

Editor responsible
Sgt R M Jacobs

RAFA Belgian Branch
Siege Social
Maison de Ailes
Rue Montoyer 1 – bte 33
1000 Brussels

RAFA Belgian Branch Account
BE 58-0014-2061-1779

**Belgique-Belgie
PP/PB
1150 Woluwe Thielemans
2/3498
No Agregation P405263**

**Périodique trimestriel
Déposé-au bureau de poste c/e
1150 Woluwe Thielemans**



NEWSLETTER NO 119

Consolidated RAF 100 Edition 2017 - 2018

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This Newsletter can only provide a brief snap-shot of events in the RAFA Belgian Branch. For further details and to keep up to date with Branch activities, please consult the Branch website: <http://www.rafabelgianbranch.com/>



THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION
Maison des Ailes – Rue Montoyer 1-B 33-1040 Brussels
 Branch No: 0645
Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
Hon Patron: H.E. Alison Rose, British Ambassador
Branch Honorary President:
 Air Commodore J Maas CBE RAF
Vice-President
 Gp Capt R Whittingham RAF (Retd)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS – SEPT 2018

CHAIRMAN	Mr Michel de Norman et d'Audenhove
VICE-CHAIR	Wg Cdr J P R Smeaton
HONORARY CHAPLAIN	TBC
SECRETARY	Sqn Ldr Ben Goodwin
DEPUTY SECRETARY	TBC
TREASURER	Wg Cdr David Trembazowki-Ryder (Retd)
HONORARY WELFARE OFFICER (HWO)	Mrs Ghislaine Walkden
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Mrs Brigitte Horton
SHAPE RAFA LIAISON OFFICER (RAFALO)	FS Kim Jarvis
BRANCH WEBMASTER	Sgt Richard Jacobs
COMMITTEE MEMBER	Wg Cdr Ross McKenzie
COMMITTEE MEMBER	Wg Cdr Emma Thompson

COMMITTEE MEMBER	Wg Cdr Charles Howard-Vyse
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For a quick answer to any query, please contact via email rafa.belgianbranch@gmail.com or to the Secretary on 0032 (0) 707 5470, NOT via the Post Box at Rue Montoyer.

HONORARY PRESIDENTS' INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

As I pen this note to you all I realise the date is auspicious – 15th September – Battle of Britain Day ... and never does the Royal Air Force motto seem to resonate more in this our Centenary Year, as is marked in tribute at Saint Omer in the photo below (St Omer being the expeditionary home of the Royal Air Force back in 1918) “100 years of toil to reach the stars” and what a 100 years of challenge and progress it has been.



It is certainly a year to celebrate, and when we think back over the achievements made in aviation, it is a truly remarkable period for both human endeavour and technical advancement.

It is hard to imagine the challenge faced by the intrepid pioneers of the string bag generation, who braved the near impossible during the Great War. With a life expectancy in combat of forty to sixty hours, it was at times a coin toss as to survival; first the sheer danger of the flimsy craft – constructed of mainly wood and stretched fabric; then the lack of speed, altitude or stealth. To begin with, the men were un-armed and just sent up for *a bit of a look*. That said, aviation offered new opportunities to those with skills – take James McCudden- Air Mechanic to Major in under five years, remarkable in those very class-conscious day- to this day the RAF remains egalitarian.



Major James McCudden –aged 23; 57 official victories

Certainly the Battle of Britain will forever to be noted as the Service’s finest hour – immortalised by Sir Winston Churchill in highlighting the debt of the Nation to the few. Having commanded London’s Battle of Britain Station at RAF Northolt, over the years I have had the chance and privilege to meet

many who served during that period. To a man they recount their tales with an air of humility – remembering the team effort that enabled them to take to the skies. It wasn't just about pilots, aeroplanes and mechanics; it was the whole system.



Crews scramble from in front of my old office at Northolt – the Officers' Mess in the background is still in action

From the anti-aircraft battery gunners and balloonists, the radar site engineers, fighter controllers and plotters, search and rescue teams and fire fighters, right down to the NAAFI wagon drivers - all played their part. And for me it is this team spirit that has always and will always mark out the RAF family. Today in RAFA, our association goal is to reflect that family.

Here in Belgium we also have that special link with the Belgian Air Force and our dear friends in the Comete Line. We are particularly fortunate in Brussels to still have some of those who played such vital roles as active members. The Comete Line of course has its links in particular to Bomber Command. Bomber Crews were for a long time the unsung heroes of a massive effort to overturn the occupation of Europe. The Command's losses were unimaginable with mortality figures that matched those of World War One Infantry Captains - 55,573 killed out of a total of 125,000 aircrew (44.4 %), with a further 8,403 wounded in action and 9,838 becoming prisoners of war. The bravery of those taking to the skies night after night epitomises the sacrifice made; replicated here in Belgium when evaders were supported in their escape by those who knew if they were caught the penalties to them and their families would be torture and death.

If in this hundredth year we remember the aircrew, the second element must also be the technological advancement – and that acceleration has continued with each passing decade. The introduction of the jet engine, thanks to Frank Whittle, set the pace. I'll just reel off a few of the types and I am sure you will agree each reflects an era...Meteor, Vampire, Venom ... Lightning, Phantom...Valiant, Vulcan, Victor ... Bulldog, Jet Provost, Gnat ... Hunter, Hawk, Harrier...Hercules, Nimrod, VC10 ... Buccaneer, Jaguar, Tornado ...



to Typhoon, Voyager and now of course unmanned Reaper and the incoming JSF - the future looks bright.

