

BELGIAN BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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RAFA Belgian Branch
Siège Social
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NEWSLETTER NO 105

JAN – FEB – MAR 2012

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THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION
Maison des Ailes – Rue Montoyer 1-B 33-1040 Brussels.
 Branch No: 0645
Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
Honorary Patron: H.E. Jonathan Brenton British Ambassador
Branch Honorary Co-Presidents:
 Air Marshal Sir Christopher Harper KBE MA FCMI RAF
 Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E Hearn DFC*
Branch Hon Vice-President: Air Cdre S Corbett MBE MA BA RAF

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN	R Whittingham (Gp Capt Ret'd)
VICE CHAIRMAN	J Hill (Gp Capt Ret'd)
HONORARY CHAPLAIN	Father W Peeters
SECRETARY	Flt Lt H French
TREASURER	D Trembaczowski-Ryder (Wg Cdr Ret'd)
HONORARY WELFARE OFFICER (HWO)	Mrs G Walkden
ASSISTANT HWO	Mrs D Whittingham
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Mrs B Horton
NEWSLETTER OFFICER	VACANT

From: Group Captain R J Whittingham FRAeS, Royal Air Force (Retired)

Brussels

12th February 2012

Dear Friends,

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

This Newsletter comes to you a little early in the quarterly cycle to ensure that you receive in good time the full details in support of the Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) which will be held on 15 March 2012. So, as I write, we remain firmly in the grip of Winter: this makes Father Peeters's thoughts in this edition particularly appropriate! It also means that our Welfare Team of Ghislaine and Deborah are kept busy with calls and visits to make sure that our members remain well cared for and content. The Team are always busy and I would like to express special thanks for their outstanding efforts which are at the very heart of Branch activity. I would also ask you all to let us know if you are aware of any members who would benefit from our welfare or comradeship support: timely involvement can be very effective in preventing problems later. There will be a full report on Welfare activities at the AGM.

The AGM is a key Branch event that we are obliged to hold to meet RAFA Rules and Belgian Charity legislation. It is also the way in which the membership at large provides guidance to the Committee for the conduct of the Branch. So, please attend if you can: if not, I would be very happy to receive your written comments which I will reflect at the meeting. Our Treasurer has done a super job in maintaining and presenting the accounts as included in this Newsletter. You will see that the Committee has very effectively followed the AGM 2011 direction to reduce our net capital balance so as to enable us to enhance our welfare and comradeship activities. The Committee proposed Budget for 2012 will enable us to continue this trend and we will seek AGM views on this approach.

Regarding the Election of Officers, sadly pressure of NATO operational activities prevents our Vice-Chairman Gp Capt Jon Hill from standing for re-election: the good news is that the remainder of the current committee are willing and able to continue to serve for 2012. So, the Committee has vacancies and the Branch would welcome volunteers who are able to assist with this most rewarding work.

As usual, this Newsletter includes a summary of future events and I would highlight that the Duisburg Military Golf Club has once again very kindly allowed us to use their course for the Barry Horton Memorial Golf Trophy on Friday 29 June. Mark it in your diaries!

Yours most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dick Whittingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**2012 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN BRANCH
OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION -
NATO STAFF CENTRE – THURSDAY 15TH MARCH AT 11:00 HRS**

FINAL AGENDA

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1. | Dedication | Chaplain |
| 2. | Minutes of the 2011 AGM held at The NATO Staff Centre, 22 March 2010 (as published in Newsletter 102, Jun 2010) | Secretary |
| 3. | Chairman's Address | Chairman |
| 4. | Election / Re-election of Officers / Committee
<i>(Please see page 5 enclosed)</i> | Chairman |
| 5. | Treasurer's Report / Approval of Accounts 2011:
AGM agreement that Committee Members have satisfactorily discharged their administrative duties.

<i>(Please see pages 6 to 10 enclosed)</i> | Treasurer |
| 6. | Honorary Welfare Officer's Report and Proposals for 2012 | HWO |
| 7. | Budget for 2012
<i>(Please see proposed Budget at page 11)</i> | Treasurer |
| 8. | Any Other Business | |

Any members who wish to have items included under Any Other Business should inform the Chairman in writing **on or before the 9th March 2012**

RAFA BELGIAN BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING –

ITEM 4 - ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Thursday 15th March 2012

1. Extracts from Branch Standing Orders:
 - a. Only those who have paid their subscription for the current year may vote.
 - b. Nominations for election must be in writing and signed by two paid-up members and **must reach the Chairman on or before the 9th March 2012.**
 - c. Branch Officers and Members of the Branch Committee holding office for one year are re-eligible for re-election.
 - d. No person nominated may be elected if not present at the Annual General Meeting unless his/her absence is justified and the Members present approve his/her election in absentia.

