



*51st Highland Division Memorial*

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*This year is the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
Royal British Legion Brussels Branch*

## Memorial to the 51st Highland Division

*Service in La-Roche-en-Ardenne, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012*

On 6<sup>th</sup> May, we held our annual memorial service at the Memorial to the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division in La -Roche-en-Ardenne. The inscription on the memorial reads: "Dedicated to the memory of the fallen of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division who gave their lives for freedom in the La Roche offensive of January 1945". Wreaths were laid and we listened to the emotive tones of the piper, Steve Laird, as he played his salute to the fallen.

At the end of the service, Colin Puplett reminded us of some poignant words of one of our branch members, Harry Shaw, who died recently aged 91. When Harry last attended the ceremony, he turned to the list of soldiers named on the monument and paid particular attention to those soldiers in their 30s. He reflected that it was likely that they had also fought in the battles around Caen following the Normandy landings.

As a gunner in a detachment of tanks in the battle for Caen, Harry was deployed to support the troops of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division. Thus, he might have helped to protect some of these soldiers who had had a very hard time in those battles, as did his detachment of tanks, which was decimated in the battle. For the soldiers of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division who survived, there followed many other battles in various parts of Europe.

Harry found it very poignant that some of these soldiers who had survived right through to the Battle of the Bulge had lost their lives at Roche so near to the end of the war. Colin found that Harry's words really brought home to him how much our veterans are a window on the lives of those who fought for our freedom and we should give some thought to the veterans of World War II from the Branch who had recently died and cherish those who are still with us.

## Can you help? Poppy Appeal 2012

*RBL Brussels needs volunteers to help with this year's Poppy Appeal*

Once again, we are beginning the organisation of our annual Poppy Appeal, and we are looking for volunteers to help with this task. Are you a business, shop, office, church, community group? Would you be prepared to have a box at your location? Or do you have some spare time to help with organisation? If so, then please get in touch.

As you know, we take pride in the fact that the money we collect supports British ex-service personnel and their families.

If you feel you would like to join the team, then please contact [chairman@britishlegion.be](mailto:chairman@britishlegion.be). Any support you can offer will be greatly appreciated.



Harry Shaw MBE, 1920 - 2012

## Harry Shaw MBE

*Harry worked tirelessly to support ex-servicemen in Belgium*

Harry Shaw was born in Derbyshire in April 1920. At the age of 14, he followed his father into the mines where he worked until he was 20. He then joined the Sherwood Foresters until the regiment was disbanded when he transferred to the 148<sup>th</sup> Royal Armoured Corps as a gunner-radio operator. Harry took part in the Normandy landings. His Sherman tank was specially converted to float; thus it disembarked at sea and hoped that the watertight preparations and the floatation collar fitted to the tank would keep it from sinking. He then fought through France, Belgium and into Holland.

During a period of leave spent in Brussels, he met Paulette who would become his first wife and mother of his two sons, Robert and Alain. He returned to the Dutch front and ended the war in Germany, 2 kilometres from the Danish frontier. Harry and Paulette married in 1945 and went to Egypt and Palestine where Harry performed police duties under the mandate of the United Nations. Harry was demobbed in 1946 after 6 years in the British Army. His marriage was a happy one but, sadly, ended in 1959 when Paulette died from cancer. Harry decided to stay in Belgium with his sons and in 1961 married his second wife, Joan.

Harry became Vice Chairman of the Normandy Veterans Association, and was a member of the RBL and, latterly, of the Redcoats Society. He also planned the creation of a monument to British soldiers at Cointe, near to Liege.

In 1995 he was awarded the MBE and later the Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Couronne de Belgique for services rendered to British and Belgian ex-servicemen.

We send our condolences to his family. He will be sadly missed.



Chris Hilton confirms the commitment from the British Embassy

## Hotton Commemoration 2012

*Annual service of commemoration to remember the 645 men who rest at Hotton*

The journey down to Hotton that Sunday morning in May was rather a damp affair and, whilst we were at the church service in Hotton, the heavens opened. Luckily, by the time we moved on to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery, the rain had eased off and we were able to hold the memorial service without our umbrellas!

Despite the weather, there was a good turnout at the Cemetery at the top of the hill on Rue de la Libération, with a mixture of Hotton locals, RBL members and dignitaries in attendance. David Fieldsend, our lay reader, gave the address and the British Ambassador's representative, Chris Hilton, confirmed the ongoing commitment to be present at memorial services from the Ambassador.

