

ROYAL AIR FORCE HALTON APPRENTICES' ASSOCIATION (RAFHAA) HERITAGE POLICY STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. Members of the RAFHAA have expressed concern that up to now no formal statement of members' wishes regarding heritage plans has been produced. The closure of RAF Halton has been extended to 2025 and planning involving an earlier date has been placed on hold. Covid 19 restrictions and other variables are hampering the ability to regenerate planning. The RAFHAA Council has only recently emerged from an amorphous state to a rejuvenated organisation respecting membership opinion. All these developments present RAFHAA with a golden opportunity to almost start afresh with heritage planning. The time is right to produce a forward-thinking planning document. A successful heritage programme is in the public interest besides being of paramount importance to those who served within the RAF Halton Apprenticeship Scheme.

HISTORY

2. Following the formation of the RAF in 1918, Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, then Chief of the Air Staff, had the vision of training young men in aircraft engineering apprenticeships to support the development of air power in the RAF. This initiative, known as the RAF Aircraft Apprenticeship Scheme, introduced an interesting dynamic of social mobility presenting, as it did, an opportunity to better oneself. Over the years, approximately 40,000 young men were trained at RAF Halton and trainees became affectionately known as Trenchard's Brats or Halton Brats. The RAF Halton Aircraft Apprentices' Association (later RAFHAA) was formed in September 1983 to meet the need for a point of focus for all those who went through the rigorous 3-year training courses. In 1993, aircraft engineering training was transferred away from RAF Halton, but Phase One basic airman training has continued as part of the Halton heritage. It is interesting to note that all the current trades in the RAF today are modern apprenticeships and all have been graded 'outstanding' by OFSTED. From the beginning, boys trained under Trenchard's Scheme became the backbone of RAF aircraft engineering support achieving standards that were envied worldwide. Over 40,000 boys were trained as Apprentices, and more than 12,000 were commissioned with 125 achieving Air Rank. Eighteen have been Knighted, and well over 1,000 others have been honoured at various levels of state. Others forged extraordinarily successful careers in industry or became important public figures in a huge variety of fields.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

3. In reflecting on the principles already established and telescoping forward to actions yet to be taken, it becomes apparent that a policy statement on heritage must be a living document. It is hoped this document will be the first of a number of important stepping-stones towards defining and managing a suitable heritage for both RAF Halton

and Trenchard's boys. It is envisaged that this document should be amended regularly by inclusion of sequential and independent updates forming a living policy document that reflects planning as it develops.

4. The scope of this document should encompass planning discussions already held to setting dateline targets for the short and longer term. The position of key stakeholders must be recorded, and changes of direction noted. Assets belonging to RAFHAA and those on loan must be established together with indicative valuations, assessments of the tonnage and cubic capacity for transportation purposes, space required to re-house and any essential special facilities required. Indicative estimates of movement effort should be defined together with hurdles to overcome insofar as packing and transportation and associated costs are concerned. Options for relocation of today's assets need to be explored. The key features of what would become the RAFHAA Heritage Policy Scheme (RAFAA HPS) need to be established and agreed by the RAFHAA membership. In parallel to these activities, a financial plan to raise funds must be developed establishing a monetary target and identifying sources of income like the National Lottery, bequests, and other public and commercial donations. It will be imperative that the RAFHAA engages in a meaningful manner with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, the Station Executive of RAF Halton, the Buckinghamshire Council and the Halton Village Parish Council.

RAFHAA ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

5. In May 2020, the RAFHAA Council decided to seek membership agreement at the 2020 AGM to develop an organisation and a revised Constitution for approval by the Charities Commission based on the Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) scheme. This new style of constitution provides charities with the opportunity to own property and employ staff amongst other things. The important thing is that by taking this step, the RAFHAA is already preparing the ground for a heritage programme. The concept of delivering this new Constitution was approved with a significant majority by the membership at the 2020 AGM and a newly developed Constitution will be circulated to Members with the Spring 2021 issue of the Haltonian. It is intended that this new Constitution will be ratified by the members at the 2021 AGM.

CHAMPIONS

6. One of the first and most important matters when setting out on a new cultural and heritage project is to secure the support of not just the members but appropriate champions. In this respect, RAFHAA could call on its Patron Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Armitage, Vice-Patrons, Air Marshal Cliff Spink and Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller to support this project and The Viscount Trenchard has previously indicated support and is Patron of Halton Heritage. On top of this, a Royal Patron would add powerful patronage. The Chairman RAFHAA is currently examining these possibilities.

TIME-LINES

7. The present date of closure of RAF Halton is stated to be 2025. Historically, closure dates slip by one or two years, but nothing is certain. It is interesting to note that SNCO training has been transferred from Cranwell to Halton in recent months.