2. The following remain as officers of the Branch and do not require re-election:

Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E.H.E. Hearn	Branch Honorary Co-President
Air Marshal Sir Christopher Harper	Branch Honorary Co-President
Air Cdre S. Corbett	Branch Honorary Vice-President
Lt Gen (Avi) Baron M. Donnet	Branch Life Vice-President
Father W. Peeters	Branch Honorary Chaplain

3. The following prospective Committee members are seeking election*:

To be Advised (<i>see para 1b above</i>)	Vice-Chairman
To be Advised (<i>see para 1b above</i>)	Newsletter Officer

4. The following Committee members are seeking re-election*:

Gp Capt (Ret'd) R Whittingham	Chairman
Flt Lt H French	Secretary
Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder	Treasurer
Mrs B Horton	Membership Secretary
Mrs G Walkden	Honorary Welfare Officer
Mrs D Whittingham	Assistant Honorary Welfare Officer

* - *'Proposer' and 'Seconder' will be sought from the meeting.*

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2011**

Net asset Surplus as at 31/12/10 **23,273.82**

Assets and Liabilities as at 31/12/11

Assets	Euros
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Deposit)	15,138.76
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Welfare)	2,528.43
CCP	3,626.38
HQ Account (UK) ¹	33.01
Petty Cash	<u>0.00</u>
Total	21,326.58
Credit	
Refund of overpayment of expenses	79.00
Eastbourne Conf. Delegate's contribution (£260)	312.00
TOTAL ASSETS	21,717.68
Liabilities	
Barry Horton Memorial Fund	1,664.47
RAFBF Grant payable	835.24
Newsletter 104	352.98
Postage 104	79.22
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,931.91
Net Asset Surplus at 31/12/11	18,785.77

¹ Exchange rate 31/12/11 Euro/£ 1.20

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2011**

CCP Bank Account (BPost)	Euros
Opening balance 01/01/11	4,792.76
Income	Euro
Subscriptions	740.00
Donations	709.68
Social Events – Golf	1810.78
December Lunch Income	630.00
Ostend Holiday Contributions	870.00
	<u>4,760.46</u>
Total (Opening balance plus income 2011):	<u>9,553.22</u>
Expenditure	
Welfare:	
Expenses 2009	224.16
Expenses 2010	387.57
Friendship Reception	863.00
Gib Conference Reimbursement (Ch + AHWO)	689.66
Gib Conference Reimbursement (HWO)	224.20
Subscriptions to HQ	300.00
Wings Appeal Payment to HQ for 2010	<u>1,000.00</u>
	<u>3,688.59</u>
Branch Expenses:	
Postage (x 6)	467.52
Ostend Expenses	23.09
Belge Monitor	114.59
Bank Charges	2.52
Virement	4.00
Newsletter (x 4)	1328.18
Wreaths	248.35
Postbox Rent	<u>50.00</u>
	<u>2,238.25</u>
Total Expenditure:	<u>5,926.84</u>
Closing Balance 31/12/11	<u>3,626.38</u>

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2011**

Welfare Bank Account (BNP Paribas Fortis)	Euros
Opening balance 01/01/11	2,019.89
Income	
RAFBF Grant (H)	1,483.30
Deposit Account	20,000.00
Interest from Deposit Account	459.00
RAFBF Grant (G)	<u>1,761.20</u>
	<u>23,703.50</u>
Opening balance plus income	<u>25,723.39</u>
Expenditure	
Transfer to Deposit	15,000.00
RAFBF Grants paid	2,409.26
Welfare grants	889.90
Welfare award	288.00
Welfare supplement (holiday)	2,000.00
Welfare expenses 2011	512.36
Winter Lunch ²	769.80
Christmas gifts (2011)	1290.50
Bank Charges	<u>35.14</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>23,194.96</u>
Closing Balance 31/12/11	<u>2,528.43</u>

² Invoice 465/3010/60936 – 14 Dec

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2011**

HQ Account (UK)

	£	Euros
Opening Balance 01/01/11	514.15	616.98
Income:		
Wings Appeal Contribution	835.77	(1,000)
Subscriptions paid in BE	250.73	(300)
Subscriptions paid in UK	36.00	
HQ payment for Cyprus Conf	405.00	
Total	<u>1,527.50</u>	<u>1,833.00</u>
Total Opening balance + income	2,041.65	2,449.98
Expenditure:		
Wings Appeal 2011to HQ	835.77	
Eastbourne Conf Pooled Fare	110.97	
Eastbourne Conf hotel costs	260.00	
Cyprus Conf reimburse	405.00	
Subscriptions to HQ (BE)	374.40	(450)
Subscriptions to HQ (UK)	28.00	
Total	<u>2,014.14</u>	<u>2,416.97</u>
Closing balance 31/12/11	27.51	33.01

Note:

1. Exchange rate 31/12/11 £/Euro 1.20

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2011**

Deposit Account (035-4397831-86)

Euros

Opening Balance 01/01/11

137.31

Income:

Interest 1.45

Transfer from Welfare Account 15,000.00

Expenditure:

Nil

Closing balance 31/12/11

15,138.76

RAFA BELGIAN BRANCH A.S.B.L

BUDGET 2012

INCOME	Euro
Subscriptions	500
Donations	500
Wings Appeal	1,000
Interest	500
Social Events	3,000
Total Income	5,500
 EXPENSES	
Wings Appeal – transfer to UK	1,000
Subscriptions – transfer to UK	400
Welfare:	
Branch grants	3,500
Expenses	500
Christmas Gifts	1,500
Newsletters – printing	1,000
Total	<u>7,900</u>
Administration:	
Bostbox rent	50
Postage	400
Bank Charges	50
Miscellaneous	100
Total	<u>600</u>
Total Expenses	<u>8,500</u>
Excess Expenditure over Income	3,000

THOUGHTS

In the middle of winter, landscapes can look like fairies. Warm behind our windows we sense our imagination into that white space of marvel. In fact there's a gap between feeling about that marvellous scene, and harsh life conditions experienced by those on duty somewhere in a far away spot of the globe. A friend of mine on navy guard in the Northern hemisphere for NATO got to know what it meant to be a sentry for freedom in the Barents Sea area. Because visibility from the inside windows was blurred by ice on the panes, someone had to stand outside on the deck, peering into the misty environment searching for less friendly craft, trying to slip into the safety zone of our Defence System. Being clad like a polar bear and somehow feeling rather alone standing in minus 25 Centigrade, it felt like being abandoned by one's beloved. Happily, outside watch was for just a very short period of time, in order to avoid becoming an ice block glued to the deck. So many of our brave soldiers and airmen in the Middle East face equally harsh and difficult conditions, on land, in trenches or compounds at the fringe of civilisation. All Air Force Personnel on stand-by in critical regions wait and get aware of the appalling winter conditions. They're watching out over there for our freedom and values. Perhaps a kind letter sent to them may trigger wonders of comfort for our defenders worldwide. We can also add our private prayers to warm up the hearts of our brave Service Men and Women.

