

THE WIPERS TIMES

BRUSSELS BRANCH (BR3416)

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NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2018

New Year's Greetings



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On behalf of the members who contributed to this January issue of the RBL Brussels Branch Newsletter, on behalf of our Branch President and Committee Members, may I wish you the very best for 2018.

May there be many moments in 2018 that make you feel happy, cheerful, glad, jolly, merry, bright, sunny, joyful, light-hearted, sparkling, bubbly, exuberant, ebullient, airy, cheery, sprightly, mirthful, positive, confident, hopeful, contented, carefree, untroubled, satisfied, buoyant, radiant, pleased, and delighted.

Michael Whitburn
Newsletter coordinator

LOOKING BACK AT 2017

In 2017 the Newsletter continued to focus on the events of WW1 with articles on the Nivelle Offensive (April 1917), on the British Army Medical Services during WW1, on the Belgian WW1 war ace and aviation pioneer Edmond Thieffry, on the German air raids that were launched against England, on the Third Battle of Ypres (31 July-6 November 1917) and the Battle of Passchendaele in which the British Expeditionary Force alone sustained over 300,000 casualties.

The events of WW2 were remembered with articles on the heroic resistance put up by the Belgian garrison at the Fort d'Aubin Neufchâteau in May 1940, on the Battle of Dieppe (19 August 1942), on the linkup near La Roche- en- Ardenne between the 51st Highland Division and the 84th US Infantry Division (11 January 1945).

There were contributions by branch members including an article by **Fleur Empringham** on the day she met Vera Lynn (in November 1973), an article by **Greg Ruthven** on the Cato Street Conspiracy (23 February 1820) and how his great-great-great-grandfather George Ruthven managed to infiltrate a revolutionary organisation that was planning to overthrow the Government,

and an article about UK Veteran Sgt. Wilf Jackson by **Peter Van den Broeck**.

In the *All about me* column, **Léon Rubin** told us about his clandestine journey through France and Spain in 1943 and how he managed to join the Free Belgian Forces in England, where he was trained as a pilot. **Randle Oliver** - a long-standing friend of the RBL Brussels Branch - explained how he arrived in Brussels on 5th September 1944 having landed in Normandy on DDay+8.

Private F.W. Vears (d. 11/09/1917, aged 21), Corporal A.K. Bassford (d.23/08/1914), Captain R.K. Dunbar & Driver F.J. Phipps (d.21/12/1944) were remembered in the Friends of the Fallen section.

The Brussels Branch was well represented at a number of commemorative events including:

The annual Remembrance Service held at the Holy Trinity Church (report by Kate Andrews); the ceremonies at Lakdaal (report by Peter Van den Broeck), Rebécq, Hotton-sur-Ourthe (report by Jean-Pierre Pede), La Roche-en-Ardenne (report by Jean-Pierre Pede); the commemorations at the Brussels Cemetery in Evere (report by Jean-Pierre Pede), at the memorial in Boom (report by Erich d'Hulster), at the Tigelot Memorial near Jalhay (report by Erich d'Hulster); the Branch was also represented at the Belgian Memorial Day in Brussels (report by Jean-Pierre Pede) and at the 73rd Anniversary of the Liberation of Brussels (report by Jean-Pierre Pede).

Sadly, 2017 saw the passing of **Fred Hobbs** (d. 02/03/2017) and **Marcelle Gratton Couvert** (d. 23/07/2017) with moving obituaries by Colin Puplett.

2017 was also the year that **Brenda Knight** turned 100 (article by Colin Puplett). It was the year that **Roger Ellis** was awarded the Légion d'Honneur (report by Colin Puplett). It was also the year the Branch organised its very first Cream Tea - scones, clotted cream and strawberry jam at St Anthony's Church Hall in Kraainem, with the participation of the Military Wives' Choir (report by Colin Puplett).

AND SO, ON TO 2018

2018 is of course a major anniversary year with many commemorations scheduled to mark 100 years since the end of WW1.

