
THE WIPERS TIMES

Newsletter of The Royal British Legion Brussels Branch



Dear Newsletter readers,

Welcome to this late summer / early autumn issue of the RBL Brussels Branch Newsletter.

First of all I would like to address a very special word of thanks to **Branch Chair Dennis Abbott** who contributed no fewer than six articles to this issue.

Many thanks also to **Yves Moerman** and **Martin Banks** for their contributions, and a great many thanks to my wife **Filomena** for her invaluable assistance in helping me out with the layout.

Here is what we have in store for you:

Dennis Abbott reports on the annual Summer Commemoration that was held on 20 June at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Evere – a commemoration with readings from Sonian British Explorer Scouts and the reading of the Names of the Fallen by Vice-Chair Jean-Pierre Pede.

In a second contribution, **Dennis and researcher Chris Dickon remember the US-based servicemen buried in the three Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries** where our branch holds its annual commemorations – Heverlee, Evere and Hotton.

Around 50,000 American or US-linked servicemen enlisted with Commonwealth forces before the US entered the First World War and a further 25,000 before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Six US-linked servicemen are buried at Heverlee, five at Evere and one at Hotton. Dennis tells us who they were.

Yves Moerman tells the story of Lt Col John W. Miller, mortally wounded at the Battle of Quatre-Bras, on 16 June 1815, two days before the Battle of Waterloo.

Martin Banks focuses on the fate of Yorkshireman Fred Tingle, killed in action on 19 May 1940 during the retreat of British Expeditionary Forces to Dunkirk.

Dennis reports on the annual Commemoration of the First Battle of Mons in August 1914.

Just over three months after the 82nd Commemorations of D-Day landings, we recall the crucial part played by **Belgian meteorologist Odon Godart** in setting the date of 6 June 1944 for the Allied Invasion.

Count Henri d'Oultremont, veteran of the Piron Brigade, joined Dennis in representing the branch on 3 September at the **commemoration to mark the 82nd anniversary of the Liberation of Brussels** by the Welsh Guards.

Dennis also reports on the annual Tank Ceremony commemorating the Liberation of Antwerp and on the annual ceremony at the National Monument to the Brigade Piron in Molenbeek.

I trust you will enjoy reading this new issue and look forward, as ever, to your reactions and suggestions.

May I remind you that your written contributions and photographs for the newsletter are always welcome.

The RBL Brussels branch is looking for a second Newsletter Coordinator and a Poppy Appeal Organiser.

Over the past three years, between June 2023 and May 2026, **Scott Wilson** and I together produced ten issues of this RBL Brussels branch Newsletter, The Wipers Times.

Shortly after the previous Newsletter was sent out in May, Scott announced his decision to resign as Newsletter Coordinator – a decision which I fully understand and respect.

Working with Scott was always a pleasure. His positive attitude and professional approach were key to our smooth and efficient cooperation.

I sincerely hope the Newsletter will continue to appear in its current form and at the rate of three issues annually, but if this is to be, **a second Newsletter Coordinator must urgently be found to help with the layout.**

A call for volunteers appeared in the previous Newsletter in May. So far, however, there have been no reactions, and the position remains vacant.

May I also remind our readers that the branch is still looking for a volunteer to take over from David Bizley as **Poppy Appeal Organiser**.

Should anyone be interested in either of these two positions, please contact Michael.Whitburn@vub.be or Brussels.Chair@rbl.communiity asap for further details.

Michael Whitburn, Newsletter coordinator

Contributions

If you wish to make a suggestion or propose an article for the next **Wipers Times**, please send an email to Michael Whitburn (michael.whitburn@vub.be).

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Website and social media

-  Bookmark our **website**: <https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/brussels-branch/>
-  Join us on **Facebook** [Royal British Legion Brussels](#)
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-  See our photographs on **Instagram** [royalbritishlegion.bxl](#)

Back issues

Back issues of the **Wipers Times** filled with news and stories relevant to our branch can be downloaded from the website.

A word from the Chair



Dear friends

Who would you describe as the “face” of an RBL branch?

Tempting as it is to suggest the Chair – modesty aside – there’s really no contest. It’s always the Standard Bearer.

At Brussels branch, we have an absolute gem in **Freddy Roiseux**.

For those who don’t know him personally, Freddy epitomises the highest standards of the Legion. His turnout and drill are never less than immaculate. Once his duty is done, he’s rarely without a smile, especially if there’s a whisky close at hand.



Freddy, who turns 80 in October 2026, took over as Standard Bearer in 2012, when the legendary [Eric Johnson BEM](#) encouraged him to be his successor.

Eric knew Freddy was a natural for the job: he was anything but green, with more than three decades of service to organisations linked with British veterans.

In 1980 he was appointed Standard Bearer for the Comet Line Remembrance Association – commemorating the courage of the Second World War secret escape network which helped hundreds of stranded Allied aircrew and servicemen to make “home runs” from occupied Belgium and France.

He carried the *Comète* flag at the funeral last year of wartime Resistance heroine Andrée (Nadine) Dumon, the last of a unique generation.

From 1987-2016, Freddy was also the Standard Bearer for the Korean War veterans (Brabant branch) and from 1998-2012 he served as Standard Bearer for the UK Royal Naval Association in Belgium (both branches, alas, now dissolved).

But the RBL has long been his priority.

In addition to taking a lead role in the branch's three main annual commemorations at Evere, Hotton and Heverlee, Freddy carries the Legion Standard at numerous other ceremonies in Belgium.

He has also been the face of the branch at high-profile occasions attended by members of the Belgian and British Royal Families. He was selected to be in the guard of honour in the presence of King Philippe, Queen Mathilde, Prince William and Princess Catherine at Saint Symphorien cemetery on 4 August 2014, at an event to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

Freddy did his military service in the Belgian Navy from 2 November 1964 until 31 January 1966. "Baby Love" by The Supremes and "(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me" by Sandie Shaw were lighting up the charts when he started; by the time he left to begin a career as a plumber, "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel and "We Can Work It Out" by The Beatles were top of the pops.

Like Freddy, they've stood the test of time.

After a year in the plumbing trade, Freddy moved to Electrogaz and then to Engie, where he spent the rest of his career before retiring.

Freddy's service to the RBL and British veterans is, and has been, exceptional. He lives a fair distance from Brussels at Eghezée in Wallonia, which means long drives to attend most ceremonies and meetings. He literally goes the extra mile (or kilometre) for us.

Freddy, who lost his beloved wife Elvire in 2024, is greatly appreciated by the branch committee and members. He has recently been recuperating after illness and everyone hopes he will soon be back on his feet.

If you see him at a commemoration, have a word; you're bound to get a smile and, if your French is better than mine, a proper conversation.

Thank you, Freddy, for all you do for the branch.

Freddy's big day is not the only milestone we will be celebrating.

Another branch hero with a special birthday in October is **Jean-Pierre Pede**, who will also celebrate his 80th.

J-P has been an enthusiastic supporter of the branch since the 1970s. He was first encouraged to get involved by his father-in-law, Harry Moffatt, a Normandy veteran who took part in the liberation of Brussels.



In 2013, J-P joined the committee as First World War Centenary Coordinator. He has since served as Membership Secretary and Treasurer before becoming Vice-Chair.