Father Walter Peeters,
RAFA Belgian Branch
Honorary Chaplain

IN MEMORIAM

Mr Ivan Kicq, Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, Bruxelles: died 19 December 2011. Branch life member since 1970. Please see obituary on page 13

Mr Georges Watelet, Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Bruxelles: died 3 January 2012. Branch life member since 1970. Please see obituary on page 13.

Mr J Vandoren, Uccle, Bruxelles: died 10 January 2012. Branch life member since 1989. An RAF volunteer in World War 2, one of the "Group Snailwell-Bottisham".

Mr A Leleu DFC: died 10 February 2012. An obituary will be included in Newsletter 106

GEORGES WATELET



RAFA Life Member, Georges WATELET was also co-founder and Vice-President of the Spitfire Pilots Club. In 1940 during the Nazi invasion of Belgium, on general Government orders he moved south to finally reach St Jean de Luz in Southern France. Befriending a Polish soldier, he was given "pieces" of a Polish uniform and smuggled aboard a Polish ship. Under the assumed name of Watowski, all he had to do was to shout at the roll call: "Jestem" – meaning "present". Successfully reaching England he was first enlisted in the Army, but craving to join the RAF and after much protesting, he at last won his case. Normal training, OTU on Spitfires to finally join the famed 609 (West Riding) Squadron in 43-44, flying Typhoons. On a mission over Normandy, while strafing an anti-aircraft battery he was shot down by flak. Safely bailing out, he was hidden by a local farmer, to be taken care of by an escape line to rejoin UK and carry on fighting with 609. After the war, he flew with Sabena until retirement.

Weakened by heart problems and 3 by-passes and the sudden death of his daughter, led to his decease at home. The cremation and ceremony took place on 11 January in the close attendance of the family.

Source: Spitfire Pilots Club. Photo: André Bar

IVAN KICQ



Ivan Kicq was born in Charleroi on 9 July 1922. He left Belgium in October 1941 and made his way to UK via Besancon, Lyon, Lisbon and Gibraltar. He joined the Belgian forces at Malvern and, following training in Canada where he was awarded his RAF Navigators Brevet, he was posted to 98 Sqn (part of 139 Wing of the 2nd Tactical Air Force) flying Mitchell B-25. He took part in 50 bombing missions over France and Holland in the period 6 June 1944 to January 1945. He ended the war with the rank of Flying Officer. After the war, he flew as a Navigator with Sabena and remained a member of the Belgian Air Force Reserve with the rank of Major. His funeral was attended by old RAF, BAF and RAFA colleagues, and the coffin was draped with the RAF Ensign in recognition of his valuable war service.

Source: André Bar and 'Belgians in RAF and SAAF 1940-1945'

REPORTS ON PAST EVENTS

Conference at Neufchâteau - 8 Dec 2011

Special Operations Executive (SOE) Commemoration at Neufchâteau. On 8 Dec 41, an RAF Lysander piloted by Flt Lt Alan Michael 'Sticky' Murphy³ (138 Sqn) flew in secret to Perchepay in Belgium to pick up a Belgian SOE agent Jean Cassart. The rendezvous was betrayed, but the planned German ambush failed and the agent and colleagues escaped and, despite being wounded in the neck, the pilot was able to fly back to England. In recognition of the 70th anniversary of this event, the Commune of Neufchâteau held a conference on 8 Dec 11 which was attended by more than 40 people with representatives from the Belgian Resistance and the SOE: the Branch was represented by our Standard Bearer Jean-Pierre Blanckaert.



M. Thibaut Westhof chaired the conference introducing operations NIWI in 1940 and "Stoat" in 1941



Lysander Mk III of 138 Sqn with under-belly fuel tank



'Sticky' Murphy
Photo courtesy Tommy Cushing



Jean-Pierre Blanckaert with the Branch Standard

³ Wg Cdr "Sticky" Murphy DFC, DSO*, Croix de Guerre was killed in action above the Netherlands on Dec, 2, 1944 flying a Night Intruder Mosquito of 23 Squadron. He is buried at Oldebroek beside his navigator Douglas Darbon.

The Chronicle of a Passer By

By Edward Harty Elliot Hearn

Editor's Note:

This fifth episode of our Branch Honorary Co-President's 'Chronicle' as transcribed by Gp Capt (Ret'd) Mike Connor, contains extracts from Part 2 Chapter 3 covering the shooting-down of his Lancaster and his subsequent escape back to England from occupied France. Please see Newsletter 101 for the Contents List.

PART TWO – 1940 -1946

3. 'Je Suis un Aviateur Anglais!'

The evening of the 7th August 1944 was typical of an English summer, warm, slightly hazy under clear blue skies and clearly positive for flying, but with distinct advantages for the enemy. At the briefing, the target was named as woodland to the north of Caen, in Normandy, where a concentration of enemy tanks was hidden near the village of Secqueville.