At the beginning of 1918, the end of the war was only months away, but there would be still be a great deal of suffering before the Armistice was signed and hostilities on the Western Front finally ended on 11 November.

This year, on 11 November, there will be a series of events to mark the centenary of the Armistice, including a commemorative service at St. Symphorien Cemetery near Mons, Belgium, where the war began in 1914 and where the first and last casualties of the battle lie.

In the UK, bells will ring out in unison from churches and cathedrals in villages, towns and cities across the UK on 11 November this year. The campaign Ringing Remembers will recruit a total of 1,400 campanologists (bell ringers) for the event, the same number that lost their lives during the conflict.

We shall of course in due time be reporting on these and many other commemorative events to be held in Belgium and in the UK.

100 YEARS AGO: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LAST YEAR OF THE WAR



11 November 1918: Signatories to the Armistice pose outside Marshal Foch's railway carriage

German spring offensives

In March, the first of the German Spring Offensives very nearly succeeded in driving the Allied armies apart. The German forces advanced to within shelling distance of Paris for the first time since 1914. As a result of the battle, the Allies agreed on unity of command. General Foch was appointed commander of all Allied forces in France. The unified Allies were better able to respond to each of the German drives and the offensive turned into a battle of attrition.

In May, the American divisions also began to play an increasing role. By summer, between 250,000 and 300,000 American soldiers were arriving every month. A total of 2.1 million American troops would be deployed on this front before the war came to an end.

Allied counter-offensives

In July, Foch began the Second Battle of the Marne, a counter-offensive against the Marne salient which was eliminated by August. The Battle of Amiens began two days later, with Franco-British forces spearheaded by Australian and Canadian troops, along with 600 tanks and 800 aircraft. German manpower had been severely depleted after four years of war and its economy and society were under great internal strain.

The Hundred Days Offensive beginning in August proved the final straw and following this string of military defeats, German troops began to surrender in large numbers. The German retreat continued and the German Revolution put a new government in power.

The Armistice of Compiègne was quickly signed, stopping hostilities on the Western Front on 11 November 1918.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_\(World_War_I\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_(World_War_I))

THE KIRKUP CONNECTION: A STORY OF COINCIDENCES

by Michael Whitburn, based on information collected by Léon Rubin and Paul Claes

You may remember, in a previous issue of this Newsletter, reading the story of Branch Member Léon Rubin's clandestine journey through France and Spain in 1943 - how, at the age of 17, he travelled through Vichy France and was taken over the border with Spain by a local *passeur*; how he was arrested almost immediately by the *Guardia Civil* and jailed in Figueras, before finally being set free thanks to the mediation of a British Consular Officer. Until his release from jail, Léon had been travelling under the assumed name of FRED KIRKUP.

Shortly after the story appeared in the January 2017 Newsletter, I received a mail from Branch Member Paul Claes, who was intrigued by the name under which Léon Rubin had chosen to travel during the long and perilous journey that was to take him to England through France, Spain, and via Gibraltar. Paul has two distant cousins in England named Michael and Philip KIRKUP, and since KIRKUP is far from being a very common name, he wondered whether there could possibly be a connection between Léon's alias and the KIRKUP family he is acquainted with in England.

Mails were exchanged between Paul and Léon, and when it became clear that there was indeed a connection, the three of us decided to meet for lunch at the *Maison des Ailes* in Brussels to talk about the KIRKUP CONNECTION. Paul and Léon arrived, each with a well-documented file, and soon the pieces of the puzzle were beginning to fit together.

Here, then, as a sequel to Léon Rubin's previous contribution, the story of what can only be described as a series of remarkable coincidences.