He was presented with a certificate of appreciation by HRH Princess Claire at our Gala Dinner on the 80th anniversary of the liberation in September 2024. The RBL awarded him its coveted Gold Badge soon after.

When I'm travelling and tell people about the RBL and Belgium in general, it's surprising how often it can trigger a connection.

A case in point is an encounter I had with **Geoff Clegg**, a 92-year-old fell runner, while visiting my mum over the summer in North Wales. We were introduced by **Craig Jones**, a family friend, at a 5km park run in Conwy, where they are pictured.

Geoff, easing his way back to fitness after an illness, decided to walk the route, albeit in record time for his age group.

When we chatted afterwards, he mentioned that he'd done his military service in Belgium in the early 1950s.

I was a bit sceptical at first and asked where he was based. "Liège", he replied, before correcting himself. "I mean Lier."

For those who don't know, Lier is a pretty Flemish town located in the province of Antwerp.

So why on earth were British national servicemen posted to Belgium?



Geoff shrugged. All he could remember was that he was sent to a Belgian barracks. He was more interested in telling me how he had fallen for a cracking Belgian woman in Lier. "I should have married her. She was beautiful," he sighed.

He's a widower, so there can be no complaints from the lady he actually ended up marrying.

But we digress.

I did a bit of digging and discovered that in 1952 Britain and Belgium signed an agreement which established "Operation Gondola". It aimed to set up military bases and supply depots in the northern Kempen countryside. It was the height of the Cold War and the UK needed

bases close to the port of Antwerp to supply the British Army of the Rhine in case of a Soviet attack.

This agreement envisaged four camps to accommodate British soldiers at Emblem, Grobbendonk, Westerlo and Tielen, as well as equipment depots in Berlaar, Boechout, Broechem, Herentals, **Lier**, Noorderwijk, Olen, Tongerlo, Geel and Tielen.

The news of British bases did not go down too well with the local menfolk, according to Belgian historian Dr Peter Schrijvers; they feared “unfair marriage-market competition” and warned that young women would face the advances of “inebriated Tommies”. An outrageous slur!

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, all the camps were transferred to the Belgian Ministry of Defence in 1992.



And, finally, congratulations to committee member Jean-François Husson, joint author of *La Cérémonie du Souvenir Cimetière de Namur*. It's a beautifully illustrated [teachers' guide](#), produced with the Museums and Cultural Heritage Department of the Province of Namur (le Service des Musées et du Patrimoine culturel de la Province de Namur). The 32-page brochure, in French, tells the story of Namur (Belgrade) cemetery, explains why it is important for youngsters to actively participate in remembrance events and how they can find out more about the people named on war memorials in their town or village.

It profiles heroes linked with Namur and the Belgian Resistance such as François Bovesse, a minister killed by Rexist collaborators, Arthur Georges, a curate who died in captivity, and Suzanne Mélot, who paid with her life for helping Allied airmen escape. It also spotlights First World War nurse Elsie Gladstone and Lieutenant James Turner of the Royal Flying Corps, killed during an attack on the German Zeppelin base at Cognelée. The booklet also recalls the tragic results of an American bombing raid on 18 August 1944, which left at least 330 civilians dead and over 600 others seriously injured.

It's a brilliant project and let's hope it will inspire other Belgian authorities to produce similar guides.

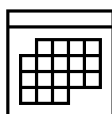
My huge thanks to Michael (Whitburn) and Filo for putting together the latest edition of The Wipers Times. You can read it online, along with previous editions going back until 1999, here:

<https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/brussels-branch/the-wipers-times/>

Well, that's all, folks. Until next time.

Dennis Abbott, Brussels.Chair@rbl.community

Dates for the diary



Check the calendar on the website for new and changed events.

<https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/brussels-branch/calendar/>

September	
26 September	196th anniversary of Belgian Independence commemoration at Monument Patria, Place des Martyrs, Brussels, 3pm. Procession starts Colonne du Congrès, 2.30pm. Contact : info@probelgica.be
27 September	Commemoration of the Battle of Dorpveld, Sint-Katelijne-Waver . Church service (9.30am), floral tribute at market square (10.30am), procession to Dorpveld rampart (10.45am), followed by reception at 't Gewent
27 September	' Top secret radio systems of WWII ' lecture (in FR) by Peter Van Onsem, 3.30pm. The speaker can take questions in EN. Fraternelle des Agents Parachutistes (Rue du Châtelain 46, 1050 Ixelles). RSVP: fapasbl.4045@gmail.com
October	
2 October	First Friday of the Month , social, from 6.30pm. The Foyer, De Warandepoort, Markt 7b, 3080 Tervuren
17 October	Belgian Air Force Association Remembrance Day, Parc du Cinquantenaire, Brussels, 11.30am
17 October	Joint launch of the 2026 Poppy Appeal by Antwerp, Brussels and Ypres branches on the Meir, Antwerp (10am-4pm). Contact: Antwerp.Secretary@rbl.community
18 October	Comet Line Remembrance Day . Start from Brussels, 9am, tribute to Jacques Le Grelle (Jérôme) at Schoonselhof cemetery Antwerp, 10am, visit to bomber crash site near Londerzeel (two airen were rescued by the Comet Line). Travel by car. Contact: cometlineremembrance@gmail.com
23 October	Conference seminar: From Secret War to Hybrid War . Organised by the Egmont Institute and Fraternelle des Agents Parachutistes at Rue du Châtelain 46, 1050 Ixelles. Speakers include historian Dr Helen Fry, Major-General Wim Denolf, Bernard Siman OBE, Prof. Dr Sven Biscop, FRATAP Chair Luc Penninckx and member Peter Verstraeten. The event is in EN. It starts with a commemorative ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of FRATAP. 9am-1.30pm. Contact: info@egmontinstitute.be
27 October	Committee meeting (online, 7pm)
November	
6 November	First Friday of the Month , social, from 6.30pm. The Foyer, De Warandepoort, Markt 7b, 3080 Tervuren
8 November	Remembrance Sunday, Heverlee CWGC cemetery . Please arrive by 10.30am, the service starts at 10.45am
20 November	Brussels RBL Annual General Meeting , 7pm-8.30pm,

	Fraternelle des Agents Parachutistes (Rue du Châtelain 46, 1050 Ixelles)
30 November	Europe in Exile colloquium at the Belgian Senate. Organised by the Tenby Memorial Committee and War Heritage Institute. Contact: Rodolphe Lancksweert, rlancksweert@gmail.com
December	
4 December	First Friday of the Month, social, from 6.30pm. The Foyer, De Warandepoort, Markt 7b, 3080 Tervuren

RBL branch summer commemoration at Evere

Author: Dennis Abbott

For the second consecutive year, our summer commemoration was held in sweltering conditions on 20 June at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in Evere.

Happily, we learnt our lesson from last year's incident when a youngster unfortunately fainted in the blistering sun. This time, we moved the microphone and encouraged attendees to stay as much as possible in the shade.

We were, once again, privileged to welcome the branch's oldest member, 101-year-old Second World War Pion Brigade Veteran Count Henri d'Oultremont, who took some persuading not to remain standing through the entire ceremony.

