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BELGIAN BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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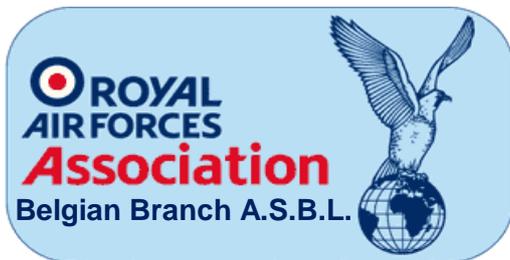
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NEWSLETTER NO 106

APR – MAY – JUN 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

BELGIAN BRANCH COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN	Robert (Dick) Whittingham (Gp Capt Ret'd)
VICE CHAIR	Wg Cdr Gillian Ward
HONORARY CHAPLAIN	Father Walter Peeters
SECRETARY	Flt Lt Arlene Walker
TREASURER	David Trembaczowski-Ryder (Wg Cdr Ret'd)
HONORARY WELFARE OFFICER (HWO)	Mrs Ghislaine Walkden
ASSISTANT HWO	Mrs Deborah Whittingham
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Mrs Brigitte Horton
BRANCH WEBMASTER	Bob Jenkins (Wg Cdr Ret'd)

For a quick answer to any query, please email: rafa.belgianbranch@gmail.com

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

Brussels

30th May 2012

Dear Friends,

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

As I write this note, I am reminded of one of the reasons why we remain in Brussels: marvellous weather! Of course, it will not last, but as with life generally it pays to make the best of what one has whilst one can. The major event since the last Newsletter was the Branch Annual General Meeting on 15 March. I am pleased to be able to say that we had a very reasonable attendance for the meeting and for the lunch which followed. The full minutes are elsewhere in this Newsletter, but I would like to give a special welcome to our two new Branch Officers: Vice Chair Wg Cdr Gill Ward and Branch Webmaster Wg Cdr (Ret'd) Bob Jenkins. They bring a wealth of experience to the Branch, and they are volunteers! I am confident that our full-strength committee is now in a position to serve you, the Branch members, even more effectively.

The National Annual and European Area Conferences held last month in Blackpool highlighted the strength and on-going viability of the Association, with many excellent examples of how friendship, help and support is provided to our members. For the Belgian Branch, Welfare support is a core function, but we can often pre-empt welfare challenges by spending some time and effort on the improvement of morale and general well-being. Please be alert to your own needs, and to those of colleagues, and let any member of the Committee know when we might be able to assist.

In this edition, we have a report from our Honorary Chaplain Father Peeters covering the recent inauguration of a memorial to the crew of a Lancaster lost near Malle on 12 May 1944 together with some personal wartime reminiscences, plus the continuation of our Co-President's 'Chronicle' giving a glimpse of India as World War 2 comes to a close.

Future events are listed on the inside back cover, and I would draw your attention to the Barry Horton Memorial Charity Golf Tournament on Friday 29 June 12 (details are on the back-cover, if you have not yet responded). 2012 marks the 10th Anniversary of the Tournament, which, thanks to the kindness of the Club, will again be hosted at the excellent facilities of the Duisburg Military Golf Club. Please make a special effort to support: remember that you do not need to be a golfer to enjoy the day!

Yours most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dick Whittingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.



Belgian Branch
A.S.B.L.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION

Maison des Ailes - Rue Montoyer 1-B 33 - 1040 Brussels

-----**Branch N° 0645**-----

Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
Honorary Patron: H.E. Jonathan Brenton British Ambassador
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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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN BRANCH OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION NATO STAFF CENTRE – 15 MARCH 2012

Present:

Gp Capt (Ret'd) R Whittingham (Chairman)	Mr L Rubin
Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder (Treasurer)	Mr R Rubin
Mrs G Walkden (Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO))	Mrs A Dumon
Mrs D Whittingham (Assistant HWO)	Mr R Laumans
Mrs B Horton (Membership Secretary)	Gp Capt (Ret'd) J Stevenson
Father W Peeters (Honorary Chaplain)	Wg Cdr G Ward
Mr J-P Blanckaert (Standard Bearer)	Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins
Flt Lt H French (Secretary)	

Apologies:

Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E Hearn (Honorary Co-President)	Mrs M Laden
Air Marshal Sir C Harper (Honorary Co-President)	Mrs A de Norman
Air Cdre S Corbett (Honorary Vice-President)	Ctsse B D'Oultremont
H.E. Jonathan Brenton (Honorary Patron)	Mrs H Van Wersch
Lt Gen Baron M Donnet (Life Vice-President)	Air Cdre (Ret'd) M Brzezicki
Gp Capt (Ret'd) M Connor (Past Branch Chairman)	

ITEM 1 – DEDICATION

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and expressed his condolences to the Belgian people for the loss of life in the coach crash that had recently taken place. He also welcomed members who were attending their first AGM and passed on apologies for absence. At the invitation of the Chairman, the meeting stood as the Honorary Chaplain Father Peeters delivered the Dedication (In Friendship and in service one to another, we are pledged to keep alive the memory of those of all Nations who died in the Royal Air Force and in the Air Forces of the Commonwealth. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause. Proudly and thankfully we will remember them.), and remembered those members of the RAFA Belgian Branch who had passed away since the previous AGM: Léon de Ville de Goyet, Comte Jacques d'Oultremont, Charles Dumont, Etienne Gutt, Mrs D

Harrison, Ivan Kicq, André Leleu, Mrs H Lind, Mrs Patricia Malengreau, Stanley Robins, Gp Capt I Thompson, J Van Doren, Lucien Verstraete, Georges Watelet.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 2011 AGM

2. The Chairman advised that no comments had been received on the minutes of the last AGM held on 22 Mar 11, and the Chairman sought AGM approval of the minutes as published in Newsletter 102.

3. The minutes of the AGM held at the NATO Staff Centre on 22 Mar 11, were approved.

Proposed by Father W Peeters and **seconded** by Mr D Trembaczowski-Ryder.
Carried Unanimously

ITEM 3 – CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

4. In his Address, (see Enclosure 1 for the full text), the Chairman highlighted the good news that the Committee had been able to follow the remit of the 2011 AGM to successfully expand welfare and comradeship activity and to reduce the Branch Net Asset Surplus. He expressed the intention, subject to AGM support and guidance, to continue to endeavour to reach the greatest number of Branch members and to provide them with opportunities for friendship/comradeship matched to their abilities, and to target welfare support on all those that need it. He warmly thanked the Committee for their hard work and outstanding dedication to duty.