LEON RUBIN also known as FRED KIRKUP

Léon first thought of using the name KIRKUP shortly before leaving the country, following a conversation with Georgette Dieu (1), a long-standing friend of the Rubin family, who also worked as an accountant for the watch business of Léon's father. It was no secret to Léon and his family that Georgette was involved in underground activities working for the Resistance. Léon also knew that Georgette had a close friend who lived in England and was married to an Englishman. Her friend's name was Lily Wittewronghel. But it was only when Léon told Georgette about his plan to join the Free Belgian Forces that she provided him with further details concerning her friend. Lily had married Kenneth KIRKUP in Brussels in 1935 and the couple had managed escape to England at the very beginning of the war. They had two children, Michael and Philip and at the time they were living in the Lake District. The name KIRKUP had a good ring to it and as an alias it sounded more genuine than Smith or Stephenson. And so it was that Léon decided to call himself FRED KIRKUP, son of John and Margaret KIRKUP, from Crosthwaite, a small village near Kendal in the North West of England.

Months later, after he had arrived in England and was attending a military training course at Scarborough, Léon arranged to pay Lily KIRKUP a visit at her home in Windermere where she was living with her two young sons, Michael, aged 6, and Philip, aged 4.

At the time, Lily's husband, Kenneth, who was serving as Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy, had been reported missing in action and Lily had been told that Kenneth had died in a submarine, somewhere off the coast of Japan.

When, several months before he contacted Lily, Léon had been handed over to the British authorities, the information about his *nom de guerre* was cross-checked in the UK for security reasons and Lily had been contacted and asked if she knew anyone by the name of Fred KIRKUP.

The mere mention of the name KIRKUP was enough to give Lily new hope that her husband was still alive.

So when Léon finally got in touch with her, Lily was understandably upset and angry with Léon for having used her husband's name and given her false hope.

The resentment soon disappeared once Léon had told her the whole story and a warm and friendly relationship soon developed between Léon and the KIRKUP family.

Towards the end of the war, when Léon was sent to Canada to complete his training as a pilot in the RAF, he received a good luck telegram from Lily and her two sons with the words:

"OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU. LILY MICHAEL PHILIP".



Leading seaman Kenneth Kirkup at the beginning of WW2

Kenneth and Lily on their wedding day in Brussels in 1935

PAUL CLAES AND THE KIRKUP FAMILY

Lily KIRKUP was the married name of a cousin of Paul's mother. Before she was married to Kenneth KIRKUP, in Brussels, on 5th October 1935, her name was Lily Wittewronghel. Kenneth and Lily KIRKUP had two children, Michael (b. 02-05-1937) and Philip (b. 27-06-1939). The family was evacuated from Antwerp to England on the last Royal Navy escorted ship before the port was closed.

Kenneth died, on 28th March 1942, in the raid on St. Nazaire (and not as Lily had been told by mistake off the coast of Japan). His body was never recovered.

Michael and Philip KIRKUP, now in their 70s, are Paul's second cousins, since they share the same great-grandparents. Some years ago, Paul contacted them by email. His long lost cousins responded with great enthusiasm. Since then, Paul has been in regular touch with them and a great deal of information and photographs have been exchanged (including the photographs reproduced in this article).

During one of his visits to St Nazaire (2) Paul tried to locate the exact place where Michael and Philip's father was buried. Unfortunately, nothing beyond a name on a monument recalls the memory of Kenneth KIRKUP, who died when the small craft on which he was serving, the ML 268, was blown up, astern of HMS Campbeltown.

"As far as I know, Paul wrote to his cousin Philip, your father lies in his seaman's grave, at the bottom of the Loire like so many seamen who died in their ships."

"At the Escoublac cemetery, there are just a few graves of unknown seamen. One of them could be your father's, but we can't be sure."

(1) *Sister of Gaston Dieu, the Belgian WW2 fighter pilot who, after the war, became Chairman of Sabena.*

(2) *Paul Claes is currently Euro-Representative of the St.Nazaire Society.*

THE RAID ON ST. NAZaire - 28th March 1942

The St. Nazaire raid or **Operation Chariot** was a successful British amphibious attack on the heavily defended *Normandie* dry dock at St. Nazaire in German-occupied France during the Second World War.