That summer night was perfect. The dark blue of the night glistened with stars, the moon rising just above the horizon. We would approach the target from the sea, locate the markers, complete our mission, then turn left over land, crossing the Seine and the French coast whilst heading north. However, due to a change in wind direction, we arrived three minutes late in the target area to find it covered in haze and smoke from the first wave of aircraft. We circled the area three times, but being unable to locate the aiming point and being aware of pointless dangers to the civil population below, it was decided to return to base, jettisoning the bomb load in the sea on the way home. That was not to be.

The smoothness and tranquillity of the flight and the night was shattered over the Seine. Without any warning of the impending disaster, a Messerschmitt fighter aircraft drew up under the belly of the Lancaster, lifted its nose and pumped cannon fire along the length of the fuselage. The rear gunner saw the second attack but was unable to make a sighting. The second spate of cannon drove into the offside engine. The Lancaster, with the outer port engine on fire, fuselage riddled but bomb load intact, was uncontrollable and began to fall out of the sky in a blazing mass. The only communication over the intercom was a stifled, "abandon aircraft".

Down in the front bay below the flight deck I had difficulty pulling the escape hatch open because of the contortions to the aircraft in its fall to earth. After what seemed an age in time, but which must in fact have been seconds, the door was eventually levered up and I forced my way out into the night. In so doing, I hit my head on the displaced hatch which knocked me temporarily unconscious but did not prevent my exit. That moment of unconsciousness was broken by a jerk on the left ankle and, on coming abruptly back to life, I found that my foot was entangled in the parachute cords and I was falling down head first. I pulled my way up the cords and, after some struggling, managed to release my leg. Then came a moment of extreme exhilaration, with the sensation of stopping still and floating in the midst of complete silence – floating as if in a vacuum - marvellous!

Suddenly, in the darkness of the night pierced by the moon, I saw the ground approaching at a tremendous speed. I braced myself for the impact, concentrating on touching earth on the ball of my right foot and remembering the drill so often explained but,

as yet, not put into practice. During the final part of the descent I had noted that I was going to fall into a field dotted with small mounds of hay, some thirty yards distance from a heavily wooded area. After making a safe landing, my immediate reaction was to gather up the massive expanse of the parachute and crawl with the silk envelope into the shelter of the wood. There, at the foot of a tall fir tree, I rested momentarily and reflected on my good fortune at having survived the drama of abandoning the aircraft.

I guessed it to be between midnight and one in the morning. With help from the light of the moon, I buried the parachute in a dip in the earth. I then tore off the insignia and rank recognition from my battle dress tunic, buried them with the parachute and covered them with fallen leaves and bracken. By this time my ears had cleared after the fall and I was able to distinguish sounds in the stillness of the night - the bark of dogs, distant conversation in muffled tones, mute laughter and the rattle of mess tins. Judging that these sounds were some way away, thus ignorant of my whereabouts, I fell into an exhausted sleep.

I awakened the next morning with an itch in my left ankle and a mosquito-bitten face. This together with the stubble of an unshaven face was uncomfortable and irritating and the cause of some restlessness. Yet I remained immobile, fearful that the slightest movement would attract the attention of the army detachment which was obviously close by. It was fairly certain that the enemy would be out looking for any survivors from the crashed plane. I was still unaware of how many of the crew had got out or whether some went down to certain death either in the Lancaster or on its impact with the ground.

Later, making sure that my parachute and marks of identity were safely hidden, I crawled to a nearby fence and on my stomach peered through the lines of rusty fencing. About two hundred yards away, a road ran parallel with the boundary of the wood. On this road I saw the movement of military traffic – motorbikes with sidecars, trucks and the occasional foot soldier leading Alsatian hounds. On the far left and beyond the road was a farmhouse and outbuildings. Next to those buildings there was a gap on the right hand side before coming to individual buildings and low-lying terraced dwellings. There were few signs of movement amongst the local villagers.

The second night was fitful with an ever mounting thirst and relentless attacks by mosquitoes. With thankfulness, I watched the rising of the sun at dawn until I caught the sounds of movement in the wood. Someone was approaching my position stealthily and I became transfixed in my reclined state. The shape of the intruder appeared between the trees, soon forming a man with his left forefinger to his lips and dressed in a spoiled pullover with a black beret on his head. He approached and I could see he carried a bottle of milk in his right hand. He stopped a good four yards away and placed the bottle of milk on firm ground, at the same time removing the finger from his lips and pointing it to the bottle. He then glided away in the direction from whence he had come and disappeared in the undergrowth. Although the reality of this act had not fully sunk home, I automatically reached for the bottle, the top of which was covered with paper and secured with an elastic band. The milk was slightly warm as if recently drawn from the cow, rich in cream and delicious to the taste. I remembered to drink sparingly, keeping most in reserve in case it was needed later.

During the afternoon, whilst drinking the remainder of the milk, I reflected on the fact that at least one person knew where I was. How many others knew of my predicament? How many friends were amongst the enemy? If from the village, it seemed fairly certain that word had been passed in secret, and many people, unknown to me, must have me constantly in mind. That was a comforting thought and strengthened my resolve to move during the twilight hour. But, secure under a friendly fir tree and knowing that there were friends nearby, I decided to wait a further day in order to gather strength for the break out. At eight thirty by my watch on the evening of the third day, I began my move by crawling up the wooded hillside on all fours until I reached the hedge and wire fence.