ITEM 4 – ELECTION / RE-ELECTION OF OFFICERS / COMMITTEE

5. **Officers not requiring Election.** The Chairman noted that as Officers of the Branch, Air Marshal Sir Christopher Harper, Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E Hearn, Lt Gen Baron M Donnet, Air Cdre S Corbett and Father W Peeters did not require election. He warmly thanked them for the time and energy they gave in supporting Branch activity.

6. **Elect Prospective new Committee Members.** The Chairman introduced Wg Cdr Gillian Ward and Wg Cdr (Ret'd) Bob Jenkins, noting with much pleasure that they had very kindly volunteered to bring the Committee up to full strength, and sought AGM approval for:

- a. Wg Cdr G Ward as Vice-Chair.

Proposed by Mr D Trembaczowski-Ryder and **seconded** by Flt Lt H French.
Carried Unanimously.

- b. Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins as Branch Webmaster

Proposed by Wg Cdr G Ward and **seconded** by Mrs B Horton.
Carried Unanimously.

7. **Re-elect Existing Committee Members.** The Chairman sought AGM approval, en masse for the following Committee members seeking re-election:

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| a. Gp Capt (Ret'd) R Whittingham | (Chairman) |
| b. Flt Lt H French | (Secretary) |
| c. Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder | (Treasurer) |
| d. Mrs B Horton | (Membership Secretary) |
| e. Mrs G Walkden | (HWO) |
| f. Mrs D Whittingham | (Assistant HWO) |

Proposed by Mr L Rubin and **seconded** by Mr R Laumans.
Carried Unanimously.

8. The AGM noted the following resignation from the Committee; Gp Capt (Ret'd) J Hill.

9. The AGM also noted with great sadness the death of Mr C Dumont.

ITEM 5 – TREASURER’S REPORT / APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS 2011

10. Following an invitation from the Chairman, Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder presented his Treasurer’s Report and the 2011 accounts as circulated in Newsletter 105. He particularly highlighted that the expenditure of the Branch for welfare and friendship activities had exceeded the forecasted expenditure, but that the Committee had felt that this was entirely appropriate in the spirit of the agreed outcomes of the 2011 AGM.

11. The Chairman noted the excellent and accurate job the Treasurer had done, and sought the approval of the AGM for the 2011 Accounts as circulated in Newsletter 105 (copy at Enclosure 2).

Proposed by Mrs B Horton and **seconded** by Mrs G Walkden.
Carried Unanimously.

12. The Chairman also sought, as required under Belgian ASBL legislation, the agreement of the AGM that the Committee members had satisfactorily discharged their administrative duties with respect to the accounts.

Proposed by Wg Cdr G Ward and **seconded** by Father W Peeters.
Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 6 – WELFARE OFFICER’S REPORT AND PROPOSALS FOR 2011

13. Following an invitation from the Chairman Mrs G Walkden presented her welfare report (see Enclosure 3) which was noted by the AGM.

14. The Chairman thanked Mrs Walkden for her clear report and emphasised how important these activities were for our members. However, he also expressed concern that collectively we were not aware of all the welfare and friendship needs of our members. He encouraged all members to be conscious of potential cases and alert the committee as soon as possible.

15. The Chairman also sought the agreement of the AGM for the continuation of the Holiday Scheme for Branch Members in 2012 on the same basis as for 2011.

Proposed by Flt Lt H French and **seconded** by Mr B Horton.
Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 7 – BUDGET FOR 2012

16. The Treasurer presented his proposed budget for 2012 (as circulated in Newsletter 105), and noted that he had used round figures as it was an estimate of expenditure. The Chairman highlighted the intent to continue to draw down the Branch net assets to benefit existing members, and sought AGM approval for the 2012 budget as at Enclosure 4 as the basis for Committee budget planning.

Proposed by Wg Cdr G Ward and **seconded** by Father W Peeters.
Carried Unanimously.

17. Gp Capt (Ret'd) J Stevenson asked for an update on status of life membership which had been introduced in the 1980's, but was discontinued in 2001 in an effort to enhance annual income. The Chairman informed the AGM that there was concern at the National level that the current cost of servicing membership (e.g. through the publication of Air Mail), was higher than the annual income from membership fees, and that the Spring National Conference would seek approval for Central Council to conduct a study and make recommendations. The Chairman reminded the AGM that donations were always gratefully received! The Treasurer added that for the Belgian Branch it had been agreed a while ago that membership fees would be simplified with only 2 rates, yearly or 4 yearly, but that the current rates would need to be reviewed by the Committee during the year.

ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18. No other business had been notified, and the Chairman closed the meeting by thanking all who had attended, and noting that the Branch remained in good heart and continued to provide valuable welfare and comradeship support to the members.

Mar 12

Enclosures:

1. Chairman's Address.
2. Treasurer's Statement of Account 2011 (not included – see Newsletter 105 pages 6 to 10)
3. Honorary Welfare Officer's Report.
4. Branch Budget for 2012.

ITEM 3 –CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

The AGM has 3 roles: to provide a stock-take of our Branch for the past year, to agree the Committee for 2012, and to provide the Committee with guidance on the priorities and activities for the coming year. Let me set the scene with some overall remarks on both past and future activities before we go through the details under the subsequent agenda items.

The background to activities in 2011 were the decisions made by the AGM last year that I have just mentioned under Agenda Item 2, namely that enhanced subsidies should be made available to support branch friendship as well as welfare requirements, and that the Committee should conduct affairs to aim for a capital reduction of 3,500 Euros during the year.

As you may have spotted from the overall summary of accounts published in Newsletter 105, the Committee did very well and in fact exceeded this target and our Net Asset Surplus was reduced by some 4,500 Euros to now stand at the very healthy sum of nearly 19,000 Euro. The Treasurer will give more details in his report under Item 5, but to me, this is good news, in that I feel that it is fully in accordance with the spirit of the AGM discussion last year. The proposals we will discuss for the Budget 2012 under Item 7 continue this approach and I commend them to you.

You will all, I trust, have enjoyed the reports of our events last year in the Newsletters: we try to make these as comprehensive and informative as possible so that they strike a chord with the wider membership. In particular, I think the excellent quality of the photographic printing that is now available at reasonable cost, plus the opportunities for electronic distribution, really enhance the value of the reports.