The operation was undertaken by the Royal Navy and British Commandos on 28 March 1942. St. Nazaire was targeted because the loss of its dry dock would force any large German warship in need of repairs, such as the Tirpitz - the Bismarck's sister ship - to return to home waters via either the heavily defended English Channel or the so-called GIUK gap (area in the northern Atlantic Ocean that forms a naval choke point between Greenland, Iceland and the UK), rather than having a haven available on the Atlantic coast in France.

The obsolete destroyer HMS Campbeltown, accompanied by 18 smaller craft, crossed the English Channel to the Atlantic coast of France and was rammed into the *Normandie* dock gates. The ship had been packed with delayed-action explosives, well hidden within a steel and concrete case that detonated later that day, putting the dock out of service for the remainder of the war and up to five years after.

A force of commandos landed to destroy machinery and other structures. Heavy German gunfire sank, set ablaze, or immobilised virtually all the small craft intended to transport the commandos back to England. The commandos had to fight their way out through the town to try to escape overland. Almost all were forced to surrender when their ammunition was expended and they were surrounded and captured by the German troops defending St. Nazaire.



HMS Campbeltown being converted for the raid.



HMS Campbeltown wedged in the dock gates.

After the raid, 228 men of the force of 611 returned to Britain; 169 were killed and 215 became prisoners of war. German casualties numbered over 360 dead, some killed after the raid when *Campbeltown* exploded. The fallen British raiders were buried at the La Baule Escoublac cemetery with military honours. The cemetery is 13 kilometres west of St. Nazaire. To recognise their bravery, 89 decorations were awarded to members of the raiding party, including five Victoria Crosses.

Hitler was furious that the British had been able to sail a flotilla of ships up the Loire unhindered. The raid refocused German attention on the Atlantic Wall, and special attention was given to ports to prevent any repeat of the raid. Hitler laid out new plans in a meeting with Armaments Minister Albert Speer in August 1942, calling for the construction of 15,000 bunkers by May 1943 to defend the Atlantic coast from Norway to Spain.

The battleship *Tirpitz* never entered the Atlantic. She remained in Norwegian fjords to threaten Allied shipping until she was destroyed by the RAF on 12 November 1944.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Nazaire_Raid

THE ST. NAZIRE SOCIETY

by Paul Claes

Age having taken its inevitable toll on the original Charioteers, the responsibility for maintaining and perpetuating the memory of the raid on St. Nazaire now rests with a committee made up of their children and grandchildren, as well as with representatives of the growing body of those who, while having no family ties with individual Charioteers, express a serious, long-term commitment to help ensure that the raiders will never be forgotten.

Every year, on the anniversary of the raid, the town of Saint-Nazaire hosts a well-attended ceremony at the *Monument du Commando*, on the seafront. Although the Society is not actively involved in the organisation of the event, it is always represented. The local authorities spare no effort when it comes to remembering the young men who were 'the first to bring them hope'. On the afternoon preceding the morning ceremony, crosses are laid at the graves of just a few of the fallen Charioteers that were laid to rest in the small Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Escoublac/La Baule.

More information on <http://www.operation-chariot.org/societystoday.html>

or from Branch Member Paul Claes on claesp2@telenet.be

GERMAN WW1 SUBMARINE IDENTIFIED

In October, the Newsletter carried an article about a German WW1 submarine that was found off the coast of Belgium. The submarine has now been identified as the UB-29, which departed on its final mission on November 27, 1916, with 22 German sailors aboard.



Shaded portion indicates the war zone proclaimed by Germany Feb. 18, 1915

After several fruitless attempts to discover the identity of the sunken vessel, divers began to sift through the sub's torpedo tubes where they found the small metal identity tag they were looking for.

