 helicopter flew through the London heli lanes before returning to RAF Northolt to carry out an operational task.

The day was a great success with lots of smiling faces, full tummies and happy memories and we couldn't have done it without the support of a whole host of Team Northolt elements including Ops, ATC, Northolt Radar, Movements, RAFP and the catering team. Thanks to all involved!

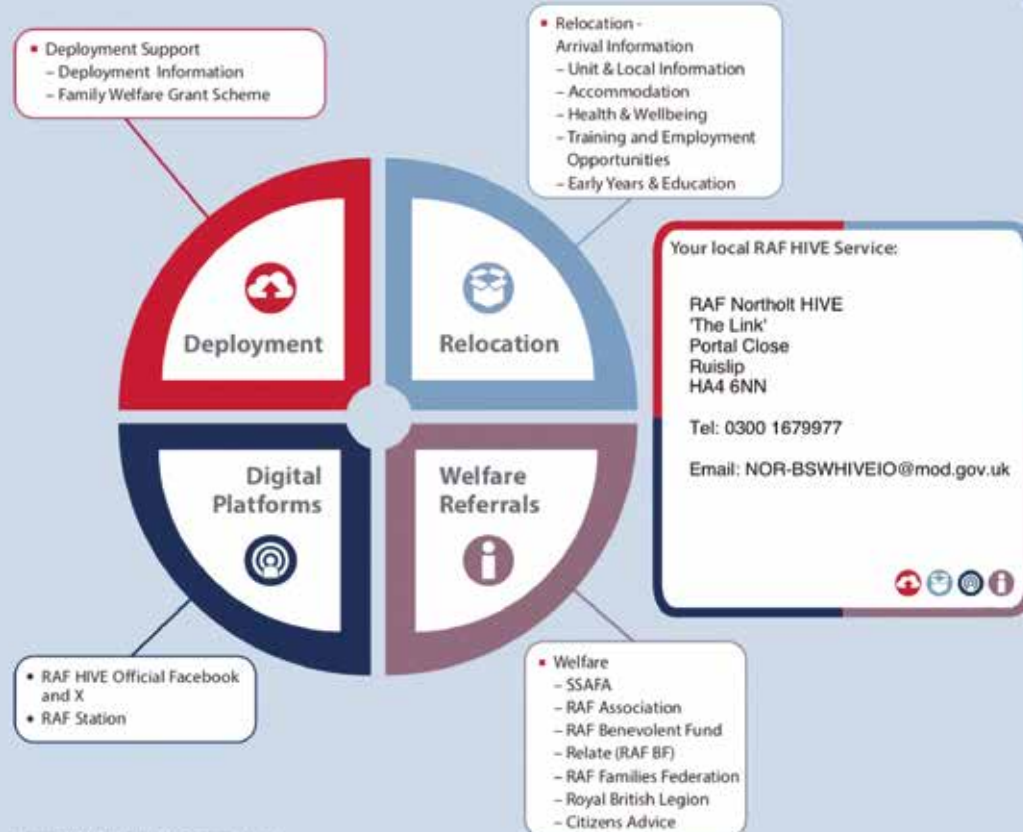


RAF HIVE Information Service

THE RAF HIVE Service: Your Gateway to Information and Welfare Support for All Service Personnel and Their Families, On-Unit or Off-Unit.

ROYAL AIR FORCE
People & Families Support

HIVE
information
Supporting the Service Community



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Mental Health Awareness Day – 10 Oct 2024

Warrant Officer Jeanette Ibbs and Flight Sergeant Isla Blamey from the Station D&I Team organised an event for World Mental Health Day which was attended by Whole Force personnel from across the Station.



The expert speakers combined personal stories, research, and useful techniques to provide the audience with an insightful afternoon.

Dr Alex Cotton, founder of the *It takes balls to talk* charity has worked in the NHS for over 30 years, and works alongside the West Midlands Police as a Street Triage Nurse. She led an interactive session covering

the language of mental health and common signs displayed when struggling with mental health.

Paul Minter from the charity *Head Up* spoke about a retreat which will soon be opened to the military community. Paul went on to discuss cold water therapy, journaling, and the benefits of being in nature, among other topics. Paul is a military veteran who co-founded *Head Up*.

Consultant psychiatrist, Wg Cdr (ret'd) Professor Walter Busuttill from King's College London, who joined *Combat Stress* in 2007, spoke about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In the RAF he was part of the team that helped rehabilitate the 1980s Beirut hostages and veterans from the First Gulf War. He joined *Combat Stress* in 2007 and led the overhaul of clinical management practice.



EX ALTO GARDA

From 11 – 25 September, personnel from RAF Northolt took part in Ex ALTO GARDA: adventure training in Northern Italy which included rock climbing, mountaineering and the Via Ferrata ('iron way') – a route that combines hiking and climbing on protected routes with fixed anchors, ladders and cables.