Wreaths were laid by Brigadier Andrew Fisher, RBL Brussels Branch President; Mr Hilton, for the UK; Major Derek Gilchrist, Warrant Officer Gingras and Sergeant Florent, for the Canadian Forces in Europe and the Royal Canadian Legion, based at Geilsenkirchen, Germany; and representatives from the commune of Hotton, including the mayor Mr François Jeanmart.

As usual the band, les Joyeux Travailleurs, gave rousing renditions of the national anthems of Belgium, UK, Canada and Australia and the Belgian army fired a volley in salute. We all then took some time to read the gravestones and remember some of the 645 men who lay at this beautiful spot in the midst of the Ardennes.

We must thank all those involved in making the event such a success and this could not be possible without the support of the commune of Hotton. See you next year.



Photos © Marc @EnglishShop.be



## Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrated in Brussels

*By Colin Puplett, Secretary of the British Charitable Fund (BCF)*

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in style by four Brussels-based English speaking organisations, with a Jubilee lunch. This was the first of a series of lunches planned to bring together senior members of the Royal British Legion, the British Charitable Fund, the Wednesday Club and the Royal Air Forces Association.

Avoiding social isolation is an important part of the activities of each of the organising bodies and this is particularly prevalent with the senior members of our society. A major task for such events is to organise transport to and from the venue. Thus, a great deal of thanks for the success of the Jubilee Lunch is due to the many volunteer drivers, some of whom are seen participating at the lunch.

The idea for the Jubilee Lunches arose out of the decision to find an alternative to the holidays at the Belgian coast organised for many years by the British Charitable Fund. Due in part to the ageing membership, the BCF wished to find new events more in tune with the needs and possibilities of its senior members. The idea for the Jubilee Lunches was quickly taken up by the other organisations to produce a combined event.

The enjoyment of the invitees was evident from their happy faces, empty plates and the level of chatter between them, and was reward indeed for the organisers who had planned the lunch. Each of the organising bodies hold regular get-togethers for their members, but this was the first time that such an event has been held jointly. The websites and contact details of the organisations where news of forthcoming events will be posted are:

The British Charitable Fund: [www.bcfund.be](http://www.bcfund.be) : [bcf.info@telenet.be](mailto:bcf.info@telenet.be)

The Royal British Legion -Brussels Branch: [www.britishlegion.be](http://www.britishlegion.be) : [welfare@britishlegion.be](mailto:welfare@britishlegion.be)

The Wednesday Club: [www.the-wednesday-club.org](http://www.the-wednesday-club.org) : [info@the-wednesday-club.org](mailto:info@the-wednesday-club.org)

The Royal Air Forces Association: [www.RAFA.org.uk](http://www.RAFA.org.uk)



*Photo © Ron Aston*



*A right royal celebration – photos © David Townsend*

## François Hollande becomes First French President to Visit D-Day War Graves

*French President visits British and Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery*

François Hollande has become the first French President ever to visit the graves of thousands of British soldiers who died liberating France on D-Day. He visited the Ranville War Cemetery near Caen, Normandy, to mark the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous invasion.



*Ranville War Cemetery*

Ranville was the first village to be liberated in France, when the bridge over the Caen Canal was captured intact in the early hours of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 by troops of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, who had landed nearby by parachute and glider. The cemetery contains the graves of 2,235 Commonwealth soldiers, 97 of them unidentified. There are also 330 German graves and a few burials of other nationalities. Mr Hollande's decision to place a commemorative wreath in the village near Caen, Normandy, will help lay to rest past accusations that the French have underplayed the British contribution to victory in World War II. As rain poured down at the end of his visit, Mr Hollande said: "The rain doesn't matter, being here does." He shook hands with Parachute Regiment veterans, as well as serving British and French Army soldiers. In previous years, French D-Day commemorations have concentrated on American invasion beaches, and on the sacrifice of Free French and Resistance forces.

In 1944, Britain's 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division took part in a daring raid to capture two heavily defended bridges across the River Orne and Caen Canal on D-Day. An assault group made up of men from the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry landed in six gliders, earning themselves a place in military folklore. Following liberation, the Ranville churchyard was immediately used to bury those who were killed, before an official cemetery was opened next to it after the war.

