



Friends of the New Forest Airfields

Registered charity 1063648

Patron: **The Lady Montagu of Beaulieu**

<http://fonfasite.wordpress.com/>

Location references for the Memorial are:

Map OS reference **SZ 208 987** Post Code **BH23 8EB**

Museum & Education Centre Post Code: **BH23 8HE**

FONFA Members' Newsletter – March 2020

Dear FONFA Member,

Firstly, I would like to apologise for this year's first Newsletter being a month later than usual. This is because recent events, regarding our Heritage Centre and the Charity, have been changing almost daily and information given may have been out of date by the time Members read it.

The news in the past week has escalated the Covid-19 virus crisis effects to levels unseen previously. The Government has now decided that all the "Over 70s" should stay at home and 'self isolate' for up to four months, except for essential food shopping. Putting aside the adverse effects on their physical fitness and mental health that would inevitably result for many, the impact of such a policy on the Voluntary sector, if made compulsory for several months, would be catastrophic.

Many small Registered Charity organisations are staffed by 'Over 70s' volunteers, providing every community support from food banks and disabled assistance to educational and transport needs.

The voluntary sector will take the greatest proportional hit, as many charities like ours are staffed by unpaid 'Over 70s' volunteers, who are now in the 'vulnerable group', quite apart from the fact that they may have pre-existing illnesses, which pre-dispose them to a more severe illness, if they catch the Covid-19 virus.

FONFA relies mainly on 'Over 70s' volunteer retirees to function and the donations from our Heritage Centre visitors are the financial life blood of the organisation. The most serious effect, regarding our Registered Charity and many other small Charities in a similar situation, who rely on footfall to create income, is that our income for this year may be almost nil. Furthermore, if Charity volunteers stop work for four months, they may never return. If we shut down the Heritage Centre for four or more summer months, we will be unable to meet our overhead costs and may have to close down permanently.

The main stream media is today reporting that "Social distancing would be needed for 'most of (at least half of) the year' to stop intensive care units being overwhelmed, according to the government's scientific advisers". For our Charity, this is a bleak prospect indeed. Furthermore, it seems intuitively perverse that while the Government is prepared to support multi-billion pound businesses, by paying 80% of employee salaries, the small Charity sector has received nothing yet, to support our survival.

Therefore, I have written to my local Member of Parliament, Dr Julian Lewis, who has shown a personal interest in our Charity over several years, describing our situation and asking what the Government will do to support us and ensure that we survive, as a successful viable Charity. **I would ask EVERY SINGLE FONFA MEMBER to please do the same.**

While our website may be busy, with increasing interest year on year, this does not generate income and our utility and overhead bills continue unabated. This situation will take FONFA close to bankruptcy, if it continues for the whole year.

Nevertheless, we held the biennial Fire Warden Training session last month and were pleased to see that eighteen Members attended, increasing the numbers available to support our Open Days. Thanks are due to all those who



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attended. It is ironic therefore that this year may see very few Open Days being held, in the coming months, due to Covid-19.

However, in spite of the difficulties, our first Heritage Centre Open Day was held on Sunday March 1st, as planned, using all appropriate hand sanitisation procedures, although footfall was very disappointing. The sensationalist national press and TV media reporting had apparently scared away the majority of those who might have visited. Given the evolving Government restrictions, we decided to postpone the inaugural Charles McKenzie Memorial Lecture, due on 20th March, to be given by Colin van Geffen, entitled "Calshot – The Flying Years". It remains to be seen whether and when we will be able to hold further Open Days or events, which will depend on future Government advice.

Grateful thanks are due to those who helped with the annual 'spring cleaning' and 'floor sealing' on March 8th and later, which has put the Centre in good condition for the year, come what may. On the positive side, we have received splendid Trip Advisor reviews, with achieving "No.1 attraction (of three) in Bransgore" status. Our visitors have commented publicly, over the past year, "The interactive tables are world class", "Enthusiastic welcome" "Beautifully presented", "A treasure trove", "Incredibly accurate dioramas", "Excellent historical resource", "Wonderful treasure", "This place is a MUST".

Looking forward, the Board Members will be working on an audio descriptive system, which visitors will be able to hand hold, while walking around the Centre. This should be available during the summer.

Construction of further models is planned, using some of the model kits that have been donated, over time, and which are stored in the upstairs rooms at the Centre. They will be made up to represent aircraft that flew from the Forest.

In addition, we are working on improving the security and storage capacity of the Centre, more of which I expect to be able to report in the next edition of the Newsletter.

If any members have ideas for income generation and are willing to spend time to work on them, please let the Board know, via fonfa2010@gmail.com.

As I reported in the April 2019 Newsletter, we urgently need a Volunteer Member to take over as Minutes Secretary.

Finally, several newer Members' e-mails are 'bouncing back', either because their Inboxes are full, or because their ISP (server) returns the message. If you know of any member, who is not receiving the Newsletter, please let us know their reliable e-mail address and we will adjust our records accordingly.

Henry Goodall, Chair of Trustees.

March 2020