Sgt Patrick Kelly, who attended the first week's session, and AS1 Amelia Hollis, who experienced the second week, share their experiences:





AS1 Amelia Hollis

After a day of travel, the first activity was rock climbing. We warmed up on smaller climbs (8-10m in height) as this helped us to discover what level we were comfortable at. After lunch, we moved onto more challenging climbs (20-25m). These were a lot more technical, but still just as fun! The higher climbs pushed people out of their comfort zone, providing a great leaning opportunity.

My group had a second day of rock climbing; whilst the other six went off to complete a Via Ferrata route. The rocks led to immense views; however, they were a lot more technical, requiring more thought along with trust in the equipment and each other. Finishing the climbs, we sat high above the lake at a local café and enjoyed the view, whilst discussing what we had learnt from the day.

On day four we completed a Via Ferrata route ourselves. We walked from the apartment for 15 minutes before starting our ascent to Santa Barbara (a church at 590 metres embedded into the side of the mountain). From this point we geared up with helmets and harnesses. The route was challenging, through rocky terrain and inclines up to an elevation of 1400m, with many parts of the climb completed on ladders bolted into the rock face. This was by far one of the most physically demanding days most of us had faced! Upon reaching the top, we had a small celebration in recognition of everyone's efforts, however the fatigue started to set in on the downhill and it was clear the day had pushed everyone to their limits.

CONTINUED >>>



Sgt Patrick Kelly

A two-day mountaineering trip saw us cover over 20 miles with 2500m of elevation. The first day began with the group huddled around a picnic table, deliberating on a route. Once agreed, we all set out together with a plan to alternate who took the lead. The climb itself was tough and everyone worked together to keep their minds off the relentlessly steep ascent – can you name the two London tube stations containing all 5 vowels? By the time we had figured it out, we were halfway up the mountain. After a challenging day of walking, we finally reached the overnight hut, and it was time for a well-earned meal and glass of wine whilst we planned the route for the next day.

Day 6:

The group needed to decide whether to take the easier, quicker route down through the valley or traverse along a more scenic, longer route. Opinions were split, with some ready to get back whilst others wanted to push on and see more. Ultimately, the group decided to take a longer route back but avoid the most arduous element. This meant we enjoyed a scenic route down whilst taking in the changing landscape as snow melted into rushing water, eventually leading us back down into the forest to finish the Exped.

The final day before flying home was a chance for everyone to relax

and take stock. After a reflection on the learning points from the week, everyone had a day to explore Lake Garda. Some cycled around the local vineyards, some went shopping in the town, and others cooled off with a swim in the lake. In the evening, the group came together for a final meal and drinks before the journey home.

What were the big takeaways from the Exped?

Amelia: "Everyone used the Exped for different reasons: to conquer a fear; to improve headspace; to learn new skills and develop. A key point we all agreed on was that learning about our own strengths and weaknesses over the week allowed us to be more effective in achieving success, and that we can also utilise this back in normal work or even our personal lives.

Now I have participated in AT, I would recommend to anyone who has ever thought about it to just apply and go. AT will strengthen your operational capacity, mental resilience and in general it will boost your morale. It gives you experiences and lessons like no other... who can say they've stood on a ladder 1,200 metres up; we can because we went on AT!"

Patrick: "One of the biggest takeaways from the expedition was the extent to which you can challenge what you're capable of.



Everyone struggled at some point during the week; conquering a fear or being pushed beyond their technical and physical capabilities. However, through effective team cohesion and support, you could see how people complement each other within a team to achieve success.

My recommendation for anyone who hasn't been on AT before would be to take advantage of

the next opportunity that comes your way. You'll learn something new and do something outside of your regular working day. It's also a great chance to socialise with other ranks and professions, gaining some insight into how the rest of the Royal Air Force operates."



FORCE DEVELOPMENT VISIT

Battle of Britain Bunker, Uxbridge — by Cpl Ethan Morrod

Personnel from Ops Sqn, HR South Ops Sqn and Base Support Wing took part in a Force Development visit to the previous 11 Group Fighter Command Bunker during RAF Northolt's month of Battle of Britain-inspired events. The group arrived at the bunker and were immediately greeted by the huge statue of Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park, Station Commander RAF Northolt in 1931-32 and AOC 11 Group during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940.

Personnel were escorted down to the bunker via the original stairwell, treading in the footsteps of figures such as Her Late



Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Sir Winston Churchill. Inside 11 Group HQ, well-informed tour guides re-enacted the events of the Battle of Britain during the summer of 1940; one of the most decisive victories for the RAF

against the Luftwaffe's attempts to gain air superiority. Stories of Winston Churchill's famous quotes from inside the bunker were told, emphasising the historical significance of the building. Once the tour ended, personnel

were given the opportunity to look around the various exhibits in the visitor centre, including the original plotting table, and the bunker itself. Stands were delivered by members of Ops Sqn covering topics such as how the chain of command played a pivotal role in the victory over the Luftwaffe, and which RAF squadrons/aircraft were operated from RAF Northolt during this time. The visit concluded with a bite to eat in the Visitor Centre's café, with opinionated discussions on the pronunciation of the word 'scone' and whether the clotted cream is applied first rather than the jam – an argument that was no doubt going on in the 1940s as well!



