



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. Jonathan Brenton British Ambassador
Branch Honorary Co-Presidents:
 Air Marshal Sir Christopher Harper KBE MA FCMI RAF
 Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E Hearn DFC*
Life Vice President: Lt Gen Baron M Donnet CVO DFC
Branch Honorary Vice President:
 Air Commodore A S Corbett MBE MA BA RAF

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN BRANCH OF THE ROYAL
 AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION
 NATO STAFF CENTRE 5TH MARCH 2013**

<p>Present: Gp Capt (Ret'd) R Whittingham Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Ryder Mrs G Walkden Mrs D Whittingham Mrs B Horton Father W Peeters Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins Mr J-P Blanckaert Sgt R Atha Mr L Rubin Mrs R Rubin Mrs A Dumon Mr R Laumans Sgt M Lawson</p>	<p>Chairman Honorary Treasurer Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO) Assistant HWO (AHWO) Membership Secretary Honorary Chaplain Branch Webmaster Standard Bearer SHAPE RAFA Liaison Officer (RAFALO)</p> <p>Deputy Secretary</p>
<p>Apologies: Air Marshal Sir C Harper Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) E Hearn Air Cdre S Corbett H.E. Jonathan Brenton Lt Gen Baron M Donnet Wg Cdr G Ward Gp Capt (Ret'd) M Conner Mrs A de Norman Ctsse B d'Oultremont Mrs H Van Wersch Air Cdre (Ret'd) M Brzezicki Flt Lt A Walker</p>	<p>Honorary Co-President Honorary Co-President Honorary Vice President Honorary Patron Life Vice President Vice-Chair Past Branch Chairman</p> <p>Secretary</p>

ITEM 1 - DEDICATION

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those who were attending their first AGM. He noted that it was a very busy time for NATO which prevented the Honorary Co-President Air Marshal Sir Christopher Harper and his ADC Flt Lt Walker from attending, and that the Honorary Vice President Air Cdre Sean Corbett and Vice Chair Wg Cdr Gill Ward were on duty. The Chairman passed on the best regards of the meeting to Honorary Co-President Sqn Ldr Edward Hearn and to Branch Life Vice President General Baron Mike Donnet who also could not be in attendance.

2. 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: Josette Demey-Bens, Lucien-Francois Devadder, Frans Douwes, Robert Francois, A Ingram, Guy Lebizay, Gp Capt John Scotter Owen, Raoul Schreiden, Amanda 'Mouchka' Stassart-Désir, Col Avi Henri Verbruggen, Jean-Pierre Vermeiren, Christine Worthington-Dumont.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 2012 AGM

3. The Chairman advised that no comments had been received on the minutes of the last AGM held on 15 Mar 12, and the Chairman sought AGM approval of the minutes as published in Newsletter 106.

4. The minutes of the AGM held at the NATO Staff Centre on 15 Mar 12, were approved.

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

ITEM 3 – CHAIRMANS ADDRESS

5. In his Address, (see Enclosure 1 for the full text), the Chairman highlighted that the AGM has 3 roles: to provide a stock-take of our Branch for the past year, to provide the Committee with guidance on the priorities and activities for the coming year, and to agree the Committee for 2013. He warmly thanked the Committee for their hard work and outstanding dedication to duty.

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

6. **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.

7. **Elect Prospective new Committee Members.** The Chairman introduced Flt Lt Arlene Walker, Sgt Mark Lawson and Sgt Richard Atha noting with much pleasure that they had very kindly volunteered to bring the Committee up to full strength, and sought AGM approval for:

- a. Flt Lt Walker as Secretary
- b. Sgt Lawson as Deputy Secretary
- c. Sgt Atha (RAFA Liaison Officer, SHAPE), as SHAPE representative.

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

8. **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. Wg Cdr (Ret'd) G Ward (Vice Chair)
- c. Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder (Treasurer)
- d. Mrs G Walkden (HWO)
- e. Mrs B Horton (Membership Secretary)
- f. Mrs D Whittingham (Assistant HWO)
- g. Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins (Branch Webmaster)

Proposed by Mr R Laumans and **seconded** by Sgt R Atha
Carried Unanimously.