I would just like to highlight the 'Home Run' Friendship Reception in August to show how the Committee has endeavoured to meet the AGM remit. This was a bit of a last minute affair where cyclists from 78 Sqn RAF re-enacted the Second World War escape of one of its pilots from Netherlands to Spain down the Comet Line. Since it gave an ideal opportunity for our members to meet with Comet and Royal British Legion colleagues as well as with the 'young' from 78 Sqn, we hosted a reception at the Maison des Ailes. It took a bit of 'off-the-cuff' organising, but was a very successful event involving over 50 people.

The Branch has also had the honour and pleasure to support a number of Air Force associated events in Belgium, many in association with our good colleagues from the Comet Line and the RBL as well as the Vieilles Tiges of the Belgian Air Force, the Association of Belgians in the RAF and SAAF 1940—45, and the 'Wings of Memory' group. I would like to give a special word of thanks to our Standard Bearer Jean-Pierre Blanckaert, he attends many of these events, both with others and sometimes as our sole representative. Always he adds a very special touch and really 'flies the flag' in honour of the Branch and the wider Association. J-P well done, and very many thanks.

Sadly we have also been represented at a number of funerals of colleagues in past year (we heard the names at the beginning). Our Standard Bearer as well as stalwart friends, like Léon Rubin (retired from the committee but still very active), try to do as many of these as we can as a mark of respect from the association. The

coffin draped with the RAF Ensign, the dipped Branch Standard and the wreath of poppies is a fitting and much appreciated way to say good-bye to old colleagues. For me, I have to say that the saddest part is that I often don't get to meet those concerned before-hand: membership take note!

On the welfare front, as you will hear from our Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO) under Item 6, things have been busy, and very challenging, with new cases as well as maintaining and enhancing the support given to members. We are very lucky that our HWO, supported by her able assistant, is an expert at not only using our Branch funds wisely, but also at persuading the RAF Benevolent Fund to provide support where appropriate. I am sure that we have very much met the direction of last year's AGM to enhance our welfare and friendship support, and thanks to Ghislaine's hard work, this has really made a difference to a number of our members.

Turning to this year and bringing together the events, including the funerals, and the welfare activity, my intention, subject to your support and guidance, is to continue to do what we can to reach the greatest number of our members and to provide them the opportunities for friendship/comradeship matched to their abilities, and to target welfare support on all those that need it. To achieve these ambitions, whilst still pulling our weight with the Association as a whole, we will need to strive even harder with our fund raising events and the Committee plans some extra efforts to enhance the Barry Horton Memorial Golf Match on 29 June, and the Wings Appeal in September. Everyone will also be aware that this is Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee, and we are working with the British Embassy to see how best this unique event may be commemorated. Suggestions are very welcome!

Lastly let me talk about the administrators of the Branch: your committee. Of course, we lost our dear friend Charles Dumont during the year and I would like to record our special thanks for the outstanding support that he gave to the Branch over many years: he left a big hole which is very hard to fill. Additionally, our Vice-Chairman Gp Capt Jon Hill is standing-down to enable him to give appropriate priority to his NATO operational activities and I would like to thank him for his efforts in support of the Branch.

However, as you will have seen from the Item 4 handout, we have excellent, highly qualified volunteers to take up the vacant posts. I should mention a proposed change to the Committee structure to bring us really into the 21st Century by creating a post of Branch Webmaster: I feel that this is a really good move and will enable us to bring our current and historic Branch information to a wider audience.

Finally, I would like to close by personally thanking all the members of the committee for their outstanding dedication to duty and their willingness to brave sometimes awful weather and challenging arrangements to devote time to the committee, Walter, David, Ghislaine, Deborah, Brigitte and Hannah.

We will address all the details under subsequent agenda items, so I would like to close this agenda item and move on, but if there are any burning issues?

ITEM 6 - RAFA BELGIAN BRANCH WELFARE REPORT TO AGM 15 MARCH 2012

Since the last AGM the Welfare activities have been carried by Deborah Whittingham and I.

As was indicated in our Annual Case Worker Welfare Report for HQ, in 2011, we have been busier than previously, with 19 home visits and over 200 telephone, mail, postal and contacts other than visits, to a dozen cases all around the country.

We are in regular contacts with all of them – either by phone and/or visits.

We have two new cases requiring much help to try sorting their very serious financial problems, these involving contacts with the Municipal and Governmental Social Services as well as with the family living abroad, and with possible funding sources outside the Branch.

The Branch has also organized the holiday scheme in Ostend in accordance with the guidelines agreed at the last AGM.

One a financial basis:

- We are very grateful to the **RAF Benevolent Fund** for its consent support, even in extending and upgrading the maintenance allowances to two deserving clients.

- From our branch funds we have covered:

- Christmas gifts as explained here under;
- Membership to RAFA for one of our paraplegic case.
- For one new case, the payment of a bailiff order for long overdue invoices.
- Part of the holiday scheme
- Part of the expenses for the Christmas lunch.

As far as visits, social contacts and other activities are concerned:

We are trying in the best possible manner to acknowledge queries and problems put to us.

- The traditional Christmas visits took place as usual in December in Brugge, Ostend, Ligny, Waterloo. On these Christmas visits we are as usual giving a small Christmas hamper and to the most deserving, financial gifts as indicated in the Treasurer report. These were greatly appreciated.

Holiday scheme

As decided at the 2011 AGM, we organized in September the holiday scheme in Ostend; only 2 participants took advantage of this offer. A friendship lunch was organized in Ostend on this occasion; this was attended by the participants to the holiday as well as by two members from Brugge and members of the Committee.

For the future, subject to this AGM approval, the Committee wishes to renew this experience and offer to all members the opportunity to take part in this scheme and the funding up to 50% on the hotel bill. The cost for such a stay, half board in a single room amount to approximately € 800.- per person; € 550.- per person sharing a double room.

In closing this report Deborah and I invite members to be alert to welfare and friendship needs and to let us know where we might have the opportunity to help.

We wish to thank all the members for their continuous support and for the financial contributions without wish we could not give the help needed.

Ghislaine Walkden

Deborah Whittingham

Brussels 5 March 2012.

ITEM 7 – BUDGET FOR 2012**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

AVRO LANCASTER ND700 OF 103 SQUADRON MEMORIAL AT MALLE

Organised by AERO PARA CLUB der KEMPEN (APCK) on May 4, 2012.

