



# The Chairman's Annual Report 2016

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## The Finances

Our finances at the end of 2016 consisted of a bank balance of £64,501 and reserves of £61,263 however £24,602 of this money is restricted for expenditure on the RFA Memorial, Coull Memorial Award, RFA Summer Ball/BBQ, RFA Golf and Welfare. The balances have increased so significantly over the past few years as the RFA Ball and Golf have transferred their entire financial holdings to the RFAA whilst ring fencing amounts for their immediate use; in 2016 the golf section transferred £15,205 and is now our primary contributor.

In 2016 income, at £34,505, was £1412 lower than 2015. Apart from the Golf section notable changes were the reduced income from membership (-£1060), the increased income from the Reunion (+£1370) and the very generous donations from the Plymouth (£1,300), London (£260) and Solent (£500) branches. Income from the RFA Benevolent Fund was £4,500 and with the reducing RFA Fleet this source of funding cannot be guaranteed for the future.

In year expenditure rose to £25,069, £4732 above that paid in 2015. £3860 of this was spent on refurbishing the RFA Falklands memorial at Marchwood; restoring the stonework and providing flagpoles and Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram memorial benches. An additional £1564 was spent on UK wide ceremonial expenses, representing the RFA and RFAA with flagbearers and marchers at the increasing WW1 and WW2 events being held.

Whilst the capital has increased over the past year declining interest rates continue to be very poor earning just £259 in 2016.

We continue to be limited by our constitution and the Charities Commission, as to where we can deposit funds. This restricts options but better rates of return are continually sought. Fuller accounts information is available on the Charity Commission website (England and Wales) <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk> and the Office for the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) <http://www.oscr.org.uk/>.

## The Constitution

No changes to our Constitution were made in 2016 and the Board of Trustees take great care to ensure the Association meets our constitutional requirements as required.

## The Membership

Membership is currently running at 671 members in total, of which 206 are Life Members and 10 are Honorary Members. Life membership is awarded by COMRFA to retiring staff whilst staff taking redundancy packages are given just their first year's membership. It is the Association's position that all staff leaving the Service should only have their first year sponsored by the RFA. As life membership deprives us of future funding and more importantly we want members to value the Association and to want to pay their annual subscription which continues at just £15.

## The Trustees

Trustees stand for a period of 6 years but may serve for a maximum of 9 years although they must be re-elected on a year-to-year basis. Please note the changes of Chair/Deputy/Welfare posts.

Mr Frank Andrews, Chairman, Northwest. (Stood down 31 October 2016 after 9 years)

Captain Pat Thompson, Deputy Chairman, S&N. (Stood down as Deputy Chairman at 2016 AGM after 8 years as Chairman and Deputy Chairman but continues as a trustee until 2017 AGM).

Captain Robin Lock, Corporate Fundraiser, Southwest. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2017) but will continue as Corporate Fund Raiser until May 2018.

Mr Peter Fry, Deputy Chairman/Treasurer, Solent. (Completes 9 years at AGM 2020)

Captain Ray Bennett, Chairman (from 01 Nov 2016), Solent. (Completes 9 years at AGM 2021)

Captain (E) Robert Settle, Welfare, Northwest. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2020)

Mr Ian Thompson, Northwest . (Completes 6 years at AGM 2021)

Mr Patrick Molloy, S&N (Completes 6 years at AGM 2021)

Ex-Officio until 2107 AGM

Mr Stan McCabe, London & SE

Mr Keith Escott, Plymouth & SW

In addition, the following are Ex Officio Trustee(s) appointed by COMRFA

Captain (LS) Martin Jones RFA

The Association is always looking for potential candidates to undertake the duties of a trustee. Without trustees the Charity cannot function and members must be prepared to support their

Association. Anyone who would like to volunteer their services and who is interested in becoming a trustee please contact the Chairman. We look for members from across the board, across the specialisations, and across the country, as it is crucial that the Board is as representative as it is practically possible to make it.

## **The Branches**

### **Plymouth and South West.**

Plymouth and South West (Chair John Halford) hold six meetings a year and additionally three lunches plus a Christmas lunch. They staff a stand for Armed Forces Day as well as providing representatives for The Lord Mayor's Choosing. They provide Standards for funerals, civic functions and the Remembrance Service at the Plymouth Pavilions. Usually 25 members attend their bi-monthly meetings.

### **Solent**

The Solent branch (Chair Stuart Pearce) have 7/8 functions a year 4 Committee meetings plus an AGM, and presently have 152 members on their books. The branch hosted the 2016 AGM and a splendid Reunion Dinner at the Southampton Grand Harbour Hotel.

### **London and the South East**

The London branch (Chair Stan McCabe) had a good year with multiple visits and trips around the London area. They also were hosted by the Malta RFA Association for four days, which included a joint visit to RFA Mounts Bay. The London Branch seamanship trophy was awarded to the best Sea Cadet in the London District

### **Midlands**

Midlands Branch (Chair John Sail) continues to struggle with a very small membership which is spread over a wide geographical area. They need more support to become a viable branch.

### **Scottish and Newcastle**

The branch (Joint-Chair Gill Forth & Andrew Armstrong) held lunch events throughout the region and usually take the form of a sit down Sunday Lunch. They have more members, but again are spread fairly widely. Therefore, it is commendable that they are so active.

