



The City of London Squadron Association

Spring Newsletter 2025



Introduction

Welcome to The City of London Squadron Association Spring Newsletter. We hope you find the items of interest, and very much encourage all members to attend events where time and distance allows.

Events 2025

11 May 25	St Bartholomew The Great service commemorating VE Day
25 Jun 25	RAuxAF Foundation Service— National Memorial Arboretum
5 Jul 25	Centenary Lunch at RAF Club, Piccadilly, London
21 Sep 25	Battle of Britain Service at Westminster Abbey
17 Oct 25	600 Sqn Annual All Ranks Dinner, Butchers' Hall
7 Nov 25	Dutch Service of Remembrance, Mill Hill Cemetery
8 Nov 25	Lord Mayor's Parade, with 600 Sqn marching
9 Nov 25	Remembrance Service at St Paul's Cathedral
16 Nov 25	AJEX Remembrance Parade, Horse Guards

To register interest, apply for tickets where necessary, and for further information – please contact Peter Harris, Events Coordinator, via 600sqnassociation@gmail.com / 07591 924812.

Association Committee for 2025/26

Following this year's AGM on 12 April 2025, the following appointments were confirmed:

President	Jane Drew
Chair	Vicky Bannister
Secretary	Jonathan Byrne
Treasurer	Simon Woodhead
Membership Secretary	Angie Luddington
Webmaster	Kean Noon
City of London Liaison Offr	Chris Owen
600 Sqn Liaison Offr	Vicky Bannister
Welfare Officer	Lloyd Saxby
Welfare Officer	Jim Bole
Ordinary Members	Jo Everest, Gwyn Jones, Sean Murphy, Ian Walton, Alisa Rebbeck-Carter

We are also deeply grateful to the following for their continued support to the Association:

Patron	Air Cdre The Rt Hon The Viscount Trenchard of Wolfeton DL
Hon Life Vice Presidents	Wg Cdr (Retd) Terry Lynn, Sqn Ldr (Retd) Kevin O'Shaughnessy

Association Lunch in Celebration of RAuxAF 100

The RAF Club opened its doors on 22 June 2024 to nearly 30 members of the Association who came together in the President's Room for drinks, lunch and conversation in celebration of RAuxAF 100. We welcomed our Patron, The Viscount Trenchard, as Guest of Honour; along with OC 600 Squadron – Wg Cdr Steve Duddy. Conversation didn't wane from beginning to end, with much laughter and reminiscence. Speeches were brief yet informative, from The Viscount Trenchard, Wg Cdr Duddy and – especially – from 601 Sqn veteran Geoffrey Monahan, accompanied by his family.

The next lunch – this time celebrating 100 years since the formation of 600 Squadron itself – is on 5 July 2025 at the RAF Club. Please contact the Events Coordinator to put your name down to attend.



Memorial, Dedication Ceremony – Royal Auxiliary Air Force, National Memorial Arboretum

By WO (Ret'd) Malcolm Campbell

The RAuxAF Foundation holds an annual commemoration for the Reserve Force at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA), Alrewas, Staffordshire which is focused on the RAuxAF Memorial situated there. On 26 June 2024 the event commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Units were invited to nominate personnel to attend and during subsequent communications with the ProjO, sixteen sqns and units confirmed their attendance. In addition to these a RAuxAF Chaplain Rev (Sqn Ldr), John Harrison, conducted the Service, Sgt Matt Peck was the trumpeter from the RAuxAF Band who played the Last Post and the Commandant-General, AVM R Munro CBE TD VR DL RAuxAF, was the Guest of Honour. Representatives from six Squadron Associations were also in attendance together with family members of four of the six individuals for whom new memorial stones were dedicated during the Service. This day the departed veterans and those attending the ceremony in their honour were met with a blanket of intense sunshine to warm the occasion. At the apex of the ceremony the iconic golden eagle came to rest majestically on the monument overseeing the event flanked by the newly erected Centenary Plinth, which was dedicated with a reading by Gp Capt Richard Mighall (Ret'd).