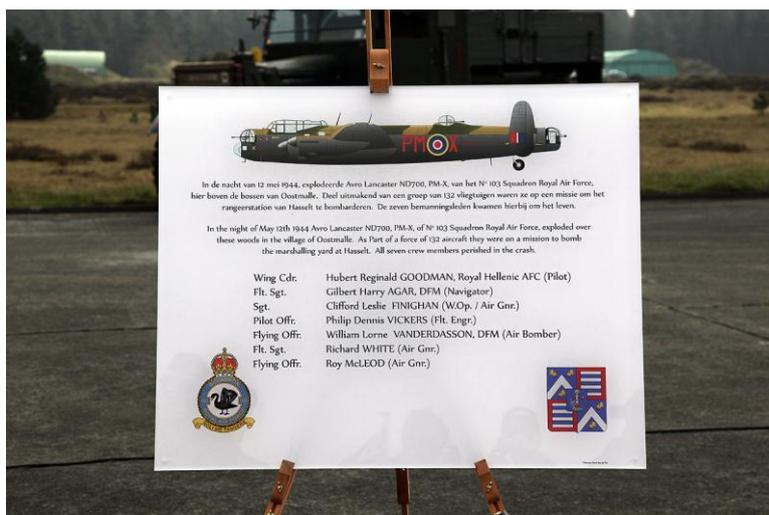
Excerpt from the Invitation, by courtesy of the APCK:

“In the night of May 12, 1944, a British RAF Bomber, the Avro Lancaster ND700 PM-X of the 103 Squadron, crashed while burning in the woods between Blommerschot and Heihuizen, near the Town of Malle.

To commemorate this event, the Town of Malle with the Association Aero-Para Club der Kempen (APCK) will hold a Memorial on the 4th of May 2012 at the Airfield of Malle, at 12.30 sharp.

During the Memorial a Commemorative Plaque will be unveiled. Various next of kin and friends have been invited and some of them will attend the Memorial.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Organisation will send the only still flying Avro Lancaster to make a few fly-by's escorted by Belgian F16's.”



The Avro Lancaster ND700 PM-X had a full experienced crew, led by Wing Commander F/O Florent VAN ROLLEGHEM born 1912 at Dendermonde. However, on the 12 May 44, the captain was ill, and his crew was led on its last mission by Wing Commander Hubert Reginald GOODMAN, Royal Hellenic AFC.

Crew:

Flt. Sgt.	Gilbert Harry AGAR, DFM (Navigator)
Sgt.	Clifford Leslie FINIGHAN (W.Op./Air Gnr.)
Pilot Offr.	Phillip Dennis VICKERS (Flt. Engr.)
Flying Offr.	William Lorne VANDERDASSON, DFM (Air Bomber)
Flt. Sgt.	Richard WHITE (Air Gnr.)
Flying Offr.	Roy McLEOD (Air Gnr.)

The ceremony on 4 May 12 was well organised and attended by Embassy Delegates of Great-Britain, Canada and South Africa. Delegations from the Royal Air Force, the Belgian Air Force, Belgian Army, RAFA Belgian Branch, RBL Brussels and many local organisations also attended. Our Standard Bearer of RAFA, Belgian Branch, Jean-Pierre Blanckaert and the Standard Bearer of RBL Brussels (*see opposite*) showed the importance for our British Associations.



Father Walter Peeters giving the exhortation

At the important moments of the ceremony a bagpiper underlined the dignity of this commemoration. A poem made by a RBL Antwerp Branch member, was being read by him to set the right spirit of this Memorial. The distinguished Mayor of Malle started speaking, followed by the Delegates. The Commemorative Plaque was unveiled and the wreaths were laid. Ours was laid by RAFA member Mr John Sutherland. An exhortation by the RAFA Chaplain was followed by the trumpet sound of Reveille.

Members of 'Wings of Memory' from Geraardsbergen took a very large part in the impeccable screenplay of the ceremony. It was a dignified Memorial event. Every possible detail had been taken care of. The welcome was particularly friendly, as was the following reception. There was a display of Lancaster parts found after diligent search. The fly-by of a Lancaster was delayed for two hours, due to the appalling weather conditions on the British Channel.

FATHER PEETERS - MEMORIES OF WAR IN BELGIUM

In fact in this area tens of RAF Bombers Avro Lancaster crashed during World War II. Little accurate information was available as the enemy covered up as much as possible and also took hold of the remains and of specific items belonging to the planes. After Liberation in 1944 till May 1945, hundreds of V1's were shot down by our brave Spitfire Crews, and crashed in the same region. They had been aimed to London and to Antwerp Seaport, and happily most of them failed on their way.

Malle Airfield, like tens of other Belgian Airfields, was taken over by the enemy after invasion. Personally, I vividly remember the whereabouts of Deurne Airfield, near Antwerp. My parents' house was situated in a neighbourhood about two miles west of this Airfield. On May 10, 1940, at 04.00 a blitz bomb attack was made by Stuka's (Junkers Ju 87) in this area. There were few casualties, but enormous damage on roof tops and window panes. We all rushed into the cellar waiting for the worst to come. Our dog Jacky remained in a tenant room and for fear he hid between a cupboard and the wall. He was so solidly blocked that we had to remove the cupboard to free him afterwards.

Shortly afterwards the enemy took over the Airfield and stationed their Stuka and Messerschmitt B7 109 fighters, Heinkel and Focke-Wulf bombers. Then the dog got accustomed to their roaring sound. But when from 1941 on, Squadrons of Lancaster bombers flew over on mission, the dog ran very fast into the cellar, even a few minutes earlier than the sound of sirens. It was the signal for all of us to shelter. In fact some bombings by Lancaster planes were made on Antwerp Seaport, 3.5 miles north west from us. Most of time Lancaster bombers were en route for Germany. The dog distinguished the difference of sounds: being used to low flying German aircraft, he felt the other humming far off sound as a risk of bombing! My family used to sleep in the cellar until May 1945. The very last year damage was caused by German V1 flying bombs and by V2 rockets. Window panes and tiles had to be "fixed" regularly, often by provisional wooden boards. Our greatest fear from 1941 to 1944, arose from the Allied daylight bombing, which sadly killed hundreds of Belgian civilians whilst trying to destroy enemy installations in occupied territory. For example, attacks on railway junctions at rush hour caused many civilian casualties, and another time in Mortsel (a borough nearby), nearly 1000 Belgian civilians, including over 200 children (one of them a distant cousin of mine), were killed as a result of a raid on a German factory which escaped with virtually no damage.

A few times only I could spot dog-fighting overhead. These were my wartime air bound souvenirs from 8 to 13 years old.

