



# THE BELGIANS REMEMBER THEM

*PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION*

*NEWSLETTER N° 05*

*ISSUE: 2022-1*

## EDITORIAL



*\* MIR or MYR in Russian or in Ukrainian will say PEACE (Picture: 20-minutes.fr - AFP)*

At the beginning of February everything seemed to be changing for the better. The health crisis was easing and the intensity of the virus that had paralyzed humanity seemed to be diminishing, signalling an imminent resumption of activities.

It was at this moment of calm that the leader of the Russian Federation chose to carry out verbal attacks against the leaders and people of Ukraine. Worried by this sudden violence, instigated by the Russian president, several heads of State started talks aimed at calming the situation, but, unfortunately without success. When I saw Mr. Vladimir Putin, live on TV, ordering his military leaders to attack Ukraine, like all my contemporaries, I was appalled. I thought he was joking. Unfolding events showed that it was anything but a joke!

From that moment on we have been witnessing horrors happening in Europe. Cities and villages are systematically bombed and the destruction of homes is making civilians refugees. Hordes of unfortunate people are trying to flee an end-of-the-world universe only to encounter it further away.

Meanwhile, women and children are wandering on roads surrounded by desolate countryside. Some are killed or injured. It's panic! It's terror! It's hell! It's war!

The people of Ukraine are trying to defend themselves with courage and determination and are slowing down the advance of Russian troops. For how long and to what lengths will these horrors be perpetuated? What will happen to these displaced people who find refuge in neighbouring European countries?

In the meantime, since the beginning of these “hostilities”, we have been inundated with information from around the world. Our television programmes permanently give air time to respected journalists, eminent scientists, retired generals, scholars and philosophers. Politicians are also on board. All try to explain, in their own way, what has happened so far, what might be to come and the reasons for this war, using, as illustrations, historical events which were often appalling. Social networks are flooded with comments from people of all backgrounds whose contributions are sometimes harmful. Widespread hysteria has seized nations and their leaders!

Meanwhile, women and children are wandering on roads surrounded by desolate countryside. Some are killed or injured. It’s panic! It’s terror! It’s hell! It’s war!

I don’t know what the future will be for Ukraine. I don’t know how long this war will last but I do know one thing - it will lead to immense tragedies and healing the wounds will be difficult and will take some time, both for the Ukrainian people and for the Russian people. Ukraine has been attacked, the country is devastated, it is mourning its dead and is trying to care for its wounded. It is living through the horror of war.

The Russian people have been dragged into this conflict by the terrible decision of one man. It will be difficult for the Russians to live in a world where everyone points an accusing finger at them.

And our people will also suffer the effects of this terrible conflict. If we see an outpouring of generosity toward the Ukrainians, will it always be the same when our economy is hit hard by this war? Will our excessively consumerist society be able to cope with the inevitable increase in the basic cost of living? Will we always be “expansive” when our way of life is drastically impacted?

Today we are experiencing, perhaps without realising it, what may become a period of profound change in civilization. Are we ready to come to terms with it?

As you read this, I have nothing but questions. Not being prescient, I cannot assure you that our short-term future will be better. But I hope the artillery will soon be silent. May the war and its devastation cease and may the people of Ukraine regain the peace to which they are entitled in a peaceful world!

In May, we will commemorate those who came to our rescue during the Second World War when we lived under the enemy’s yoke. They came from every continent, even from the USSR. Among them were Russians, Belarusians, Estonians, and perhaps Ukrainians. They all had one goal: to drive out barbarity, to restore democracy and peace.

Through the Act of Remembrance which we will hold on May 18, we will keep alive the memory of those who sacrificed so that we could regain our freedoms taken away by the Nazis and, in thinking about what is happening in Ukraine, we will express the hope that peace between nations and humans will be restored.