A hasty look to right and left, then up and over the hedge and in seconds I was on the other side of the road stumbling towards a narrow path leading towards a detached house which was enclosed on either side by tall fir trees. A quick glance showed me three windows on the first floor, two windows and a door on the ground floor. The door was ajar. I pushed it further open and walked in. As if drawn by a magnet, I turned to my right and stopped on the threshold of a small room. The room was occupied by two people. The man, dressed in parts of three different suits stood with one hand clutching the back of a high chair. The woman seemed to crouch in her low sitting position by the ancient fireplace, her gnarled hands bent over the arms of her chair. They both had their eyes wide open. Standing in the doorway, I spoke resignedly and with near indifference, "Je suis un aviateur anglais", the statement drawing forth an extraordinary fatigue. I heard the tick of a clock in the silence that followed.

Then, calmly and with patience, the man addressed the woman, emphasising his words by laying his hands down, palm upwards on his knee. Between gazing at the floor and darting glances to his face, she began to slowly nod her head, with some hesitation at the beginning, but more definitely as she appeared to make up her mind. When the man, clearly her husband, had finished speaking, she turned her eyes and examined the parched lips and mosquito-bitten unshaven face, then rose from her chair and moved painfully to a door at the rear of the room. A smile lingered around the old gentleman's lips as he commenced to speak very slowly, and trying to make himself understood. Food was being prepared (two eggs fried in butter surrounded by freshly boiled runner beans). After the meal there would be a bed in his house and I would pass the night under his roof. The enemy had search patrols out and because of this a move must be made before dawn.

A gentle rocking of my shoulder awakened me the following morning. The old man stood by whilst I hurried into my clothes. When ready, my host beckoned me to follow. It was not quite dawn – not grey or blue, but a shade of gold. The evader followed some twenty yards behind his protector, down the narrow path to the road, then turning left along the road itself until coming to the centre of a row of single-floored cottages through which I was pushed without too much ceremony.

Once inside the cottage, the scene changed dramatically. The cottage itself was a quarter of the size of the previous farm house, but with at least five times the number of people in it. It was a hive of activity. The man of the house, big and broad in a near-white pullover (who I later found out was an ex-chef of the ocean liner Normandie), pulled me to a couch and produced tobacco and cigarette papers. The daughter, pale and wan, ran for hot water and bandages and dressed the injured ankle. The mother and her son brewed coffee and buttered dark brown bread. A succession of villagers poured in and out of the front door, returning time and time again with various assortments of clothing. Drawing deeply on a handmade cigarette, I relaxed, overcome by the attention being accorded me. I attempted to speak in broken French, but was waved smilingly to silence. At about eleven o'clock, the guard on the door motioned me forward. I looked around me at those smiling faces, young and old and my gratitude was simply portrayed by opening my arms towards them. I set off with the homemade cigarette dangling from my lips, although by this time it was no longer alight. I was dressed in a pair of multicoloured trousers, a frayed shirt and a M'moiselle's pullover. A balloon-tyred bicycle had been provided and I rode alongside my guide who I had met only minutes before and whose greeting was a toothless grin from an unshaven and unwashed face.

We rode for about a mile through flat open country before turning on to a steep incline to our right. The right turn twisted to the left before sighting a small town with the River Seine appearing beyond the valley. Branching off the main road, we continued on side roads and entered the market place. At the crossroads, a military policeman signalled us on and to the left. Just off the corner of the market place, we propped our cycles against the wall of a small boot and shoe shop. There were two customers in the shop being attended

to by a man dressed in plus fours and wearing a bow tie and a beret. He paid no attention to the newcomers whilst occupying himself fully to the requirements of his clients. Having dealt with his customers, the proprietor turned and without a word being spoken, showed the strange pair through the door at the rear of the shop. There then ensued a hurried conversation between the shop owner and my guide. By his very actions it was obvious that the man in plus fours had been awaiting my arrival. By his stature it began to emerge that it was possibly he who had organised the whole operation. During this conversation, the lady of the house entered from the very small kitchen-cum-dining room accompanied by her very young daughter.

After bidding 'au revoir' to the guide, my new host introduced me to his wife and daughter with a smile of welcome. "My name is Romy. This is my wife and daughter Monique. We cannot give you any guarantee for your safety, but we will do our best." The little girl was charmed and said 'Hello' – her French missing the 'H'. Her mother stood by in quiet contemplation of this untidily dressed Briton. I suddenly realised that this was the first time I had heard a name spoken – and only a Christian name at that. As I sat down with the family for their evening meal (more eggs and beans), I learned that I was in a small town of some twelve thousand inhabitants in time of peace, though most of the young population had gone and had been replaced by foreign soldiers. Lillebourne, a town with a long and illustrious history, was once the military headquarters under Julius Caesar, at that time named Juliobona. The only survival of those times was the carefully preserved amphitheatre. I had been brought down from the hill-top village of La Frenaye.

I was shown to the parent's room where I was able to sleep that night. Every picture in the room was hung with parachute cord and on the bedside table, hidden behind a flower vase, was a secret radio. It was tuned to the BBC in London. Under the drone of 'V' bombs heading for that City, the family listened to French news and later on I picked up the nine o'clock news. After the excitement of a very long day, I slept soundly in this friendly haven. Early in the morning after my arrival I was taken to have my photo taken behind a barricaded shop a hundred yards down the road. We found our way via boundary walls at the rear of the shop to avoid the military on the main street. The photograph took three minutes to take and afterwards Romy completed my new Identity Card in three hours. I was now deaf and dumb in the eyes of the law and was a student once again. At two in the afternoon, Romy set off with his overnight lodger, again on bicycles, this time in the direction of the Seine. After half an hour's ride, Romy changed places with a young thin bespectacled man who he introduced as 'Claude'.