The NMA, an idyllic and serene setting for the occasion, the event commenced with a call to attention by the Parade WO (WO Tony Watts of 605 Sqn), that initiated the march on of the Sovereign's Colour, paraded by members of 600 (CoL) Squadron. In a sombre but honourable mood Rev Harrison commenced the Service of Remembrance, followed by a speech and reading from the Commandant-General. The Act of Remembrance was then recited by Gp Capt Gary Bunkell (Retd), followed by the melodious bellow of the Last Post and Reveille injected with a poignant heartfelt 2 Minute Silence. Wreaths were then laid by Squadron and Association representatives, to include OC 600 (CoL) Squadron (Wg Cdr Steve Duddy), also followed by the dedication of the six Memorial Stones and the newly commissioned Centenary Plinth.



Culminating the ceremony with the marching off, of the Sovereign's Colour, all personnel present with great reverence and reflection took in the moment before engaging as individuals, squadrons remembering the gallant members of the RAuxAF, both past and present who had actively served with the wider Service. Amongst the stones was projected the name of a past squadron member, George Schroeder.

Most definitely, a day to remember, and also...“**We will remember them!**”



Battle of Britain Service - Westminster Abbey – 15 Sep 24

By FS Vicky Bannister

I was privileged to attend the Service to commemorate the 84th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, it is always extra poignant when the date of the service always held on the closest Sunday actually falls on the 15th as it did this year. I was seated in the nave which in some ways are the lesser seats in the service as you cannot see the altar or pulpit from there, however there are screens relaying the service so that you can see this. The nave does have one advantage though, you get to watch all the important people arrive and leave as they walk past. The Service was conducted by the Dean of Westminster and the Sqn's very own inaugural Padre, now the Venerable (Air Vice-Marshall) Giles Legood. Musicians were of course provided by RAF Music Services, and they were only enhanced by the wonderful Abbey Choir. The first reading was given the Sqn's (and Association's) Sgt Angie Luddington (who indeed did such a good job she was reference by the national press). WO Shobha Earl gave one of the many prayers and Padre Le-Good gave a memorable address.



It is an event that is always special, but especially as the congregation is varied between those currently serving and retired personnel. I travelled to the event with OC 602 Sqn, sat with two honorary Gp Capts from 601 Sqn, whilst behind me were the Sqn OC – Wg Cdr Duddy and his wife, Peter Harris and Janet Jarvis, and somewhere the Drew's - David and Jane. As 2024 was the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force we took centre stage – this was captured by the display of standards from Auxiliary Sqn's who have a Battle of Britain Battle Honour, it was great to see the Sqn's relatively new standard forming part of the occasion. It was a joy to sing the hymns with the choir, whilst it still feels odd to sing the RAF version of Eternal Father it still does instil a sense of belonging and pride. There are few Services where person such as myself can feel as important and welcome as the Prime Minister (who was present) but this is certainly one of them. I am already looking forward to the 85th Service.

Commemoration of the Centenary of the Founding of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force

By Sqn Ldr (Retd) Jane Drew

Sunday 6 Oct 24 saw Royal Auxiliary Air Force members and veterans gather at St Clement Danes for a service of commemoration in the presence of His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester. Led by the Chaplain in Chief and Archdeacon for the Royal Air Force, and ex-600 Squadron member, The Venerable Dr (Air Vice-Marshal) Giles Legood, the service was warmly received, with the RAuxAF Colour on display.

Following the service, those assembled went back to the RAF Club for a Reception and the unveiling of a stained-glass window by His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester in commemoration of the centenary of the RAuxAF. Attendees gathered in the 601 Squadron Room for speeches and the unveiling following which His Royal Highness met with various groups, including RAuxAF Foundation Trustees, supporters, and relatives of RAuxAF personnel who lost their lives on duty. The window, sponsored by the Beaverbrook Foundation, was designed by Air Specialist Class 1 (AS1) Chad Kenney, a serving Royal Air Force aviator.



