



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 – November 2020

Dear FONFA Member,

Welcome to the third FONFA Newsletter of 2020. This is following on from the March and May Newsletters, to keep you up to date. In these very abnormal times, we have some bad news, but this is outweighed by the Good News that we can both survive and prosper next year; but more of that later. While many small Charities will not survive through 2021, our Trustees and Board Members are confident that FONFA will improve and grow.

As you are aware, the Covid-19 pandemic reduced attendance at our two March Open Days and, since then, we took the decision to close the Heritage Centre to visitors, initially for the summer months and, when it became obvious that the safety of our visitors and volunteers could not be guaranteed, for the whole year. We did manage to train thirteen Fire Wardens in February, whose authorisation lasts until February 2022 and so, hopefully, we will not need to run another session until then.

Facebook members are up, at approximately 170, and the website has attracted approximately half of the 2019 traffic, (above 2016 levels but not reaching more recent figures). We kept posting new articles until July, after which it became clear that both visits and views were staying well below last year's figures. Interestingly, the numbers have stayed around the same, since then, at around half of last year's summer month figures. If you don't already know it, you may like to read the story of the Berlin Airlift 'Candy Bomber' who reached his 100th Birthday last month, posted recently.

We had given six face to face PowerPoint presentations before the initial 'Lockdown' and have migrated to 'Zoom' since, with five more, one of which was a 'hybrid', with 42 audience members in the hall and 17 at home. This was made possible by the expertise and dedication of Philip Benstead, one of our Board Members, who runs free 'Zoom' training sessions weekly, for those who want to set up their own sessions in their community. Without his generosity, these sessions would not have been possible. While they have all been successful and well received, we have no bookings 'in the pipeline' for the winter months and none for next year, which is the first time that we have been in such a situation, since we started the presentations, in April 2016. If you know of any community group, school or other organisation which you think may like to hear and see one, please let me know, via the e-mail address fonfa2010@gmail.com and direct them to the list, on the website <https://fonfasite.wordpress.com/>, under the top strapline heading 'Presentations and Talks'.

After two months of extreme anxiety, for the Trustee Board, and after a string of unsuccessful attempts to source and obtain national and local grant funding to see us through the Covid-19 crisis, which initially threatened the future existence of FONFA, we set up an Emergency Donation Fund through the on-line website, "GiveAsYouLive". For those of you still unfamiliar with this organisation and who have not accessed their website, they are a portal to many on-line and mainstream shopping organisations, including eBay, Argos and high street retailers, who have an on-line presence. You can choose from a number of retailers and travel companies, as your 'favourites', and every time that you make a purchase from them, or buy a holiday (less likely at present!), a small percentage of every purchase goes to FONFA, eventually, from both the vendor and Gift Aid.



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The Emergency Appeal, launched in the Spring and still open, has so far accrued almost £2,800, plus some additional Gift Aid due, which is a superb achievement.

The generosity of our members and the many others who have given both small and large amounts, to keep us afloat, when we did not know whether the Charity would survive, has been overwhelming.

As reported in May, Martin Baily and Sue Hounsell, our landlords, have offered and kindly installed a shipping container at the rear of the Heritage Centre museum building, in which we will be able to store additional chairs and also items for eventual sale in the museum. Once we are able to open up again for Open Days, we will be able to use this facility and see how it will best contribute to our activities in the future.

In addition, Martin has organised a quote for installing roller doors, to improve the security of the museum building, which we hope will be in place before Christmas. This has been facilitated by a large new donation, covering over half the cost, which Martin and Sue have kindly obtained. In addition, they have donated the rent received from a lady whose horse is being kept in the field next to the Centre.

Lynda Asquith has decided to step down from the Board, for personal reasons, but will continue to support Open Days next year. We are greatly indebted to her husband, Joe, who has built a most impressive new reception desk, for receiving visitors into the Centre, photos of which are reproduced below. This will project a very professional image to visitors, as well as protecting our volunteers and will be a positive enhancement when we re-open the Centre next year. So, in spite of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic crisis, there is much to look forward to, for 2021.