On reaching the banks of the Seine, we clambered into a small rowing boat at the oars of which were two ancient, pipe-smoking mariners. It took the four of us in the small rowing boat a good half hour to reach the other side of the Seine, even though we were using the current most of the way. There then followed a long walk over the undulating countryside until the sun had gone down well below the horizon. Our steps seemed to be set to the music of the continuous gunfire thudding away in the distance. At ten in the evening we approached an isolated farmstead. After treading cautiously to the back door, my companion lightly tapped the panel of the door. Someone behind the door opened it and left it open without making an appearance. We marched in. Across a large oak table, a well set woman in her forties sat with her two good-looking daughters. The only recognition of the visitors was the pushing of a bottle of cider and two glasses across the table. Three pairs of grave feminine eyes rested on the airman. After drinking his cider, the young bespectacled man talked quietly for about two minutes, shook hands with each of the ladies in turn, then with me and departed, closing the door behind him.

I continued to sit on the edge of my chair watching for the play to unfold. Thirty minutes passed before the younger girl pushed back her chair, smiled, and motioned me towards the door. I went out of the house behind her, through the dark farmyard. A ladder placed against a hayloft was used to clamber up to the loft. The young lady pointed towards a pile of hay in a far corner, said 'Dormez bien', then retreated, still smiling, down the ladder.

At dawn the following morning, after drinking a bowl of hot coffee laced with milk, I set off with the younger daughter, both of us crawling on hand and knees on the ground. I followed the beaten track in front of me. Our journey through the long grass ended abruptly in front of a tent formed by the leaves of two trees. Two young dishevelled Frenchmen came forward and I was introduced to two frozen faces. The girl departed immediately, clutching my arm in farewell.

I was bedded firmly in the ground between these two apparent miscreants for three days and nights, only being allowed out under the supervision of one or the other. I was quite evidently under suspicion and as it was useless trying to ask questions, I shrugged in my stomach and did nothing but gaze at the sky and sun through the gentle movement of the leaves of the trees. My thoughts were directed to possible ways of moving on. At dawn on the fourth day, the young girl made another appearance and I heard church bells in the distance. Church bells on a weekday? The month of August? It must be the Feast of the Assumption. I had a motive for moving. Directions were given to get to the country church that was six kilometres away in the village of Marais Vernier. I set off on foot alone, keeping to the hedges and beaten tracks until reaching the main road. There I joined the crowd heading for the church porch and the last Mass of the day.

I stayed in my pew until the service was over and all the parishioners had left. I then made for the door of the vestry beside the altar. Opening the door and resting my back against it, I confronted the Curé, the Parish Priest, who was disrobing. "Monsieur?" – "Je suis un aviateur anglais." The large jovial face of the Curé paused in a puzzled expression as he stepped forward. "Identification?" The identity discs were shown During the lunch that followed, the Curé commenced to plan the future of his new guest's destiny. They were in the frontline, or rear line, whichever side one was on. To go forward was problematical, to go back unreasonable. Therefore, in consultation with the local postmaster, it would probably be better to stay awhile in the air-raid trench which had been dug behind the Post Office. In the following days this was arranged and I found myself bedded down in the six foot deep trench. The trench was partly covered, the earth floor hard and dry with enough room for the camp bed.

The passage of time under these circumstances seemed interminable. The break of each dawn keyed us all up with the expectation of something new, but nothing different ever seemed to happen – just guns, bombs, flares, troops and tanks in unending monotonous regularity day after day and night after night. An almost daily target of the friendly air forces appeared to be the bridge at nearby Pont Audemer. Until one morning, twenty one days after my arrival in the village of Marais Vernier, I awoke and all was calm. After finishing shaving in cold water and smoking the first of my three daily cigarettes, a dozen pairs of hands and faces appeared over the top of the trench. Country hands – great excitement in the air! Those country hands pulled me out of the trench and dragged me over the cemetery wall. I was propelled by the bustling crowd into the centre of the village street. Windows opened and with each step forward a newcomer joined the party. At the turn of the hill at least half of the population of the village was packed around me. They stretched from side to side of the road and rubbed the windows of the shops and houses as they passed. Everyone was chattering and laughing with children running criss-cross in front like clowns heading a fair.

At the second bend in the hill, the entrance to the village, a lone figure appeared pushing a motorcycle up the hill. Tall, fair and with bright blue eyes, the newcomer wore a red beret and a khaki battledress. I was in the centre of the crowd and their chatter ceased as if by a hidden signal. They melted away, leaving me standing alone. We met, the Airborne Officer and the Flight Lieutenant, across the tank of the motorcycle, in the middle of the road. He made an opening remark, lost to me. I attempted to speak, but no word came from my parched lips. "Your identification please." I held out my discs at the same time quietly exclaiming, "I am pleased to see you Captain!" The Captain grinned. "I have heard about you. That is why I am here, but being alone had to make sure of you first you know."

He held out his hand which I shook warmly, and he bent forward to hug me. That gesture brought the crowd surging forward, surrounding the two figures in the centre of the road - laughing and happy, with garlands of flowers and once hidden bottles of wine suddenly coming to the fore.

That night, I slept on bare boards in an upper room of a house in Pont Audemer. After breakfast (tea!), I was taken by the Captain on his well used cycle to a tented encampment several kilometres to the west. It turned out to be the Canadians' advance Headquarters. There, under canvas, I was given a generous tot of rum before undergoing interrogation. No time was then lost and I was bundled into a truck and transported to a nearby airfield and a waiting Dakota. The aircraft was due to fly to England and a rapid communication had found a place for me.