The UB-29 carried out 17 patrol missions and managed to sink or severely damage 36 ships including the ferry *SS Sussex*. The French steamer *Sussex* provided ferry service on the English Channel. On a crossing to Dieppe in March 1916, the ship was mistaken for a minelayer and torpedoed by a German U-boat. The *Sussex* did not sink; it was towed into the French port of Boulogne. Fifty persons were killed in the incident. Though no American citizens lost their lives in the attack, the event prompted American President Woodrow Wilson to declare that if Germany were to continue to target unarmed vessels, the United States would break diplomatic relations with Germany. Fearing the entry of the United States into the war, Germany tried to appease the United States by issuing - on May 4, 1916 - the *Sussex Pledge*, which promised a change in Germany's naval warfare policy.

Under the terms of the pledge the belligerents promised not to target passenger ships and not to sink merchant ships without provision for safety of passengers and crew. In 1917, Germany became convinced that it could defeat the Allied Forces by instituting unrestricted submarine warfare before the United States could enter the war. The *Sussex* pledge was therefore rescinded in January 1917.

The reason why the UB-29 went missing is still not clear. It may have sustained damage at sea and was trying to reach the Belgian coast or it could have hit a mine.

Objects salvaged from the submarine will be included as part of the exhibition 'The First World War - the Battle for the North Sea' to be held at the Provincial Palace of Bruges from 21 April - 31 August 2018.

Sources: Associated Press November 14th, 2017
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sussex_pledge
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1098.html>

ARTISTS RIFLES MEMORIAL

As Greg Ruthven explained in an article for the RBL Newsletter in July 2016, he first became aware of Wilfred Owen's poetry on the horrors of WW1 trench warfare at the age of 11. His new school, "The Royal Liberty School", had once housed the Artists Rifles, at the Hare Hall Officer Training Camp (OTC), where in WW1 four companies of cadet recruits passed through rigorous training to become Officers, who were then fed to various regiments throughout the Great War. Many were to die on the battlefields.

Now, as Greg reports, a memorial is to be installed to commemorate the end of WW1.

The Artists Rifles Camp WW1 Memorial

by Greg Ruthven

On 23rd November 2017, a short service was given by Rev Weston from St Michael's Church in Gidea Park (east of Romford, in the London Borough of Havering, east London) to consecrate the land on Main Road where a new memorial will stand for the Artists Rifles Camp WW1. The camp was part of the site where the Royal Liberty School now stands.

We were delighted to be invited to tour the School and were very interested to see Hare Hall and lay a wreath in the quadrant gardens before the stained-glass window in respect of those who died in WW1 and other conflicts.



The memorial has been commissioned and will be installed at the location of the old main gate of Hare Hall Camp this year to mark the centenary of the end of the conflict.

The camp saw 10,000 men pass through the officer training programme in the First World War and many men marched out of the main gate, and across to France and Belgium.

These soldiers included Wilfred Owen and Edward Thomas, both well-known poets who died on the battlefields in 1918.

The memorial will bear the poems *Futility* by Wilfred Owen and *Rain* by Edward Thomas, and a reproduction of the painting *Over the Top* by John Nash.

Futility, by Wilfred Owen, one of the most renowned poets of WW1, was written in May. The poem details an event where a group of soldiers attempt to revive an unconscious soldier by moving him into the warm sunlight on a snowy meadow. However, the "kind old sun" cannot help the soldier - he has died.

Futility

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds,—
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved—still warm—too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

Rain by Edward Thomas is about the poet's experience of sitting in a hut all night alone, listening to the rain falling and meditating on his death and the fate of his fellow soldiers. Thomas was killed at the Battle of Arras in 1917 - a year after he wrote the poem.

Rain

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying to-night or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,
Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be towards what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Over the Top is a 1918 painting by John Nash depicting a counter-attack on Welsh Ridge in northern France on 30 December 1917, during WW1. The painting is held by Imperial War Museum, London.

The painting shows British soldiers in heavy winter greatcoats scrambling up from their trenches to advance over a snow-covered landscape. Two already lie dead or wounded on the duckboards in the base of the trench and one on the snow.