9. The AGM noted that the previous Secretary Sqn Ldr Hannah French had resigned from the Committee on posting during 2012. The Chairman expressed his thanks for all her hard work and congratulated her on her promotion.

ITEM 5 – TREASURER’S REPORT / APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS 2012

10. Following an invitation from the Chairman, Wg Cdr (Ret'd) D Trembaczowski-Ryder presented his Treasurer's Report and the 2012 accounts as circulated in Newsletter 109. He noted that due to the receipt of generous donations, the deposit account remained at the same level as for the previous year and that the Net Asset Surplus had increased by some 800 Euros. He also noted that difficulties in administering the BPost account had led to a temporary deficit on the UK account and hence the committee had decided to close the BPost account and consolidate on accounts with Fortis Bank.

11. The Chairman noted the excellent and accurate job the Treasurer had done, and sought the approval of the AGM for the 2012 Accounts as circulated in Newsletter 109 (copy at Enclosure 2).

Proposed by Father W Peeters and **seconded** by Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins.
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 Sgt R Atha and **seconded** by Mr L Rubin.
Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 6 – WELFARE REPORT AND PROPOSALS FOR 2013

13. When delivering her Welfare Report (see Enclosure 3), Mrs G Walkden paid special tribute to Mrs Christine Worthington who had passed away recently and who had provided invaluable support to the Branch for 10 years as Assistant HWO. The Chairman invited the AGM to endorse the report.

Proposed by Mrs B Horton and **seconded** by Mr R Laumans.
Carried Unanimously.

14. On behalf of the AGM, the Chairman thanked Mrs Walkden for her comprehensive report and for the dedication to the Branch and its welfare activity displayed by the welfare team, highlighting especially the tenacity and compassion which is required to get the support our members need from the RAF Benevolent Fund and from the Belgian Care System.

ITEM 7 – BUDGET 2013

15. The Treasurer presented his proposed budget for 2013 (as circulated in Newsletter 109), which, as for 2012, anticipated an excess of expenditure over income of some 3000 Euros. The Chairman thanked the Treasurer and sought AGM approval for the 2013 budget as at Enclosure 4 as the basis for Committee budget planning.

Proposed by Sgt R Atha and **seconded** by Wg Cdr (Ret'd) R Jenkins.
Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 8.1 – COST OF MEMBERSHIP

16. The Chairman highlighted that the Central Council have become concerned that the costs of servicing membership far exceeds the annual income from membership fees and that they have invited Branches to consider what actions should be taken. Noting that supporting papers and a draft Branch Resolution prepared by the Committee were circulated in Newsletter 109 (pages 15 – 17), the Chairman sought the views of the AGM.

17. Mr L Rubin supported the draft Resolution, but recommended that it be amended to also invite existing Life Members to pay annual membership fees at an agreed level, if they so wished.

18. Following general discussion, the Chairman invited the AGM to agree the revised text of key points as at Enclosure 5, incorporating the proposal from Mr L Rubin at para 17 above, and that it should be forwarded to Central Council and the European Area HQ.

Proposed by Mr L Rubin and **seconded** by Mrs B Horton
Carried Unanimously.

ITEM 9 – CLOSING REMARKS

19. The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and continued support, and closed the meeting.

31 March 2013

Enclosures:

1. Chairman's Address
2. Treasurer's Statement of Accounts 2012
3. Honorary Welfare Officer's Report
4. Branch Budget for 2013
5. Branch view on Cost of Membership – Key Points for CHQ

ITEM 3 - CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

The AGM has 3 roles: to provide a stock-take of our Branch for the past year, to provide the Committee with guidance on the priorities and activities for the coming year, and to agree the Committee for 2013. Let me set the scene before we go through the details under the subsequent agenda items