Service of Remembrance – St Paul's Cathedral

By Sqn Ldr (Retd) Jane Drew

The final event of 2024 for the Association was the annual Service of Remembrance at St Paul's Cathedral on 10 Nov 24, which followed 600 Sqn's appearance at the Lord Mayor's Parade the previous day. The service is coordinated by the Reserve Forces & Cadets Association and we were delighted to have been invited to participate.

The Association Standard was ably carried by Sqn member Robin T'ung, accompanied by Lloyd Saxby and Alan Dillon. This meant an early start for the three of them in order to get in a short rehearsal in at St Paul's before the main event. The Lord Mayor arrived just before the service started at 1015, allowing for the 2-minute silence at 1100. From there members of the Association joined the marching detachment of veterans to move up to the London Troops Memorial at the Royal Exchange. Following the wreath laying by represented groups, the Parade marched past the Mansion House Balcony where the Lord Mayor took the salute, before all participants with tickets were invited into Mansion House for lunch.



Memories of Biggin Hill

By Geoff Monahan

I first became involved with RAF Biggin Hill when I joined 578 Squadron, Air Training Corps, in Beckenham, in June 1948, aged 15.

578 enjoyed a good relationship with Biggin Hill. We would often turn up there on the weekend and 'help out' various sections.

I enjoyed visiting the Link Trainer Room and got on well with the NCO in charge, Flight Sergeant Laing. The Link Trainer was a stylized mock-up of an aircraft, intended as an aid to blind flying instruction. The cockpit had a control column, rudder bar, instruments and the hood closed. You would be given instructions over headphones as to courses to fly etc. A stylus plotting your 'flight' on a map table followed your progress.

Today's simulators are often full-scale cockpit sections of the aircraft the student is learning to fly. It replicates the movement of the actual aircraft and, for strike aircraft; you can simulate rolls, loops, etc. A sizable percentage of students' courses is now spent on a simulator. They are expensive but airframes last longer!

Biggin Hill had three Squadrons at that time: 41 Squadron RAF, 600 (City of London) Squadron RAuxAF, and 615 Squadron (County of Surrey) RAuxAF. All were equipped with the last mark of Spitfire (Mk 24), and they looked splendid in their aluminium finish, with roundels, ID letters and Squadron badges.

We ATC attended for flights provided by the Air Experience Flight at nearby Kenley. Initially they used Avro Anson Mark 1s, with a glazed cabin and dorsal turret removed. Later they re-equipped with Avro 19s and 20s. A more civilianized Anson, with better seats and porthole windows. They were originally intended to assist in training observers, radio operators and navigators, so it was quite a handy aircraft and a much neater version than the original Anson Mk 1. We cadets had to report anything we saw of interest; three cows in a field would not do!

Our flying would sometimes be cancelled, eg if Sir Winston Churchill was returning from a trip abroad, usually in Lord Beaverbrook's Dakota. He would climb down from the plane and his waiting car would take him to his nearby home at Chartwell. He was Honorary Air Commodore of 615 Sqn.

600's Honorary Air Commodore was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. If she was visiting, then our flying was again curtailed. The squadron's Spitfires would be drawn up in echelon on the tarmac, gleaming, and with pilots standing to at attention by the nose. The pilots would be dressed in immaculate white flying suits, with service caps on.

After one such visit by The Queen Mother, I was cycling towards Keston, in my ATC uniform, and was waved into the kerb by two motorcycle police. As I stopped, puzzled, a limousine passed me. In the back was the Queen Mother, she leant forward as she passed and gave me a personal 'royal wave'.

We cadets also helped at the Battle of Britain airshow. We did marshalling and collected for the RAF Benevolent Fund. 615 always trumped these shows. Their Officer Commanding was Sqn Ldr Neville Duke who was a wartime ace and Chief Test Pilot for Hawker Aircraft. He would display Hawker's latest fighter prototype.

At the air shows you used to get some good display aircraft, and I remember one year the display squadron of Lightnings, (supersonic fighters), were there. They came in low along the runway, then stood on their tails with reheat, like being hammered into the ground; it really was quite something to see.