The others move to the right without looking back. The painting is based on Nash's experience while serving in the 1st Battalion of the Artists Rifles). His unit went "over the top", to push towards Marcoing near Cambrai. Of the 80 men, 68 were killed or wounded by the shell-fire during the first few minutes. Nash was one of the 12 that survived. He made the painting in early 1918. The work was commissioned by the Ministry of Information and painted in a rented seed-shed at Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Fiona Greaves is Welfare Chair and a Committee member of the Longhope and District RBL branch in Gloucestershire and is organising a **charity bike ride** to raise money for the 2018 Poppy Appeal and mark 2018 by cycling from London to Mons via Arras. The group undertaking the challenge will set off from the RBL headquarters in London on **Friday 27 July**.

The third day of their cycle will be from Arras to Mons, where they would like to end their journey, lay a wreath and crosses on behalf of their branch and generally mark the occasion. Fiona would like to get in touch with RBL members who may be able to assist with **contacts in and around Mons** for cheap accommodation and food at the end of the bike ride. Should anybody be prepared to support this initiative and assist Fiona and her fellow cyclists with any aspect of their challenge, please contact them on fiona.greaves@yahoo.com or mobile +44 7581 193923 or contact our Branch Secretary on andree.farrant@hotmail.com. Many thanks to all, and good luck to Fiona and the Longhope and District branch!

BRITISH TORCH OF REMEMBRANCE PILGRIMAGE - BRUSSELS, 10TH NOV. 2017

by Andrée Ferrant

The British Torch of Remembrance is a completely self-supporting association. Every year, in early November, they organise a pilgrimage lasting several days. Last year's event started on 7th Nov at 18:00hrs with the Torch Lighting at Westminster Abbey in London. There were subsequent Remembrance Services, wreath laying ceremonies and parades in Dover, Oostende, Bredene, Roeselaere, Ypres and finally, in Brussels.



Standard Bearers and Torch Bearer (right) before the monument to the 3012 railway workers who lost their lives in the two world wars



Andrée Ferrant and Fernand Delcourt lay a wreath at the monument

At 17:45hrs, on Friday 10th November, participants in the pilgrimage gathered in the hall of Central Station in Brussels where they were welcomed by officials of the Town Hall of Brussels and members of several Belgian patriotic associations.

The procession, preceded by the Brussels Military Brass Band, started at 18:00hrs with a ceremony of tribute, the laying of wreaths and playing of national anthems at the monument for railway workers. The parade then moved on to Place de l'Albertine where a similar ceremony was held at the statues of King Albert I and Queen Elisabeth, after which all proceeded down to the Town Hall of Brussels for the last ceremony followed by a reception.

Despite the cold, the event gathered a great many spectators, not only in the hall of Central Station, but also along the streets leading to the Grand' Place. In the Town Hall there were speeches by the representative of the Burgomaster and the President of the British delegation, followed by renditions of The Last Post and the British and Belgian National Anthems.

The reception that followed was a perfect occasion to mingle with the guests among whom members of the Royal British Legion in the UK.

COMMEMORATION AT THYNES ON 12th NOVEMBER 2017

by Jacqueline Daugnaix-Whitfield

On 12th November I was invited by M. Luc Detal, Secretary of the Amicale Patriotique Awagne - Lisogne - Thygnes - Loyers to a commemoration at the monument erected where two Halifax planes crashed on November 21st 1944, close to the village of Thynes. I laid a wreath at the monument and then followed the local authorities of Dinant (Burgomaster Richard Fournaux and local Aldermen) to the other patriotic monuments situated in surrounding villages.

The two Halifax planes were flying on a mission to bomb a synthetic petrol plant in Sterkrade when they collided because of the bad weather conditions. The fourteen crew members were killed, but there were no civilian victims. The crew of one of the planes was Australian (346 squadron); the crew of the other plane was French, from Group Guyenne (51 squadron).