After a warm welcome in every sense, UK Defence Attaché Colonel Nick Thom delivered a very personal and moving reflection. Branch Chaplain Canon John Wilkinson conducted the service with his usual grace while the Military Wives Choir ensured that harmony reigned throughout with stellar performances of *Carry Me* and *Abide with Me*.

The event attracted a strong youth turnout.

A big thank you to Irina Krishnan, Faith and Jos Wittevrongel, as well as to our readers from Sonian British Explorer Scouts, Tara Carroll, Emil Dencik and Nathanael Wittevrongel.





One of the most poignant moments in the service was the reading of the Names of the Fallen by **Vice-Chair Jean-Pierre Pede**.



Looking up each in turn afterwards, I discovered that several were just out of their teens, while a surprising number were in their 40s. Sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers.



One casualty's name, **Fusilier Eric Baden Powell Farthing**, must have struck a particular chord with the scouts.

A 20-year-old from Ipswich, Farthing was serving with the 4th Battalion Royal Northumberland Fusiliers when he was mortally wounded during the liberation of Brussels.

Special thanks to our always immaculate Standard Bearer **Freddy Roiseux** and pipers **Melvyn Morrison** and **Bruce Hardie**, as well as **David Bizley** (Master of Wreaths), **Steve Grant** (standing in magnificently for M-J), **Alain Brogniez** and **Andrée Ferrant**.

Fusilier Eric Baden Powell Farthing

US heroes who fought under Commonwealth colours

Author: Dennis Abbott and Chris Dickon

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence so it seems particularly fitting to remember the US-based servicemen buried in the three Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries where our branch holds its annual commemorations – Heverlee, Evere and Hotton.

At first glance, it appears there is only one American hero – who lies at Heverlee – but researcher Chris Dickon has identified a dozen who were either born in the USA or living “across the pond” when they enlisted.

Their American background is not always obvious, especially when searching the CWGC website, because burials are recorded by name, number, unit and country of service – which is not necessarily the same as home country.

Around 50,000 American or US-linked servicemen are thought to have enlisted with Commonwealth forces before the US entered the First World War in April 1917 and a further 25,000 before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 ended US neutrality in the Second World War.

Most crossed the border to Canada to join Army, Air Force and Navy units. Around 9,000 alone joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1939-41.

By delving more deeply into the records, Chris found there are in fact six US-linked servicemen buried at Heverlee, five at Evere and one at Hotton. So, who are they?

Heverlee



Private Gerald MacIntosh Johnston (6. E. 9). was born in 1904 in Winnipeg, Canada, but moved to East 65th St. New York City when he was 19.

He became an actor, under the professional name of Gerald Kent, and was the leading man opposite Mae West in the play “Diamond Lil”, staged in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In the 1930s his credits began to extend to film, but upon the outbreak of the war in Europe he joined the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada.

By 1942 he was stationed in England and appeared in a 15-minute propaganda film, “From the Four Corners,” directed by Anthony Havelock-Allan and starring Leslie Howard ([clip](#)). Howard, as himself, is seen sharing a pint with three soldiers from Canada, New Zealand and Australia. As they look over

London from St Paul's Cathedral, they express their fervour in the fight against Hitler. Johnston took the role of the Canadian.



Gerald Johnston in "From the 4 Corners"



Johnston (right) with L. Howard (centre) and R. Gilbert

In real life, Johnston took part in the disastrous Dieppe Raid ("Operation Jubilee") on 19 August 1942, which resulted in catastrophic losses for the Canadian infantry. Initially listed as missing in action, he was captured and held as a prisoner of war for two years at Stalag II-D near Stargard, Pomerania. On 5 November 1944, he was part of a mass escape attempt and was shot dead by the guards despite surrendering. His death was reported in The New York Times.

The only grave with an unambiguous US headstone at Heverlee is that of **1st Lieutenant Donald West DFC**, son of Floyd and Maybelle West, who was born in Fresno, California.



Don West's grave



Don West (second right) with crew: Edmunds, Heaton, McKernin, Buggey, Elliott, Neill (not in shot, Clements)

He enlisted in the RCAF in August 1941 and flew with RAF 57 Squadron, based at East Kirkby in Lincolnshire. West had already logged 560 hours of flying time when he transferred to the US Army Air Force in September 1943 – although he stayed with his RAF squadron.

Lively young man

According to the American Overseas Memorial Day Association [website](#), Don, as he was known, was “an active and lively young man. He was a regular at both the Officers’ Mess and the American Red Cross Jules Club. He owned a beat-up 1926/27 eight-horsepower Ford sedan. He kept a diary. He played tennis, danced, drank, and enjoyed life”. One of his best friends was Flying Officer Jim Elliott, a member of West’s air crew.

On the night of 3 November 1943, West and his seven-strong Lancaster crew took off from East Kirkby, bound for Dusseldorf. They were attacked over Belgium by an enemy fighter that set the plane ablaze, killing its two gunners, Sgt Francis Heaton and Sgt John Edmunds. As 25-year-old West fought to stabilise the Lancaster, Wireless Operator Sgt Harry McKernin and Flight Engineer Sgt Frederick Neill also died attempting to extinguish the flames.

With West remaining at the controls, three of the crew managed to bail out before the plane exploded, breaking into two and crashing 3km north of the Limburg village of Hechtel. His pal Jim Elliott and second pilot Flight Lieutenant Robert Clements were rescued by the Belgian Resistance and eventually returned to Britain via the Comet Line escape network. Pilot Officer Norman F. Bugey, the navigator, was captured after breaking his leg in the jump and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner at Stalag Luft III in Sagan (now Żagań), famed as the scene of “The Great Escape” in March 1944.

Bugey wrote of West: “His refusal to leave the controls while there was still remote possibility of saving some of the crew was superb.” For his actions, the pilot was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and California Air Medal.

West and the crew who died with him are buried in the same area (**Plot 7 Row D Coll Grave 1-4.**).

Staten Island



There is no mention of any US connection on the grave of **Warrant Officer Class II William Climie** (Photo: *Veterans Affairs Canada*)

However, an American life was the only one he knew. Born in Glasgow in 1921, his parents, Adam and Mary, emigrated to America when he was an infant and Climie grew up on Staten Island.

By 1940 he held “first papers”, the first step in gaining American citizenship, but he crossed the border and joined the RCAF in Vancouver, serving with 434 “Bluenose” Squadron.

On 23 August 1943, the 21-year-old was killed when his bomber was shot down near Tongeren after a raid on the IG Farbenworks at Leverkusen. The plant, which used forced labourers and concentration camp prisoners under brutal conditions, was a critical part of the Nazi war machine, manufacturing explosives and synthetic rubber.

Climie and the other crew members (Pilot Officer Richard Harrison, Warrant Officer Class I William Ledford, Warrant Officer Class II Edward Morgans, Sgts Norman Betts, Henry Ebberts, Ernest Ford and David Walshaw) were initially buried at Brusthem near Sint-Truiden, then a Luftwaffe base, but were reinterred at Heverlee after the war (**Coll. grave 10. C. 1-8.**)

Air Gunner Warrant Officer Class II Bryon Garoutte, son of Homer and Ellena Garoutte, was born in Delano, California, in 1920. He enlisted with RCAF's 432 Squadron and was posted to RAF Skipton-on-Swale.

