



## RAFA Annual Conference - Yarnfield nr Stone, 12 – 14 May 2017

*Alain L. Dardelin*

For reasons beyond the Association's control, the 2017 Annual Conference was not held at either of the seaside resorts of Blackpool or Eastbourne. This year's venue was located in the depths of Staffordshire at the Yarnfield Park Training and Conference Centre near Stone.

The Conference, attended by some 300 members, including delegates and visitors, was opened by RAFA

days: the Mayor of Stone, Councillor Jim Davies (RAF retd.); Colonel David Leigh, deputising for the Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Ian Dudson; Air Vice-Marshal David Murray, Controller of the RAF Benevolent Fund, and Air Marshal Sir Barry "Baz" North, successor to Sir Dusty Miller as President of the Association.

Once further recommendations on electronic voting procedures were made to the 118 Delegates, the presentation of and debate on nine Resolutions plus one Emergency Resolution was able to go ahead. The bulk of the Resolutions concerned the Royal Charter, Rules, Byelaws and Regulations of the Association: five out of six were carried.

- Resolution No. 1 on receiving a presentation on the review of Standard Area, Branch and Branch Clubs Regulations made by our Chairman Bryan Pattison,
- Resolution No. 2 on the registration of all Branches with the Charity Commission,
- Resolutions Nos. 3, 4 and 5 amending Standard Area Regulations, Standard Branch Regulations and Standard Branch Clubs to bring them up to date and thus in line with decisions of past Conferences,
- Resolution No. 6, authorizing Branches to continue recruiting Branch Associates, was turned down.

At Annual Conference, Resolution No. 7 and the Emergency Resolution were carried after amendments were made to the text. As a result, alternate venues between North and South will resume in 2020 with the first Conference to be held in Blackpool, also, Council has been given authority to source a venue for 2019 other than in the Midlands as originally worded.

*(Continued on page 2)*



President Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, and the Chairman of the Annual Conference Committee (ACC) Mr Anthony "Taff" Rees. The dedication and Silent Tribute was led by Group Captain the Reverend Tim Wright, Deputy Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force. The RAF Central Band provided the music throughout the week-end.

In his opening speech, Sir Dusty mentioned that the Conference proceedings could be viewed live on the YouTube website, but without the possibility to participate in the debates. It will be recalled that a video link was tested at RAF St Mawgan during last year's Conference in Blackpool. He also made a short mention of guests who would be present during the 2

Resolution No. 8 on the report of the Trophy Review Committee, resurrected from last year's Conference, was carried.

Unfortunately, Resolution No. 9 which stated that all branding of the Association should include the strap-line wording '**Friendship/Help/Support**' and that no changes be made without agreement of Conference, failed.

Conference approved two changes to the programme which meant that the Annual Report for 2016 by the Chairman of Council Air Vice Marshal John Cliffe and the Financial and Auditor's Report for 2016 by the Honorary Treasurer Mr. Philip Tagg were delivered before lunch.

Conference resumed at 1400hrs as the President welcomed to the room the Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier and Lady Hillier. The Secretary-General Mr. Nick Bunting gave a lengthy presentation on the Association's activity in 2016 and spoke of its projects for the future including its participation in the events marking the Centenary of the RAF (RAF100) in 2018 since its formation in 1918. Since 2013, Membership has been increasing, reaching 70,268 members to date composed of Associates (14%), Serving (25%), Ordinary (24%) and Life (37%). The Association is engaged in ongoing marketing and communication campaigns on welfare programmes and rejuvenation and revitalization of membership to contain the closure of branches.

The afternoon continued with the participation of the dynamic RAF Presentation Team which gave an account of the activities and resources of today's RAF. After a short address made by the Chief of the Air Staff, it was time for Air Cadets and Members to be presented with Flying Scholarships and National Presidential Certificates respectively, thus ending the afternoon session.

The evening events resumed at 8pm with the Gala Awards and entertainment provided by the Jazz Quintet of the Central Band and singer Ms. Lizzy Rushby.

On Sunday, the morning started at 0930hrs with the assembly of the congregation outside the conference building for a drumhead service and dedication given by The Reverend Tim Wright. A moving ceremony, but regretfully without a "proper" parade of Standards ahead of the Area flights; no flypast either.



Air Marshal Sir Barry "Baz" North, successor to Sir Dusty Miller as President of the Association

The Conference closed after Sir Dusty thanked everyone for the support he had received during his time in office and the vote of thanks was given by

Taff Rees. The National Standard was paraded out to the strains of the RAF March.