346 Squadron :

F/L Gordon L. Chapman KIA, W/O William A. Porter RAAF KIA, F/S Michael W. Cockbaine KIA, F/S Neville R. Lewis RAAF KIA, Sgt John D. Clark KIA, Sgt Leslie T. Carter KIA, Sgt Edwin V. Wallis KIA

51 Squadron:

Sgt André L. Fauge FFAF KIA, Adj Georges E. Thiery FFAF KIA, Cne Claude L. Loe FFAF KIA, Sgt Jean Godefroy FFAF KIA, Sgt André M. Boutillier FFAF KIA, Adj Francis J. Laffont FFAF KIA, Adj André Fleck FFAF KIA

UK PASSPORTS TO TURN BLUE AGAIN AFTER BREXIT

The new blue and gold design, which will no longer need to conform to European Union standards, will replace the burgundy cover that was introduced in 1988.

The passport will boast updated security features and technologies, including a super-strength plastic polycarbonate material that will be used for the picture page making it difficult to alter.

The new passports will be phased in from October 2019, and will be issued when citizens apply to renew their document. British passport holders do not need to do anything until their renewal date.

A blue cover is a nod to the original appearance of the British passport, which was first used in 1921. It remained blue until the UK joined the EU.

Until 29 March 2019, every passport issued by the UK will continue to be valid as a European Union travel document. From the date of leaving, all current British passports will lose this status.

Travellers are still waiting for clarity about what additional bureaucracy will be required from British citizens.

While negotiations continue on Brexit, a European initiative is being developed to strengthen the EU's external borders.

There is expected to be a surge of applications from ardent Remainers for renewals in March 2019, in order to keep a connection with the European Union for as long as possible.

The last British "EU" passport will run out by the end of 2029.

Sources: <https://www.itv.com/news/2017-12-22/uk-passport-blue-leave-eu/>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/passport-european-union-brexit-british-burgundy-dark-blue-eu-a8123616.html>

THANK YOU

Most of you have now paid your membership fee for 2018 and should be receiving your membership card very soon. Thank you all for your loyalty and support.

Should you inadvertently have failed to pay, please contact our Membership Secretary, Jean-Pierre Pede, who will be pleased to assist.



Jean-Pierre Pede, Avenue E. de Thibault 51, B19,
1040 Bruxelles

Tel : 02 736 31 80

E-mail : jppem.jp@gmail.com

2017 POPPY APPEAL

by Ann Morley, Poppy Appeal Coordinator

The Brussels Branch remains extremely grateful for the support it received from all the businesses, offices, shops, pubs, churches, associations and clubs during its Annual Poppy Appeal.

Nothing however would be possible without the help of all the volunteers who so generously give their time to deliver and/or collect the poppies and collecting tins.

So, many heartfelt thanks to our helpers and many thanks to ALL the supporter locations, to those who delivered and collected boxes and of course to all those who bought a poppy and wore it with pride.

This year the branch would like to express its **very special thanks** to a schoolteacher at the **Lycée de Waha** (Liège), **Jackie Farbridge**, who together with her pupils did a really splendid job selling poppies in the centre of Liège, explaining the meaning of the poppy appeal, and producing drawings and posters that were put on display in the school's main entrance hall.

Below, the mail Ann Morley received from a very keen Jackie Farbridge, who was obviously delighted with what she and the children had managed to achieve:

Hello Ann,

Well I've finally got together the money we collected and in all I have 322 euros. The bracelets sold really well and I could have sold more. I went with the children of year 6 and their teachers into the centre of Liege on 10th November to sell our poppies and we collected 180 euros in just 45 minutes. The children explained what the poppies represented to the people interested and why they were selling them.