His death certificate states that "on enlistment the deceased exhibited evidence of his birth in the United States and declared his willingness to serve but took no oath of allegiance". By avoiding the oath, he ensured he would not lose his US citizenship.

On 3-4 July 1943, 23-year-old Garoutte's Wellington was part of a huge raid on Cologne. His plane was shot down at Helen-Bos near Zoutleeuw, and he was killed along with the rest of the crew (Pilot Officer Roy Moore and Warrant Officers Class II Patrick Chambers, Lee McCormick and Brock Owen). They were first buried at Brusthem, with full military honours, before being reinterred at Heverlee after the war (**Coll. grave 6. D. 1-20**). Garoutte's grave, as with the others mentioned below, states "of USA".

Pilot Officer Stanley Dodge (7. K. 1.), the son of Ralph and Amy Dodge of Redwood City, California, served with 21 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in the Royal Airforce Volunteer Reserve, based at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire. He was killed on 17 September 1942 after a bombing raid over Essen against the Krupp steel works, which supplied heavy artillery for the German military.

Homeward bound, his Vickers Wellington was shot down by a Messerschmitt night fighter at Spalbeek, near Hasselt. The rest of the crew (Sgt Herbert Roake, Pilot Officer Claud Hendley-Cross, Sgt Kenneth Smith, Sgt Kenneth Downing and Sgt Armand Confait) also died and lie at Heverlee.

Flight Sergeant Billy Orin Gates (3. E. 17-18), son of Basil and Aletta Gates of Loveland, Colorado, was a member of the RCAF attached to 214 Squadron at RAF Stradishall in Suffolk. He was killed on 15 April 1942, aged 25, when his Vickers Wellington was shot down at Overrepen, Tongeren. The other crew members who died (Pilot Officer Robert Halliday and Sgts Reginald Lawrence, Douglas Jacques, Eric Mason and Samuel Cox) are buried nearby.

Warrant Officer Class II Otis Judson Mohler (5. C. 20.) was born in Larimore, North Dakota.

(Photo: North Dakota Veterans Affairs).



A farmer and the husband of Adelaide V. Mohler of Excelsior Springs, Missouri, he enlisted with the RCAF's 420 Squadron, based at Waddington, Lincolnshire.

He was killed on 28 May 1944, aged 26, when his Halifax aircraft was destroyed during a night attack on Beverloo Camp at Leopoldsborg, a key training base for the Germans. The rest of the crew (Squadron Leader Gordon Beall, Pilot Officers Alan Goodall, William Stainton and David Woolley, Flying Officers Edward Andrews and James Robinson, and Sgt William Hickox) also died.

Evere

Five America-based servicemen are buried at Evere under the colours of the Commonwealth and mostly Canadian units. However, none of their graves refer to their US homeland.

They are **Flying Officer William Warfield (X. 26. 43.)**, **Flight Lieutenant Stuart Barbour (X. 27. 20.)**, **Corporal Thomas Cochrane (X. 26. 27.)**, **Corporal William Lovett (X. 24. 10.)** and **Sapper Robert Brown (X. 9. 9.)**,



Flying Officer William Warfield (Photo: 360survey)

Warfield, the son of Lt Col. William Warfield and Corinne Warfield of New York City, was serving with 421 Squadron RCAF, operating from Advanced Landing Ground B-56 Evere after the Liberation of Brussels. He was killed on 3 December 1944, aged 21, when his Spitfire ran out of fuel and crashed near Nivelles, just before he could reach his base.



Stuart Barbour's grave

Barbour, born in Maxwelltown, Scotland, was the son of William and Ann F. Barbour, of Palm Beach, Florida. He flew with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He was killed on Christmas Day 1944, aged 43.

Cochrane, born in Windsor, Ontario, was the son of Thomas and Mary Cochrane of Detroit, Michigan. An electrician by trade, he joined the Canadian Essex Scottish Regiment. He died of injuries on 21 November 1944, aged 25.

Lovett, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the son of William and Mary Gallagher Lovett and served with the Canadian Provost Corps. He died on 10 February 1946, aged 27.

Brown, a machinist by trade and the son of the late Robert Brown and Annie Brown, of Whitinsville, Massachusetts, enlisted with the 1st Canadian Engineers in Toronto. He died on 17 December 1918, aged 31. He was originally buried in Cologne but reinterred.

Hotton



The sole American buried at Hotton war cemetery is **Flying Officer Frederick Irwin**, husband of Anne Irwin, of Beverly Hills, California. (*Photo: Veterans Affairs Canada*). He served with 425 "Alouette" Squadron, the first French-Canadian unit in the RCAF. His headstone states "of USA".

Based at RAF Tholthorpe in North Yorkshire, he was killed on 19 March 1945, aged 22, when a Halifax in which he was navigator collided with a Mosquito and both aircraft crashed near Ciney.

Pilot Arthur Temple and four other members of the RCAF crew perished – Pilot Officers Lloyd Hinch and John Wilson, Flying Officer Joseph LeJambe, and Sgt Alexander Banks. Rear gunner Sgt G. A. Balyx managed to bail out safely.

The Mosquito pilot, Squadron Leader Arthur Hirons DFC, and navigator Sgt Peter Williams, both of 515 Squadron, were killed. Except for John Wilson (**I.C.8**), all the airmen have a collective grave (**I.C. 1-7**).

Chris Dickon, based in Portsmouth, Virginia, is the author of [“Americans at War in Foreign Forces”](#) (2020) and [“The Foreign Burial of American War Dead – A History”](#) (2011). He was an American Memorial Day speaker at Heverlee in May 2014 and has also worked with the [American Legion in Belgium](#).

He contacted me after reading a news report about the branch’s ceremony at Evere – sparking further investigation by both of us.

Approximately 40% of 528 researched American-related burials at Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries in Belgium were US citizens; 22% were members of pre-war, and 19% members of post-war immigrant families to the United States. The remaining 21% were husbands of widows who subsequently emigrated to the US, or with citizenship still to be determined.

Some 1,100 British soldiers, sailors and airmen of both wars are buried under the auspices of the CWGC in American cemeteries.

Sources: www.cwgc.org, aviation-safety.net, findagrave.com, aomda.org, 360survey.eu, veterans.gc.ca.

Lt Col John William Miller

Author: Yves Moerman

Translated from French by Michael Whitburn



Born in 1784, **John William Miller**, a Lieutenant Colonel in the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Foot Guards, was the second son of Baronet Sir William Miller. He was badly wounded on 16 June 1815, two days before the Battle of Waterloo, at the Battle of Quatre-Bras. He was taken to Brussels where he died.

J.W. Miller was first buried in the cemetery of the Quartier Léopold, outside the Porte de Louvain. As the city expanded, his remains were transferred to the cemetery at Evere and reburied there on 14 April 1886, at the request of his brother, A. W. Miller.

Sir Walter Scott immortalised J.W. Miller in *The Field of Waterloo*, a long narrative poem written and published in 1815:

*(Thou)
Saw'st gallant Miller's failing eye
Still bent where Albion's banners fly*

The poem sketches the ruined landscape and the ghastly harvest of slain soldiers, celebrates British courage under Wellington, imagines Napoleon's fate, and records mourning for the Fallen.

It closes with a celebration of national pride and a moral lesson: Britain's fame is rightfully earned but must be sustained by steady virtue.

