# RAF veterans aged over 100 urge remembrance and stronger defence funding



In a charming room filled with the aroma of freshly brewed tea and the comforting sight of scones, a group of esteemed RAF veterans gathered recently to share heartfelt memories of their time in the Second World War. Among them was George Dunn, now 102, who had bravely completed 44 operational missions over Nazi Germany in Halifax bombers and Mosquitos. This poignant meeting, organised by the RAF Benevolent Fund, served as a reminder of the sacrifices made by these members of a generation that has profoundly shaped modern Britain.

As the veterans shared laughs, the contrast between their once youthful selves and their now frail bodies was conspicuous. George, with a gleam in his eye, recounted the exhilaration of victory following Germany's surrender, echoing the jubilant atmosphere in Trafalgar Square 80 years ago. He remarked, “The atmosphere was terrific... After six years of conflict, to be able to go out into the open without worrying if there were any jerries about—it was a really lovely day and we were very lucky to have got through our tours.” These gatherings evoke nostalgia, yet they also present an urgent call to remember past lessons as contemporary conflicts unfold in Europe.

Colin Bell, who celebrated his 104th birthday this year, also contributed to the lively discussions. A fellow Mosquito pilot, Colin has not only committed himself to preserving the memories of the war but has actively engaged in fundraising for veterans’ charities. His remarkable fundraising efforts included a daring 17-storey abseil down the Royal London Hospital, aimed at both raising awareness and financial support for the RAF Benevolent Fund and other worthwhile organisations. Colin’s tenacity and spirit culminated in a Guinness World Record— the oldest person to abseil down a building. He raised over £5,000 from the event, embodying a relentless dedication to helping fellow veterans.

In the midst of their memories, the veterans also addressed the pressing issue of national security. Colin articulated a concern that resonates as much today as it did during the 1930s, asserting that the lessons from the past must be heeded to avert future conflicts. "If you haven’t got [security], you have nothing," he emphasised, while calling for increased defence spending to 5%. His steadfast conviction reflects a growing urgency; as tensions rise globally, the need to prepare ensures that younger generations are spared the harrowing experiences of their predecessors.

Another poignant facet of these interactions is the sense of gratitude expressed between the veterans and those who have come to honour their stories. While participants feel privileged to engage with such history, the veterans are often more inclined to express thanks, embodying the humility that characterises their generation. George, for example, recounted his early days of combat, advising anxious new aircrew members to “take a clean pair of underpants with you.” This gentle humour belies the deep-seated fears and stark realities faced in the crucible of war.

The contributions of both George Dunn and Colin Bell extend beyond their military service. Their ongoing support for the RAF Benevolent Fund exemplifies the collective spirit of service that continues to flourish in the UK. This fund has been a stalwart source of support for RAF members and their families for over a century, ensuring that the legacy of those who fought for freedom is both remembered and honoured.

As the audience reflected on the significant milestones of VE Day, the importance of these remembrances resonates more powerfully than ever. In a time when historical lessons risk being overlooked, the voices of veterans like Dunn and Bell serve as critical reminders of resilience, sacrifice, and the vital necessity of remembrance in shaping a safer future.