So much had happened in the previous weeks that it was not until I found myself walking down Regent Street in London that I realised that I was home again. In my strange attire, my right hand holding a plastic bag containing a razor and a toothbrush, the wartime crowds took no notice of me and even the police waved me through the traffic with seeming indifference. I made my way to Military Intelligence where I had been ordered to report without delay. There I was questioned in detail on the events of my escapade and eventually released with a free rail ticket to Dorking.

Still dressed in the worn shirt, pullover and multicoloured trousers, I found the house I was looking for in the High Street. Pausing in front of the entrance door which gave onto the street, to make sure I was at the right address, I knocked, there being no doorbell. The door was opened almost at once – and there was my Mother, her hand coming to her mouth in stunned amazement. She turned back into the house crying, 'It's Teddy it's Teddy it's Teddy'. "It is you isn't it Teddy?" "Yes Mother, I'm back."

I had nothing apart from my razor and toothbrush so I went out and bought a suit off the peg, plus two shirts, socks and a pair of shoes. All my belongings, including my uniforms and clothing had been impounded. Whilst enjoying the comforts of home at Dorking and being brought up to date with all the news of the family, I became frustrated with the lack of activity and decided to make a quick trip to Skellingthorpe and confound my friends with a sudden appearance there. I passed the guardroom in my ill-fitting dark brown suit and made for the Mess. During my absence, many new unknown officers had appeared. They eyed the arrival of the civilian with some bewilderment until a signal and a cry of 'Eddie' came from a small group sitting by the fireside. The cry came from Frankland⁴, one of the Squadron's great survivors whom I had known from the beginning of my tour. The small group were 50 Squadron aircrew and greeted me with amazement using the occasion for a mild celebration

On returning to Dorking, a signal awaited me calling me to Elgin, in Scotland. Also, my belongings had arrived in a trunk, carefully packed by some unknown person from the Squadron after I had been reported as missing. Elgin, lying south east of the Moray Firth, had been chosen by the RAF as a centre for psychoanalysis, where doctors and specialists invented all sorts of tricks to confirm their patients' mental stability after periods of stress. It was Elgin and the friendly Scots who were the real cure. I passed all the tests at the Centre (including putting wooden objects into their correct holes) and my report must have been satisfactory for I was soon to move on.

Another phase was about to commence – where would destiny lead me to now?

To be Continued

⁴ Dr Noble Frankland, later to be Director of the Imperial War Museum and co-author of the official 'Strategic Air Offensive'.

BRANCH ADMINISTRATION

The Committee believes that the Newsletter is a key instrument to support the aims of the RAF Association and the needs of RAFA Belgian Branch members. You can help enhance the value of the Newsletter by offering contributions of general interest concerning memories of the past as well as practical information to foster friendship and welfare of members today. Please forward your contributions to the Editor.

To help us cut our printing and postal costs, the Newsletter is also available in electronic form for issue by email. If you are able to receive it in this way, and have not yet advised us, please let the Membership Secretary know.

RAFA is a charity operating for the benefit of its members. It would be helpful if members could maintain their subscriptions (Annual - 22 €, 4-year 60 €) by transferring funds to the RAFA Belgian Branch account BE12-0000-0482-0492 (FOR MEMBERSHIP FEES). In case you have forgotten your membership status, *if there is a **red dot** on the address label of this Newsletter, then we believe that your subscription is due for renewal.*

Please note that 'Life' Membership is no longer available, but, at present, existing 'Life' members are exempt annual membership fees.

Donations are, of course, welcome at all times. Please pass to the above account noting 'DONATION'.

ADMINISTRATION FOR THE AGM

Date/Time: Thursday 15th March 2012:

AGM at 11:00 hrs in the NATO Staff Centre Chalet

Lunch at circa 12:15 hrs in Restaurant Private Room

Venue: NATO Staff Centre, Ave Bourget, 1110 Evere

Please advise your intention to attend the AGM and/or the Lunch by **completing and returning the information in the proforma below by 9 Mar 12.**

Costs: €20 per person to be collected in cash on the day.

If you have any special dietary needs, please let us know.

I/WE WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND THE AGM AND LUNCH* ON 15 MAR 12*

NAME AND INITIALS.....DATE OF BIRTH.....

**IF POSSIBLE, COULD THE COMMITTEE PLEASE ARRANGE TRANSPORT?*

** delete/complete as appropriate*

**I PLAN TO TRAVEL WITH*

**I WILL TAKE MY OWN CAR, REGISTRATION NUMBER*

*Send to Flt Lt Hannah French, UK Delegation to NATO, NATO HQ Evere, 1110, Brussels,
(or phone 02.707.7562 or email Hannah.French@fco.gov.uk)*

FUTURE EVENTS CALENDAR

Thursday 15 Mar 12 - 11:00 hrs, Branch Annual General Meeting to be held at NATO Staff Centre, followed by lunch. Please see the detailed information in this Newsletter: Agenda at page 4, Election of Officers at page 5, 2011 Accounts pages 6 to 10, proposed 2012 Budget at page 11, and administrative arrangements at page 21. NB additional Committee members are required: please make proposals to the Chairman by 9 Mar 12. All Branch members, including Associate Members, should make their best endeavours to attend to ensure that the Committee are given guidance to reflect the body of Branch Members: please complete the proforma at page 21 and return to the Secretary by 9 Mar 12.

Sunday 25 Mar 12 – St Clement Danes Church in the Strand, London. Annual Service to commemorate the formation of the Royal Air Force. Any members who also would like to attend should either apply via the RAFA website www.rafa.co.uk or advise the Secretary by end February 2012.