And we repeat with strength and conviction:

**We condemn all acts of war and aggression against sovereign states and innocent civilians.**

**Our duty to remember and our work to preserve the memory of those who helped the peoples of Europe to annihilate Nazism during WW2 will never be conditioned by the policies of yesterday, today or in the future.**

**We will always remember them and their sacrifice, whoever they are and where they came from.**

Wilfred Burie,  
President

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY REBECQ 2022, FEBRUARY 17, 2022

## MINUTES

### Agenda:

- Welcome and introduction of new members:
- Presentation and Approval of Accounts for 2021:
- Presentation and Approval of 2021 Morale Review and of 2022 Programme of Events
- Miscellaneous

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

In opening the meeting of the General Assembly of the Association, Wilfred Burie, President, informed those present that Eric Verly, Vice-President, could not be present for health reasons.

The Association welcomed the new members. They are Benoît Crasset, Freddy Boosten, Maurice Duquesnes and Francis Populaire (attendance excused). These people had attended the ceremony of 29/09/2021 and wished to join our Association as they have just begun to set up their own, in Ath. This new patriotic Association is called the «Association Paatriotique du Pays Vert» ("*Green Country Patriotic Friendship*") and aims to establish a link between the preservation of the memory of those who fought for freedom and democracy in world conflicts and the younger generations.

Other people have joined our group: Mm. Yves Louis, President of the «Groupe Mémoire-Heriner Groep», Jean-François Maréchal, also a member of the Groupe Mémoire, Vincent Decroly, lawyer and his wife Elisée Tumba Sentery.

The President welcomed them and assured them of the friendship of all.

### 2. PRESENTATION OF 2021 ACCOUNTS

1) Situation Financière au	
1/01/2021	/01/2021
Caisse Trésorier	
Caisse président	
Compte banque	1041,06
Compte d'épargne	
Autres	
A recevoir	
Cotisations	-320,00
Affiliations	49,00
A Payer.	
<b>Total</b>	<b>770,06</b>

3) Détail caisse actuelle		
Nombre	Coupures	Sous total
0	100	0,00
	50	0,00
	20	0,00
	10	0,00
	5	0,00
	2	0,00
	1	0,00
	0,50	0,00
	0,20	0,00
	0,10	0,00
	0,05	0,00
	0,02	0,00
	0,01	0,00
1/01/11	Total	0,00

It is clear from this financial statement that, despite two years of health restrictions which prevented the work of Remembrance being carried out normally, we were still able to maintain some of our objectives and we have also opened up other areas of activity which are referred to in the following Moral assessment.

We note that the number of affiliated members has dropped sharply during these two years, but we hope that the resumption of the normal course of life will bring an end to this phenomenon.

2)

<b>Synthèse de l'année en cours</b>	
Total des Dépenses	4377,27
Total des Recettes	4383,91
Résultat de l'exercice	6,64
<b>Total intermédiaire</b>	<b>776,70</b>

4)

<b>Situation Financière actuelle</b>		
Date	Libellés	Solde
31/12/20	Caisse	0,00
30/12/21	Compte vue	720,33
	Compte épargne	
	Cotisation 2022	-240,00
	A recevoir	296,37
	A Payer	
	<b>Total encaisse</b>	<b>776,70</b>
	Différence	0,00

Despite the exceptional expenses incurred by the commemoration of September 29, we were able to end the year on a positive note.

- Approval: The financial accounts were approved unanimously.

### **3. PRESENTATION OF 2021 MORALE REVIEW**

#### **A. Ceremonies organised by the Association**

##### ***May 9: Ceremony to pay Tribute to the Soviet Armed Partisans:***

We were keen to organize this commemoration, to which we thought we would welcome about fifty people. Unfortunately, health restrictions related to the Covid pandemic restricted the number to fifteen. A large Russian delegation had made the trip, including Russian Ambassador to Belgium Alexander Tokovinin; Minister-Counsellor Dmitri Borodin; Defence Attaché Colonel Igor Kolodin; Major Alexey Kozhevnikov, Deputy Defence Attaché and Mr Igor Minaev, Counsellor of the Russian Embassy.