Sadly, the 2018 Conference will be held at Yarnfield. Question is: how many delegates and visitors will make the trip?

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## My two cents worth

*John Hannon*

**T**his was my first Conference - and my first as a European delegate. Dr Bryan Pattison chaired the European Area Conference meeting on 11 May. Since apparently so many were unable to attend the Yarnfield venue, the EA Awards and Trophies for 2016 were postponed until our autumn meeting in Dublin. Malcolm Mason read the Dedication and a Minute's Silence was observed.

At 'top' table were Sqn Ldr Dean 'Gibbo' Gibson, Mr Simon Martin (newly appointed Life Vice President), Mr Brian Darke (Luxembourg - Central Council Rep), Mr Pete McWilliams (Rep of Ireland - Elected Member), Mrs Beryl Dennett-Stannard (Sud-Ouest-France - Vice President), Mr Malcolm Mason (Amsterdam - Vice Chairman), Mr Bob Hunt (North Costa Blanca - Chairman), Dr Bryan Pattison (Swiss - Life Vice President), Air Commodore Andrew Neal (RAFBF), Mr Peter Clarke (Jersey - Elected Member), Chief Tech. Mark Margrave (RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus - RAFALO), Mrs Sarah Waugh (Northern Ireland - Area Director/Secretary). Some 14 out of 17 branches were able to send delegates.

From the purely European point of view in discus-



sions the point was made that many members living in the EU were considering returning to the UK as they were worried about their status and financial position when the UK leaves the EU. Many were worried about their uncertain future. Bob Hunt took the view that members should make their feelings known to their local consulates/embassy in their country of residence, otherwise the authorities might assume Brits abroad are quite happy and let us disappear into oblivion. As soon as more information was known it would be passed on to the Membership. The point regarding liability insurance for overseas branches is still a vexed question. Item 16 saw an Emergency Resolution by the York branch for Conferences to revert to North and South rotations as before proposed by Malta and seconded by the Swiss branch. The next AC will be in Dublin.

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## Armistice Day celebration in Valleiry (France)

Alain L. Dardelin



For the second consecutive year, no ceremony commemorating the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 was held at the French Consulate in Geneva. However, the Swiss branch of RAFA was cordially invited by the municipality of Valleiry in Haute-Savoie to participate in the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the commemoration of the day, an invitation we could not turn down.

John Hannon and I attended carrying respectively the Union Flag and the Association's Standard. We were welcomed by Mr. Mugnier, mayor of Valleiry, and standard bearers from different veterans' associations, some we often meet at other events.

Mr. Loïc Hervé (senator), Mrs. Virginie Duby-Muller (MP), Mr. Gérard Blandin (President of Souvenir Fran-

çais Saint-Julien-en-Genevois), presidents of local *Anciens Combattants* and *Résistance* associations were in attendance. During the ceremony, school children of Valleiry sang the Rawa-Ruska camp song "*Sur la terre ukrainienne*", and provided a musical rendition of *Chant des Partisans* and *La Marseillaise*. They also read French poet Paul Eluard's "*Liberté*" written in 1942 as an ode to Freedom.

As part of the ceremony, the spouse of one prisoner, Mr. Michel Buffet, and the daughter of another, Mr. Camille Ballet unveiled a plaque in homage to local French soldiers who made repeated attempts to escape from PoW camps or who engaged in acts of resistance and were deported to the reprisal camp of Rawa-Ruska in 1942.

The two men shared the inhuman conditions at the camp with fellow prisoners Messrs. Fernand Borgel, Marius Favre, Joseph Favre, William Jacquard, Albert Philippe, Edmond Vuichard and Eugène Tremblet whose names were mentioned.

Following the unveiling of the plaque, Madame Françoise Brun-Ney, president of the Dauphiné-Savoie section of the "*Ceux de Rawa-Ruska et leurs descendants*" association, gave a vibrant and emotional speech recalling the fraternal bond, mutual help and moral support between prisoners in order to survive and overcome the daily humiliations inflicted.

It is known that over 22,000 men were interned at the camp and its 40 satellite camps in an area now situated in Ukraine. On learning about conditions of detention and lack of drinkable water at Rawa-Ruska, it is believed that Winston Churchill described it as the "*camp de la goutte d'eau et de la mort lente*".

