



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

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

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)
Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder (Treasurer)
Mrs G Walkden (Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO))
Mrs D Whittingham (Assistant HWO)
Mrs B Horton (Membership Secretary)
Father W Peeters (Honorary Chaplain)
Mr J-P Blanckaert (Standard Bearer)
Flt Lt H French (Secretary)

Mr L Rubin
Mr R Rubin
Mrs A Dumon
Mr R Laumans
Gp Capt (Ret'd) J Stevenson
Wg Cdr G Ward
Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins

Apologies:

Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E Hearn (Honorary Co-President)
Air Marshal Sir C Harper (Honorary Co-President)
Air Cdre S Corbett (Honorary Vice-President)
H.E. Jonathan Brenton (Honorary Patron)
Lt Gen Baron M Donnet (Life Vice-President)
Gp Capt (Ret'd) M Connor (Past Branch Chairman)

Mrs M Laden
Mrs A de Norman
Ctsse B D'Oultremont
Mrs H Van Wersch
Air Cdre (Ret'd) M Brzezicki

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
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 5 – TREASURER’S STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

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

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

Assets and Liabilities as at 31/12/11

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

¹ Exchange rate 31/12/11 Euro/£ 1.20

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

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

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

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

² Invoice 465/3010/60936 – 14 Dec

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

HQ Account (UK)

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

Note:

1. Exchange rate 31/12/11 £/Euro 1.20

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

Deposit Account (035-4397831-86)

Euros

Opening Balance 01/01/11

137.31

Income:

Interest 1.45

Transfer from Welfare Account 15,000.00

Expenditure:

Nil

Closing balance 31/12/11**15,138.76**

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