8. Regular updates of this Heritage Policy Statement, following review, should be made by Chairman and Deputy Chairman RAFHAA every 4 months, providing best official information regarding closure timelines.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

9. The key stakeholders listed below should be encouraged to participate in and support the Heritage aspirations described in this document. The distribution list must be reviewed regularly.

- Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
- RAF Halton Station Commander
- OC Operations and Plans Wing, RAF Halton
- RAF Halton Station Archives
- Chairman RAFHAA
- Deputy Chairman RAFHAA
- Heritage Officer RAFHAA
- Heritage Officer RAF (based at Air Command, High Wycombe)
- Curator – Trenchard Museum
- The Buckinghamshire Council
- Halton Village Parish Council

PRESENT DAY ASSETS

10. Real Estate. The Trenchard Museum (TM) is currently located in Buildings 23 and 29 at Henderson/Groves Barracks as an official encroachment. Tenure is guaranteed until at least 2022, the date initially announced for the closing down of RAF Halton. However, there is a strong probability that it could remain in situ until 2025, the current scheduled closing date. The TM complex consists of the Trenchard Museum, the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre (JMFHC) and the Station Archives.

11. Trenchard Museum. The present Museum artefacts are listed at Annex A. Progressively, these items will be included in a table indicating approximate weight, dimensions, special display needs, facility requirements and any unusual aspects concerning packing and transportation.

12. Archives. The present archives are listed at Annex B. Overall weight and dimensions are shown and storage requirements for re-location purposes are indicated.

13. St George's Church. The Church is an un-consecrated military place of worship under public ownership. The stained-glass windows are of unique historical importance and were designed and supplied by generations of Apprentices trained at Halton. Their installation was the inspiration of the RAF Halton C of E Padre in the 1990s and their removal and relocation is regarded as totally impractical by the Master of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass besides being very costly. Adjacent to the Church grounds and facing Kermode Hall there is a significant sculpture unveiled by Her Majesty The Queen in 1997 known as the Tribute that remains a place

of great significance to all ex-Apprentices and their families. Families frequently scatter the ashes of deceased Apprentices nearby the Tribute. The designer and erector of the Tribute consider that relocation would be impractical because of the high risk of damage. Furthermore, buried beneath the Tribute is a time capsule recording many elements of the Apprentice Heritage.

14. The Trenches. Vintage WW1 training trenches located to the west of the main workshops are of unique historical importance and have been restored. They should continue to be preserved and maintained at public expense if possible. Our understanding is that this asset is already listed in the station Heritage plan.

15. An outline concept. Based on current thinking it is hoped that the whole St George's Church 'footprint' of land can be transferred to the ownership of the RAFHAA. This will enable some local small-scale development of the building to be undertaken and, within that, create space not only for the existing RAFHAA assets, the JMFHC assets and the various operational flight simulators but also provide community resources for Halton Village including a coffee shop and rooms for local organisations to rent such as the Air Cadets and RAFA for example. Creating such a multi-use resource, which will be open to the public to generate ongoing income, will be appealing to potential funders. To take the next steps it will be imperative to develop a robust and appropriately costed business plan and it is this work that will be commenced in Spring 2021.

NEW MEMORIAL

16. As an element of the development plan when RAF Halton closes, the RAFHAA has a vision of creating a lasting memorial to the Station and the thousands of Apprentices and other RAF personnel from all over the world who trained there. It is hoped that with funds donated by RAFHAA, a public appeal and support from local authorities, a suitably sized bronze statue of an RAF Apprentice in No 1 Uniform could be designed, created, and installed in a prominent position. The most obvious position would be in the centre of a new roundabout proposed at Main Point. This, however, would be subject to planning consent and, no doubt will probably require the involvement of the Highways Agency.

17. Preliminary work on producing suitable designs and obtaining outline costs will commence when Covid 19 restrictions are lifted. A document seeking village, town and county authorities support will be written by Chairman RAFHAA once more detail is available.

LOCAL NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ATTRACTION

18. The Museum, St George's Church stained glass windows, the Tribute and the Trenches have the potential to become attractions of local, national, and international interest. Once the various operational flight simulators are added to this package the appeal to the general public will be increased. At Annex C is a list of countries that sent young men for training as Apprentices at RAF Halton and these countries should also be approached. Commercial sponsorship of the Heritage programme should be investigated. In the first instance, local companies should be considered, and county authorities should be approached for recommendations. In any event, national or

international sponsorship should not be ruled out, such is the world-wide appeal of what could be developed. There is no doubt that such a prestigious attraction would bring significant benefits to the local populace in terms of increased leisure industry business opportunities and the associated employment.