## The Laying up of the RNA Belgian Branch Standard

*Rev Dr. Clifford Owen describes the new home of the RNA standard in the English church Oostende*



*The RNA Standard moves to Oostende*

Three years ago, the English Anglican Church Oostende was asked to host a special memorial for the survivors of HMS Hayburn Wyke, an armed trawler which was sunk by a U-boat on New Year's Day 1945, off Oostende. Thus, a new memorial was dedicated to those lost, and placed on the church wall. So, when the Belgian Branch of the Royal Naval Association (RNA) was looking for a location to lay up its standard, it seemed the natural thing to do, for the English Church, Oostende to offer it a new home.

A special service was created for the occasion, which included such pieces of naval liturgy such as "Hearts of Oak", "Eternal Father strong to save" and the naval

prayer. The service, held on 11<sup>th</sup> March, followed the RNA drill book for the actual laying up of the standard and the service also included the *Te Deum* in Latin. This is used in Belgium to mark the National Day in July, and, as always on these occasions, it was fitting to honour the host country.

Links between the Belgian and British Navies have always been close and so the local branch of the Belgian RNA was represented, together with other local standards, including the British Legion (Oostende). Michael Rose represented the RBL Brussels Branch.

The Church was built in 1865, to serve the English community which at the time numbered about 100 families. It is now in need of repair and a major restoration project is about to start. As part of that refurbishment, the intention is to relocate the standard in a new "memorial corner". Here history and memorabilia can be placed side-by-side to honour the long history of the naval connections between Oostende and Britain.



*Commander Gavin Short laying a wreath*





*Standard Bearers at the ceremony*

## New Memorial to Lost Lancaster

*Crew of PM-X Lancaster of RAF 103 Squadron remembered*

The 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012 was an exceptional day for the APCK flying Club at Oostmalle-Zoersel, as this was the day that a memorial plaque for a Lancaster aircraft, lost 68 years ago, was inaugurated. The plaque commemorates the 7 member crew of the Lancaster PM-X ND700 of 103 RAF Squadron, which was shot down and crashed to the ground in an area known as "Bruulbergen" and which is currently part of Zoersel Airfield in the village of Oostmalle.

The inauguration of the memorial plaque was witnessed by family members of the crew, veterans and representatives of the Embassies of the United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa. Freddy Roiseux, RBL standard Bearer, Jean-Pierre Blanckaert, RAFA standard bearer, and Michael Rose, Vice Chairman of the RBL Brussels Branch also attended. A Belgian Air Force Piper played "Flowers of the Forest" and at around half past four, a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) Lancaster accompanied by 2 Belgian Air Force F-16s completed the event, with a flypast in salute to the lost crew.

The PM-X Lancaster of RAF 103 Squadron, based at RAF Elsham Woods, crashed on the night of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1944 during a raid on Hasselt railway installations, killing its crew. Belgian Pilot Officer Florent Van Rollegheem, the regular pilot and his crew, the usual mixture of British, Canadians and South Africans, had already made a tour of operations together, but this night Van Rollegheem was sick in hospital and could not fly. His crew were reluctant to fly with a different pilot, as 2 other team members had already lost their lives whilst flying with another pilot. However, Wing Commander H. R. Goodman of the South African Air Force (SAAF) was nominated to command the flight that night, with the intention that after the raid the crew would have a break until their regular pilot was fit.

The same night, British formations also attacked Leuven and Leopoldsburg. However, due to thick fog, the Master Bomber gave the order to abandon the mission over Hasselt, and after some confusion Goodman headed for home still with a full load of bombs. Just after midnight, the Lancaster was detected by Capt. Werner Baake of 1/NJG (1st night-fighter group, Luftwaffe) and was hit by cannon fire, exploding in midair.

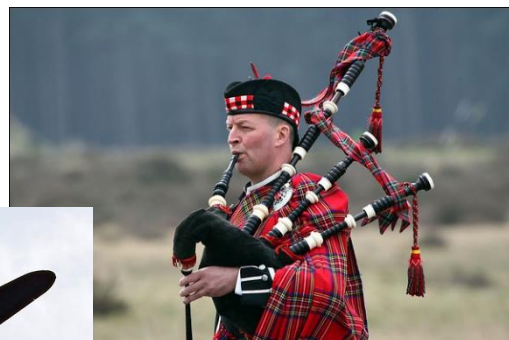
The memorial plaque commemorates all the 7 crew members who lost their lives that night: Wing Commander H.R. Goodman (SAAF), Navigator G. Agar (RAF), Bomb Aimer W. Vander-Dasson (RAF), Radio Operator C. Finighan (RAF), Tail Gunner R. McLeod (RCAF), Flight Engineer Ph. Vickers (RAF) and Midupper Gunner R. White (RAF). All are buried in Schoonselhof Cemetery near Antwerp.