After liberation by British and Canadian Forces in Antwerp, there happened to be a British Artillery unit in action, a few hundred yards away from my parents. They were shooting onto German positions at the other side of the Albert Canal. It lasted for about six weeks. With some friends of mine we went to say 'hello' to the soldiers, although I didn't know any word of English. They were very friendly and offered us chocolate! While standing nearby there I heard them talk, and as you know: children are very efficient tape recorders... When my father came back from his office at night I 'rehearsed' my vocabulary of the daytime. My father spoke quite well English, and as soon as he heard what I had said he cried out: "Never say that again!!!" A couple of years later I understood his concern and why he hadn't been proud of his young son!

W. Peeters

The Chronicle of a Passer By

By Edward Harty Elliot Hearn

Editor's Note:

This sixth episode of our Branch Honorary Co-President's 'Chronicle' as transcribed by Gp Capt (Ret'd) Mike Connor, contains extracts from Part 2 Chapter 4 covering our hero's initial experiences in India at the close of WW2. Please see Newsletter 101 for the Contents List.

PART TWO – 1940 -1946

4. Discovering India

Via the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean, Bombay was some 7,000 miles by ship from the west coast of England. Before boarding the SS Andes in January 1945, I had spent a short time at a place called Halfpenny Green, near Wolverhampton, to where I had been posted to undertake a Flying Instructors Course. The odd name typified the rural character of the Station. Our visits to Wolverhampton were a delight. For the first time in many years we were able to go to concerts and to the theatre. It was there, at Halfpenny Green, that I was asked to take up a post in India. Although it was another theatre of war, the vacancy was for a Senior Instructor on a training base for operations in South East Asia. Promotion was offered as an incentive.

Just before embarking on the P&O ship, I read in the Daily Telegraph an extract from the London Gazette dated the 16th of January, which stated that I had been awarded a Bar to my Distinguished Flying Cross. This was celebrated at sea where I shared a four berth cabin with three agreeable companions.

Our ship was packed with service personnel of all ranks, together with some civilians taking up administrative posts in Asia or returning to the East after home leave. The journey took six weeks. It was understandable that many romances blossomed, reached a tempo by the Red Sea, then decreased in passion as we approached the Indian Ocean and Bombay, the 'Gateway to India'. Apart from several alerts, our journey was pleasant with balmy nights and, once in the Mediterranean, sunlit days. At dusk we could see groups of dolphins rising and dipping in the sea, glistening in the golden spread of the setting sun.

Passing Port Said, we were surrounded by bum boats plying their wares, purchases being hauled up on ropes slung to our ship's rails. This was stopped by concentrated water from a dozen hoses which drenched the small craft and their occupants. It may have been necessary, but it was not an incident one could be proud of. The only time we were allowed to leave the ship in all that long voyage was at Port Tewfik, the docks adjoining the town of Suez. Even then we had to disembark in groups with the warning that we should not stray off alone in the desert or travel outside our groups. Between the docks and the town nothing embellished the vast amount of sand, so we settled for a game of football.

The sea level canal across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt and extending to Port Said in the north, a distance of a hundred miles, was opened in 1869 and the fascination of this engineering success was greater than the blank and torrid banks – apart from the pyramids. There was life on the canal with its many colourful ships and this made a contrast to the sparsely inhabited banks on either side. We never ventured into the town of Suez (a

departure point for Mecca) because we had no time, but we might have been able to have a better judgement of the area had we been able to see that trading centre.

Nothing could describe our arrival in Bombay better than the words of John Keay in his book, "Into India"¹. He wrote, "Bombay hangs like a drooping claw about to pick at the Konkan Coast. The wrist is so narrow and marshy that there are only two roads out of the City. Both are appallingly congested but most of the City's expansion is taking place to the North on what is in fact another island. The men working on the downtown skyscrapers would certainly object to living out there; it's much too far to walk and what Indian labourer has ever been able to afford transport or contractor to supply it? A further complication is that like so much of Bombay's population, the labourers do not really belong here. When the monsoon comes in June, most of them move off to their villages in the Deccan. Why should anyone bother about housing for those who are not permanent residents? 'To know her is to love her' says the Bombay sightseers' brochure. 'To see her once is to want to see her again and again. Some call her heartless. They forget how she opens her heart to the thousands who flock to her with their dreams. They forget that never does she deny sanctuary to even the humblest of the humble.'"

The luxurious apartments on Malabar Hill contrast sharply with the overcrowded City centre. John Keay says, quite rightly, "Stuck in the middle of a piece of Indian suburbia is like stumbling on a cattle market in the middle of Hounslow".

Even staying a night in the marble splendour of the Taj Mahal Hotel did not prevent me getting stomach trouble. This seemed to happen to almost all new European arrivals and, having been warned, we were not surprised. Even so, arriving in this vast country of 550 million people with its 2,900 large towns and cities and 567,000 villages, my first impression was not of an unwelcome foreigner and I was to learn that amongst the strange mixture of wealth and poverty, the 'exotic and unspeakable', there was an inner warmth in the Indian character which had to be experienced to be appreciated.

I was introduced to this new experience during the long train journey from Bombay to Calcutta passing Nagpur and Raiper on the way. The journey of over a thousand miles was not boring or tiring and the three days passed quickly enough. The morning stops were lively interludes, breakfasting on hard-boiled eggs and ripe fleshy mango fruit. The morning station stops, usually about 7 o'clock, saw thriving crowds milling about on the platforms, and a good many of the Indian passengers, men and women, unwound their saris and dhotis and took a morning bath under the water gushing from the rubber pipes used to supply water to the puffing locomotives. The hot breeze dried their clothes before they rewound them and reboarded the train. The beauty of the mornings were also magnified by the glorious colour from the sun over the countryside – vast country with scattered villages and seemingly happy people toiling in the rice fields.

The main airfield in Calcutta was Dum Dum Airport, but my destination at Amarda Road was to the north, way out in the bush. There was a small village near to the airbase and most of the male inhabitants were employed on the station but, apart from that, we were an isolated community of some 1,500 airmen. There were no social facilities at all, an all male station with frugal meals, Liberator and single-engined training aircraft. The main relaxation was the afternoon bath taken in tubs on the verandas followed by a siesta in the airless heat of the afternoons.