Belgian representatives included, among others, the Minister of State André Flahaut; the representative of the Minister of Defence, Colonel Olivier Degroote, Military Commander of the Province of Walloon Brabant; the Mayor of Rebecq Patricia Venturelli; the Walloon Deputy Dimitri Legasse; the president of the CPAS of Rebecq, Marino Marchetti and Alderman André Deschamps.

##### ***19 May: Tribute to the Czech Republic:***

We had the honour of welcoming His Excellency Pavel Klucký, Ambassador of the Czech Republic and Sandra Miholavá, Minister-Counsellor and Consul General of the Czech Republic to Belgium.

Our guests had wished to pay tribute to the RAF airmen who died in Belgium during the Second World War and more particularly to Flying Sergeant Pavel Pavlik and Flying Lieutenant John Pinny, both of Czech nationality, who lost their lives while on combat missions. They are buried in Ypres and Bourg-Léopold respectively.

##### ***September 29: Solemn Act of Remembrance Ceremony:***

We had planned to hold a ceremony in 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the Allied victory over Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, this event could not be held because of the pandemic. Since 2021 coincided with the Association's tenth anniversary, we therefore thought of organizing a commemoration, recalling at the same time the sacrifice made by the Allies during five years of war and the contribution of the Resistance to the fight against the Nazi occupying forces.

On this occasion, representatives of the 14 nations who had nationals shot down in Belgium while they were on a combat mission for the Royal Air Force were invited. His Majesty the King was also invited to the commemoration. He honoured us by being represented there. Thanks to a partial lifting of health restrictions, this major event was able to take place. It should be noted that all participants appreciated the quality of what was said and done during the ceremony and in particular, the contribution of the children of Rebecq communal school to its success.

#### **B. Ceremonies held outside the Association**

##### ***April 25: Anzac Day NZ – Hunterville, New Zealand***

Mr. David Cole, a member of the Association and a resident of New Zealand, laid a wreath for us at the Huntville Cenotaph.

##### ***July 21: National Day – Brussels***

Wilfred Burie, President, represented the Association in the National Day parade, Place des Palais, in Brussels.

##### ***September 5: Commemoration Marcq – Resistance Secret Army***

We participated in the commemoration organized in Marcq by the Association Secret Army Zone I and laid a wreath there.

##### ***30 September: Inauguration of the new BW Military Commander***

We were invited to attend the handover of military command of the Walloon Brabant Province by Colonel Olivier

Degroote and the investiture of his successor, Colonel Philippe Ramaekers.

### ***10 November: UK embassy reception***

Wilfred Burie attended the reception given by the British Ambassador at the Embassy Residence in Brussels.

### ***11 November: Armistice Commemoration – Brussels***

Eric Verly, Christian Renotte and Wilfred Burie participated in the Armistice commemoration held at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Brussels.

## **C. Publications**

We have published our news reports together with a Newsletter in English containing the articles published in the reports. This Newsletter is distributed by Email to more than 150 recipients around the world.

To mark the ten years of the Association, we have also published a book detailing the stages of our Memorial journey. In addition, we have provided other Associations with articles in their respective magazines and newspapers.

Finally, we published an educational dossier entitled “Transmission de la Mémoire: implication d’élèves lors de l’hommage solennel rendu à Rebecq le 29 septembre 2021”.

## **D. Zedelgem**

Alerted in December 2020 to the existence of a monument erected in Belgium in 2018 in memory of members of the Waffen SS, we sought further information from respected historians. It turned out that this monument called «the Latvian Hive» had indeed been inaugurated by the municipal authorities of Zedelgem, West Flanders, in memory of the 12,000 Latvian soldiers taken prisoner by the Allies on the Eastern Front after the surrender of Germany and brought captive to a prison camp in Zedelgem. These individuals were lucky enough not to be tried. They were set free in 1947.

We also discovered that these men were part of the 15th and 19th divisions of the Waffen SS that operated mainly in the Baltic States and occupied USSR. They were guilty of mass shootings of entire populations in the places through which they passed. Among the victims were many Jews.