In closing, I am delighted too, to announce that we have some new members joining the Belgian Branch Committee to take us forward into 2019. Sqn Ldr Ben Goodwin will take over from Danny Smith as our Secretary from November – Danny has been an outstanding member of the Committee and we wish him all the best in his next appointment in RAF High Wycombe. Further Wg Cdrs Emma Thompson and Charles Howard-Vyse are also set to join as members in the autumn. I will reserve also special thanks to David and Ghislaine who are true stalwarts in staggging-on as our Treasurer and Welfare officers. Brigitte too is forging a link with the 350 ATC Sqn in UK and in this newsletter you will find an update on the Barry Horton Trophy winner. In upcoming events; Michel, our Chairman, will be masterminding the RAFA European Annual Conference in Brussels between the 2-4 November and we hope as many of you as possible will join in the Gala Dinner at the Bedford Hotel on the evening of the 3 November. Ross will coordinate the placing of the Sqn Plaque in the Memorial Chapel on the 4th November in the Basilica.

May I take this opportunity to send all Members my best wishes and I look forward to seeing you at the Bedford.

As ever JM



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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN BRANCH OF THE
 ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION
 RUE MONTOYER, BRUSSELS, WEDS 18TH APR 2018**

<p>Present: Air Cdre J Maas Gp Capt (Retd) R Whittingham Mrs G Walkden Wg Cdr (Retd) Trembaczowski-Ryder Mrs B Horton Mrs D Whittingham</p>	<p>Hon President Vice-President Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO) Deputy Treasurer Membership Sec Branch Member</p>
<p>Apologies: Mr M de Norman Wg Cdr R Smeaton Mr L Rubin Sgt D Smith</p>	<p>Chairman Deputy Chairman Secretary</p>

<p>ITEM 1 - DEDICATION</p> <p>1. The Hon President welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those who were attending their first AGM.</p> <p>2. At the invitation of the Hon President, the meeting stood as Gp Capt Whittingham, on behalf of the Honorary Chaplain, 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 <u>we will remember them.</u>), and remembered those who had passed away since the previous AGM.</p>
<p>ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 2017 EGM</p> <p>3. The Hon President advised that no comments had been received on the minutes of the AGM and sought approval of those minutes as published on the website.</p> <p>Proposed by Wg Cdr (Retd) Trembaczowski-Ryder and seconded by Mrs G Walkden</p> <p>Carried Unanimously</p>

ITEM 3 – CHAIRMAN’S ADDRESS

4. In the absence of the Chairman, the Hon President delivered the address. He began by reminding those present that the purpose of the Association is to keep the memory of those who served in the RAF.

5. The Hon President reiterated that activities should provide a link between active members and those who need support, and that the Association is organised by volunteers who are doing whatever they can do to support the Association.

6. He went on to explain that in the coming few months, there need to be discussions about how to take the Belgian Branch forward, and noted that in order to meet the requirements of RAFA and Belgian law, the Branch Committee needs to have - at a minimum - a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

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

7. The following seeks re-election as Branch Vice-President:

Gp Capt (Retd) R J Whittingham

Proposed by Mrs B Horton and **seconded** by Mrs G Walkden

Carried unanimously

8. The following seek election/re-election as Officers of the Branch:

Air Cdre J D Maas	President
Mr M de Norman	Chairman
Wg Cdr R Smeaton	Vice-Chairman
<i>No nomination</i>	Treasurer
Wg Cdr (Retd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder	Deputy Treasurer
Sgt D Smith, Secretary	Secretary

Proposed by Gp Capt (Retd) Whittingham and **seconded** by Mrs B Horton

Carried unanimously

9. The following seek election/re-election as members of the Branch Committee:

Mrs G Walkden	Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO)
Mrs B Horton	Membership Secretary
Wg Cdr R McKenzie	Committee Member

Proposed by Wg Cdr (Retd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder and **seconded** by Air Cdre J Maas

Carried unanimously

10. The following are co-opted/appointed and not subject to ratification:

Rev (Wg Cdr) Mitchell, SHAPE Padre	Honorary Chaplain
Sgt R Phillips	SHAPE RAFALO
FS K Jarvis	SHAPE Deputy RAFALO

11. The following resignations have been tendered:

- FS M Bowen, SHAPE RAFALO

ITEM 5 – TREASURER’S REPORT / APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS 2017

12. Following an invitation from the Hon President, Wg Cdr Trembaczowski-Ryder presented the Treasurer’s Report and the 2017 accounts, which are reproduced at Enclosures 1 & 2 to these minutes.

13. The Hon President noted the excellent and accurate job the Dep Treasurer had done, and sought the approval of the AGM for the 2017 Accounts.

Proposed by Mrs B Horton and **seconded** by Mrs G Walkden

Carried Unanimously.

14. The Hon President 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 Gp Capt (Retd) D Whittingham and **seconded** by Mrs B Horton

Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 6 – WELFARE REPORT 2017 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2018

15. In the Welfare Report (see Enclosure 3), Mrs G Walkden detailed the many and varied cases she had been involved with over the last year.

