

The Chairman's Annual Report 2012



The Finances

The interest on the CCLA account has declined in percentage terms but the capital sum has increased. In 2012 bank interest earned us £525.37. See figures below:

2007 - £1423
2008 - £3000
2009 - £200
2010 - £300
2011 - £422
2012 - £525

It is also worth looking at is the income and expenditure over the last 7 years. This information is readily available on the Charity Commission website (England and Wales) <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk> and the Office for the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) www.oscr.org.uk/search-charity-register/charity-extract/?charitynumber=sc039054 It shows a continued fall in income up to 2010 and then the following increases include substantial receipts towards the memorial. The corresponding expenses include the cost of moving our HQ and the part payment for the memorial.

Year	Income	Spending
2005	£38042	£35880
2006	£36144	£35152
2007	£51264	£27190
2008	£28767	£27364
2009	£27121	£23822
2010	£28778	£25807
2011	£38653	£25081
2012	£61461	£40683

Membership subscriptions are down for a second year in succession. These were down by some £1400 in 2011 and by a further £600 in 2012. This is a worrying development.

A gift aid claim is currently being submitted and we should have these figures shortly.

Marketing

Website Sales

The website shop must be developed but is problematic. Items that have our logo on them are expensive and often have minimum order levels coupled to the small the order from the supplier the more expensive they become. Pat has identified a number of sources of income from nautical book suppliers and they will be appearing on the website in due course.

Christmas Cards.

RFA Association Christmas Cards have been quite popular among the membership but not, I am afraid to say, popular enough. We have an increasing number of leftover cards accumulating in HQ which could be sold but to produce a new card at a price that would make a profit would make them prohibitively expensive to members; to buy less from the supplier would ramp up the price and is self defeating. So reluctantly and unless we are instructed otherwise by the Trustees/Members we are not pursuing this avenue.

The Membership

Membership is currently running at around 660. This comprises 9 Honorary Members, 203 Life Members, 426 Full members and the remainder are either widows or unclassified members. Life membership is still awarded by COMRFA to retiring staff but staff taking redundancy packages are given just their first year membership. It is the Association's position that all staff leaving the Service should only have their first year sponsored by RFA. As life membership deprives us of future funds 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.

(The stand down dates are when the trustee must stand down constitutionally)

Chief Officer (SE) Frank Andrews, Chairman, Preston. (Stands down Nov 2013)

Captain Pat Thompson, Deputy Chairman, Barnard Castle. (Standing down AGM 2014)

Captain Alan Roach, Belfast. (Stands down AGM 2013)

CPO (Carp) George Mason, Crombie. (Stands down AGM 2016)

Mrs Pam Axworthy, Welfare, Newark. (Stands down AGM 2015)

Captain Robin Lock, Corporate Fundraiser, Exeter. (Stands down AGM 2017)

Captain Ray Bennett, Solent. (Stands down AGM 2018)

Mr Peter Fry, Treasurer, Solent. (Stands down AGM 2017)

Also the following are Ex Officio Trustees appointed by COMRFA

Captain (LS) Rupert Drew

Chief Officer (LS) David Gatenby

PO (E) Ian Boyle.

Trustees Richard Fernley and Chris Locke have both resigned during the year as they are currently working abroad on extended tours of duty. We appreciate their services and look forward to seeing them again when they return to UK. The Association is always looking for potential candidates to undertake the duties of a trustee. Without trustees the Charity cannot function correctly so members must be prepared to support their Association and they should contact the Chairman if they feel they could volunteer their services. 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.

A very active branch with by John Halford as Chairman.

Solent

A very active branch with Brian Waters as Chairman.

London and the South East

Chairman, Shane Redmond assisted by Captain David Cooper (Branch Secretary), manage this branch.

Midlands

John Sail is Chairman.

Scottish and Newcastle

Andy Armstrong and Gill Forth now jointly run this branch

North West

The Chairmanship of this small branch is changing to Ian Thompson from AGM 2013.

It is important that the work of all Branch Chairmen is fully recognised and I would like to offer my thanks for this volume of work that is readily undertaken and for time so freely given. We should also remember and thank recently retired John Roddis for his excellent work for the Scottish and Newcastle Branch and also for James Wyatt in London.

