

RAF Football Association - E-Bulletin

RAF FA Veterans Fund Raising Efforts 2017/18 Season and the RAF Centenary Year

The RAF FA Veterans decided that in the 2017/18 season and in this the RAF's Centenary year, we would raise funds for a RAF associated charity and because of the involvement of former RAF FA Chairman Mike Neville and his link with the RAF Benevolent Fund, the appropriate charity was chosen.

We put pressure on ourselves almost immediately by stating that we would try to raise £10,000 within the 2017/18 season, a decision that at one point seemed a long way off, however with the additional help and assistance from other certain individuals, who will become apparent later, allowed us to fulfil our pledge.

How would we raise funds? A very telling question, however, it started with a Golden Goal Competition pre-season for the members only, which raised £545, followed up with First Goal Scored on match days, raffles, the selling of RAF Benevolent Fund memorabilia, which included, pens, T-shirts, Teddies, vintage whisky, there were many raffles from singing lessons and body massages to 3 litre bottles of Vodka/Brandy and crates of Prosecco.



It all started on 26th Aug 17 in Scotland our first venue at Forres Mechanics FC, against the Highland League Select XI and an ideal location due to the large ex RAF contingency from both RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Kinloss who had settled in the area, which proved to be extremely fruitful, as an ex RAF airman/footballer who will remain anonymous donated £500 to the cause. This was added to £434.04, giving us £934.04.

Of note and a follow-on from the Scotland fixture was an open day in Oswestry on Sunday 3rd Sep 17 in Darrell Kerr's amazing Cambrian House Emporium, Darrell ably supported by his wife Ali, Jimmy Sheehan and Jane Bee, Alison and Tony Reeves raised a further £393.43 to the cause. Darrell would continue to raise funds for the RAF BF throughout the season.

Our next fixture at St George's Park (SGP) now our Home venue was a very good fundraiser, however as the season progressed we realised that SGP was to have its limitations from a fund-raising point of view. Nevertheless, the fixture on 24th Sep 17 against England FA Vets saw us raise a total of £1021.51, which was due to another anonymous donation of £500 through John Jones and the support of One Touch Football Soccer School organised through Mark Bryan.

On 14th Oct 17 at a RAF Hullavington Balloon Operations Sqn reunion, (all ex MTDs) the sum of £220.05 was raised, however and importantly on the same night an ex airman Dougie Gowans said to me, "Tony, I try to do a charity event each year, could I try to raise money towards your £10k for the RAF BF". I didn't hesitate, I said yes and then linked Dougie up with the POCs that he would need, the rest we will come onto later.



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£262.22 was raised at the away fixture at Chobham on the 22nd Oct 17 in the fixture against Manor FC Vets, this was raised mainly from the sale of cakes made by the fair hands of several wives and girlfriends of the RAF Vets.



Our next fixture on 11th Nov 17 against Wales FA Vets in Caerphilly, it was a case of looking at the bigger picture, there was nothing we could have done about the weather, however on an extremely wet and very cold late afternoon/early evening with a 5pm kick off, competing with Wales Vs South Africa in the millennium Stadium and live on TV, the turnout was exactly as you would expect...Zero!!!! Nevertheless £116 was raised plus the Wales FA Vets also kindly donated their match fees to the RAF BF so a total £326.00 was raised.

Of Note Glyn Stockton raised £110 from his friends and colleagues of RAF Leeming prior to the expected game against the Northern Premier League Select XI which should have taken place at Oldham Academy Sports Centre on 10th Dec 17, unfortunately the fixture was cancelled due to the difficult weather conditions at the time.

The next fixture against scheduled for 21st Jan 18 against Shifnal Vets was also cancelled because of the snow, both cancelled fixtures certainly slowed down our progress towards our £10k target and with our "Celebrity Fixture" looking like it was also going to be cancelled things were looking ominous and our £10k pledge was now in doubt.

However, bubbling away quietly in the background was Douglas Gowans who in October asked if he could help raise funds towards our target, he had come up with the novel idea of cycling the Coast to Coast, nothing novel in that but for a guy who stands 6'5" tall to complete it on a Raleigh Chopper, now that's novel!!!!

February saw the first "Double Header" weekend at our home venue SGP, we played fixtures on the 3rd and 4th Feb 18, against North Wales over 35s and Liverpool FC Vets respectively. A total of £750.81 was raised over the weekend, I stated that SGP had its limitations when it came to fund raising, although the venue is second to none, the location doesn't offer itself up to supporters other than the family and friends of the RAF Vets and the opposition teams, so we are limited to what we can achieve.