16. The AGM was asked to endorse the report and proposals.

Proposed by Mrs B Horton and **seconded** by Wg Cdr (Retd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder

Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 7 – BUDGET 2018

17. The Dep Treasurer presented the proposed budget for 2018.

18. The Vice-President asked whether the Branch expects to receive any funds from the European Area in respect of various expenses that may arise during the Autumn Conference. The Dep Treasurer said that he will investigate this query.

19. The Membership Sec asked how much money is claimed by RAFA HQ from the membership fees paid by Branch members. The Dep Treasurer confirmed that those monies are deducted from the UK accounts.

20. The Hon President thanked the Dep Treasurer and sought AGM approval for the 2018 budget, as at Enclosure 4, to form the basis for Committee budget planning.

Proposed by Gp Capt (Retd) D Whittingham and **seconded** by Mrs B Horton

Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Donations

21. In response to a query lodged before the meeting by Mrs Robins, it was confirmed that the Branch makes donations to the Wings appeal (£3500 in 2017) but does not make donations to the RAF Benevolent Fund. However, donations to the Branch are also used for our welfare cases; in 2017 €1348 was spent to support Branch members and their families.

European Conference, Autumn 2018

22. The Hon President indicated that a meeting should be called in early May to discuss the organisation of the forthcoming European Conference.

Branch Committee

23. The Hon President stated that he would like to review the structure of the Branch Committee. The Secretary will advise the Hon President about RAFA Branch Regulations concerning committees.

ITEM 9 – CLOSING REMARKS

24. The Hon President thanked everyone for their attendance and continued support, and closed the meeting.

25. The next AGM will be held in Brussels in March 2019. Date and location TBC.

Enclosures:

1. Treasurer's Report.
2. Treasurer's Statement of Accounts 2017
3. Welfare Report
4. Branch Budget for 2018

AGM 2018 - Accounts 2017 Treasurer's Report

Comparison between 2016 and 2017 Annual Accounts:

1. The total surplus is reduced compared to 2016 because of a 4000 euros contingency for staging the 2018 RAF Autumn Conference (counted as a liability) . It is not known at this stage whether this contingency will be needed. The Surplus at the end of 2016 was 25,705.62, while the estimated surplus at the end of 2017 is 19,870.49
2. The Welfare Account is somewhat reduced from 2016, but this is not a worry because whenever funds are needed for welfare then money is transferred from the current account. The RAF rules do not allow funds in the Welfare Account to be transferred to other accounts for general use and therefore the Branch Committee decided that it was better to have flexibility in the current account.
3. The Deposit Account is stable at around 15,500 euros
4. The UK Account is stable at around 1,000 euros.
5. The Branch Committee reviews the accounts at every meeting (4-5 times per year) and adjusts each account depending upon circumstances.
6. Funds are used for welfare and friendship, as well as running costs of the branch.

I commend the accounts to the AGM

AGM 2018 – Budget 2018 Treasurers' Report

1. `The main item on the draft budget is the contingency for the RAFA Autumn Conference (4000 euros)
2. All other income and expenditure items are in line with previous years.
3. There are normal fluctuations in expected income (donations and Wings Appeal).
4. There are minor fluctuations in expected expenditure, except for the contingency for the Autumn Conference.

I commend the budget for 2018 to the AGM

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2017**

Net Asset Surplus at 01/01/2017	24,130.48
 Assets and Liabilities as at 31/12/17	
Assets	Euros
CCP (BPost)	106.11
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Deposit)	15,539.83
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Current)	8,138.67
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Welfare)	584.43
HQ Account (UK) ¹	1,034.80
Petty Cash 0.00	
 TOTAL ASSETS	 25,403.84
Liabilities	
Barry Horton Memorial Fund	1,340.50
Tax return (2016)	102.85
RAFA Autumn Conference Contingency	4,000.00
RAFA Post Box	60.00
BAFA subscription	30.00
 TOTAL LIABILITIES	 5,533.35
 Net Asset Surplus as at 31/12/2017	 <u>19,870.49</u>

¹ Exchange rate 31/12/17

1 GBP = 1.12409 EUR

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2017**

CCP Bank Account (BPost) (Old Branch Current Account)	Euros
Opening balance 01/01/17	<u>157.85</u>
Income	Euro
Total Income:	Nil
Expenditure	
Bank Charges	51.74
Total Expenditure:	<u>51.74</u>
Closing Balance 31/12/17	<u>106.11</u>

BNP Paribas Fortis (Deposit Account – BE78 .0354.3978 3186)	Euros
Opening Balance 01/01/17	<u>15,523.48</u>
Income:	
	Interest 16.35
Expenditure:	Nil
Closing balance 31/12/17	15,539.83

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2017**

BNP Paribas Fortis (Current Account - BE58.0014.2061.1779)	Euros
Opening balance 01/01/17	<u>9,166.09</u>
Income	Euro
Subscriptions	425.00
Donations	1,020.00
99 Not Out	2,010.00
Wings Appeal (SHAPE)	2,855.26
Christmas Lunch 2017	345.00
Total	<u>6,655.26</u>
Total (Opening balance plus income 2017):	<u>15,821.35</u>
Expenditure:	
2016 Xmas Lunch	448.00
2017 Xmas Lunch	468.00
Wings Appeal (2017)	3,500.00
99 Not Out	2,673.50
350 Sqn ATC Cadet Award	200.00
Sub Total	7,289.50
Branch Expenses:	
Les Maisons subscription	30.00
Bank Charges	36.00
RAFA Post Box (2016/2017)	120.00
Newsletter postage	107.35
Accountant – Tax Return 2016	99.83
Sub-Total	393.18
Total Expenditure	<u>7,682.68</u>
Closing Balance 31/12/17	<u>8,138.67</u>