With the Minister of State, André Flahaut, we spoke to the authorities of the country, including the Federal Government. In the face of the limited responses of the latter, we formed a group of people from the international press, the scientific world, etc. Thanks to the expertise of these eminent comrades in the struggle, we slowly but effectively raised, with the municipal authorities of Zedelgem, the need to organize a symposium of international expert historians to decide whether this statue should remain in public view where it has been erected or not. These eminent experts have stated unequivocally that this controversial statue should be removed from its original site.

However this is only a partial victory for us since the local government body has issued no statement setting out what it intends to do with this cumbersome, controversial statue. In our opinion, a more discreet use could be made of this «hive», and still leaving it in a public place. However, for us, as for all Belgians who respect the memory of the victims of Nazism, it is inconceivable that this monument could find any use in Belgium. It is an insult to the memory of those we remember and brings shame and dishonour on our country.

We would also like to emphasize that our action does not in any way target the Flemish population for whom we have the greatest respect.

## **E. Database**

Since it was set up the database “The Belgians Remember Them” has consistently been updated and expanded. As a result of our own research and thanks to written information received from correspondents world-wide we have been able to add historical data and, at the same time, correct mistakes which we had not picked up on.

Year by year, this research tool becomes more useful to numerous families of airmen shot down over Belgium between 1940 and 1945.

## **F. Miscellaneous**

We organized the change needed on the headstone of the Russian Armed Partisan Vladimir Talda, whose date of death was shown as September 11, 1944, but who was shot down on the 3rd in the battles of the Liberation of Montgras.

We also replaced the three memorial plaques on the Rebecq Memorial Monument. In fact, the old ones contained a number of historical errors due to our lack of knowledge of the facts at the time of construction in 2011. We took this opportunity to repaint the whole monument.

Our Association became a member of Groupe Mémoire – Herinnering Groep. The main objective of this Association is to keep alive the legacy and memory of Belgian political prisoners and the Resistance during the Second World War. The Association also defends human rights and respect for human dignity.

The GM-GH was founded in 1993 by two Belgian resistance fighters and political prisoners of the Second World War: Baron Arthur Haulot, then president of the Federation “Ancients of Dachau” with his friend Baron Paul Halter, then president of the Auschwitz Foundation. Their successors are (in chronological order): André Wynen, former president of the World Medical Association WMA; Pieter-Paul Baeten, and Doctor Yves Louis, a member of our Association.

We have submitted our application for membership of the Servio Group. This organization, created in accordance with the wishes of King Baudouin, aims to bring together, under one umbrella, the country’s patriotic Associations, Federations and Organizations and Memorials.

- Approval: The General Meeting approved the financial year 2021 Moral balance sheet.

## **4. 2022 PROGRAMME**

- The Service of Remembrance at the Rebecq Memorial will take place on May 18, 2022, in the presence of the King’s Representative, with the help of a guard of honour and a Royal Music corps.

- The commemoration of the sacrifice of the Soviet Armed Partisans will take place on 8 October 2022 at the Memorial to the Soviet Armed Partisans, in the presence of the Ambassador of the Russian Federation. (\*)

- We will take part in several official patriotic demonstrations both in Belgium and the United Kingdom. We will advise members as soon as we know the dates and details of these events.

We are also waiting to hear if a delegation can come in May from North Killingholme.

(\*) This event will be organized taking into account the current international situation. We wish to affirm that our work of preserving the Heroes’ Memory will never be determined by circumstances of any kind.

**ACT OF REMEMBRANCE REPORT**  
***THE ROLE PLAYED BY PUPILS IN THE SOLEMN ACT OF REMEMBRANCE***  
***HELD AT REBECQ ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2021.***

On Wednesday, September 29, 2021, the patriotic Association “The Belgians Remember Them” organized a commemoration in memory of the Royal Air Force airmen shot down over Belgian territory during the Second World War as well as the Belgian and Soviet Resistance fighters who helped the survivors of the plane crashes to escape the occupying force.