NATIONAL LOTTERY

19. The Heritage programme, particularly relocation of the Museum and design and construction of a new Memorial to the Trenchard Apprenticeship Scheme is a cause worthy of a National Lottery grant. The RAFHAA Heritage team should prepare and apply for a grant once a robust business plan has been created.

HERITAGE TEAM

20. The existing RAFHAA Heritage team is a small core of enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers under the guidance of Group Captain (ret'd) Min Larkin. While the team should remain volunteers, it needs to be strengthened, with retired experienced fund raisers, marketing, and local businessmen. An advertising campaign for ex-Apprentices with these skills will be launched shortly.

IMPORTANT PLANNING DECISIONS

21. Public Funds. OC Ops and Plans Wing RAF Halton has asked for RAFHAA representation on his Closure Planning Committee and this has been agreed. An important matter to be decided is the extent to which (if any) public funds/logistic support are available for the movement of the museum and the archives.

22. Real Estate. The Trenchard Museum (TM) is currently located in Buildings 23 and 29 at Henderson/Groves Barracks as an official encroachment. Its security of tenure in these buildings is guaranteed for the time being and there is a strong probability that it could remain in situ until 2025, the current scheduled closing date. The TM complex consists of the Museum, the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre, and the Station Archives.

23. Estate Apportionment. At the initial meeting of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and RAF Halton, the RAFHAA Heritage team advised that they were anxious to preserve the heritage of RAF Halton, and to that end were keen to acquire St George's Church and its surrounding land to use as a Halton Heritage Centre. In 2018, the Heritage team concluded that a better way forward was to join forces with Halton Village Parish Council (HVPC), which also had an interest in preserving local heritage, to argue the case for the acquisition of St Georges Church to use as a community Centre by HVPC. The Church could be renamed The Halton Heritage Centre and be used to house some local historical items, some contents of the TM but mainly items in the JMFHC. The Archives could also be housed in there. It is unlikely that HVPC could take the lead in this due to their limited funds availability. On the other hand, the RAFHAA have funds presently available and the offer of significant other donations that could secure the guidance of professional museum designers. The Council is committed to a digital facility that would display the training of 20th century Apprentices in a 21st century manner. They seem likely to be the lead organisation to rent or purchase the building

and to provide volunteers for its existing day-to-day activity and the whole project would be managed by a paid curator. Other paid staff such as cleaners would be employed via suitable out-sourced entity who would also manage and maintain the building. The Centre, possibly named St George's Halton Heritage Centre, could be run on a not-for-profit basis and would be financed by charging entry fees, fund raising and other events which could include organising reunions for ex-Apprentices and holding social functions in a museum environment. The Heritage team could use the Centre to continue STEM sessions for local school children under the auspices of the Royal Aeronautical Society's international Cool Aeronautics programme.

24. Importantly, in June 2018, the DIO produced a first draft of their recommendations for the site disposal entitled "A vision for development at RAF Halton". This document included statements such as:

- "Provision of land, buildings and car parking for a new local centre including community hall"
- "Following the closure of the RAF Halton base, there is a clear need to redevelop the site. RAF Halton is a unique location and as a brownfield site within the green belt there needs to be a sensitive approach to redevelopment".
- "There is a unique opportunity to provide, in one sustainable location, new homes, education and local retail within a well-established and defined landscape setting."
- "Create a viable, sustainable and vibrant on-term future for RAF Halton that recognises its unique features and heritage."
- "BUILDING 326: ST GEORGE'S CHURCH - Whilst not a designated heritage asset, St George's Church contains stained glass windows which were designed by ex-Apprentices based at Halton. There is potential to integrate this church with a community facility as part of the new neighbourhood"
- "A heritage-led strategy will demonstrate how the heritage potential of the site can be unlocked as part of redevelopment plans"
- "Enhance existing facilities on site such as St George's Church, to provide further Community facilities"
- "Ensure, through a heritage-led strategy, that the memory of the site former use is maintained, and the local community can benefit from the unlocked potential of the site."

Given these statements, it seems that we are in a good position to press for the retention and development of a broader Heritage facility that encompasses our heritage and that of the Rothschild family, Halton Village and Buckinghamshire as a county.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

25. The RAFHAA participated in the public consultation phase of the DIO's work and their submission is included as an Appendix to this document.