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2017**

BNP Paribas Fortis (New Welfare Account- BE81.0017.1142.1924)	Euros
Start Balance – 01/01/2017	<u>2,946.77</u>
Income	
Refund overpayment of Welfare expenses	240.35
Total Income	240.35
Expenditure	
Welfare Xmas (2016)	1,080.70
Welfare visit expenses (2016)	136.87
Welfare Xmas (2017)	1,247.32
Welfare visit expenses (2017)	101.80
Bank Charges	36.00
Total Expenditure	2,602.69
Closing balance 31/12/17	<u>584.43</u>

HQ Account (UK)	GBP	Euros
Opening balance 01/01/2016	944.77	1,096.15
Income:		
Subscription Income	16.80	
Total	16.80	
Expenditure:		
Subscriptions to HQ	41.00	
Total Expenditure	41.00	
Closing balance 31/12/16	920.57	1,034.80²

² Exchange rate £/Euro: 31/12/2017

1 GBP = 1.12409 EUR

REPORTS ON PAST EVENTS

Fateful Crew of Lancaster NN775 of 514 Squadron Commemorated



On the 05 March 1945, only 3 days short of VE day, Avro Lancaster NN775 took off from RAF Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire on a bombing mission over Gelsenkirchen but never returned.

The 514 squadron aircraft came down in circumstances unknown in a Belgian field near the Flemish village of Bunsbeek. All seven aircrew were killed in the incident and what could be found of the remains of the airmen at the time were buried in a single grave at Heverlee war cemetery. The large hole created by the crash, which quickly filled with water, was then filled in by a farmer.

On 11 Nov 2016 work began by the Plane hunters Group and the Belgium Aviation History Association Archaeology team (BAHAAT) to excavate the wreckage of NN775, with the permission of the Flemish official archaeological board. They found the Lancaster was still buried but in a badly damaged state.



From Left to Right

Pilot: F/O Holman Kerr (23, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland)

Air bomber: F/O Frank Clarke

Navigator: FS Sidney Smith (21)

Wireless Operator: FS Allan Olsen RAAF (20, Toowoomba, Australia)



From Left to Right

Mid Upper Gunner: Sgt Christopher Hogg (20, South Yardley, Birmingham, England)

Rear Gunner: Sgt Herbert Thomas (23, Jamaica)

Flight Engineer: Sgt William Marsden (20, Croston, England)



Amongst the articles found relating to the crew was a wristwatch, oxygen mask, a uniform cap and British coins. Once the aircraft and any remains were fully exhumed it was fitting to have a reburial commemoration service at the Heverlee war cemetery

Amongst the articles found relating to the crew was a wristwatch, oxygen mask, a uniform cap and British coins. Once the aircraft and any remains were fully exhumed it was fitting to have a reburial commemoration service at the Heverlee war cemetery.

This was held on the 28 April 2017, organised by the UK Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), based at Imjin barracks in Gloucester. Heading the RAF contingent whom attended from SHAPE was Wing Commander Gez Currie who gave a warm-hearted commemoration speech at Heverlee barracks to the dignitaries which included families of some of the fateful aircrew; British Ambassador Rose; Australian representative Cdr Gaudry and Mayors of Glabeek and Leuven.

The contingent then relocated to the Heverlee CWGC cemetery for the main commemoration service which was conducted by the RAFA Belgian branch reverend (Wing Commander) Ashley Mitchell RAF. Wreaths were laid by the families of the fallen aircrew by the individual headstones. I had the honour of laying the wreath on FS Allan Olson's (RAAF) grave in the absence of his family.

Article written by FS Bowen

RAFLO SHAPE



SHAPE RAFALO Matt Bowen behind the gravestone of FS Allen Olsen

The RAF Contingent from SHAPE, from L-R, Cpl Lee Seville, F/O Burgess, Reverend Ashley Mitchell, Wg Cdr Gez Currie, FS Matt Bowen



SHAPE BRIT FETE 17 JUNE 2017

The annual SHAPE British Summer Fete took place around the newly revamped festival tent at SHAPE on the 17th Jun under unusually (for us Brits) sunny weather.

The day was a great success with many stalls and attractions including a Gurkha Military marching band, Morris dancing, bouncy castles and an obstacle course for the children; SSAFA cakes and a grand prize draw.

On top of this the RAFA team at SHAPE, led by RAFALO's FS Matt Bowen and Sgt Richy Phillips ran a RAFA stall raising funds for needy servicemen and women and their families, past and present. The stall sold the traditional aircraft pin badges, RAF soft toys and charming flying RAF ducks as well as running a prize draw for a limited edition single malt Scottish whiskey.

In all, over the five hour period, we managed to raise funds of 300 Euros. A big thank you must go to all those who took time out from their own afternoon and volunteered to do a stint on the stall, including Cpl Gordie Wilkie, FS Kim Jarvis and Mrs Lisa Phillips. The team's next outing should be the SHAPE festival in early September.