The ceremony continued with speeches given by Mr. Jean-Philippe Blanc, vice-president of the National Federation of Deportees and Internees for Haute-Savoie, and Mr. Mugnier, mayor of Valleiry. The laying of wreaths and the Last Post followed by a one-minute silence observed by the 100-strong audience. School children then sang *La Marseillaise*.

At the close of the ceremony, all were invited to share a *vin d'honneur* at the town hall giving us time to mingle with the locals and chat at length with Mr. Denis Fournier, standard bearer for "*Ceux de Rawa-Ruska*" and descendant of a prisoner.

Note: further reading about Rawa-Ruska is available using the following internet link:

[rawa-ruska.net](http://rawa-ruska.net)



## A DREAM COME TRUE

*Eric Schaerer*

As an officer in a radar anti aircraft unit of the Swiss Army in the sixties and seventies, I followed the radar dots of Venoms, Hunters and Mirages on my screens many times. The Hawker Hunter was definitely my favourite plane, to me the epitome of what a fighter jet should be!



About 10 years ago, I gave some serious thought to taking a flight in one of these magnificent machines. I had heard about the “Amici dell’Hunter”, a group of Hunter mechanics who decided to keep one of these wonderful planes in flying condition after they retired from the Swiss Airforce. A pilot joined them and the association was created in November 1996. Starting to save my money (a flight is not cheap), I decided this would be my 70th birthday present and I signed up for a flight in August 2016, a long time ahead, as these flights are now subject to many restrictions.

Arriving in Sankt-Stephan, a small ex-military airfield in the Bernese Oberland, I was met by the Association President Mr. Eric Hauert, who had been a squadron leader of one of the last flying Hunter units. He introduced me to the pilot for my flight and guess who it was? No less than Yves Rossi, alias the “Jetman”, who had crossed the Channel (among other feats) using jetwings a few years ago. Having provided the necessary papers required (medical certificate, insurance etc.) I donned a G suit, oxygen mask and helmet ready for

my long wished-for jet experience.

After what seemed a long wait in the cockpit sitting next to the pilot in the blazing sun, receiving last minutes instructions on how to use the ejector seat (just in case...), we finally took off. Once in the air, I never had the impression of high speed, although we were flying between 750 and 950 Km/h! The weather conditions were perfect. The formidable north wall of the Eiger approaching fast, up we went and rolled over to do the full length of the Aletsch Glacier upside down – The effect of the G-Force really made itself felt then and my whole body started sweating! A straight flightpath to the Matterhorn helped me to recuperate my senses, a quick dash around the most famous mountain in the Swiss Alps and a simulated attack on the radar of the Plaine Morte above Montana-Crans followed. A final loop-the-loop over the airfield and the 25 minutes were over. Although I was not sick, it was tougher than I thought for my stomach. No regrets though, and an unforgettable experience.

Three days later an F-18 of the Swiss Airforce crashed in the mountains not far away from where I had been flying, reminding us of the risks and dangers military pilots face on each mission they fly.

### Postage Stamp Donations.

Dear Mr Editor,

I am delighted to report to Members and other contributors the continuing success of our postage stamp sales, made on behalf of the Swiss Branch’s welfare fund. Our UK based Member, Ian Crees, enjoys a wide range of contacts within the sphere of Philately who are buying and providing good homes for the material so kindly donated to this worthy cause.

Thank you, Ian, for managing this process.

Having just returned from a trip to UK, which included delivery of more material to Ian, I was able to hand over another large cheque to our Honorary Secretary, one that will further strengthen our welfare fund.

This is an on-going process that continues to call for the kind support of us all. Please, therefore, think of RAFA before discarding old or new stamps received from any corner of the world (including Switzerland). Modern communication methods have certainly reduced the amount of paper mail used but – as long as we still have some post offices – stamped letters will remain in use.

Thank you, once again, for your help. The large collection box that I hold ready for sorting and dispatch is no longer full.....

Alan Baker

Vice-Chairman, Swiss Branch



## Meanwhile in



Nick and Simone Meyer, Bernadette Thom  
And Alain Dardelin



## Yvoire on 3 June!



Di Robertson, Jim Cathcart and Graham Robert-  
son



Michael Rogers OBE



(Above: Régis  
Pizot with  
Bernadette  
Thom. (Right)  
Pam Walsh.  
(Left) Bryan  
Pattison and  
Margaret Duff.