As with Countries, in particular UK and Belgium, the key driver of our activities at the moment is money so let me start there: last year the AGM agreed to continue the policy adopted the previous year that whilst we would continue with our fund raising activities, we would run at a deficit to enable us to give maximum comradeship and welfare support to our members. Our Treasurer will go into the details under Item 5, but you will see that in fact, our overall Net Asset Surplus actually increased last year. This was entirely due to the kindness of our members who have made substantial donations to the Branch: I have highlighted those especially involved in the Newsletter, but let me particularly also mention here our heartfelt thanks to Dorothy Burch (ex-WAAF and Belgian Branch member who remembers her time here very fondly) and Ann Robins (in memory of her father Stan who was a long-time Branch member). The Committee is dedicated to spending these donations wisely, using them for welfare support and to foster comradeship and comfort amongst our, mostly now rather elderly, members. Quite small amounts can really make a lot of difference to 'quality of life' and such support is absolutely in the spirit of the RAFA.

I would not discourage, of course, other members making donations, or indeed bequests, to the Branch in the future, but such income must be viewed at 'windfalls'. We must, therefore, develop our budget, for discussion under item 7, on the assumption that we are self-sufficient, and hence the committee proposes the continuance of our annual deficit approach. Our Treasurer David is doing a super job, and I believe we should all give him our support.

On the welfare front, as you will hear from our Honorary Welfare Officer (HWO) under Item 6, the pace of activities has rather increased – this I suppose is not surprising as the average age of our members is probably increasing and this brings with it a need for more support. I am very pleased to note that some of our newer (younger) members are also assisting with this load – just giving a little time and thought can make a big difference to those who have limited mobility, and I would encourage all members to assist where they can. 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 and Deborah's hard work, this has really made a difference to a number of our members.

For our events last year, the highlight was our Barry Horton Memorial Golf Match in June, where, I am very pleased to say, that participation was back up to levels which enabled us to enhance Branch funds up to the best of what we have achieved in the past – well done to all who participated and contributed. In addition to that, the Branch has also had the honour and pleasure to support a number of Air Force associated events throughout Belgium, many in association with our good colleagues from the Comet Line and the Royal British Legion as well as the Vieilles Tiges of the Belgian Air Force, the Association of Belgians in the RAF and SAAF

1940—45, the Wings of Memory group and the new Belgian Air Forces Association. Sadly we have also been represented at a number of funerals of colleagues in the past year (we heard the names at the beginning): my thoughts particularly go to Monique Owen in Brugge at the death of her husband John an ex-RAF Gp Capt, after suffering 48 years of multiple sclerosis, and to the family of Christine Worthington our past Assistant HWO who died recently.

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.

So, where to from here? Firstly, I think that our new innovation since last year of the Branch Website has made a real difference to members' ability to keep in touch with the Branch and its people and activities. Bob Jenkins the webmaster has done a really super job in establishing a very effective and professional site, so very many thanks to him. I encourage all members to visit the site regularly to pick up the latest news – even if sadly sometimes it is funerals.

As you will have seen from the website and the Newsletter, we have a full programme of events for 2013, in particular Duisburg Military Golf Club have very kindly agreed to host the Barry Horton Memorial Tournament – Friday 28 Jun is the date this year. Remember, not just for golfers: the BBQ and raffle are for all members and friends! Also please mark your diaries for Sunday 20 October where we plan a joint event with the Comet Line to mark the 25th Anniversary of the dedication of the Air Force Chapel and stained-glass windows in the National Basilica at Koekelberg.

Lastly let me talk about the administrators of the Branch: your committee. You will recall that at last year's AGM we brought the Committee up to strength with a new Vice-Chair Wg Cdr Gill Ward and Webmaster Bob Jenkins. As you will see under the next Agenda Item all members of the committee have agreed to stay on for this year and, additionally, we have volunteers to provide support from SHAPE and to support the Branch Secretariat. This is very good news – it is the committee that provides the focus, so strong committee means strong branch (and vice versa). Just a small note of caution. Some of us have now been on the committee for some years, and next year we may well see a change of blood – so, I would ask all members to think about volunteering to join the committee – we need you!

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 to devote time to the committee, Father Walter, David, Ghislaine, Deborah, Brigitte, Bob and Arlene.

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?