*Michael Rose, RBL Brussels Branch Vice-Chairman*



*The BBMF Lancaster over the airfield*



*Belgian Air Force piper*

### Cercle Georges Lecointe (Belgian Navy):

Conference on a Naval theme 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month (ex. July & August) - 20:00 at BRYC



*The cyclists enjoying a well earned drink*

## Bike to Brussels and Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers

*Cyclists support RBL fundraising*



*Re-kindling the eternal flame*

On one of the rare sunny afternoons in June, there was a ceremony at the tomb of the Unknown Soldiers in Brussels to celebrate the arrival of riders on the "Bike to Brussels" organised by the Royal British Legion. More than 30 bike riders, of all ages and from all backgrounds, arrived in Brussels after a 200km cycle ride from Calais via Ieper. The sun shone and the ride was a great success, raising funds for the Legion's valuable work.

The ceremony was presided over by Lieutenant-colonel Aviateur Jean Jacques David, Commander of the Region of Brussels Military and President of the Committee of the Flame. Branch Vice-Chairman, Michael Rose and Helen Haywood represented the RBL Brussels Branch at the ceremony and Jean-Pierre Blanckaert carried the RBL standard.

The Colonne des Congrès/Congreskolom is a national monument of Belgium, located on Rue Royale in the centre of Brussels. The tall spire was erected in 1859 as a symbol of Belgian independence and in tribute to the congress which drew up the Belgian constitution in 1830. A statue of Leopold I, the first King of the Belgians, stands atop it. Between 2 lions at the base lies the tomb of the unknown soldiers (from both world wars), their memory immortalised by an eternal flame.

### Monthly Lunches

**RBL Brussels Branch Lunches continue throughout the Summer**

The next lunch is on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> July at our usual location, les Brasseries Rustiques, Ave du Cimetière de Bruxelles 155, 1140 Brussels. 12:00 start - All welcome.



PR XVI N777 photo-reconnaissance Mosquito from 140 Squadron at Melsbroek, Belgium in December 1944 flown by Flt Lts Arthur Kirk and A G "Tony" Humphryes on their first operation together - a daylight sortie to the Gröningen area of the North Netherlands and German border.

**The "Red Coats" Society, 145 Bld de Smet Naeyer, 1090 Brussels:**

Conference on a British Military theme 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month (ex. July & August) - 19:45

## Calendar of Events 2012

Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> Jul	<b>Joint Service of Commemoration, Ieper/Ypres</b>
Mon 9 <sup>th</sup> Jul	<b>RBL Branch Lunch</b> 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques, Ave du Cimetière de Bruxelles 155, 1140 Brussels. Tel: 02 736 1648
Mon 13 <sup>th</sup> Aug	<b>RBL Branch Lunch</b> 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Sun 19 <sup>th</sup> Aug	<b>Tigelot Remembrance</b> 10:00 - Jalhay/Verviers
Tue 4 <sup>th</sup> Sep	<b>Brigade Piron</b> 10:00 - Parc des Muses, Ave Brigade Piron, Molenbeek
Mon 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep	<b>RBL Branch Lunch</b> 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	<b>RBL Branch AGM</b> 13:00 - Fulcra
Oct - date tbc	<b>Friends of RNA/RBL Trafalgar Lunch</b> 12:30 - Le Manoir du Lac, Genval
Sun 14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Belgian Air Force Remembrance Service - tbc</b> Air Force Memorial at the Cinquantenaire Brussels
Wed 7 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Ambassador's Reception</b> 19:00 - Venue & date tbc
Sun 11 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Remembrance Service &amp; RBL Lunch</b> 12:00 - Pro-Cathedral Holy Trinity, Brussels
Mon 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>RBL Branch Lunch</b> 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques
Mon 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>RBL Branch Lunch</b> 12:00 - Les Brasseries Rustiques



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British Legion Brussels



Guests at the ball

Photo © Colin Puplett

## Duchess of Richmond's Ball 2012

*A glittering occasion, raising money for charity*

This year, more than two hundred guests attended the Duchess of Richmond's Ball, held at the Château Ste Anne in Auderghem. This glittering occasion, gave everyone the opportunity to dress up for the evening, with men in dinner suits and ladies in ballgowns. The Château was the perfect backdrop for the theme of the Ball, which was originally held in Brussels on the eve of the Battle of Waterloo, in 1815.