I believe the OC of that squadron then was Harold Bird-Wilson, later my Squadron Leader Flying when I was at North Weald. He later became an Air Vice Marshal.

It was at Biggin Hill I was selected to attend a volunteer Glider School there. I managed a couple of ground slides, a couple of airborne ground slides and also a flight in an AT 21 two-seater. My instructor was deaf and I had to hold his aid battery (12 volts) on my lap!

One time, a flight of Spitfires crossed our bow, we bounced and I learnt some swear words! The next weekend the school closed. Jets were to replace Spitfires, and Jets and Gliders did not mix! I would say neither do Spitfires and Gliders!

I left to do National Service and was eventually posted to RAF North Weald, in Essex. North Weald enjoyed a friendly rivalry with Biggin Hill, just across the River Thames. This came to a head when the Biggin Hill Meteor Mk 8 wing 'beat up' an outdoor pay parade at North Weald.

Our Station commander was Wing Commander Al Deere, he was Wing Commander at Biggin Hill in 1943 under Group Captain Sailor Malan, both Battle of Britain aces. He responded to the above incident by loading the station flight Airspeed Oxford with rubbish. It proceeded to Biggin Hill and deposited the rubbish on the runway. The Ministry then decreed that no more such happenings would be tolerated.

Unlike so many RAF stations, Biggin Hill is still a viable flying base. It's not crammed up with loads of houses. I believe married quarters were sold off privately and the officers' mess is being used for some other purpose. There is a business park but in the main the flying goes on, in a different form, but still goes on.

Returning to airshows, Biggin Hill's big advantage was the big dip at one end of the runway. The aircraft would come along low along the runway and disappear in the dip. It worked the other way round too, when suddenly aircraft would appear by popping up out of the dip. So that could be quite a sight. Biggin Hill is a very interesting and historic station, and the Museum Chapel adds to this interest.

I later served on 601 (County of London) Sqn RAuxAF. All Auxiliary Flying Squadrons were disbanded on 10 March 1957, and a few years ago some were reinstated as ground support squadrons. I am now affiliated to 600 Squadron RAuxAF Association, now based at Northolt, West London.

So, for me, a link with Biggin 'on the Bump' Churchill and the airport is back in place.

Geoff Monahan
SAC ret'd, ex 72 and 601 Squadrons

All Ranks Dinner – Victory Services Club, London

The traditional All Ranks dinner had been cancelled in October 2024 for various reasons, postponing the dining-out of key Sqn members, notably Wg Cdr Steve Duddy amongst them. So, on 16 Jan 25, the Victory Services Club played host to an enlarged gathering of Sqn and Association members. With a number of people being dined out, the speeches interspersed the courses, providing laughs and entertainment throughout. The HAC, Lord Trenchard, gave a memorable speech commending Wg Cdr Duddy's leadership of the Squadron over much change experienced by the Royal Air Force and, subsequently, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.



Closing Remarks



Finally, in this year of the 80th commemoration of VE Day, a final word of a former 601 Sqn member – solicitor and, later, a pilot with 601 Sqn – Sqn Ldr Roger Bushell. Sqn Ldr Bushell was captured and incarcerated in Stalag Luft III; and led what became The Great Escape. He escaped along with 75 others, but sadly was recaptured to his cruel demise.

Further details can be found on the RAuxAF Foundation website: <https://rauxaf.org/bushell-roger-601/>

On behalf of the Association we would like to thank Wg Cdr Duddy for his staunch support of the Association – and we look forward to him being part of the Association going forward. In the same spirit, we look forward to continuing our relationship with Wg Cdr Steve Fry, due to assume command of 600 Sqn on 1 May 2025. Our thanks too, to Ian Walton, who whilst remaining a member of the Association Committee, has stood down as its Treasurer after a number of years balancing the books – and we welcome Simon Woodhead as its new Treasurer.

If any Association member has news they would like shared, please email 600sqnassociation@gmail.com and we will do our best to do so in subsequent newsletters. In the meantime, we look forward to welcoming you to as many of our events, both formal and informal.



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