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2012**

Net Asset Surplus as at 31/12/11 **18,733.67**

Assets and Liabilities as at 31/12/12

Assets	Euros
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Deposit)	15,165.74
BNP Paribas Fortis Bank (Welfare)	6,385.01
CCP	5,896.24
HQ Account (UK) ¹	minus 1,767.94
Petty Cash	<u>0.00</u>

Credit

To HQ Account	2,200.00
---------------	----------

TOTAL ASSETS **27,879.05**

Liabilities

Barry Horton Memorial Fund	1,664.47
Subscriptions and Wings Appeal to HQ	2,200.00
RAFBF Grant payable	2,440.60
Newsletter 108	383.72
Postage 106, 107, 108	209.92
Christmas Lunch	1,125.00
Welfare expenses	268.95

TOTAL LIABILITIES **8,292.66**

Net Asset Surplus at 31/12/12 **19,586.39**

¹ Exchange rate 31/12/12 Euro/£ 1.23

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2012**

CCP Bank Account (BPost)		Euros
Opening balance 01/01/12		3,626.38
Income	Euro	
Subscriptions	849.00	
Donations	565.00	
Social Events – Golf	2542.00	
Wings Appeal	565.00	
AGM Lunch Income	380.00	
Christmas Lunch	600.00	
Misc	10.00	
	<u>5511.00</u>	
Total (Opening balance plus income 2012):		<u>9,137.38</u>
Expenditure		
Welfare Expenses 2012	507.63	
AGM Lunch	760.00	
Branch Expenses:		
Postage (x 2)	152.28	
Belge Monitor	118.70	
Bank Charges	41.88	
Newsletter (x 4)	1337.72	
Wreaths	262.93	
BE AFA Membership	10.00	
Postbox Rent	<u>50.00</u>	
Total Expenditure:		<u>3241.14</u>
Closing Balance 31/12/12		<u>5,896.24</u>

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2012**

Welfare Bank Account (BNP Paribas Fortis)		Euros
Opening balance 01/01/12		<u>2,528.43</u>
Income		
RAFBF Grant (G)	3,120.00	
Donation	4,920.40	
Interest from Deposit Account	17.60	
Overpayment	79.00	
Total	<u>8,137.00</u>	
Opening balance plus income		<u>10,665.43</u>
Expenditure		
RAFBF Grants paid (G & H)	2,741.94	
Welfare award (O)	700.00	
Christmas gifts (2012)	800.00	
Bank Charges	<u>38.48</u>	
Total Expenditure		<u>4,280.42</u>
Closing Balance 31/12/12		<u>6,385.01</u>

Deposit Account (035-4397831-86)

		Euros
Opening Balance 01/01/12		15,138.76
Income:		
Interest	26.98	
Expenditure:		
Nil		
Closing balance 31/12/12		15,165.74

Note: additional 2012 interest to be credited in 2013

**Royal Air Forces Association
Belgian Branch
Statement of Accounts – 2012**

HQ Account (UK)

	£	Euros
Opening Balance 01/01/12	27.51	33.01
Income:		
Eastbourne Hotel cost	260.00	
Amsterdam expenses	178.89	
Reimbursement Whittingham	100.00	
Total	<u>538.89</u>	662.83
Total Opening balance plus income	566.40	696.67
Expenditure:		
Wings Appeal 2012 to HQ	1000.00	
Blackpool Conf Pooled Fare	106.65	
Subscriptions to HQ (UK)	897.10	
Total	<u>2,003.75</u>	<u>2,464.61</u>
Closing balance 31/12/12	Minus 1437.35	1767.94

Note:

1. Exchange rate 31/12/12 £/Euro 1.23

RAFA Belgian Branch Welfare Report to AGM 5 March 2013

We very much regret Christine Worthington's death. She served with great determination and efficiency as Assistant Honorary Welfare Officer during some 10 years. Firstly she made a team with Angela Shannon and later with myself, teaching me everything. She was superb in this role and knew exactly how to deal with the Belgian social services to reach her goal: helping people in need. We will greatly miss her.