*Yes - Agincourt may be forgot,
And Cressy be an unknown spot,
And Blenheim's name be new;
But still in story and in song,
For many an age remembered long,
Shall live the towers of Hougoumont
And Field of Waterloo!*

Lt Col. Miller was known for his courage and humanity. As he lay dying, he asked to see his friend, Colonel C. Thomas, and said to him: "I feel that I am mortally wounded, but I am glad to know that it is my fate rather than yours, for you have a young wife." After a pause, he continued: "I would like to see the regiment's colours before I leave them forever."

The colours were brought and waved around the wounded man. He smiled and said he was content; he was then carried from the battlefield to the rear.

He died of his wounds in Brussels three days later, on 19 June 1815. He was 31.

The now barely legible words on his headstone recall the fate of Lt Col Miller and the moving of his mortal remains in 1886:

THE REMAINS OF / LT COL. MILLER / OF THE 1ST REG. BRITISH FOOT GUARD / OF GLENLEE BORN NEAR EDINBURGH SCOTLAND / MORTALLY WOUNDED AT THE AGE OF 31 YEARS / AT THE ACTION WITH THE FRENCH ARMY / AT LES QUATRE BRAS 16TH JUNE 1815 / DIED AT BRUSSELS ON THE FOLLOWING / DAY – ARE DEPOSITED HERE. / MANY BRITISH GENTLEMEN FELL WITH HIM / DOING THEIR DUTY NONE, OF A MORE SPOTLESS LIFE, / OR WHO HAD GIVEN FAIRER PROMISE OF RISING / TO EMINENCE IN HIS PROFESSION.

THE REMAINS OF LT COL MILLER / WHICH HAD REPOSED IN THE PROTESTANT CEMETERY / BEYOND THE PORTE DE LOUVAIN AT BRUXELLES SINCE / THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO / WERE IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE EXTENSION OF THE CITY / NECESSITATING THE BREAKING UP OF THE GROUND / REMOVED AND RE DEPOSITED HERE 14 APRIL 1886 / AND THE MONUMENT BEARING THE ABOVE / EPITAPH RAISED BY HIS BROTHER OFFICER / REMOVED TO SCOTLAND.



Death of Lt Col Miller, Guards Museum, London

Glen Hill (Waterloo Hill), New Abbey, Scotland



Glen Hill is located about 2km north-west of New Abbey, near Dumfries in Kirkcudbrightshire, south-west Scotland.

Its summit, where only sparse, low-lying vegetation grows, rises 400m above sea level and towers at 120m over the surrounding countryside.

Glenn Hill is also known as Waterloo Hill, because Sir William Miller, father of Lt Col Miller, had a tower erected there in memory of his son, whom he mourned for nearly 31 years.

The granite tower is almost 18m high and 5m in diameter at its base. An interior spiral stair leads to the top of the monument.

In 2008, **Yves Moerman** organised a ceremony **at Evere cemetery** in the presence of a British delegation including two officers recently returned from Afghanistan.

A tribute was paid at the **Waterloo Campaign Monument** which contains the remains of 17 men including Wellington's aide-de-camp Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Alexander Gordon and Deputy Quarter-Master General Sir William Howe De Lancey, and at **Lt Col Miller's grave**.

Yves Moerman has been entrusted by the Miller family to care for the grave of Lt Col Miller and make sure it does not disappear altogether with the passing of time.



© Yves Moerman 21 February 2026

Yves Moerman is a photographer and history enthusiast with a keen interest in the First French Empire and in the history of the Second World War. He has published a number of books on both these periods.

Special re-dedication service at Heverlee for Trooper Fred Tingle

Author: Martin Banks

The following article previously appeared in several news outlets including The Bulletin (in March 2026). We reproduce it here with some adjustments and with the author's permission.

Cemeteries everywhere are full of unidentified service members killed in war.

They symbolise the ultimate sacrifice and the many fallen without a known grave.

But the mystery of one such brave Briton who died at the hands of the German Army in a tiny Flemish village in the Second World War, and whose remains lie in a Belgian cemetery, has finally been unravelled thanks to the painstaking work and research of a couple of determined Belgian sleuths.

Thanks to Dirk Van Melkebeke and Willy Roggeman the serviceman's full identity was established, along with his final resting place.

The two research workers found that a couple of administrative errors (a misspelt surname, typed Pringle instead of Tingle) on paperwork after his death was why the full story of what became of Yorkshireman Fred had never emerged.



Left: Trooper Fred Tingle.

*Above: The Tingle children: Nancy, Winnie, Ruby, Fern, **Freddie**, Tommy and in front, Florence. Photo taken about 1932 (with thanks to Linda Robshaw)*

In belated honour of Trooper Tingle's sacrifice, a formal rededication ceremony was held at Heverlee War Cemetery on 25 March.

Fred Tingle was born in Castleford, Yorkshire, in 1920 – a twin brother to Fern, and one of 11 children born to William Tingle, a coal miner. His mother was Annie Hepples, William's second wife.

Fred was a soldier in the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, which had operated since just before the outbreak of the war as part of the newly formed Royal Armoured Corps. The Regiment was part of the British Expeditionary Force which was deployed to mainland Europe shortly after the conflict broke out.

When the Germans launched their invasion of the Low Countries on 10 May 1940 they forced a retreat of the British forces, and the 5th fought a fierce rearguard action as they made their way back towards Dunkirk – which they reached on 29 May 1940.

Fred was killed in action on 19 May 1940 during the retreat.

His body was initially recovered and buried in Sint Antelinks, a village 37km west of Brussels.

Although local people continued to care for Fred's grave throughout the war, when his body was recovered by the British Army in 1946, it proved impossible to reconcile all the records. His remains were exhumed and he was buried at Heverlee War Cemetery as an "unknown soldier".

The cemetery contains 977 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 37 of them unidentified.

Recent research by Dirk Van Merelbeke found the key documents which proved that the location from which the "unknown soldier" had been recovered (in Sint Antelinks) was the same as the original burial location of a soldier who had been carrying an identification disc.

Further research revealed more details and information about letters and papers the soldier was carrying, which bore addresses in the West Yorkshire area.

Ultimately, all this information taken together proved that the unnamed grave at Heverlee was that of Trooper Fred.

Dirk says he unearthed the information about Fred as part of research for a book on the impact of the war in Herzele.

In the area, which was in the British sector of the front from 11 to 19 May 1940, three British soldiers were killed.

One of them died near Sint-Antelinks on 19 May and was temporarily buried there in an improvised grave. His remains were exhumed after the war and reburied in the Commonwealth war cemetery of Heverlee in an anonymous grave.

Dirk, who lives in Herzele, looked for more information about the three servicemen. For the soldier who was buried in Sint-Antelinks he found a report in the Herzele municipal archives.

"In the column where the name had to be filled in, Dirk explains, it says *anonymous*, but in column 5 the identity of the man is indeed mentioned.

"And that man is Freddy Tingle."

"An incorrectly filled in document was the reason why Freddy Tingle ended up in an anonymous grave in Heverlee."

"We think Fred Tingle was injured, says Willy, and died while the British were retreating and passing through our village."

"He was buried not very deep by the British. Shortly afterwards, the Germans arrived and buried him deeper."

He adds: "Until 1946 the resistance held regular speeches at his grave."