SUMMARY

26. This document sets out the present status and ambitions of the RAFHAA Heritage team so that when DIO planning resumes all stakeholders maybe briefed accordingly. The actions being undertaken by RAFHAA to obtain membership support for a heritage programme including but not restricted to an expansion of St George's Church to meet all needs, a new statue, modifying the RAFHAA Constitution, raising funds, and obtaining patronage are important stepping-stones to achieving a worthy memorial to RAF Halton and Trenchard's Brats.

Prepared on behalf of the RAFHAA Council

By Frank Denton-Powell and Chas Challinger

22ndFebruary 2021

Annexes:

- A. Museum Artefacts (to be added post-Covid lockdown).
- B. Archives (to be added post-Covid lockdown).
- C. List of Countries who sent boys to Halton for Apprentice Training. TBD

Appendix: RAF Halton Public Consultation RAFHAA Input

DATED FEB 2021

From: deputychairman@rafhaa.co.uk<deputychairman@rafhaa.co.uk>
Sent: 18 December 2020 11:40
To: DIO-DEOPublicConsultation@mod.gov.uk
Cc: Heritage Member heritage@rafhaa.co.uk; Chairman RAFHAA
chairman@rafhaa.co.uk
Subject: RAF Halton Public Consultation

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to you in connection with the Public Consultation on the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's vision for RAF Halton. My detailed comments are below but can you please add me, representing the RAFHAA, to the circulation list for updates as they arise and especially the proposed timetable for the process to move forwards. I am sure you will see from the below that we are extremely keen to participate and do our utmost to preserve the rich Heritage of RAF Halton and the RAF Apprentice Scheme. I am greatly encouraged by the positive comments contained in the DIO vision regarding these very important matters.

Trenchard's vision in creating the RAF Apprentice Scheme which not only provided the necessary technical backbone to the newly created RAF but also presented opportunities for social mobility for almost 40,000 young men, many of whom had highly successful careers in the RAF and beyond that in the civilian world.

Here are my aims:

1. To create a Flight Heritage Centre for the people of Buckinghamshire and beyond incorporating broader community uses by following the objectives detailed below.
2. St George's Church (Building 326) – acquisition or prime tenant status for the RAFHAA so that they can undertake protection of the church especially the stained-glass windows, the Tribute (in front of Kermode Hall) and the First World War training trenches (listed status).
3. Co-operation with the DIO (Defence Infrastructure Organisation of the Ministry of Defence) the Station Commander, Wing Commander Operations and other senior officers of RAF Halton to bring about sympathetic transfer of Heritage assets to RAFHAA on closure of RAF Halton. Please see especially pages 121, 122 and 147 of the Consultation Document regarding how an expanded St George's Church would sit within the proposed 'green corridors' referred to in the DIO document entitled 'A Vision for Development at RAF Halton' dated June 2018.
4. To work with Halton Village Parish Council towards implementing the expansion of the St George's Church area as detailed in the points below.
5. Funding sympathetic development to the rear of the existing Church (subject to planning permission) to create suitable areas for the transfer of a revitalised

Trenchard Museum, the RAFHAA archive and the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre (currently in Buildings 23 and 29).

6. To open this extended area of resource to the general public with a view to generating paying visitors, general use and income. Visitor numbers to the Trenchard Museum and St George's Church run typically at a figure well in excess of 11,000 per annum with no promotional activity beyond the RAF family.
7. Within the proposed extended area to create a dedicated Flight Simulator room to attract visitors and generate additional income. The flight simulators are currently in place in the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre.
8. Within the proposed extended areas to create suitable meeting rooms to enable youth groups to undertake meetings and training, such as the Air Training Corp (currently located on the RAF Halton airfield) and the Scouts for example and to generate additional income.
9. To expand the Cool Aeronautics programme currently operated by the Trenchard Museum for the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) for 9-11 year old students. This will help address the extended waiting list this highly successful programme has generated so that the Government requirement to increase interest in STEM subjects is being addressed in Buckinghamshire. Currently this programme helps educate up to 1,000 children per year and is expected to generate a steady income from RAeS.
10. To engage with the Royal Air Force Association (currently located on the RAF Halton Airfield) to explore the opportunities for collaboration.
11. To create a memorabilia shop and café within the extended museum area to generate income.
12. To create a small private area of worship with piano etc, so that those who are wishing to use it can have access. This is especially relevant to those who have travelled to Halton to scatter ashes at the Tribute.
13. The areas to be added will also be available for hire for events such as choir practice, concerts, cocktail parties and Halton Apprentice Reunions to name a few.
14. To create local employment for museum staff in order to be open for longer hours than are currently possible.
15. Please use this link to access our contribution supporting the Bucks Cultural project "Bucks in 100 items"-
<https://buckinghamshireculture.wordpress.com/bucks-in-100-objects/halton-apprentice-scheme/>

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