**Reference Map**

1. Paragraph 1: 1
2. Paragraph 2: 1, 4
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7. Paragraph 7: 1, 4, 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2052766/raf-ve-day-veterans-war> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-stories/news/ww2-mosquito-bomber-pilot-completes-17-storey-abseil-fund-break-guinness-world-record> - In September 2023, 102-year-old former Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell, a World War II Mosquito bomber pilot, completed a 17-storey abseil down the Royal London Hospital to raise funds for the RAF Benevolent Fund, London’s Air Ambulance, and The Royal College of Nursing Foundation. This event aimed to break the Guinness World Record for the oldest person to abseil. Colin Bell, who flew 50 bombing raids over Germany during the war, including 13 over Berlin, has been actively involved in fundraising for veterans' charities. The abseil raised over £5,000 for London's Air Ambulance service. ([rafbf.org](https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-stories/news/ww2-mosquito-bomber-pilot-completes-17-storey-abseil-fund-break-guinness-world-record?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-stories/fundraising-stories/ww2-mosquito-bomber-pilot-102-takes-extraordinary-challenge-fund> - In August 2023, 102-year-old former Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell, a World War II Mosquito bomber pilot, embarked on a fundraising challenge to support the RAF Benevolent Fund, London’s Air Ambulance, and The Royal College of Nursing Foundation. The challenge included a sponsored walk visiting significant sites from his wartime service and culminated in a 17-storey abseil down the Royal London Hospital. Colin Bell, who flew 50 bombing raids over Germany during the war, including 13 over Berlin, has been actively involved in fundraising for veterans' charities. The abseil raised over £5,000 for London's Air Ambulance service. ([rafbf.org](https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-stories/fundraising-stories/ww2-mosquito-bomber-pilot-102-takes-extraordinary-challenge-fund?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-stories/news/bomber-command-veteran-george-dunn-be-honoured-his-majesty-king-charles-iii-after-turning-100> - In September 2022, RAF veteran George Dunn, who celebrated his 100th birthday, was honored with a special recognition award from His Majesty King Charles III. George Dunn, who flew 44 operations during the Second World War, including 30 in Halifax bombers and 14 in Mosquitos bombing Berlin, has been actively involved in fundraising for the RAF Benevolent Fund. He has raised tens of thousands of pounds through book signings and appearances at air shows, contributing significantly to the welfare of those in need. ([rafbf.org](https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-stories/news/bomber-command-veteran-george-dunn-be-honoured-his-majesty-king-charles-iii-after-turning-100?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/east-sussex-world-war-ii-veteran-shares-memories-of-his-service-in-the-raf-3770148> - In July 2022, 99-year-old RAF veteran George Dunn shared poignant memories of his service during World War II. He discussed the after-effects of his service, his reflections on the importance of remembrance, and his support for the RAF Benevolent Fund. George Dunn, who flew 44 operations during the Second World War, including 30 in Halifax bombers and 14 in Mosquitos bombing Berlin, has been actively involved in fundraising for the RAF Benevolent Fund. He has raised tens of thousands of pounds through book signings and appearances at air shows. ([sussexexpress.co.uk](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/east-sussex-world-war-ii-veteran-shares-memories-of-his-service-in-the-raf-3770148?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.rafclub.org.uk/flt-lt-colin-bell-dfc-ae-celebrates-his-102nd-birthday-club> - In March 2023, Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell DFC AE celebrated his 102nd birthday at the RAF Club. Colin Bell, born in 1921, joined the Royal Air Force towards the end of 1940. His flying training was carried out in the USA prior to their entry into the War in December 1941. He flew 50 bombing raids over Germany, including 13 over Berlin, and experienced much action and survived many close scrapes, all with wit and good humor. The celebration at the RAF Club was attended by members and friends, honoring his remarkable service and longevity. ([rafclub.org.uk](https://www.rafclub.org.uk/flt-lt-colin-bell-dfc-ae-celebrates-his-102nd-birthday-club?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.memorialflightclub.com/blog/spitfire-mj755-and-veteran-pilot-george-dunn/> - In January 2020, RAF pilot George Dunn, now 97 years old, witnessed the first flight of Spitfire MJ755 after its restoration. George Dunn, who flew 44 operations during the Second World War, including 30 in Halifax bombers and 14 in Mosquitos bombing Berlin, was present at Biggin Hill to see the Spitfire take to the air again. After the war, George was posted to a Maintenance Unit at Ismailia, Egypt, where he delivered Spitfire MJ755 to Greece in 1947. Remarkably, he met the aircraft again 72 years later. ([memorialflightclub.com](https://www.memorialflightclub.com/blog/spitfire-mj755-and-veteran-pilot-george-dunn/?utm_source=openai))