The ceremony should have been held in May, but the adverse health conditions forced us to postpone it. Bear in mind that they also prevented us from organizing a major commemoration in 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the War.

The Association was celebrating its first decade, which called for a significant event to be held. Some may wonder why we organised and held a ceremony paying tribute to the victims of British plane crashes? Since 2017, we have created a database listing all crashes and all RAF aircraft crew members shot down over our country. Approximately 4,600 aircrew were involved in the, approximately, 750 crashes. Most were British, but we also noted that some of them belonged to 12 other nationalities: Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Americans, Irish, Norwegians, Poles, Dutch, Belgians, French and Czechs.

A 13th nationality is represented by Soviet soldiers captured on the Eastern Front and brought to Belgium and made to carry out forced labour in the coal mines of Central and Limburg. Some of them managed to escape from their place of captivity and tried, in every way possible, to put themselves at the service of the Resistance groups. As such, many participated alongside the Belgians in rescuing survivors of RAF or USAAF plane crashes, when there were survivors.

In order to mark the event, we extended an invitation to the King, who showed his appreciation of it by sending his representative. In conjunction with this, we extended an official invitation to all ambassadors of nations who have had nationals involved in plane crashes. All also responded positively, but the South Africans were unable to attend for health reasons.



As usual when I organize a ceremony of this kind, I will first visit the pupils who will participate in it to explain to them the reasons for such an approach, both historically and morally. On this occasion, I was able to witness the interest shown by young people in this tragedy. It is expected that they will actively participate in the Act of Remembrance.

The big day has arrived and the pupils are all there, visibly impressed by the uniforms of the officers present. A guard of honour composed of armed soldiers is already in position, as is the Royal Air Component Band (Air Force). A complete silence covers the area of the gathering as we await the arrival of the King’s Representative. Upon his arrival, the ceremony can begin.

After the three speeches delivered by the Mayor of Rebecq, the Minister of State André Flahaut and myself, as President of the organizing Association, the children gave of their best by playing their role to perfection. One child was given the task of flag-bearer for his school. He remained standing at attention alongside the Association, in the foreground of the “stage”. He stood impassive under the showers of rain.

Another pupil played the role of “bell-ringer”, a function that must be perfectly carried out in order to give full dramatic emphasis at the moment the gong sounds. The rest of the pupils took the VIP wreaths, two by two, and laid them in front of the Memorial Monument.

The adults present that day at the Rebecq Memorial all felt that the pupils had gone beyond the stage of walk-on parts, that their action was no longer limited to playing a role but that they were experiencing a crucial moment during which their contribution was an act of Remembrance to those who are honoured on the Memorial Monument.



Two months later, I brought the pupils of this class a copy of the latest Bulletin of our Association which carried the report of this day in which they took part.

This was an opportunity for a short debriefing. I asked them, among other things, what they had learned from this experience?

On the whole, they were impressed by the importance given to the event, by the emotion that flowed from specific moments, such as the roll call of civilian and military victims, the one minute of silence and the laying of wreaths in which they all participated by, several times, bringing forward the wreaths of honoured guests present.

The answer to the second question, regarding the feelings expressed in all the speeches given that day, is harder to determine, since the question was asked point blank without no prior opportunity to review the events of the day. However, I sensed that their impression was that very significant things had been said which they could not exactly put into words there and then. Overall, it was clear that the children still felt that they had participated in an important event and had played very important roles in it.



As a result, there are several important lessons to be learned when inviting young people to participate in Acts of Remembrance:-

**1. Preparation**

It is important that during the preparation of a memorial type event, the organiser introduces himself and details his role in the event in which he is inviting the pupils to participate This presentation must of course be adapted to suit

the event to which it refers. It is also extremely important to detail the role the pupils will be asked to play during the ceremony.