(Above) Jonathan Pitt with Alain Dardelin, our two Welfare  
stalwarts. (Right) Laura Broennley, John Hannon and Joe  
Smith



*Hope to see even more of  
you there next year!*



## Les Glières—Monument du Maquis, 17 June 2017



"*Quoi qu'il arrive, la flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s'éteindre et ne s'éteindra pas.*" These famous words of General de Gaulle broadcast on 18 June 1940 are the reason for the Glières monument - and for this ceremony. The drive there is breath-taking. The crystal mountain air is truly magical. The RAFA Swiss branch party numbered five. Bryan Pattison and Margaret Duff, Régis Pizot, Alain Dardelin and John Hannon. This occasion was particular in that *for the first time in years*, the Union Flag was paraded there, together with the Association's Standard. The text of the famous speech made by General De Gaulle on that day in 1940 is on the monument. The 100+ standard bearers were positioned on either side of it with the Union Flag in the front rank and the Branch Standard in the second rank, both to the left of the monument. There were five speeches in all and five floral tributes laid. The band and the guard of honour were provided by the *Chasseurs alpins* as usual, who also led the standard bearers of the associations back down to the marquee for the *vin d'honneur* and Haute-Savoie *charcuterie*.



Having taken a lot of mountain sun we repaired to the Auberge Camelia for a splendid lunch in the shade under the aegis of our genial hosts, Roger and Suzanne.





# THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

## CENTENARY SERVICE AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

24 MAY 2017

So it was that 2017 saw the centenary of the Order and when the announcement of the date, 24 May 2017, Empire Day (now Commonwealth Day), was published we sat side by side filling in our respective requests for tickets – they had to be made individually. There was a space for special information or requests so we each said that the other was applying for tickets and that, if we were lucky in the possible ballot, it would be nice if we could sit together. It was expected that demands would be high and a ballot could well take place. To our delight we were both lucky and the tickets in our respective envelopes showed that we were in seats D2 and D3 (4<sup>th</sup> Row next but one and two from the Nave Aisle) under the Dome of St Paul's, a matter of 10 yards from HM The Queen and HRH Prince Philip.

The commemoration took place just two days following the Manchester atrocity and as you can imagine security was extremely tight but nevertheless the Cathedral was full to capacity so we were indeed lucky.

There was of course no shortage of pomp and ceremony with a procession comprising in order: the Cathedral Choir and Minor Canons and College of Canons, Gentlemen Ushers, The Lady Usher of the Purple Rod, The Registrar, The King of Arms, the Dean's Virger, The Chapter, The Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, The Lord Mayor bearing the Pearl Sword, HRH Prince Philip (Grand Master of the Order), HM The Queen (Sovereign of the Order), the Equerry-in-Waiting, the Lady in Waiting, the Private Secretary, the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen of Arms (second section) and The Queen's Bodyguard of the Yeomen of the Guard. The Service lasted for an hour and the same procession took place. Exiting from the Cathedral was slow due to the numbers but once outside we were met by Alan Harrison, who had been recently invested with his BEM, and his wife from the Republic of Ireland Branch! Then back to the RAF Club for lunch where we met up with other friends who had also been present. All in all, a splendid day to remember!

### HISTORY OF THE ORDER

At the most critical time of the Great War, King George V decided to create a new Order of Chivalry so that honours on a generous scale could be given to those deserving well of their country. At that time, there was no suitable decoration which could be given to the less senior ranks in the armed services for their administrative work at headquarters, in camps, hospitals etc; nor was there any appropriate award in recognition of the outstanding work, both military and civilian, performed by women – which was as arduous and deserving of acknowledgement as any done by men. Nor, indeed, was there a way of rewarding the work of those who were

outside the Civil Service, and were consequently ineligible for the Imperial Service Order. It was not considered appropriate to enlarge the Orders of the Bath or of Saint Michael and Saint George by the addition of a fourth or fifth class. It was obvious to the King that a new honour should be instituted to provide a suitable award for people of all ranks in the community.

Various titles were discussed: 'The Order of George and Mary'; 'The Patriotic Service Order'; 'The Order of the United Empire'; 'The Order of the Imperial Crown'; and 'The War Service Order' were amongst the more reasonable suggestions. More curious ones included 'The Order of Saint Martin'; 'The Order of the Golden Rose'; and 'The Order of Mars'.