### **North West**

An embryonic and small cadre who have recently been formed and are actively chaired by Ian Thompson. They are already planning the AGM and Reunion Dinner for 2018, which will be held in Liverpool.

It is important that the work of all Branch Chairmen and their committees are fully recognised and I would like to offer my sincere thanks for the volume of work that is readily undertaken and for the time they so freely give.

## Associated Organisations

The Association has links to the RFA Association of Malta and John Caruana of the London Branch provides liaison.

We have an affiliation with Seychelles, Mr Guy Govinden is leader and there are currently 12 Affiliates and a very substantial number of retired RFA Seychellois seamen.

There is a very unofficial “branch” (The Far Flung) in Thailand with John Littlechild and David Palin providing the necessary liaison.

We also have members in: Falkland Islands, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, Croatia, Singapore, Oman, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Bahamas and Jersey.

## The Management

The Association continues to occupy rooms 212 & 214 in Semaphore Tower, Portsmouth Naval Base. Our offices house the entire collection of RFA artefacts, pictures, battle honours belonging to ships no longer in service and a substantial collection of literature. Access to the Naval Base is becoming increasingly difficult and possible options will be investigated.

The Association continues to have trustees from all areas of UK and our management has become more diverse and widespread. The trustees continue to meet approximately 3 times a year, but all the day-to-day work continues to be done in private homes. The Chairman is assisted by Dawn Reay who is our part-time Membership Secretary and Bookkeeper. Pat Thompson after standing down as Trustee will continue to run the website/Force 4 and manages ceremonial duties. Trustee Peter Fry is our Treasurer/Deputy Chairman and Trustee Robin Lock handles Corporate Fundraising, whilst Trustee Bob Settle is in charge of Welfare.

## The Website ([www.rfa-association.org.uk](http://www.rfa-association.org.uk))

The website continues to provide news to the membership and had been further enhanced by the late David Gerard, former Plymouth Branch webmaster, who added a photo gallery archive. Peter Lannin now runs the Plymouth website.

Each branch has its own area on the website to publish whatever is necessary to keep the members informed. Similarly, each branch has its own area in the HQ photo gallery.

In addition to the website we now operate a Facebook and Twitter page, members should just search the Facebook and Twitter sites to find our entries.

## **The Members Handbook**

The Members' Handbook and Yearbook. The 2016/2017 Handbook was distributed in February 2016. The 2017/2018 Handbook is similarly expected to be distributed in February 2017.

Despite the fact that we get the Handbook published and printed free of charge, it still costs a substantial amount of money to distribute it. This year it cost in the region of £988, and this figure is likely to rise, as it does every year. We try to mitigate the expense by coupling the mailing with the Reunion and AGM mailings.

## **Gunline**

Gunline has now effectively ceased publication, although no official word to that effect has been received from COMRFA. We have therefore produced our own hard copy of "Force 4" which we post once a year to all UK members and email any other editions produced during the year.

Whatever means of news communications we use, none of the content is possible unless all the branches, and members, contribute articles and photos. Without your input we cannot produce Year Book and Force 4. This is an important part of our remit, so please help us to help you.

## **The RFAA Emergency Welfare Fund.**

We were able to make several welfare payments during the year and we continued to use our own set of guidelines when applications are received. We also involve other agencies SSAFA, RBL, etc. where appropriate. The ability to offer emergency support to both members and non-members, former or serving personnel is a big step forward as it means the Association now has a framework to assess applications. This enables us to meet every single objective in our constitution. A small sub group of trustees assess applications and make recommendations to the full board.

## **The RFA National Memorial / Graves.**

Keeping the memorial alive and relevant is not easy. We are considering holding some sort of service/remembrance event at the National Memorial Arboretum in 2018.

Two RFA seafarer graves in Bermuda have been cleaned and tidied by members of WAVE KNIGHT's ship's company. The grave of a seaman in Limassol, Cyprus lacks a marker and this has been a long time ambition to resolve. After various attempts, we have finally been able to engage the assistance of the Base Chaplain, RAF AKROTIRI and he is doing his best to help. The Association is extremely grateful to all those who assist us to do this important work.

## Annual Meeting with the Commodore.

The Formal Annual meeting with the Commodore took place on 19/20<sup>th</sup> October 2016, with the outgoing and incoming Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen calling on Commodore Duncan Lamb on successive days.

## The Coull Memorial Award

In 2016, the Coull Memorial Award was presented to 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer(E) Martin Peet, who accepted the award at our Annual Reunion Dinner in May. The 2017 award will be announced at the AGM and will be presented by the Association at the RFA Awards Ceremony in September.

## Looking Ahead

The Association is achieving its aims, but must not become complacent. Future challenges include improvements to governance, the increasing burden to ensure data protection, pressure selling and the right to contact legislation is observed. Possible closer ties with other charities to provide support in these areas may be scoped. The membership will be consulted any future major links with other charities. We look forward to welcoming the TIDE class and hope to be involved the dedication ceremonies that take place. A TIDE First Day Cover issue is being worked on to help raise funds for the Association.

In summary, the Association is meeting its commitments, but the next few years hold major challenges from increasing legislation for charities, the reliance on a part time administrator who has other commitments, future funding and an ever-increasing burden on the volunteer Trustees.



Captain Ray Bennett RFA Retd  
Chairman  
RFA Association.

20<sup>th</sup> April 2017