Associated Organisations

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

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

The Management

In March the Association physically moved from Bellingham, Northumberland to rooms 212 & 214 in Semaphore Tower, Portsmouth Dockyard. This was followed by a “Sort-out Day” when a number of local Solent members helped us to sort, clean, repair and hang pictures. We are particularly grateful to help offered by John Finch, Hugh O’Donnell and Ian Maclean. Shortly afterwards we were able to hold our first trustee meeting in our new HQ and were pleased to be able to show Commodore Bill Walworth our new premises

The Association continues to have trustees from all areas of UK and our management has become a more diverse and widespread task. Modern IT has enabled this to be done successfully although a few of us would prefer to spend less time on our computers. The trustees continue to meet approximately 4 times a year but all the day to day work is effectively done in private homes. The Chairman is assisted by Dawn Reay who is our Membership Secretary and Bookkeeper. The Deputy Chairman runs the new website and manages ceremonial duties. Trustee Peter Fry is now Treasurer. Robin Lock handles Corporate Fundraising and Pam Axworthy takes the lead on Welfare issues.

The Website (www.rfa-association.org.uk)

The new website continues to provide news to the membership and has been further enhanced with a new improved photo gallery. In cooperation with Dave Gerard, the Plymouth Branch webmaster, a new gallery has been added to display photographs from the RFAA Archive. A substantial amount of the Archive is now on display and more will be added in the near future.

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

The E-Shop is in operation and has earned the Association over £1000 since its inception. The shopping facility is very basic and a more comprehensive e-shop is sat hidden in the wings and should be ready to go into operation soon.

Also waiting to be finally configured and published onto the system is a member’s Bulletin Board that is fully flexible for members’ discussions.

The Members Handbook

The Members' Handbook and Yearbook. The 2012/2013 Yearbook was distributed to all members in March 2012 and the 2013/2014 Yearbook was edited in November/ December and distributed in March 2013. It is hoped to produce a new Handbook in 2014.

The cost to distribute the Year/handbook, currently in the region of £1000, is set to rise significantly with envisaged increases in postal charges.

Gunline

Gunline is our third line of communication to our members, the chain of command being:-

- The Website, live and up to date.
- Direct mailing, all embracing but very expensive (around £600 for a letter, £1000 for the Year/Hand Book).
- Gunline, Free to us, other than typesetting charges (£100) but out with our control.

Recently, and due to the savage cuts imposed on the Defence Budget, COMRFA has been obliged, as a cost saving, to reduce the number of Gunline issues from 4 to 3 per year. You will not have failed to notice that there was no Christmas 2012 issue of Gunline. We view this with extreme concern and are actively considering our options. We will report to the membership, via the website, the results of our enquiries.

The RFA National Memorial.

In October the new RFA National Memorial was dedicated in the presence of our patron HRH The Earl of Wessex, Commodore Bill Walworth, Vice Admiral Alan Richards, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Colonel Michael Beatty and a wide cross section of serving and retired RFA personnel. The event was supported by the RM Band who supplied stirring music throughout. This was a wonderful and exceptional day for both RFA and RFA Association.

Annual Meeting with the Commodore.

The Formal Annual meeting with the Commodore did not take place this year as many informal meetings allowed us to keep up to date with our parent organisation. It is though intended to ensure a formal meeting is scheduled for 2013/14.

The Association has requested a short list of candidates who may qualify for the James Coull Memorial Award and until this is forthcoming the Association is unable to take the award forward. The presentation normally takes place during our annual reunion dinner.

The Future

The Trustees have made good progress during the year. Not only have we had the benefit of the presence of HRH The Earl of Wessex at both the excellent reunion dinner in Southampton and the memorial dedication in Staffordshire but we have also successfully moved our office from one end of the country to the other and shared out many of the trustee duties which means we are no longer carrying all our eggs in one basket.

I have enjoyed working as a Trustee, Deputy Chairman and now Chairman but it has become apparent that the 6 year limit imposed by our constitution is too short a period given the time it takes to hand over duties and the number of volunteers that are coming forward. Consequently it is planned to amend our Constitution and extend the maximum serving period from 6 to 9 years for all trustees. For these extra 3 years trustees will have to be voted in by the membership as is currently the case. It is planned to bring this constitutional amendment to the 2013 AGM.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Andrews', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Frank Andrews
Chairman
The RFA Association.

23rd April 2013