Trooper Fred Tingle's temporary grave



Willy Roggeman managed to acquire photos, including one of Fred's temporary grave in Sint-Antelinks (taken around 1943) which shows members of the Belgian Resistance.

The final chapter of Trooper Tingle's story was played out at his rededication service at Heverlee on 25 March this year.

A rededication service is a funeral service without the coffin. It is essentially an acknowledgement that an "unknown soldier" has finally been identified.

The service includes a blessing of the grave, the Last Post and Reveille, prayers, the Exhortation and Kohima Epitaph.

The service is short, but it is a fitting epitaph to a young man whose life ended all too early through war. Chair Dennis Abbott represented the branch and gave a reading at the ceremony.

Odon Godart

Author: Michael Whitburn

Just a few months after the 82nd Commemoration of D-Day, we remember the crucial part played by Belgian meteorologist **Odon Godart** in setting the date for the Allied Invasion of 6 June 1944.

This article is largely based on an RTBF radio programme broadcast on 5 June 2026 entitled "*82e anniversaire du D-Day: Odon Godart, ce héros discret dont les analyses météo ont été déterminantes.*"

A native of Farciennes near Charleroi, Odon Godart demonstrated a passion for the study of climate and atmospheric phenomena—a passion that enabled him to secure a scholarship and work at the prestigious American universities of Harvard and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

He was in the United States when the Second World War broke out, but despite the appeal and comforts of academic life in the US, he chose to go to England to contribute to the war effort.

Godart joined the Royal Air Force and Bomber Command, where his expertise proved invaluable. He provided forecasts that were essential to the planning of Allied operations,

primarily for the bombing raids on Germany, but also in preparation of the Normandy landings in June 1944.



Odon Godart and Group Captain James Martin Stagg, a Scottish meteorologist appointed as the Chief Meteorological Adviser to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, were the two pivotal meteorologists whose weather forecasting directly decided the timing and ultimate success of D-Day.

Coincidentally, James M. Stagg is one of the main characters in the 2026 war film *Pressure*, starring Andrew Scott.

Coordination between scientists and the military was crucial. After much hesitation, the landing was finally scheduled for early June.

The success of the operation largely depended on calm seas, a westerly wind, a full moon, and favourable tidal conditions, and there were many doubts as to the best day for the landing.

“Some (including General Eisenhower) clearly wanted to launch the landing on 5 June, but I said it would be completely impossible,” recalls Godart in an RTBF archive clip.

The Allied generals were then faced with two options: either they could postpone the landing until 6 June, despite uncertainties regarding the weather, or they could delay it by a fortnight, but with the troops on board the ships and the landing craft already at sea, this latter option was rejected.

Godart then helped the Allied High Command make a final and decisive decision by setting the landing date for 6 June. It was a bold move, but Godart hoped weather conditions would be favourable along the coast though not inland, so that the Luftwaffe would not be able to intervene.



After the war, Godart taught for many years at the Catholic University of Louvain. He died in 1996 at Bousval in the Brabant Wallon, where a commemorative plaque recalls his role in postponing the D-Day landing—a postponement that undoubtedly saved many lives.

Had the Allies sailed on 5 June, the high winds and heavy seas would almost certainly have caused havoc among the landing craft and resulted in far more Allied casualties.

Alas, the critical role of Odon Godart and Norwegian Sverre Petterssen, another meteorologist whose advice contributed significantly to the postponement of D-Day, fail to feature in the film *Pressure*.

Main sources:

Odon Godart and James Stagg, en.wikipedia.org

<https://www.rtb.be/article/82e-anniversaire-du-d-day-odon-godart-ce-heros-carolo-dont-les-analyses-meteo-ont-ete-determinantes-11735637>

(translated from French and adapted by Michael Whitburn)

Battle of Mons commemoration (24 August 2026)

Author: Dennis Abbott

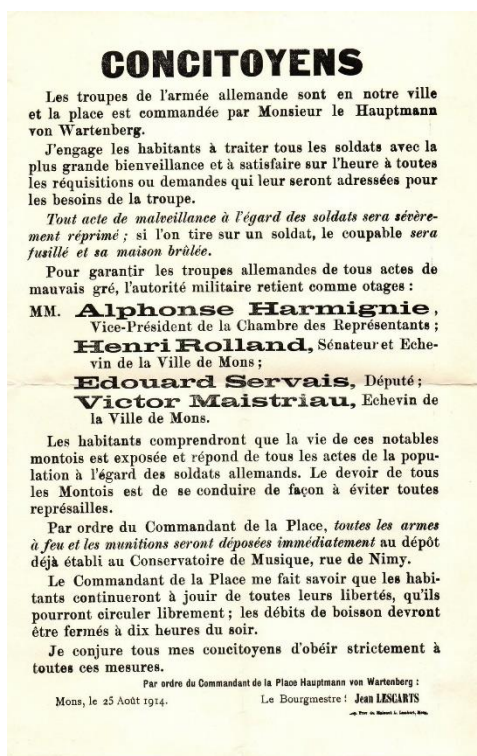
The branch was well represented by members and friends at the annual commemoration of the First Battle of Mons.

We were welcomed ahead of the opening ceremony at the Hôtel de Ville by the Mons and District Pipe Band and Natacha Vandenberghe, President of the CPAS (Centre Public d'Action Sociale) and member of the College and Municipal Council.

The RBL delegation was composed of: Dennis Abbott (Chair), Andrée Ferrant (Joint Secretary), Mireille Picron (Joint Secretary), Freddy Roiseux (Standard Bearer), Professor Jean-François Husson (committee member, Namur), Colonel (ret'd) William Bache (Co-Chair Brussels Battles and Books Club), Lieutenant-Colonel (ret'd) Matt Hill (ex-US Marine Corps), and Ela Nora Fidan.

Civic and military representatives, together with the Chair, laid wreaths in the city hall's grand portal under the memorial to the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, who took part in the defence of Mons in August 1914 and were among the first Allied troops to re-enter and liberate it on 11 November 1918.

The participants were then conveyed by coach to key sites associated with the battle in and around the city.



The first stop was the Place des Martyrs, commemorating five civilians who were shot in the back by panicking German troops during an engagement with the British: Zéphyr Cyprès (a 50-year-old notary's clerk), Emile Ducamps (61-year-old secondary school teacher), André Godin (36-year-old farmer), Victor Gorez (38-year-old zinc worker) and Léon Massart (55-year-old lawyer).

1914 poster warning the population of Mons of severe reprisals

Nimy bridge VCs



Ela Nora Fidan in the line-up at at Nimy Railway Bridge

The coaches then took us to the Nimy railway bridge and the Quai des Anglais alongside the Mons-Condé Canal. A plaque under the bridge recalls the exploits of Lieutenant Maurice Dease and Private Sidney Godley of the 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers who were each awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry, for their heroic defence of the position.

Despite being mortally injured, 24-year-old Dease maintained fire as his machine gun section fell around him until he was overcome by his wounds. Godley, 25, took over and, despite sustaining a head wound, covered the withdrawal until he ran out of ammo. He disabled the weapon, throwing it into the canal, before being captured.



Ela at Nimy Railway Bridge

Ela, 14-year-old grand-daughter of Vietnam War veteran Colonel Bache, laid a wreath on behalf of the branch.