Force Development Trip to Westminster Abbey — by AS1 Jack Morgan

On Tuesday 3 September, 13 personnel from No. 1 AIDU participated in a Force Development trip, visiting the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey, and the RAF Club.

The day began with a guided tour of the historic Palace of Westminster, where the group gained insight into the workings of the UK Parliament and explored the iconic chambers of the House of Commons and House of Lords. As Parliament was not in session, it was possible to venture into both houses, getting a first-hand look at the heart of the British democratic system. The tour finished on Parliament Square, where the host gave a brief talk on the history of the landmarks surrounding the

area, including historical edifices such as the Palace of Whitehall.

The next stop was Westminster Abbey, where the group enjoyed the magnificent artwork, stained glass, and fine masonry on display. A visit to the RAF Chapel, a memorial dedicated to the men and women of the Royal Air Force who have served in defence of the Nation, offered a moment of reflection.

After a sunny afternoon walk through the Royal Parks, the trip concluded with a tour of the prestigious RAF Club in Piccadilly, a venue steeped in RAF history and tradition. Everyone then enjoyed a drink in The Running Horses pub; part of the RAF Club. The FD day was a success, building team spirit and providing a valuable insight into the heritage and legacy of the RAF.

Nijmegen March

600 Sqn joined forces with 602 (City of Glasgow) Sqn to complete a four day, 100-mile march as a combined RAuxAF unit in July. It was a great achievement for a team whose Sqns had not met before, let alone trained together, to undertake the gruelling walk in the Netherlands.





Cyber Flt to London

by AS1 Ethan Davison



Organising a staff ride for any number of people is no mean feat, but worth it, to ensure RAF Northolt personnel could take advantage of the proximity of the Station to Central London.

On this occasion, it was time to gather up all staff members of Digital Services Flt (neé Cyber Flt), which they away from their daily passions of dealing with I.T, and head off to the 'Big Smoke' for some Force Development and light refreshment, which saw Service personnel, civil servants and contractors all enjoy some time out in the late September sun.

Our London tour took us across town to Bloomsbury, visiting the British Museum which allowed us time to explore at our own pace the vast history of many cultures over the ages, and discover many relics of British history which served as a good taster leading into our main destination on this FD trip: the Churchill War Rooms.

An immersive experience which captured the comprehensive efforts of the British campaign to halt the German offensive and eventually obtain victory for Europe – all planned within the depths of Westminster. It was surreal to stand and look at the very rooms and equipment, and to see, smell, hear and feel the surroundings military and civilian staff alike endured during the campaign to save Europe and indeed the world. The experience certainly gave us all a sense of purpose, and affirmed our understanding of what we must keep on doing to strive for lasting peace and democracy.

After light refreshments and discussions around our stand topics, Cyber Flt Northolt concluded a satisfactory and educational day by taking in some of the late summer heat, with a newfound understanding of the strength and capability of air power.



Padre's Piece

— by Padre Dave Skillen

A Christmas Message

As I type this Christmas message it is not yet Advent! Advent is the four weeks leading up to Christmas. It is intended as a time of preparation for the great celebration of the arrival of the baby Jesus - God-become-man - in the stable at Bethlehem. Words associated with this rather understated season – Advent – include waiting, anticipation, expectation, excitement.

Mary was expecting her baby and journeying those nine months, waiting and pondering what this special birth might mean for the whole world. She knew joy and worry in equal measure in her own 'Advent' days before that first Christmas. The faith she had gave her resilience and saw her through to the joy of Christmas. Faith means different things to different people. Faith is what sustains us in hope and helps to grow resilience even in the most challenging of circumstances. Where does your faith lie – in what or in whom?

I have got my Advent reading ready and have fought hard not to jump the gun and open this little book early. 'Wounded I sing' is Richard Harries' reflection on the poetry of George Herbert. Advent is sometimes thought to be at risk of being forgotten, or wiped from the journey to Christmas. I don't think this is intentional as such but may serve as a metaphor for how society has become

for us - frenetic, hurried, impatient, seemingly only concerned with the destination and irritated by the journey required to get there. Just look at the driving standards in our part of the country!

Advent reflects something much deeper than merely getting ready for Christmas in a given year; Advent is more fully understood as illustrating what our whole life's journey is or what it could be. Think of the characteristics I mentioned above. Where are you on your journey right now? Be honest. Is it joyful, expectant, peace-filled; is it frenetic, hurried, full or challenging? Perhaps this Advent and Christmas time you may wish to take time to journey with these themes and to allow yourself some self-care and self-kindness.

As I now go off on deployment at the end of December, and look forward to a new posting in April 2025, Advent with all its character traits feels very real to me. I too am making my own Advent journey. It has been a privilege – a joy and at times a challenge – to serve among you at RAF Northolt and Northwood Headquarters. Thank you to those I have journeyed with, for your friendship, your trust in me to serve you, and your challenge too where this has been necessary.



May God in His perfect love for you, bless you and your loved ones this Christmas and in the years ahead.

Padre Dave



12:43



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 **ROYAL
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**// Our break
gave us the
quality time
we needed as
a family.”**

- Al Dyer



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