The day was a great success with many stalls and attractions including a Gurkha Military marching band, Morris dancing, bouncy castles for the children; SSAFA cakes and a grand prize draw

This event was the final swansong for FS Bowen as RAFALO at SHAPE, who has officially handed over the reins to FS Kim Jarvis. She will work alongside Sgt Richy Phillips to continue to fly the flag for RAFA, raising funds and carrying out duties on behalf of the Royal Air Forces Association.

FS Bowen is soon posted to MOD Corsham to carry out a CIS Project Management role and hopes to continue his association with RAFA in the future.

He would personally like to thank all those who supported RAFA during his tenure at SHAPE and wish every success to all those of the RAFA Belgium Branch, especially as they look towards a busy 2018, holding the prestigious 100 year RAF anniversary overseas conference.

Article written by FS Matt Bowen

RAFALO, SHAPE

350 SQN (ATC) ANNUAL FORMAL INSPECTION



50 (Carshalton & Wallington) Squadron proudly presented a healthy squadron, full of enthusiastic cadets at their Annual Formal Inspection. On parade there were two flights, as well as the Squadron banner party, who all looked extremely smart in their Wedgwood uniform.

Amongst the audience were the respective Committee members, Squadron Leader Machin, Mrs Brigitte Horton who was representing RAFA Belgium Branch and cadets' parents and Squadron staff.

During the AFI, 7 well deserving cadets (Cady, Cole, Coupland, Khan, Mauricio, McKenzie and Wilson) were promoted to the rank of Corporal and Cpl Turrel was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

During September 2017 the 8 cadets completed a rigorous Cadre Course which included leadership tasks and lesson planning. Also at the AFI several new cadets were enrolled in to the ATC and were given their own personal F3822 identification books. Junior cadets also received their First-Class Classification badges. Awards such as Best Dressed Cadet and winners of sports events were also recognised at the AFI.

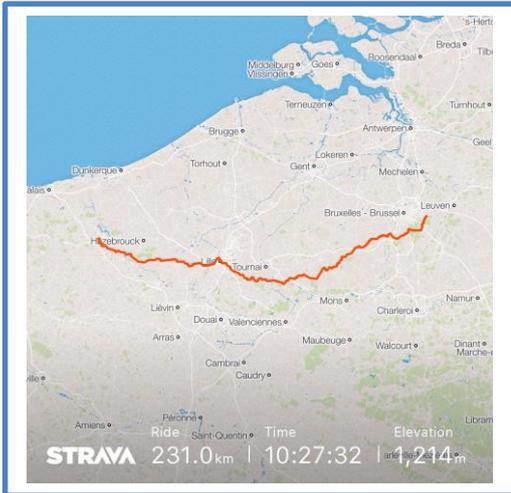
The Cadet of the Year award was awarded to Cpl Wilson and in addition she was presented with €200, funded by RAFA Belgium Branch



The Cadet of the Year award was awarded to Cpl Wilson and in addition she was presented with €200, funded by RAFA Belgium Branch, which was to go toward funding and improving the Squadron. In addition, the audience were entertained by the cadets of 350 Sqn who performed First Aid activities and the sequence from this years; Drill Competition. After the parade, cadets, parents and staff celebrated a successful, but hectic year with food and refreshments in the Squadron building.

Article written by Cpl Wilson (350 SQN (ATC))
The AMBIORIX 350 SQN Newsletter - Winter 2017/2018

COMET CYCLE 09-10 JUNE 2018



The Comet Cycle Route

The Comet Cycle event took place in early June of this year, organised by Wg Cdr Charles Howard-Vyse and Wg Cdr Emma Thompson; it comprised of an intrepid team of 15-20 enthusiastic cyclists and a dedicated support team.

Coinciding with the RAF 100 celebrations, the event followed part of the route used by the heroic 'Comet Line', an underground organisation that escorted downed Allied aircrews to safety from behind enemy lines.

Starting from NATO HQ, Evere; the team cycled the Comet Line until they reached the town of Lille where they spent the night. By Sunday afternoon they had reached a significant point of interest along their route, the town of St Omer (France) where the roots of the RAF were firmly founded (RFC units had been established at the aerodrome between Aug - Sep 1914).

The group of cyclists stopped at the memorial to the Secret Army at Marcq-Labliau where appears the name of the Allied airman Gerald E Sorensen who, after jumping from his flaming plane landed in Gibecq on May 1st 1944. Sorensen was assisted by the Comet Line, but was tragically killed fighting alongside the resistance against the occupation.



Air Commodore Maas, sporting a team jersey

Team photo



The team and Monique outside the Hanotte residence



After a brief stop and a picnic at Beloeil, the team pedaled onwards to Rumes. There they were treated to an encounter with Mdm Herriette Hanotte (also fondly known as Monique), a National Heroine and member of the Hanotte family, who at the age of 16 personally escorted airmen across the border; evading German patrols and onward to safety. The encounter took place outside the former Hanotte family home, where there is a plaque dedicated to the bravery of the family and their generosity.

Article written by Brigitte d'Oultremont

IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness that I inform our members of the passing of a friend and comrade.