Our third stop was the site of the old railway station at Obourg where a soldier from the 4th Battalion Middlesex Regiment held off the enemy to cover the retreat of his comrades. The unidentified hero, who stayed alone on the roof of the station, kept firing until he was wounded and finished off by the attackers. Alex Jackson, a South African volunteer at the local museum, recounted the story at the ceremony. Mireille Picron laid the RBL wreath.

Left: Mireille at the ceremony in Obourg

Saint-Symphorien



Left: Col Bache at the Cross of Sacrifice in Saint-Symphorien cemetery.



Above: Lt Col Hill and Col Bache with Commander Caroline Kirouac (Canadian Navy) and Chief Warrant Officer Christa Ethier (Canadian Air Force)



Above: Lt Col Rory McDermott with Jean-François

Right: Lt Col Hill at the German memorial in Saint-Symphorien cemetery



The delegation then transferred to the famous Saint-Symphorien cemetery which contains the graves of 284 German and 229 British and Commonwealth soldiers, among them the first and last Commonwealth soldiers killed during the First World War, Private John Parr and Private George Price. Colonel Bache laid a wreath at the British Cross of Sacrifice while Lieutenant Colonel Hill reciprocated at the German memorial.



Left: Jean-François at the Irish Cross



Above: Jean- François with Irish Ambassador Kevin Conmy and Lt Col Rory McDermott

Below: Col David Wright (second right) and Col Bache at the Irish Cross



Jean-François joined Irish Ambassador Kevin Conmy and Lieutenant Colonel Rory McDermott, Defence Forces Ireland, in laying tributes at the Celtic Cross monument at La Bascule, honouring the soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment who fought in the First and Second Battles of Mons.



The final ceremony was held at the British Empire Memorial, which stands on the opposite side of the crossroads on what was part of the frontline during the battle. Andrée laid the wreath on behalf of the branch.

Commonwealth military representatives from SHAPE attending the commemorations included Colonel David Wright, Commander Caroline Kirouac (Canadian Navy), Chief Warrant Officer Christa Ethier (Canadian Air Force) and AS1 Tom Priest (Royal Air Force). We were also joined by David Grant, CEO of the Irish College Leuven.

Left and below: The RBL delegation at the British Empire Memorial





After the ceremonies the participants were invited to a reception at the Mons Memorial Museum where Mme Vandenberghe gave a short speech thanking all who had taken part and the excellent band that played the national anthems at each wreath laying.

Left: Dennis and Natacha Vandenberghe of the City of Mons share an informal moment at the reception

Angels of Mons

The ceremony this year took place a day later than usual as representatives of the city were attending a commemoration and an exhibition at the Atkinson Art Gallery in Southport, a twin town of Mons, on 23 August.



The centrepiece of the exhibition, organised in collaboration with the Belgian city's Memorial Museum, is an oil painting of the so-called **Angels of Mons**. It was created by **Mons-based artist Marcel Gillis** in 1934. The work was inspired by an enduring myth that British soldiers were protected during the heat of the battle by angelic figures which emerged through the smoke and fire of the artillery.

The Old Contemptibles and the story of a Standard

Kaiser Wilhelm II is said to have dismissed the troops of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) as a “contemptible little Army” before the First Battle of Mons.

The heavily outnumbered British infantry fought tenaciously, holding up the German 1st Army’s advance with rapid and accurate rifle fire, causing heavy casualties.

The soldiers of the BEF held the line in Flanders from 5 August to 22 November 1914 before Kitchener's New Army was created.



After the war, the veterans who took part in the Battle of Mons proudly called themselves the “Old Contemptibles” in response to the Kaiser’s insult. The Old Contemptibles Association was formed in June 1925, with branches throughout the UK. It organised pilgrimages to Mons and Brussels for members who were also known as “chums”.

The Duchy of Cornwall Branch was one of those branches. Despite its name, the branch was created in Kennington, London. The then Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII) was a member of the association and granted the branch its title because its headquarters were located within the Duchy Estate.

Above: Duchy of Cornwall Old Contemptible Standard on parade at Obourg

Below: The Duchy of Cornwall Old Contemptibles leaving London for Belgium in 1928



A picture survives of Duchy of Cornwall Branch members leaving London's Victoria Station on 8 November 1928, for a pilgrimage to Mons and Brussels. It shows Frank Briant, Member of Parliament for Lambeth North, shaking hands with Spencer John Bent VC, MM. Known as Joe and a drummer in the East Lancashire Regiment, Bent was awarded his VC for taking command of his unit when the officer and NCO were struck, holding a position at Gheer near Comines-Warneton on 1 November 1914. He was a member of the Hackney branch which took part in the first Association pilgrimage to Mons to mark Armistice Day in 1927.



The **Duchy of Cornwall Old Contemptible Standard** was carried to Mons until the 1970s when the Old Contemptibles Association was disbanded. It eventually found its way into the collection of a private museum at Obourg.

Nearly 100 years old, it was once again held aloft among the patriotic flags and RBL standard carried by Freddy at the anniversary commemoration.

82nd anniversary of the Liberation of Brussels (3 September 2026)

Author: Dennis Abbott

Count Henri d'Oultremont, veteran of the Piron Brigade, joined Chair Dennis Abbott in representing the branch at the commemoration to mark the 82nd anniversary of the Liberation of Brussels by the Welsh Guards.

Due to ongoing works at the Colonne du Congrès, the ceremony exceptionally took place **at the Tomb of the Unknown French Warrior** at the Parvis de Notre-Dame in Laeken.

We were joined at the ceremony by UK Military Attaché Colonel Nick Thom and Welsh Government EU Office Manager Julia Ridsdale-Saw, as well as representatives of the Belgian forces, veterans' associations, the city of Brussels and diplomats from the French, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Canadian and US embassies.



Above left : Monument to the Unknown French Warrior

Above right : Julia Ridsdale-Saw for the Welsh Government, City councillor Ayse Malcikan, and Chair Dennis Abbott

Above : VIPs with Col. Nick Thom and Count Henri d'Oultremont (in the centre)

The Tomb of the Unknown French Warrior was inaugurated on 17 July 1927 in the presence of King Albert, Queen Elisabeth and Raymond Poincaré, former President of France.

The remains of the Unknown Soldier, initially interred at the French military cemetery of Saint-Charles de Potyze near Ypres, were discovered in 1921 when a trench containing 42 troops was uncovered during building close to “La Grande Dune” at Lombardsijde in West Flanders, a strategic site which was the scene of heavy fighting through much of the First World War.



Inauguration of the monument in 1927

A national fundraising campaign, led by a committee chaired by Baron Louis Steens, was set up to pay tribute to the Frenchmen lost on Belgian soil. Designed by sculptor Mathieu Desmaré and architect François Malfait, the monument was executed by the sculptor Ernest Salu. The edifice is crowned with four Belgian soldiers carrying a laurel-wreathed coffin bearing the monogram RF for République française.

In 1949, an urn containing a flame of remembrance, taken from the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, was unveiled by Lieutenant-Général Marcel Jooris, representing Belgium, and French Ambassador Jean de Hauteclocque, cousin of wartime hero Marshal Philippe Leclerc de Hauteclocque.