My own class (year 2) made drawings and posters that are now displayed in the main hall of our school. Two other schools have asked me to supply them with poppies next year. Bye for now, Jackie





Young poppy sellers in the centre of the *Cité Ardente*

RBL CHRISTMAS LUNCH

by Ron Aston

As always, everything was impeccably set up by Brenda and Colin. The tables were suitably festive. Christmas was clearly here again - both inside *and* outside. For the first time this



"Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow"

"Let it snow, Let it snow, Let it snow" (Andrew Fisher)

winter, it really snowed, making driving conditions hazardous and causing total chaos on the roads. The traffic froze and practically came to a standstill. Needless to say, many people were unable to attend, but the fifteen hardy souls who finally did make it to Le St Hubert enjoyed a lovely turkey dinner and generous helpings of Christmas pudding with flaming liquor to follow.



I set a Christmas-themed quiz, multiple choice à la "Who wants to be a Millionaire". Who knew that The Settlement was the capital of Christmas Island, or that Ukrainians put spider's webs on their trees for good luck? Well, not many of the quizzers did! Anyway, after a tie-break, Alan Puplett won the customary bottle of wine.



Hampers were then handed out to some of our more senior members (François, Denise, Roger), and we were just beginning to tuck in to the turkey when, lo and behold, at 13:35, Muguette walked through the door. She had finally managed to get a taxi when the bus she had been waiting for failed to materialise. She was congratulated for her perseverance and determination, and she too was given a hamper.

An intrepid lady is our Muguette! (below, left, pulling a Xmas cracker with Denise)



Portraits by
Rosemary Pallett

A reminder that **lunches** are organized all the year round, on the 2nd Monday of every month, from 12.30, at **Le St Hubert, Place des Chasseurs Ardennais, 1030 Brussels.** All branch members are more than welcome.

As reported in the October issue of this Newsletter, the first Cream Tea organised by the Brussels Branch, on Monday 23rd October 2017, was a resounding success. So much so, that the Welfare Committee is now considering organising a **second Cream Tea** at the end of March and possibly also two **Barbecues**, one in June and one in the autumn. All being well, the venue for these three festive events should be St. Anthony's Church, Kraainem. More details later.

CONDOLENCES FROM THE RBL BRUSSELS BRANCH

The RBL Brussels branch wishes to express its heartfelt condolences to Jack Christy for the recent loss of his dear wife Barbara. Though living in the UK, Jack has been a friend and a member of the Brussels branch for many years. Our deepest sympathies go out to him and his family.

CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2018

RBL Lunches	12 th Feb, 12 th March, 9 th April, 14 th May, 11 th June
Sun 6 th May	Commemorations of the Battle of the Bulge at Hotton-sur-Ourthe and La Roche-en-Ardenne
Fri 21 st Sept	Belgian Memorial Day , 14:00-16:00, at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Rue Royale, 1000 Brussels. All details later.



Happy birthday wishes to the branch members who have recently celebrated or are about to celebrate their birthdays:

Glenys Aston-Bowen, Jacques Blavier, Michel Bourland, David Boyd, Wilfred Burie, Joëlle Campion, Andrew Charlton, Jack Christy, Sheila Lyle Cuthbertson, Justin Davies, Luc Dewolf, Brigitte d'Hulster-Ceulemans, Paul Grayson, André Hespel, Rainer Hiltermann, Lawrence Anthony Kelly, Terry Ann Kemp, Michael Andrew Light, Andrew Lysak, Anthony More, Denise More-Thys, Tom Peeters, Paul-Henri Philips, Colin Puplett, Jean-Pierre Schellekens



Very special congratulations to the branch members who have recently celebrated their 90+ birthday:

Ivy Lilian Hobbs, François-Marie Jacobs, Peter Pallett, François Roberti-Lintermans and Léon Rubin



Super special congratulations to

Brenda Ghislain-Knight, who on 27th January will be celebrating her 101st birthday.

Victor Rasquin, who celebrated his 104th birthday last November.

Hugs and warmest congratulations to both of them.

With many thanks for their contributions to this January issue to Andrée, Andrew, Ann, Greg, Jacqueline, Léon, Paul, Ron, Rosemary and, for expertly piecing together yet another issue of your favourite newsletter, Filomena.