The Ball was held to raise money for five charities, including the Brussels Branch of the RBL. It was organised by the British Chamber of Commerce (BBCA) and the British Embassy, with the sponsorship of a number of well known companies.

The British Ambassador welcomed the guests, praised the work of the beneficiary charities and thanked the Ball's organisers for a job well done. An auction of sponsored gifts raised money for the charities and the professional auctioneer, from Sotheby's, was highly amusing and quickly encouraged bidding, which contributed to a healthy total.

Once again, the Ball was a great success and is now firmly placed in the events calendar for future years.



**Musée Royal de l'Armée, Brussels:**

Conference on a military theme 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month (ex. July & August) at 20:00  
[www.klm-mra.be](http://www.klm-mra.be)





Myriam Wraith – A very active  
Branch member

## Thanks to Myriam

*Certificate of thanks presented to Myriam Wraith*

At long last, a framed certificate was presented to Myriam Wraith by the Branch President, Andrew Fisher, at the Hotton Commemoration in May. The certificate was originally presented to her by Rachel Aaron, the previous British Ambassador to Belgium in 2008, since when it has awaited a frame and a suitable occasion when Myriam could attend!

Myriam was the all singing, all dancing face of the Brussels Branch of the RBL for five years, acting not only as honorary secretary, but also as editor of the branch magazine and events' organiser. She represented the RBL at many ceremonies throughout Belgium and was the point of contact with countless Belgian organisations. She was also an active member of the welfare committee and was a welcome visitor to elderly members with her ready smile, particularly at Christmas, when she would arrive wearing a Christmas hat and carrying hampers. She was also part of the Poppy Appeal team!

It was lovely to see Myriam again after a long absence. She has not enjoyed the best of health recently and we all wish her a speedy recovery.

### Condolences from RBL Brussels Branch

The Brussels branch would like to extend its condolences to the family of Ernie Forsythe who passed away earlier this year, aged 92. He saw active service in World War II and was a long standing member of the RBL. His funeral took place in March in the Westpelaar cemetery, near Hacht.

The Brussels branch would also like to extend its condolences to the family of Emiel Pletsters who passed away in April. Mr Pletsters was born in 1922 and was a Normandy Veteran who joined the Belgian Forces in the UK. He leaves his wife Madeleine, 4 sons, 10 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. His funeral took place at the Sainte-Aldegonde Church in Ophain.

## About the British Legion, Brussels Branch

*Caring and campaigning for the serving and ex-Service community*

The Brussels Branch of the RBL has a mixture of predominantly, but not exclusively, British and Belgian members.

A number served in the last World War and remained in Brussels after its liberation from the occupying forces.

We actively seek Members, both serving and ex-servicemen or women, with a tie to the services, but anyone is welcome. Annual membership is only €20.



The Brussels Branch provides welfare for a number of protégés who are ex-service personnel or their spouses in need of varying levels of support. This includes hospital and home visits as well as financial assistance.

We also provide a social focus for our members which includes trips, lunches and various other activities.

The RBL Brussels Branch also provides military representation at a large number of ceremonies enacted at the various war graves and cemeteries throughout Belgium.

Our main fund-raising activity on an annual basis is the Poppy Appeal, particularly relevant in Belgium as it is representative of the poppies of Flanders and Picardy where some of the bloodiest fighting of the First World War took place.

Main email contact: [info@britishlegion.be](mailto:info@britishlegion.be)

Membership contact: Paulina Robbins van Rijn  
[membership@britishlegion.be](mailto:membership@britishlegion.be)

[www.britishlegion.be](http://www.britishlegion.be)

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Newsletter contributions or requests to receive future copies by email to Dr Helen Haywood at [newsletter@britishlegion.be](mailto:newsletter@britishlegion.be)