

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON BRANCH ACTIVITIES FROM 1st AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 1988.

Sunday 28 August, the Chairman, members & the Standard attended the Annual ceremony at Jalhay. The choral Masse in the village church was attended by the whole village, the Canadian, American & British Ambassadors were represented by their Attaches. Following the service wreaths were laid on the monument to the crew of a Halifax aircraft that was shot down & fell in the village. We were invited to the annual luncheon where speeches of dedication to the R.A.F. were made by the local dignitaries.

Tuesday 13 August. The Standard & a group of members attended the annual ceremony at the R.A.F. Memorial, Boxbergheide, Genk. Wreaths were laid by the local people & each child from the local school placed a bunch of flowers on the Memorial. The Commanding Officer of 101 Squadron U.K. was in attendance with a colour party & there was a fly past by aircraft of the Belgian Air Force & 101 Squadron. The event was attended by some 2000 local people, the ceremony was followed by tea & sandwiches in the local hall & a collection was made for the Battle of Britain Appeal.

Thursday 15 September. We held our annual cocktail party but we had a very poor turn out only 50 odd people turned up. It makes one a little sad to think that of almost 500 members we only have 50 attending, what have we done to deserve such a POOR response? What has happened to that R.A.F. ESPRIT DE CORPS ?????

Sunday 18 September. We gathered in the Pro-Cathedral to pay homage to those who died in the Battle of Britain.

Wednesday 21 September. The nine memorial windows in memory of the Belgians who died in the service of the Royal Air Force & Allied Air Forces, the Escape Lines & the Secret Agents were Dedicated in the presence of the King of The Belgians. Distinguished guests included the British Ambassador & Lady Petrie, the Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir David Craig, Lt. General Jacques Lefebvre Chief of Staff of the Belgian Air Force, Marshals of the R.A.F. Sir Keith Williamson & Sir Michael Beatham, Air Chief Marshals Sir Michael Knight, Sir John Aiken, Sir Antony Skingsley & Sir Lewis Hodges. The Escape Lines & the Secret Agents were represented also the Bomber Command, the Pathfinders, the Airgunners, Mr Mark Tomkins Secretary General of the R.A.F. Association represented the Association. Our Honorary Padre the Rev'd Charles MacNeill conducted a most memorable service and gave a moving address. Following the service a splendid reception was given by the Belgian Air Force in the Air Museum. A full list of donors to the windows is given in this news letter.

Friday 14 October. The Chairman attended an open day at the Belgian AirBase at Beauvechain given for the Belgians of the Vriendenkring Amicale Bottisham -Snailwell. Following a tour of the airfield & a pilots briefing 350 members & wives sat down to a splendid lunch. Many members of this organisation were under the impression that they are not entitled to membership of the R.A.F.A. Your Chairman made a speech to inform them that any one who has served 3 months or more in the R.A.F. can join the R.A.F. Association & in consequence 3 signed up on the spot & others expressed their intention to join us. Gaston Castelyn has volunteered to help to recruit these old R.A.F. men who are very welcome to join the Belgian Branch. It is amazing that for the past 43 years these Bottisham -Snailwell men have been under a dis-illusion I hope that you will encourage any one of this group to come along to join us, they most certainly have still got the old Esprit de Corps of the R.A.F. from what I saw of them on 14 October.

Thursday 27 October. Some 45 members & friends met at the Maison des Ailes for a dinner which was followed by a talk by Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Knight the British Military Representative to NATO entitled "NATO the Approach of Middle Age".