Mr Basil Jackson

Nationality: English

Rank: Leading Aircraftsman 1807640

Role Occupied: Aerial Photographic Intelligence

Date of Birth: 19th March 1923

Passed Away: 9th July 2018

Basil was born in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, in a suburban town called Hampton on 19th March 1923.

Enlisting in May 1943, Basil joined his first Unit, 34 Wing Aerial Photographic Group (140, 69 and 16 Squadrons at Northolt). Due to the airfield not being ready for use he was detached to General Eisenhower's HQ in Norfolk House, St. James's Square to handle War Room intelligence gathering for the intended beach landings and dummy runs over Picardy.

By the end of May 1944 operational activity had intensified over Normandy. Basil spent D-Day in a 69 Squadron Wellington photographing the supply ships and beach landings, using a hand-held F24 camera. There were dog-fights all around him and the Wellington he was flying in experienced a few hits. Safely returning to base his photographs were destined to the news agencies for press release.

At the end of June 1944, Basil had left Northolt and moved onto Portsmouth to join a convoy for the beach landings. The convoy was attacked a few times, but no serious damage or casualties were sustained. After reaching the beachhead, Basil and his crew were informed that his destination airfield was still occupied for rearm and refuel operations and that they were to wait under canvas in a Normandy apple orchard. This brief period of respite was spent under constant enemy bombardment and in Basil's own words '*was the worst part of my service life with enemy shells falling day and night in our area. Also, no sleep whatsoever with explosion noises*'.

Basil followed Field Marshall Montgomery ever Eastward and was based at Amiens, Brussels, Eindhoven and Northern Germany. His main duty was to provide oblique view prints to advancing platoon commanders, sometimes by parachute.

When the war ended in Europe, allied forces were shipped to Far East Asia to deal with the Japanese situation. Here Basil fought to free the Mekong countries including French Indochina and Saigon. He was in these zones from 1945 until 1947.

ADMINISTRATION

MEMBERSHIP

Unless you are a Life Member, RAFA Membership fees for 2019 are due in January 2019. Fees for Ordinary and Associate Members are €25 for 1 year subscription and €75 for a 4 year subscription. Please transfer funds to RAFA Belgian Branch account BE58 0014 2061 1779 (FOR MEMBERSHIP FEES).

MEMBER'S NEWS

Editor's Note: in parallel with developments on the Branch website, it is planned that we will introduce this 'Member's News' section in future Newsletters. If you would like to share information or to seek contact with old colleagues, please let us know, via the Secretary or (preferred) via the 'Contact Us' link on the website, and we will publish.

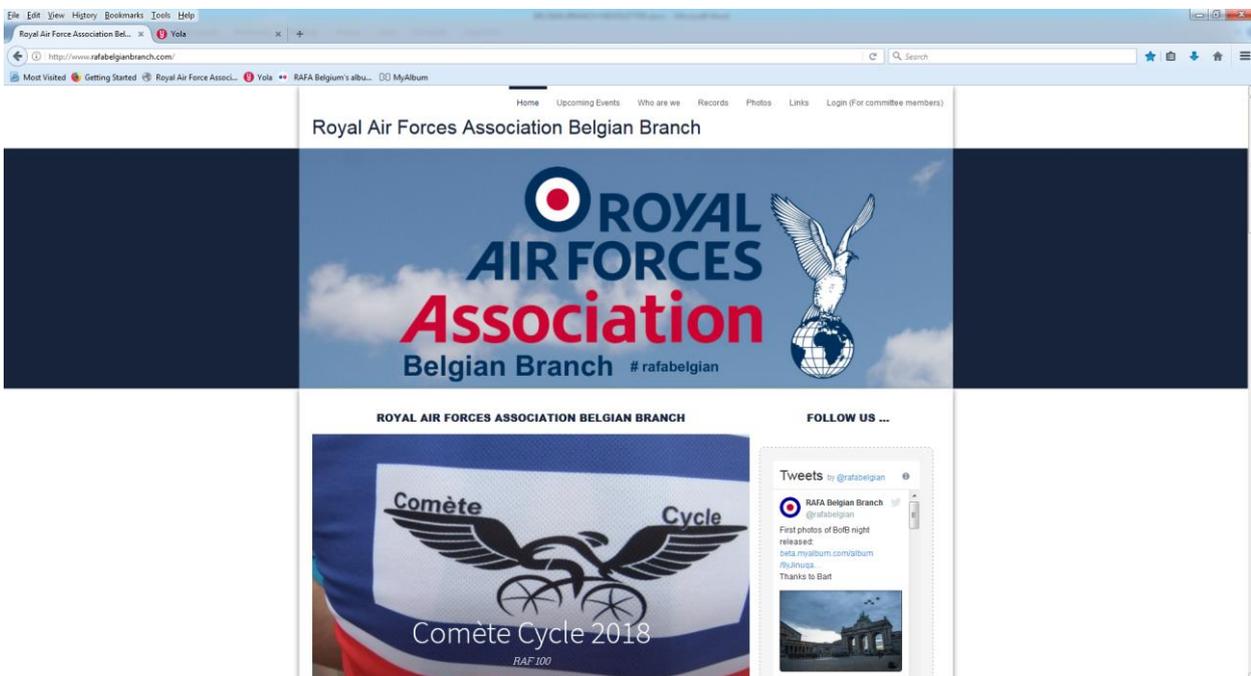
BRANCH WEBSITE

The branch website is in the process of redevelopment at the moment, those of you that use the site will start to notice new content being added more frequently. Sgt Jacobs has recently joined the committee, assuming the role of the Branch webmaster. He will endeavour to keep you informed of the Branches activities and include the content that you request.