18-20 May 12 – National and European Area RAFA Conferences at Blackpool. The Chairman will attend: others members who would like to join this policy-making event which also does much to foster the Association's comradeship aims, should contact the Chairman as soon as possible. It should be noted that although central funds only reimburse some of the costs of sending one delegate to Conference, it is Branch committee policy that available funds will be shared equally amongst all Branch attendees.

Friday 29 Jun 12 – with the very kind permission of the Duisburg Military Golf Club (DMGC) and the Defence Sports Centre, the Barry Horton Memorial Charity Golf Tournament and BBQ will this year be held on Friday 29th June. A copy of the Chairman's invitation to the event is at page 23, together with an attendance proforma at page 24. This event not only constitutes our major fund-raising event of the year, but it also provides an ideal opportunity for Branch members to foster comradeship amongst their colleagues. Branch members are therefore encouraged to participate: it is not necessary to play golf!

Sunday 15 Jul 12 – Belgian Forces parade and march past at the Cenotaph in London.

Sunday 19 Aug 12 – Tigelot Memorial at Jalhay. Annual anniversary church service, commemoration and lunch.

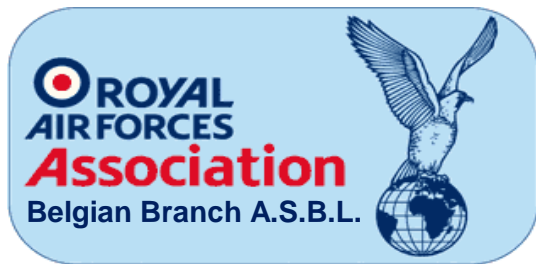
[14]* Oct 12 - Belgian Air Force Remembrance Service at the Air Force memorial at the Cinquantenaire, Brussels.

19-21 Oct 12 – European Area RAFA Conferences at Amsterdam, Netherlands. It is likely that the conference will also include a Welfare Seminar.

Saturday and Sunday 20/21 Oct 12 - Comète Line Annual Reunion in Brussels.

* date to be confirmed

From: Gp. Capt. Dick Whittingham RAF (Ret'd), Chairman RAFA Belgian Branch



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3090 Overijse

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e-mail:
dickwhittingham@skynet.be

12th February 2012

Dear Friends,

**ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION BELGIAN BRANCH
BARRY HORTON MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT – 29 JUNE 2012**

Following what has now become a RAFA Belgian Branch tradition of over 10 years, I am very pleased to be able to advise that the President and Committee of the Duisburg Military Golf Club (DMGC) have once again this year very kindly agreed to allow us to hold our Barry Horton Memorial Golf Tournament and barbecue at the DMGC. The event will take place on the afternoon/evening of Friday, 29 June. As many will know, this is an event designed to be fun for all, but it is also the prime means by which the Branch raises funds for RAFA associated welfare activity in Belgium: last year thanks to your generosity we were able to provide over €1500 to support those in need. As everyone will appreciate, the current economic climate places further pressure on the Branch welfare budget, so our ambition is to do even better this year: your participation can really make a difference!

The event this year will follow our normal formula. We plan shotgun starts at 2 p.m. and at 4 p.m. Playing lists will be posted in the Club House and will be issued by email during the week before: on the day, please register in the Club House 30 minutes before the start times. After the golf, there will be aperitifs at 6 p.m. followed by the prize-giving and then the barbecue at 7 p.m. and the ever popular tombola.

The all-inclusive cost per person this year will again be €45 but, if you are unable to stay for the barbecue, the golf-only cost will be €25. Alternatively, if you can only come to the barbecue, or if you are a DMGC member, the cost will be €25. These costs include aperitifs and wine and water with the meal. Please make payment to the RAFA CCP [Account BE12-0000-0482-0492](#) by **22 June 2012**, clearly **indicating RAFA Golf** and the name(s) of participants.

We will be seeking the help of participants in the provision of salads and desserts. Equally, if you have anything that you would be willing to donate as a tournament or tombola prize, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please help Branch planning [by sending me the information on the attached proforma at your earliest convenience, but at the latest by 22 June 2012](#). If you've never played at DMGC, you can look it up on the internet at www.golf.be/duisburg.

**ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION BELGIAN BRANCH
BARRY HORTON MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT – 29 JUNE 2012**

From: (Name).....(First Name).....

Spouse/Partner (Name).....(First Name).....

(Address).....

(Tel No)(E-mail address).....

(Handicap(s)).....DMGC Member.....Yes/No

Participation*:

Golf and Barbecue Yes (€45)

Golf only Yes (€25)

Barbecue only Yes (€25)

Preferred tee time: 2 p.m. Yes/No*

 4 p.m. Yes/No*

Willing to provide*:

Salad for persons. Type of salad

Dessert forpersons. Type of dessert.....

Golf tournament/Raffle prize: Yes/No*

If yes, please describe.....

Donation in support of RAFA Belgian Branch..... €

* Delete as appropriate.

PLEASE RETURN TO:

email: dickwhittingham@skynet.be or

Post: Dick Whittingham, Memlingdreef 5,
 3090 Overijse

**BY 22 JUNE 2012 WITH PAYMENT TO CCP ACCOUNT BE12-0000-0482-0492 STATING
"RAFA GOLF" AND PARTICIPANTS NAMES IN THE INFORMATION SECTION OF THE
PAYMENT FORM**

Newsletter Printed by Joh Enschedé- Van Muysewinkel