

European Autumn Conference Brussels 2-4 November 2018

(Conference & Gala Dinner)

Between September and November 2018 the committee busied itself by making preparations for one of the association's major annual events. The Belgian Branch was to host the European Autumn Conference; under the stewardship of the Branch Honorary President, Air Commodore John Mass and the Branch Chairman Michel de Norman et d'Audenhove, Committee members coordinated the various work stands that would ensure all our guests would receive a warm welcome.

The Bedford Hotel & Conference Centre was selected as the venue for the event; boasting numerous conference rooms and being ideally situated to local tourist hot spots like the Grand-Place, the Bedford Hotel offered all of the amenities necessary to make our guests feel comfortable.



Delegates that attended the conference were informed of key policy changes and the aspirations of the association for the future. Newly appointed Welfare Officers and Treasures were provided training on topics like governance, data protection and financial training in a development workshop.



With the serious business out of the way, the festivities could begin in the wonderfully decorated ballroom (floral arrangements courtesy of Mrs Penny Maas, Mme Brigitte Horton and Mme Ghislaine Walkden). Guests met for some champagne and canapés before being called through to the ballroom. Led smartly by cadets from 350 Sqn ATC, the association

standards were marched into the ballroom and hung above the diners, once settled the Branch Honorary President extended a warm welcome to all of the guests before inviting Wg Cdr Howard-Vyse to deliver grace.

During the meal, Lt Cdr Foreman (RN) entertained guests with a historical review of flight and the accomplishments of the RAF. With hunger quelled, the VIPs delivered their speeches, touching briefly upon the significance of the Royal Air Forces centenary year and the cessation of hostilities at the end of the First World War. During his speech, the European Area President AM Phillip Sturley CB MBE FRAeS informed guests that he would be stepping down as the Area President and would be replaced by AM Sir Graham Stacey KBE CB.



European Area Presidential Certificates were issued to delegates that had shown exemplary service and had gone above and beyond to raise funds for the Wings Appeal. Mrs Beryl Dennent-Stannard (Sud-Ouest France), Mrs Sue McNaught (North Costa Blanca) and Mr Regis Pizot (Swiss branch) were amongst the deserving recipients. Additional funds were raised for the charity towards the end of the evening, when the cadets of 350 Sqn ATC distributed raffle tickets ahead of the tombola; prizes were generously donated by association members attending the gala event.



From my personal perspective, the gala dinner was a huge success, the culmination of months of hard work and preparation. It was immensely satisfying to see everybody enjoy the evening, it was also an opportunity to solidify ties with the other branches and establish new and lasting friendships with our colleagues from across Europe.

Written by Sgt Richard Jacobs

Belgian Branch Webmaster