After more than two decades on the Trustee Board, John Brooks, our Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary, and former Chairman, has decided to retire, stepping down from the Board, last month. John was one of the original founder members of FONFA and has been involved in every aspect of FONFA, since the 1990s. Lynn Corbin will also be stepping down at this time. They have both given an immense amount of time and effort to contribute to FONFA, over the years, and our organisation would not have survived throughout this time without their dedication and efforts. Lynn will continue to support our café, when we re-open to visitors, next year. John has written a piece, describing his time with FONFA, over two decades, which is reproduced below:



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John and Lynn with Dr Julian Lewis, New Forest East MP and aviation author, at the New Forest Volunteer Fair.

My 2 Decades of FONFA Membership by John Brooks

“When I retired in January 2001, I arranged to move down to Barton on Sea close to my childhood friend from 1942, who became my best man when I married in 1963.

“I settled into my flat on Marine Drive and then wanted something to entertain my mind, my friends from Kettering came down in March to visit and we went out touring the old airfields and chanced upon the build up of the memorial at Holmsley and saw the notice where Bernard could be contacted at Merryfield Park so we arranged to meet him in his office where he invited me to join up with him.

“So I joined FONFA in March 2002 and I was approached by Bernard Baily to assist in catalogueing a batch of aircraft spares donated by a company based in Ringwood. These were primarily located in the old stores building next to the fire station. They were mainly in the realm of Hawker Hunter type parts and we progressively started to sell items such as anti-vibration mountings for equipment racks such as radios and radar sets.

“Work was continuing on the memorial and railings were required to surround the area, so I purchased a supply of metal to construct further needed railings as Bernard had already obtained some railings made for a sloping site so a jig was built for adapting these into 6ft runs. I went with Lynn with our Horticultural Club in June to the Floriad in Holland but was taken ill and ended up in the old Lymington Hospital upon our return and was released just at the time Ray Dean and his team were assembling the railings. This was just before dedication day on August 16th 2002. We held a reception in the old airman’s mess, after the dedication service.

“In 2003, Ann Baily stood down as the Treasurer (Bernard had already stood down as Chairman with Les White taking over) and I agreed to take over. At this time all the trustees were very willing to support our activities.



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“Annual rededication services, which Les used to organise, Ann and Bernard used to lay on a reception in their garden afterwards for the visitors and the Air Cadets with Lynn helping Ann with the refreshments and, over the years, small fund raising events took place, we actually went with a trailer full of some of the aircraft parts to Old Sarum, with Ann (Baily) flying in to join us.

“In 2006 Les stood down as Chairman and I agreed to take over, assuming responsibility to organise the annual service with the help of Lucy Eden as our parade marshal. Lucy used to invite all the VIPs to come and we used to book a venue to entertain them.

“For a few years we had an annual History Fair held in the old airman’s mess hall with the mural of a B-17 on the end wall. Refreshments served from the old kitchen by Lynn and our 2 friends, hot dogs and pies warmed on a microwave. This led to the construction of a reference centre/museum in the far end of our office. We used to hold regular meetings monthly and used to have refreshments served by Lynn and 2 of our friends Peter and Sylvia.

Charles (McKenzie) stood down as membership secretary and I took on this role to create a database.

“When Ian (Potts) joined in 2010 he took over as membership secretary until he moved in 2016, and I picked up the pieces again.

“In 2014 we were given notice to vacate the building by November, which we had occupied since 1997 as Merryfield Park had been sold for housing but Bernard arranged for the old standby generator building was to be retained for our use. Ian and I, with help, packed away all the pictures and modelled aircraft with all the records away to be stored in Canford Magna storage units which we rented at £120 per month. During this period we went ‘on the road’, renting community halls where available, to carry on making public aware. The furthest we ventured was to Tangmere museum with our old 3 metre gazebo which sadly didn’t survive the windy weather. One of furthest also was Hythe community centre and the most expensive was to Ringwood centre. Then we were given permission to move it all back to the old standby generator building that we now occupy. Sadly this only lasted a few weeks as Bernard arranged for the building to be converted; all our material was stored by Bernard on his Blue Gates site in Black Lane. Sadly some of the artifacts got damaged and weather beaten, but it saved us paying the rent and we didn’t move back finally until 2015, ready to start fitting it out, making display stands and fixing the donated prints onto wooden rails installed by a funded work force. Thus this is where you will know we are.”

In the meantime, stay safe and healthy; enjoy and tell your friends about our organisation and our website. If you have a contribution for the website that you think would be appreciated by a wider audience, please let us know. If any members have any ideas for income generation and are willing to spend time to work on them, please let the Board know, via fonfa2010@gmail.com.

Henry Goodall, Chair of Trustees. October 2020