The famous Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris contains an ossuary holding the remains of more than 100 Belgian soldiers who died in France. It was inaugurated in 1922.

To find out more about the Tomb of the Unknown French Warrior, the Cercle d'Histoire de Bruxelles has an in-depth piece here: <https://www.cehibrux.be/chroniques/document-du-mois/531-le-monument-au-soldat-inconnu-francais-tombe-sur-le-sol-belge-pendant-la-wo1>

Tank Ceremony, Antwerp (4 September 2026)

Author: Dennis Abbott

Chair Dennis Abbott and US veteran Colonel Bill Bache represented the Brussels branch at the annual Tank Ceremony, commemorating the liberation of Antwerp 82 years ago.



Above: Mayor Els van Doesburg



Right: Bill and granddaughter Ela with Dennis





Paul Harris QGM, National Vice-Chair of the RBL, lays a wreath



Our Antwerp colleagues once again did themselves proud with a superb event alongside the Cromwell tank which was presented to the city by Britain in 1947.

UK Ambassador Anne Sherriff and Mayor of Antwerp Els van Doesburg both gave speeches, while other VIPs taking part included Ambassador of Nepal HE Sewa Lamsal, Ambassador of Sri Lanka HE Chandana Weerasena, UK Military Attaché Colonel Nick Thom, Polish Chargé d'affaires Barbara Nieciak and Australian Counsellor Johanna Tayior.

Paul Harris QGM, National Vice-Chair of the RBL, gave the Exhortation and laid a wreath on behalf of the Legion. He was joined by Brussels Chair Dennis Abbott, Antwerp Chair Sid Wilkins and President Bob Chambers, Ypres President Colonel Christophe Onraet MBE, Kent County Chair Clive Richards and Robert Boyle, Chair of Benajarafe, Spain.

Colonel Johan Leniere, Military Commander, and Luc Lemmens, Senior Executive Member, represented the Province of Antwerp, with Police Commissioner Karl Heeren.

Boris Skerath gave a moving account (it's on his [Facebook page](#)) about the ordeal faced by his great-grandparents during the war, while Antwerp Secretary Inge Hödl read a soldier's reminiscence of his unit's advance on Antwerp in 1944 – via a hotel lift to a rooftop vantage point which provided a perfect view of the unsuspecting enemy.

Master of ceremonies Adrian Veale, together with Vice-Chair and Parade Marshal Ian Newbitt, ensured the programme proceeded smoothly despite some minor arboreal challenges for the Standard Bearers.

The Royal Band of the Belgian Navy and singer Mella Klaessen provided the music, while Spearhead, a group of military vehicle enthusiasts and re-enactors, added to the sense of occasion with their jeeps, trucks and Second World War uniforms.

Honouring the Brigade Piron (4 September 2026)

Author: Dennis Abbott





Second World War veterans **Count Henri d'Oultremont** (right) and **André Liégeois**, born within a week of each other in May 1925, were the focus of the annual ceremony at the national monument to the Brigade Piron in Molenbeek (*photo, commune de Molenbeek*).

The pair, now with a combined age of 202, were both 19 when they enlisted in the Belgian-Luxembourg unit named after its commanding officer, Colonel Jean-Baptiste Piron. Henri served in the artillery battery while André, who had been active in the resistance and Secret Army, was a rifleman in an assault platoon. Both found themselves in the frontline in the Netherlands in the frenzied final months of the war.

Burgomaster Dr Catherine Moureaux, who opened the ceremony, encouraged the many

schoolchildren present to speak to the heroes afterwards and take advantage of a living history lesson – an offer several took up.

The branch was represented by Count Henri, Chair Dennis Abbott, Joint Secretary Andrée Ferrant and committee member Alain Brogniez, who laid our wreath.



Andrée Ferrant and Alain Brogniez

Deputy Ambassador Elisabeth McKinnell represented the UK Embassy to Belgium.

After a warm welcome by Dr Moureaux, Colonel Jacques Luyckx spoke about the history of the Brigade and its exploits.

VIPs at the event included Jacques Marie, Mayor of Bénerville-sur-Mer, one of the Normandy towns liberated by the Brigade in August 1944, Marie Lapierre, Première Conseillère at the French Embassy, Jean-Louis Thill, Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Max Valstar, representing the Netherlands Embassy, and Colonel Christ Maseure, for the Minister of Defence.

Nearly 100 youngsters from nearby Flemish and Francophone primary schools (De Knipoog and Ecoles 9, 13 and 17) took part in the ceremony. Each child laid a flower at the foot of the monument after the wreath laying. Brussels branch Chair Dennis Abbott read The Exhortation.

After the ceremony it was a particular pleasure for branch members and the Deputy Ambassador to meet Patricia Destrebecq, daughter of Brigade member Roger Destrebecq, together with her son Laurent.

During the war, Roger underwent his basic training at Leamington Spa in Warwickshire before being sent to a coastal defence unit at Lowestoft, Suffolk. It was not all hard work: he fell for a young English woman, Hazel Ward, and they married in 1943. They had two sons, Louis and Melvyn, as well as Patricia.

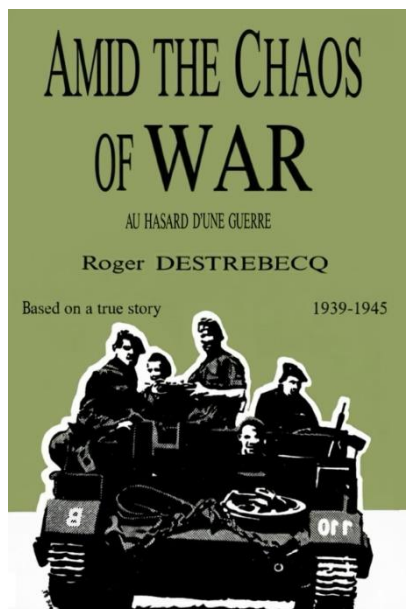
Roger passed away in February 2007.



Roger, Hazel and son Louis



Daughter Patricia



Roger's memoir *Au Hasard d'une Guerre*, about his wartime experiences, was recently translated into English by his grandson. The book, titled *Amid the Chaos of War*, is available on Amazon.

Digest

German history expert and branch member **Rainer Hiltermann** recently organised his *Walking tour of Brussels under German occupation during WW1* for the benefit of members and friends of the Battles and Books Club.

Three years ago, in May, Rainer organised this interesting tour for members and friends of the Brussels branch.

Some of you may remember walking around in Brussels on a very hot and sunny day to view such places as the building in the *Rue de la Loi* where the *Kommandatur* had established residency during German occupation, the *Cercle Gaulois* for convalescing German soldiers, and the *Palais d'Egmont* that housed a German hospital.

A description and photos of the tour can be found in the Newsletter of June 2023.

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About The Royal British Legion

Patron: *His Majesty King Charles III*

National President: *Vice Admiral (Rtd) Paul Bennett CB OBE.*

The Royal British Legion formed on 15 May 1921 bringing together four organisations of the Armed Forces that had established themselves after the First World War.

By 1921, the tradition of a Two Minute Silence had been established. The first Poppy Appeal was held that year, raising over £106,000 to help First World War veterans with employment and housing.

The Legion was established to care for those who suffered as a result of service during the First World War. It has been helping the Armed Forces community and their families ever since.