Our occasional visits to Calcutta were centred round the Grand Hotel, it being the only place distancing itself from the hubbub surrounding it. Again, John Keay describes the scene with terrifying accuracy: "Fortunately privacy is not something which Indians value. No streets in the world are as crowded as those of Calcutta, Bombay and Old Delhi. Not just the pavements but the road itself is alive with people, so many and at first glance so alike in their shapeless white clothes, that one is revolted. To stand at 9.30 a.m. on London Bridge

¹ "Into India", John Keay, John Murray Publishers.

and watch the well drilled phalanx of suited city workers thunder over the Thames is an impressive sight. But the crowds in India are different. Their apparent lack of purpose and discipline, their uncoordinated chaos is as disturbing as the teeming confusion of a flattened ant hill. Once you can identify the cloying sweetness of jasmine or the not unpleasant smoke of burning cow dung, the air becomes friendly and exciting. Once you can distinguish the sweet seller and the fortune teller, the Brahmin and the untouchable, the Tamil and the Punjabi, these very crowds start to dissolve and you glory in the diversity and excitement of the Indian concourse. It makes the uniformed army of London Bridge seem dull beyond reason.”

Was it not Sinclair Lewis who watched people dying in the streets from his hotel bedroom, people lacking food because of religious taboos, whilst the sacrosanct cows roamed the streets? Cosseted within the walls of the Grand Hotel, being silently served with almost every European luxury, one tends to think “the presence of the sun you have taken for granted – just so with poverty.”

Back at Amarda Road airbase, we celebrated ‘VE’ day on the 9th of May by chasing scraggy roaming chickens which, when caught, were handed over to the cook and his assistant who then served us with an enormous curry with rice, bananas and spices. This together with liberal supplies of Australian beer doused the remorse of being a long way from Europe.

The routine days at Amarda Road which consisted of early rising, followed by lectures intermixed with flying exercises in Liberators, was interrupted at the beginning of May by a flight to Assam. Why we were detailed to go there we were never told and I do not know the reason to this day. We took on board an ancient Wing Commander who was in Intelligence. When we landed at an airfield near Sorbhog, almost on the border with Bhutan and some 240 miles south of Lasa, he disappeared and then reappeared two hours later accompanied by a sun bleached tea planter who we later learned came from the Rajgarhali Tea Estate in upper Assam. The flight north had brought us within range of the Himalayan Mountain range, an awe-inspiring and beautiful sight, something that would be there for ever and ever. Below was the Brahmaputra River, the Assam plains and river valleys.

The reappearance of the Wing Commander, now accompanied by George, the tea planter, signalled the beginning of an alcoholic bachelor evening in our temporary accommodation. Whilst a meal was being prepared, no mention was made of the Intelligence Officer’s foray and conversations on the tea estate, but we did learn that there were 750 tea gardens producing 44,000 pounds of tea a year and we were in an agricultural country where the women weaved fine silk and cotton cloths. Every Assamese house had at least one loom and every girl was required to know the art of weaving. The tea planter had been on his plantation for over thirty years, arriving from Britain at the age of twenty. He kept us amused throughout the evening with his continuous chatter as though he was revelling in the experience of being able to talk after long periods of silence – rather like some missionaries who came back to Europe after spending many years in isolation in African and Eastern countries. The following morning, we took off rather later than planned and the three hour flight back to Amarda Road was carried out in almost total silence in contrast to the chatter of the previous evening.

Back on the Station, the Flight Commander of the Fighter Training Squadron, the ‘Duke’ as we called him, had bad news for us. In our absence, one of our Liberator aircraft had not returned from a training flight and there had not been any distress signals. Another Liberator had been sent up and a search over the dense jungle revealed no trace. A search party then went out and was away for four days before they found the wreckage. No reason could be established as to the cause of the crash and all seven on board were found within the wreckage. The search party brought the seven dead airmen back and later we buried them in a silent ceremony in this far country, thousands of miles from their homes and families.

We had no time to dwell on this tragedy because we were almost immediately detailed to carry out a liaison mission to Ceylon. The eight of us on the aircraft landed at Trincomalee after a three hour flight. There we had been invited to lunch by the Commander of a Free Dutch Naval Squadron. Being warned of our arrival, lunch had been prepared in the open and we found that the Dutch had imported the Indonesian style of eating. After introductions, we sat down with the Dutch Commander and twenty five of his officers. They were all impeccably dressed and we were to find that the Dutch abroad carried their discipline with them over lunch breaks. It was a very formal meal with numerous delicate dishes served by turbaned servants. The warm and composed Dutch spoke in perfect English with his guests, clearly anxious to gather news for his companions who must have been among the first to leave their country at the outbreak of hostilities.

After lunch, we departed for Colombo, our main destination. There, we made our way to our pre-arranged accommodation organised by the Navy. Ever curious, the first thing that caught our eye was the Notice Board in the entrance foyer. Amongst the orders and communications pinned on the board, the one that caught our immediate attention was signed by the Commandant of the local Women's Royal Naval Establishment. We could hardly believe the written message. It quite clearly said that if visiting officers would like company for an evening out, the Commandant should be personally contacted. We lost no time in doing this and it was soon arranged that we should have eight partners for a dinner date at the Galle Face Hotel the following evening.

Showered and shaved, dressed in our best khaki, we duly turned up at the prescribed time. There we found eight Wrens in white blouses and blue uniforms, demurely anticipating the preliminary cautious introductions. Once at table, in the comparative luxury of the Galle Face Hotel, the conversation soon became lively as the wining and dining progressed. The ladies were delightful and conversable dinner companions until the stroke of midnight. Obviously following orders, the lady officer looking after the group gathered her flock together, making sure that they were safely chaperoned back to their billets.

The next morning we were due to meet the local Naval Commander following a previously arranged appointment. After rising early, whilst dressing, I suddenly found that all my rank insignia were missing. The buttons on the epaulettes were unfastened and the rank rings removed. A hurried call to my companions found that they had suffered the same fate. Our delightful dinner companions had somehow contrived to strip all of us of our rank – a feat which must have been practised with great skill on many occasions, especially when targeted on young Air Force officers!

I had the feeling that the Naval Commander was in on the conspiracy because I detected a hidden knowledgeable smile as he directed his attention to the most junior officer amongst us as though not being able to distinguish the senior spokesman in our group. Once we had been able to sort out this embarrassing situation, the Naval Commander arranged for us to visit Galle, on the south-west tip of the island. We went in two cars to the most delightful untouched beach, where we lunched on the veranda of a bungalow surrounded by large lizards of enormous size and comparable to miniature dinosaurs. The sands and the blue of the sea at Galle compare very favourably with any Mediterranean coastline mainly because the crowds were absent and the beach devoid of any manmade intrusion. Loin-clothed fishermen were dragging large nets off the coast, their golden bodies contrasting with the glitter rising from the sea. Their womenfolk and children were gathered in small groups on the sands, chattering and laughing under the warmth of the sun.