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 2012, we have been busier than previously, with 78 home and hospital visits and over 500 telephone, mail, postal and non face to face contacts, to a dozen cases all around the country. We have dispersed through the Branch welfare account a total of € 4.280,42 on this total € 1.500 represents specifically Branch welfare grants.

We have no new welfare cases as such, but as our membership has become older, the needs for medical and social support have become greater. From the welfare side, we are now monitoring the couple (mother and son) who required much help in 2011 who are now receiving all possible assistance from their local Social Services, including, we are pleased to see, control of their finances.

On a financial basis:

- We are very grateful to the RAF Benevolent Fund for its consistent support, even in extending and upgrading the maintenance allowances to a deserving client. These grants make a real material difference to the well-being of our clients, and are very much needed and appreciated.
- From our branch funds we have covered:
 - Support for a member during the final stages of his terminal illness and for his widow following her bereavement.
 - Christmas gifts as explained here under;
 - Membership to RAFA for one of our paraplegic case.

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.

Sadly, however, we are not always in a position to undertake the number of Social calls that are requested of us: we are a small team and I am afraid that we must sometimes prioritise. However, we are very grateful that some of our Branch members are now helping us greatly in visiting people at home.

The traditional Christmas visits took place as usual in December in Brussels, 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

In 2012 we did not organize the holiday scheme in Ostend due to the fact that no members applied for it due to ill health.

Obituary

We regret very much the loss of one disabled member that we used to visit regularly; he peacefully died in hospital.

It is also with much sadness that we learned, last week, of the death of our previous colleague in the Welfare team, dear Christine Worthington.

Closing remark

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 which we could not have given the help needed.

Ghislaine Walkden

Deborah Whittingham

Brussels 5 March 2013.

RAFA BELGIAN BRANCH A.S.B.L

BUDGET 2013

INCOME	Euro
Subscriptions	800
Donations	600
Wings Appeal	1,000
Interest	200
Social Events	3,000
Total Income	5,600
EXPENSES	
Wings Appeal – transfer to UK	1,000
Subscriptions – transfer to UK	600
Welfare:	
Branch grants	3,500
Expenses	500
Christmas Gifts	1,500
Newsletters – printing	1,000
Total	<u>8100</u>
Administration:	
Postbox rent	50
Postage	400
Bank Charges	50
Miscellaneous	100
Total	<u>600</u>
Total Expenses	<u>8,700</u>
Excess Expenditure over Income	3,100

BELGIAN BRANCH VIEW ON COST OF MEMBERSHIP AS AGREED AT BRANCH AGM ON 5 MARCH 2013 – KEY POINTS FOR CHQ

GENERAL

RAFA is an organisation designed to support its membership: as such, the Association can, quite properly, decide that expenditure on servicing the members should exceed the income gained from membership fees.

Nevertheless, the level of the current imbalance for RAFA as a whole (some £660K in 2011) is a cause for concern, and the Association should conduct a thorough review of membership costs, and, if necessary, identify ways to boost membership income.

COSTS

The discussion and resolutions(s) at the Annual Conference should be supported by all the relevant facts including a detailed analysis of costs reflecting the planned situation for 2013.

Since the direct manpower cost plus the total of the manpower support costs are very significant (over 60% of the total at some £840K for 2011), costs in this area should be especially considered for reduction.

Since AIRMAIL is available via the RAFA website, there would appear to be scope to reduce AIRMAIL costs (£202K in 2011, some 15% of the total) by sending only to those members who request hard copy.

INCOME

The Association should stick to its earlier commitments and not now require additional membership fees from Life Members, but should invite existing Life Members to pay annual membership fees at an agreed level, if they so wish.

Associate and Ordinary members now have very similar rights; membership charges should be brought to the same level.

All those who wish to retain hard copy AIR MAIL (including Life Members) should be invited to pay the same annual rate (above any annual membership fee).

ADMINISTRATION

Central Council is invited to develop and circulate to Branches draft resolution(s) and supporting papers well in advance of the May 2013 Annual Conference.

March 2013

Brussels