Main Branch Site: <http://rafbelgianbranch.yolasite.com>

Branch Photo Repository: <https://flickr.com/photos/rafbelgianbranch/sets/>

Dedicated site for the Air Force Chapel: <http://www.theairforcechapel.be>



MEMBERS NEWS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON AREA AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES

 **ROYAL AIR FORCES Association**
The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFA Belgium Branch 80 strong

**Key links with the Belgium Air Force
"349 / 350 Squadrons"**

Comete Line - over 700 airman escaped

***Sabena from the Golden Era
of passenger aviation***

***This Conference will be the Culmination of
our Celebration of 100 years***



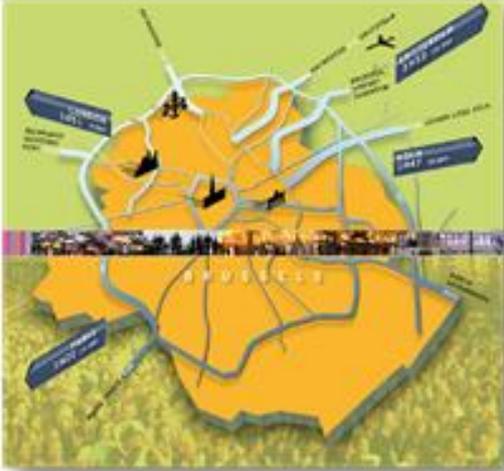
 

 **ROYAL AIR FORCES Association**
The charity that supports the RAF family

When: 2-4 November 2018
Where: Bedford Hotel in Central Brussels

Brussels is very easy to get to:

- ✓ Direct flights from 200 European & international destinations
- ✓ Most European cities within a 2 hour flight
- ✓ Main airport only 20 minutes from city centre
- ✓ European high speed trains hub (TGV, Eurostar, Thalys, ICE)
- ✓ Drive from UK (Ferry or Channel Tunnel)



Moving around in the city

Every part of the city easily accessible by public transport – *hop on hop off*

4 metro lines, 17 tram lines, 50 bus lines
(10 Journeys for 14 Euros)

Lots of taxis including UBER...

For the more adventurous:
Bikes for rent (*called Vilos*)



Lots to do...

Bruxelles Art de vivre

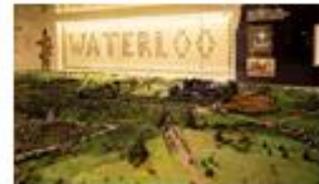
Lots to taste...



Deep historic ties and close Military Links

1815
1914-1918
1939... 1944/5
Iraq and Afghanistan

*Waterloo to Ypres
Zbrugge to Afghanistan*



Menin Gate



*RAF Chapel in the
Basilica
Koekelberg*





European Area Autumn Conference Overall Programme



Friday 2 November 2018

1700-1900 Area Council Meeting Lindbergh Room
1900-2000 Get-together cocktail, Lindbergh Room
2000-2200 Informal Dinner Belgian Buffet with Music and Tombola for Wings appeal

Saturday 3 November 2018

1000-1300 Conference
1300-1900 Optional Beer tasting or Museum Visit
(Moeder Lambic café or Magritte gallery or time to potter...)
1900-2000 pre- Gala Dinner aperitif
2000-2200 Gala Dinner - Mess Dress / Black Tie / Association Blazer

Sunday 4 November 2018

1030-1230 Church service in National Basilica
followed by Plaque unveiling at the RAF chapel
Dress Number 1 HD, Suits/jacket & ties with medals, equivalent dress for ladies.
End of Conference
1300-1400 Optional lunch at Hotel (see reservation form)



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The Conference Costings



Friday's get-together Reception and Dinner	€70
Saturday's Lunch	€45
Saturday's Reception and Gala Dinner -all meals include 2 glasses of wine, soft drinks, tea or coffee	€85
Conference room Friday & Saturday -including coffee break & coach to Basilica Sunday	€40
Sunday's optional lunch	€45

Payment as per the Registration form:

Bank account RAFA Belgian Branch
BIC: GEBABEBB IBAN: BE58 0014 2061 1779



Accommodation: at the Bedford



Rooms Bed & Breakfast

Single Occupancy Min 2 nights p/n	€70
Double Occupancy Min 2 nights p/n	€80
City tax per room & per night	€5



Extra nights are available at conference price ~-(20% discount)

Address: 135 Rue du Midi, Brussels 1000
(Tel+32 25 07 00 00)

Registration and Payment: rafa.belgianbranch@gmail.com



Belgian Air Force Visit



BAF Beauvechain

By kind invitation the Belgian Air Force – for those who would like to visit a modern Fighter Base, there will be a bonus tour of Beauvechain offered on Monday 5 November (20 miles south of Brussels)



Registration as per the form: rafa.belgianbranch@gmail.com



RAFA Belgium looks forward to welcoming you ...