In mid-February we were offered two autographed footballs from Crystal Palace and Cardiff City, to be raffled or auctioned off, well unfortunately timing is of the essence and we had already played our fixture in South Wales, we offered both balls to as wide an audience that we possibly could, then later in March we also were offered a Swansea City autographed football. Unfortunately, nobody whatsoever wanted either of the Welsh teams' footballs, but Dougie Coull was good enough to bid £100 for the Crystal Palace football, so thank you Dougie for your very kind donation.

A late rearranged fixture also at SGP against Shifnal Vets on 25th Feb 18 saw us raise £280.04.

A further £262.20 was raised at the IS fixture Vs the Army on 14th Mar 18 at Lilleshall.

With the "Celebrity Fixture" well and truly cancelled we only had one final fixture to raise almost £4k in order for us to reach our £10k target, a tall order in fact impossible, nevertheless, we were heartened when Victoria Beattie said that she would try to raise funds by running in the Great Peace Run (half marathon), her target on her JustGiving page was £500, and Dougie Gowans who now had a Raleigh Chopper loaned/sponsored to him by Raleigh had also set up his JustGiving page with a target set at £625, well who knows!!!



Royal Wootton Bassett, with an RAF Lyneham MT reunion the night before and our final fixture of the season on Sunday 29th April 18 it was a place and venue where really, we should do very well. The day got off with a very early start as there were several games being played before our fixture and it would have been wrong not to set our stall up early and make the most of every person who walked through the gates of the New Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, it proved to be an extremely long and, at times, very cold day but the exertions of many came to fruition.

Overall a total of £949.89 was raised from both the MT reunion and the events on the day, less expenditures of £109 saw £840.89 paid into our JustGiving platform, this singularly was the largest amount of money raised at any one singular event. We had collectively raised so far over the season £6781.79, we still had Victoria's half marathon to consider and Dougie's Coast to Coast bike ride on a Raleigh Chopper. Time would tell!!!



On the 6th May 18 Victoria Beattie, who set a target of £500, ran the Great Peace Run (half marathon) and surpassed her target of £500, she raised £610 towards the RAF Vets £10k target, very well-done Vicki, not taking into account the Gift Aid that had not been considered at this point, but the RAF Vets total was now £7391.79.

Douglas Gowans ex MTD serving from 1986 to 1990, now 48 years of age, took it upon himself to try to raise funds on behalf of the RAF Vets for the RAF BF and set himself a target of £625 by cycling from Coast to Coast, i.e.: Whitehaven to Tynemouth, approximately 140 miles over 3 days on a Raleigh Chopper.

He wrote to Raleigh and they agreed to loan/sponsor him the said Chopper, he went out and got sponsorship from Mr Dave Glossop of Hello Dave Autocare and Repair, Dave not only sponsored Dougie but cycled with him on Day 1 from Whitehaven to Penrith on a Raleigh Burner BMX Bike, single speed, no gears!!!!



He got further sponsorship from FINS Design and Print, who designed his signs, which were strategically placed on the Raleigh Chopper, so people who were passing could see the RAF BF logo and see where the monies being raised was going to.

Colin Richardson another Ex MTD and an attendee at the reunion the previous October, not only cycled with Dougie and myself on the final day, but also wrote to the Provincial Grand Charity of Derbyshire, where Colin and Dougie both live and asked if Dougie's incredible exploits could be considered for a

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donation, they agreed and kindly donated £500 towards Dougie’s and the RAF FA Vets chosen charity, so a thank you to Colin for being instrumental in raising the additional funds.

To date, Dougie has raised £3386 and the money is still coming in, therefore the total raised has surpassed the original £10k mark, we have now raised £10,677.79 and counting!!!



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The RAF FA Presentation Evening on 9th May 2018 saw the presentation of a cheque for £5,000 to AVM (Retd) David Murray, Controller of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund (RAFBF). The cheque is the first of two that are to be presented to the RAFBF in support of our Charity of the Year. AM (Retd) Sir Chris Coville presented the cheque to David watched on by ACM Sir Stephen Hillier and the Ambassador, Geoff Hancocks together with the Veterans who attended the function.

Finally, this doesn't happen single-handedly, there are lots of people to thank, many have been mentioned in the text above, however, there are many others, John Jones, Alison Reeves, Dave Peel, Sarah Taylor, Darrell Kerr, Fiona Aitkenhead, Steve Findler, Francesca Rose Beattie, Steve Tindle, Yvonne Salkeld, Del Stewart, Barbara Edwards and Laura Day as well as the remaining, wives and girlfriends of the RAF FA Veterans Family but also and very importantly to our President Sir Chris Coville, the Management team and all of the players, because without them we don't even have a starting point.

The RAFFA Veterans staff and players would like to thank Tony Reeves and his team for their tireless efforts in helping us to achieve the target. Well done all...Fantastic effort!

Photographs – Various unless stated



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