The following day we returned to Amarda Road, the long flight passing over the Bay of Bengal, then Calcutta and the Howrah Bridge carrying its endless throng of people and traffic. There a letter awaited me. It had been addressed to Adastral House in London and forwarded out to this distant Station in India. The contents of the letter, written by the distressed mother of one of the crew who had been killed in the aircraft that fell in Normandy, was a cry of despair. Why – she wrote – was I alive and well whilst her son was

buried in a foreign ground north of the Seine? The letter, in its anguish, was the mother's imagination of what her son must have suffered, but its meaning was her own unbearable suffering. I read the letter many times, each time adding to my own mental pain to the point where I knew I could not answer her many questions. I handed the letter over to the Station Commander, but never knew whether or not he was able to reply on my behalf. I could not help that poor mother and I doubt that anyone could have consoled her in her grief.

Just before the announcement of the end of the war with Japan, my tour of duty at Amarda Road came to an end and I received notification of a posting to Ranchi, in the State of Bihar, in north east India, bounded by Nepal in the north, West Bengal in the east and Orissa in the south. This State's population was about the same as that of the United Kingdom, which gives some idea of its size.

Ranchi was a considerably larger Station than Amarda Road. It had some 2,000 British and Indian personnel including Headquarters staff, a large Medical Unit commanded by a Senior Medical Officer; a School of Hygiene mainly occupied with research; an Education Department staffed with nine instructors; spacious Maintenance installations; a Photographic Unit and an Instrument Section. An Indian and British Squadron had been stationed at the airfield for several years. In addition to other tasks, the airfield served as a staging post for the Army, Navy, Air Force and civil administrators, transporting men and women in and out of Burma and the north-west Frontier regions.

My new post at Ranchi was that of Station Administration Officer, second to the Commanding Officer. Shortly after my arrival, on a Sunday morning, the 2nd of September 1945, General Douglas MacArthur received the nine-man Japanese delegation on board the USS Missouri for the signature of the ceasefire and the end of the war. Unlike the celebrations following 'VE' day, the importance of the end of all hostilities was lost in the immediate thoughts of those who at long last would be going home and the unpredictable future seemed to pervade uppermost in the general mood of Ranchi Station. It was during this strange interlude between war and peace that I settled into my new surroundings, fully aware of the preparation needed for the task ahead.

My first experience of Ranchi emphasised the difference and size of that airfield in comparison to Amarda Road. A Grand Victory Inter-Service Sports Meeting took place on the Saturday after my arrival. Neighbouring Army regiments had been invited to take part including the 11th Division of the East African Regiment, the North Staffordshire Regiment, the 134th Field Regiment and the 304th East African Regiment. About 4,000 people attended, a large number being civilians and there were many ladies in bright summer dresses. At the end of the Meeting, the Governor of Bihar presented a trophy to the overall winners – the Africans, who outran and outpaced our RAF teams in almost every event.

The Station Commander who had organised that Meeting was a Group Captain but, after the signature of the Armistice with Japan, that position would later change following the new circumstances that would arise. Despite the aura created by the successful Sports Meeting, I rapidly became aware of a possible explosive situation on the Station. The first element in a possible developing crisis was the 'ongoing' Indian resistance campaign. The Indian Squadron was commanded by a Muslim and his adjutant was a Hindu. I was informed that there was great friction between the two. Moreover, the adjutant was known to be distributing Congress literature.

Then, during my first inspection of the airfield, I found that the main runway had dangerous dips at both ends, where the planes took off or touched down. The swimming pool, built two years previously, did not and never had held water. Major cracks in the walls and lack of proper waterproofing meant that as soon as water was put in it, the water seeped out. There was a continuous stream of complaints about the Station Cinema – run under contract by an Indian Parsee. Very poor silent films were being shown together with some pre-1940 films such as Pygmalion featuring Leslie Howard. The large British contingent was restless, which was natural now that the Armistices had been signed. The main topic of

conversation in the barrack rooms, bars and messes was the possibility of an early return home.

To top it all, I came to Ranchi armed with an instruction that peacetime discipline must now be enforced. This would mean tightening up on dress, initiation of dining-in nights and measures concerning hygiene and general cleanliness of barracks and surrounding areas.

The only compensatory element was that the nearby town of Ranchi afforded periods of relaxation and a change of atmosphere outside the confines of the Station. The inhabitants of Ranchi town were mostly very friendly people and after many years had become used to the large foreign settlement and their welcome custom.

With the Station Commander's approval, I decided to tackle all the immediate problems in one frontal swoop. I moved out of the large comfortable bungalow allocated to me on the fringe of the Station and offered it to the Indian Squadron Commander and his adjutant and their large families. The bungalow was so large it could be easily converted into two separate areas. The Indian Officers, despite their differences, were delighted to have accommodation which was a considerable improvement to that in which they were living, and they promptly moved into the bungalow. I hoped I would have no more trouble from that direction. I moved into a room on the Station, not far from the Mess, and was to be happier with my fellow officers compared with the isolation of the bungalow.

The swimming pool and runway were more difficult because my request for the necessary funds to repair the damage was refused. We could not dig up the whole runway after test holes discovered that there were no proper foundations and ended up by laying another thick layer of asphalt over the area where the aircraft landed and took off. The original plans detailed a substantial foundation, but the contractor had obviously ignored it. The swimming pool was a luxury and, despite efforts to seal up the cracks, it continued to leak, so it was left – a big concrete hole in the ground.

During my rounds it did not take me long to discover that the labour force, mostly women, queued up for their pay on Thursdays and, at the end of the queue, the foreman collected a percentage to compensate him for employing them. I had been warned not to stop this as it was an old Indian custom as was the cook's habit of adding an amount for his services on all shopping bills.

Settling the cinema issue created delicate problems. The Parsee from Bombay was an excellent businessman and breaking his secured tenure could, if not handled properly, burst into uncontrollable enmity. However, the string of complaints was so strong that I had to do something, so I decided to bring in the Royal Air Force Film Unit. My final meeting with the Parsee from Bombay was at his invitation, at his house, in the presence of his wife and two very beautiful daughters – the thought flashed through my mind, 'the last throw!'. When the invitation came, it could not be refused. At our previous meetings I had said that I had been 'ordered' to change the management – which I had not – and I went along to the dinner party armed only with that argument. It would serve no purpose to say that his performances were awful, out of date and not worth the entrance money. In the end, it turned out that the attitude I was confronted with was one of settling with the inevitable; my hosts were charming and I was left with a feeling of extreme embarrassment faced with the marvellous Indian trait of being able to cope with irrevocable situations with finesse.