Finally, King George V decided that the Order was to be 'The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire'. After the end of the Great War the question of a spiritual home for the Order began to be considered, a place where services could be held regularly. Committees were set up in 1919, 1937, 1946 and 1957 to discuss the home of the Order – St Faith's Chapel in the crypt of St Paul's, St Margaret, Westminster, the Cathedrals of Canterbury, York and Liverpool, Southwark Cathedral, and finally the 1937 Committee decided that St Paul's Cathedral was the only really suitable and appropriate place, not only because it was the Cathedral of London, but also because it could seat the large congregation which would want to attend.

It was also agreed that. In addition to the Services of the Order which should be held from time to time in the Cathedral, a Chapel of the Order should be built at the eastern end of the crypt of the Cathedral. The first Service held on 20 May 1960 attracted over 3,000 members of the Order. In recent years Services have been held every four years.

[Acknowledgements for the History are due to 'The Chapel of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire' by Frederic Hood, Oxford University Press 1967.]

Bryan Pattison OBE and Margaret Duff BEM



Margaret Duff BEM and Bryan Pattison OBE on the steps after the service.



Mr and Mrs Alan Harrison on the steps after the service.



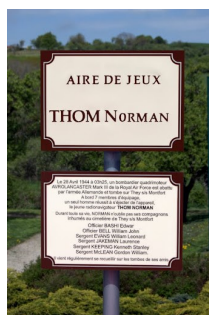
## Norman Thom's last wishes

On Sunday 30th April last, Norman Thom's last wishes were carried out at a final private ceremony at They-sous-Montfort near Vittel in the Vosges region. His ashes were scattered at the foot of the Grand Montot hill. This is where his aircraft, Lancaster DV 192 of No 100 Squadron, bound for Friedrichshafen, had crashed on the night of 27th to 28th of April 1944. It was a very private ceremony with only some 15 persons attending. It was a beautiful day and the moving little ceremony brought together three generations to witness the scattering of Norman's ashes.

When Norman was finally 'demobbed' in 1946 he received the British Empire Medal. However, he could never have imagined what would happen to him in later life. In 1994 following a meeting organised by historians between French, German and British former wartime aircrew, he met *Hauptmann* Heinz Rokker of NJG.2, the German pilot who had shot his Lancaster down in April 1944. They met again on several occasions and became friends. On 8 May 2006 in Neufchâteau (near to They-sous-Montfort) during a ceremony,



Thomas Harvell, Heinz Rokker and Norman Thom joining hands in reconciliation at the grave site of Norman's comrades.



Like Heinz Rokker, Norman went every year to They-sous-Montfort to mourn by the graves of his six comrades. In his honour the village council created a play area named after him, which was inaugurated on 26 April 2009.

Norman was president of the RAFA Swiss branch from 1970 until the early 1980s. After the war he returned to Switzerland and worked at the New Zealand mission in Geneva. He was married with three sons. He was created *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* on 5th December 2015 in Cruseilles, Haute Savoie. He died on 17 November 2016 in Annecy. He left a wife, Bernadette and three sons.

the town awarded them both the title of "*Citoyen d'Honneur*" for this fine example of reconciliation.

That day they were joined by Thomas Harvell, who received the same honour. Thomas Harvell's Lancaster LM206 JI-C from No 514 Squadron, bound for Stuttgart, had also been shot down by *Hauptman* Rokker on the night of the 28th to the 29th July between Rouceux and Coussey some 40 km from They-sous-Montfort. Like Norman, he was the sole survivor from his aircraft.

### Obituary notice

We deeply regret to announce that the following Branch Members have died:

*Eric Jelfs*

*Michael Ryan*

### List of Events for 2017

19 Aug	10.30	Plateau des Daines Commemoration, France
17 Sept	10.30	Battle of Britain 77 <sup>th</sup> Commemoration, CWGC Cemetery, Vevey, Switzerland
6-8 Oct		European Area Conference, Dublin, Republic of Ireland
22 Oct	10.30	78 Sqn. Halifax Commemoration + lunch, Montcony, France
28 Oct		Joint BRA/RAFA/RBL Lunch, Zurich, Switzerland
11 Nov	10.40	Armistice Day, CWGC Cemetery, Vevey, Switzerland

Your Committee looks forward to welcoming as many Members to each event as possible. Watch for details in *Roundel*, or by special circulation, or on the Web site

<http://rafa-swissbranch.co.uk/>

**Don't hesitate to ask a Committee Member for information**

### The Team:

John Hannon (editor/layout), Régis Pizot ('court photographer'), Alain Dardelin (printing organiser), Nick and Simone Meyer and the Stuffers—but chiefly—all you contributors. With thanks to everybody.