And of course please do register by 20th August 2018

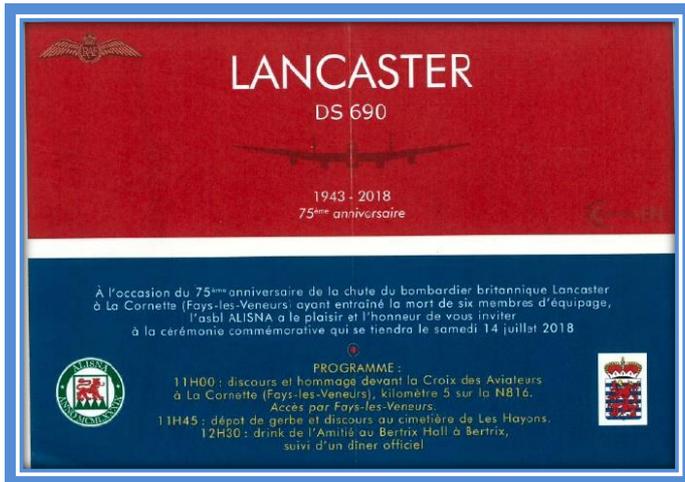
rafa.belgianbranch@gmail.com

And when you do annotate your mail:
"Conference 2018" followed by your name



FUTURE CALENDAR EVENTS

LANCASTER DS690 MEMORIAL 20 SEPTEMBER 2018



On 14th July 1943, Lancaster DS690 of the RAF crashed in Les Hyons after being shot down by a German night fighter. Of the 7 crewmember, 6 were killed and the 7th was taken as a prisoner-of-war.

A memorial now stands at the corner of Rue de la Cornette in Les Hyons to remember the fallen. Each year the families of the crew and Officers of the RAF Sqn are invited to visit the memorial and lay a wreath.

This year RAFA has been invited to attend the short service to lay a wreath at the Memorial and the cemetery where the crew members are buried. The ceremony is followed by a "verre de l'amitié" and a lunch at Bouillon.



Ligne Comète Line - Remembrance

Pugna Quin Percutias

82, rue de Mellery, B-1450 Gentinnes

Email: comete.remembrance@gmail.com - Website : www.cometeline.org

Belfius Banque – BE27 0688 9148 3173 – BIC GKCCBEBB



INVITATION

ANNUAL REUNION "COMÈTE", Brussels 2018

Weekend Saturday 20 - Sunday 21 October

Dear Members and Friends of The "Comète" Evasion Network,

The Committee of the "Ligne Comète Line - Remembrance" Association is pleased to invite you to our 2018 Annual Weekend in Brussels³, which takes place this year from **Friday October 19**: Arrival of participants, and a relaxing dinner (optional) in one of the restaurants around the Place St Catherine area (near the Hotels Novotel and Ibis). **Saturday October 20**: Coach trip in Hainault Province, around Chièvres Military Airport, used by the Luftwaffe during the Nazi Occupation from 1940-45 to ruthlessly hunt and destroy Allied aircraft. We will stop at several crash sites in the area, as well as Aircrew parachute landing sites, where local Resistants spontaneously offered help and safe hiding places to the Airmen.

Passing the towns of Hal and Enghien, Elise will recount (in the bus & ...) the fascinating stories of these airmen and their escape, thanks to the courageous assistance of the local population. In the village of **Silly**, crash site, April 13, 1944, of **B-17G-BO Flying Fortress**, we will stop at Miraine Farm to hear moving accounts of witnesses to the drama, and lay a wreath in honour of the fallen Airmen and their brave "Helpers" who hid them, and helped them escape from the claws of the Occupiers. We will also see the "Gondregnies Hideout", where the Lepoivre family hid between 15-20 airmen, then visit an unusual little museum "Maquistory in St Marcoult", recounting the important resistance activity in this area.

In **Chièvres**, we will have lunch in a charming place and then a tour on the **Airbase**. Afterwards, we tour the pretty countryside, stopping at several well-maintained monuments, erected by local inhabitants to the memory of Airmen and Resistants – as both are inextricably linked, in **Frasnes-le-Anvaing/Montreuil-au-Bois, Wodecq, Marcq** and **Rebecq**. We will have dinner in Rebecq. Along that journey, once again, descendants of fallen Airmen will meet descendants of the Comète Network in homage and remembrance of these tragic and courageous events.

Sunday October 21: 75 years ago, on October 20, 1943 – 11 members of the Comète Evasion Network were executed. We will pay homage to them in front of their tombs at the **Enclos des Fusillés** (The Cemetery for Executed Political Prisoners). Afterwards we will proceed to the Maison des Ailes for our **COMÈTE Lunch**, passing in front of the plaque dedicated to ALL members of the Comète Network, on the wall of the

"Swedish Cantine", rue Ducale (Royal Parc, Brussels), the dispatching centre directed by Jean Greindl, killed in September 1943. At 16.00, we leave for the **Basilique de Koekelberg** to pay homage in front of the **Comète Line Stained Glass Window** as well as the **RAF-Belgian Branch Chapel**, in this important RAF Centenary Year. We hope many of you will participate in this year's program, compiled for you in remembrance of the glory of our compatriots who fought together for Liberty.

³ **Very important: INSURANCE: The organizers decline all responsibility in the event of an accident incurred during the weekend of Comète activities. Each participant must take responsibility for their own safety, & subscribe to personal insurance if they wish.**

Cordially,

Brigitte d'Oultremont, President, together with all the Committee