Our Air Force Film Unit was duly appointed and our first hired film was a tremendous success. It was in colour and featured Esther Williams in 'Bathing Beauty'. Out of politeness, the replaced Parsee contractor was invited to the first showing and even he, demonstrating that he would not be accused of acting contrary to 'fair play', applauded with the rest of the audience.

In order to cope with the new peacetime conditions, I decided that the only way to combat the dangers of boredom was to keep everyone busy – preferably doing useful things

suitable to the persons engaged. We increased the education programme (Ranchi already had an Education Officer) by bringing in officers and men specialised in certain peacetime branches – banking, engineering, trades, the arts, handicrafts and leisure topics. Also, we started a huge refurbishment venture including the conversion of a building into an ecumenical church and the smartening up of billets, messes and their surrounds. We called for trade volunteers and the positive result obviously coincided with the desire of our personnel to keep active.

The real purpose of Ranchi Air Force Base still continued. Aircraft flew in and out bringing reinforcements for Burma and flying out detachments from that area. The Indian fighter squadron continued to operate, mostly on short patrols.

Dining-in nights in the Officers' Mess, part of the new disciplinary measures, soon developed into a routine, although it disrupted many young officers' private plans in that they had to reorganise their visits and rendezvous' in Ranchi town. The unrest among the British contingent simmered down although the undercurrent remained, fanned by left-wing debates reported on in the Station magazine, 'Two Six'. In the refurbished Station church, all denominations held services which were well attended. The new lectures received great support. The cinema continued to provide up to date and popular films and was giving two shows every night. In a matter of weeks, our new peacetime organisation was fully in place and working reasonably well.

I learned that the Station had been without an Adjutant for over a month and the Group Captain, who I had hardly got to know, was posted to another country and other duties. The new Station Commander, a Wing Commander, and a new Station Adjutant arrived on the airfield on the same day. I was to learn that these new arrivals were two very different officers as later events would show.

I had to explain to them all the measures that had been taken in a short period prior to their arrival – the Wing Commander taking it all very seriously, but the new Adjutant reacting with apparent unconcern. My immediate impression regarding the new Station Adjutant was that he treated the whole of life as a bit of a lark and that he was going to see out the following days as a further chapter in his humorous career. I was not to be disappointed in my first assessment of these two gentlemen. In the unfolding of the near melodrama during the next few weeks, I followed the events rather as a detached observer than an active participant.

To be Continued

BRANCH ADMINISTRATION

NEWSLETTER

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 Editor know.

MEMBERSHIP

RAFA is a charity operating for the benefit of its members: a significant source of income is the membership subscription. However, at present, overall membership income does not cover the annual costs of servicing the membership and hence at this year's National Conference, Central Council were tasked to conduct a thorough review of membership costs and to report to Branches in Jan 2013, for decision-making at the Annual Conference in Spring 2013.

For the Belgian Branch, roughly 60% of our members are life members and hence are not required to pay an annual subscription. For others, the Branch Committee set 2012 fees in Euros at the level of 22 € for one year and 60 € for 4-years: these rates apply to both ordinary and associate members. In accordance with Central Council decisions, these rates will be increased for the calendar year 2013: details will be published in Newsletter 107.

If there is a red dot on the address label of this Newsletter, then we have not received your subscription for 2012, and would ask you now to make payment of 22 € or 60 € to RAFA Belgian Branch account BE12-0000-0482-0492 (FOR MEMBERSHIP FEES).

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

WEB SITE

The RAF Association has a new website: <http://www.rafa.org.uk/>

It is the Committee's intention, under the leadership of our Branch Webmaster, to create a Belgian Branch website which follows the general layout and 'look and feel' of the main RAFA site, and which is linked to it. It is our ambition to use the Branch website to inform our members of current and future activities and matters of interest in Belgium, and also to provide a portal to archive material concerning personalities and past events (e.g. Branch Newsletters). If you have ideas concerning the material that you would like to see made available via the web-site, or if you can contribute content, please contact the Branch Webmaster (see page 2).

FUTURE EVENTS CALENDAR

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. Details are included in the poster 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. Participation by the Branch Standard Bearer is anticipated.

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

7-9 Sep 12 - Annual Comet Line Reunion at St Jean de Luz-Anglet in France.

Saturday 29 Sep 12 – inauguration of 'Wings of Memory' memorial at Lierde to mark the 70th Anniversary of the loss of RAF 57 Sqn Lancaster DX-P 57: further details will be provided in Newsletter 107.

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

12-14 Oct 12 (*NB changed date*) – European Area RAFA Conference at Amsterdam, Netherlands. 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.

Saturday and Sunday 20/21 Oct 12 - Comète Line Annual Reunion in Brussels. Saturday, visit to Ypres and Flanders Fields: Sunday, Church service and Comet Line/RAF memorials in the Koekelberg Basilique, followed by lunch.

Thursday 1 Nov 12 - Commemoration at the Belgian and RAF Memorials at the Belgian Cemetery at Evere.

Wednesday 7 Nov 12 - Veterans Reception hosted by the British Ambassador to Belgium, Jonathan Brenton, 18:00 – 20:00, Rue Ducale 17, 1000 Brussels. Entrance will be on presentation of invitation only. If you would like to attend, please contact the Branch Secretary.

Sunday 11 Nov 12 - Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday: 12:00 hrs at Holy Trinity, Brussels.

Tuesday 11 Dec 12 - 12:30 hrs, Branch Winter Lunch at the NATO Staff Centre: all Members are encouraged to attend. Costs will be supported from Branch funds in accordance with AGM guidelines.

* date to be confirmed



**RAFA CHARITY
GOLF MATCH &
BBQ**

Be part of something special

Play in the Barry Horton Memorial Golf Tournament

Duisburg Military Golf Club

Friday pm, 29th June 2012

INDIVIDUAL SINGLES STABLEFORD

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Tickets: €45 all-inclusive golf and BBQ (DMGC members € 25)

BBQ only, with aperitifs, wine and water - € 25

(Pay RAFA CCP Account BE12-0000-0482-0492, indicating **RAFA Golf** and **name(s)**. Last minute cash payments also acceptable.)

Help us raise some funds to provide welfare support for Veterans of the RAF in Belgium.

Tournament co-ordinator:

Dick Whittingham

Chairman, RAFA Belgian Branch

Tel: 0494 71 72 44

e-mail: dickwhittingham@skynet.be