## **2. The teaching input of the teacher in charge of the group**

It is vitally important that the teacher in charge be able to carry forward this initial “introduction” during the period preceding the ceremony and, so, the teacher’s clear interest in the historical material is essential, for, if the teacher shows no willingness to understand and appreciate the History behind the event, neither will the pupils.

## **3. Involvement in the act of celebration**

Pupils must be kept informed of the roles that will be assigned to them during the event. Providing details of the symbolism portrayed in the celebration will serve to underline the importance of their roles.

## **4. Post-event analysis**

Debriefing, perhaps a few days later, is very important so that young people recall the symbolic acts witnessed during those moments of celebration and can then draw a parallel between the different acts and the historical events commemorated. For example, the citation of the names of victims recalls those whose Memory is celebrated. The one minute silence demonstrates the homage paid by the entire gathering during this moment of Remembrance, etc. Finally, if some of them have not grasped the significance of a particular act or any part of the commemoration, it is important to provide them with the information they ask for.

## **5. How to remember what happened**

It is interesting that children can have a tangible “memory” of what they participated in. This could possibly pave the way for later reflection on the subject. The organizer may be able to leave a brochure or a text relating to the event that includes the main points or highlights of the ceremony with one or two photos that will more easily perpetuate the tradition of the celebration.

## **6. The role of the teacher**

This is essential. If the teacher does not show an interest in a subject, he will not succeed in making the subject captivating for the young people.

As I left the class, the pupils asked me for an interview, which they have yet to prepare, as part of a joint project scheduled for the coming months. Indeed, they will have to write a school journal, a section of which will deal with history.

On February 10, at the invitation of the pupils, I went to the class to answer their questions. I noticed that, even after several months, the children had retained a precise and crucial memory of their experience. Their questions were clear, concise and showed how they intended to use the answers I gave them. I am sure that the work they will do will be worthwhile and of a high quality.



*The pupils of 6th Rebecq's grammar school class and Wilfred Burie*

## LANCASTER DV 309-BQ-S OF 550 SQUADRON SHOT DOWN IN WESTERLO ON MAY 22, 1944

Late in the evening of May 21, 1944, a squadron of 510 aircraft took off from England for a mission in the Ruhr. Their mission was to bomb the industrial part of Duisburg. Drawn from several units, these aircraft met up above the North Sea. The squadron, once in flight order, headed towards the Belgo-Dutch border which it would have to follow to fly over the territory of the Reich. From there, the planes would fly towards their identified target.

The pilots have been operating this way since the beginning of the Allied bombing of Germany, but the fact that the Americans operate by day while the British fly by night needs to be borne in mind.

When they approached the mainland, the airmen knew they were entering dangerous territory. They risked, at any time, being the target of German anti-aircraft defenses (the Flak) or German fighters, those light and maneuverable planes which generally launched surprise attacks on heavy bombers.

This is what happened to Lancaster DV309-BQ-S, piloted by Geoffrey Hinde. While the Lancaster was flying over the region of Westerlo, in the Province of Antwerp, a German pilot, whose mission was to prevent the RAF aircraft from reaching his country, took off from the base in Saint-Trond and flew to intercept the enemy aircraft.

Hinde's Lancaster suffered a direct hit and immediately burst into flames. In a matter of seconds, the burning aircraft crashed into a field in the hamlet of Schobbroek, just ten kilometers from Westerlo. As soon as it hit the ground, inevitably, the aircraft exploded because of its load of fuel and of bombs that should have been dropped on the target.

The explosion was terrible! The surrounding farm buildings were demolished by the blast. Luckily, all of their occupants had gone to a wedding in a nearby town. All the crew members were killed. The bodies of five men would be recovered and two will have disappeared in the fire, highlighting the violence of the explosion.

Years after the accident, a group of Westerlo citizens decided to remember the sacrifice of the Lancaster airmen. Research at the time was thorough and a monument was erected in 1998.

### The crew members were:-

**HINDE, GEOFFREY WILLIAM**, Pilot Officer  
**YOUNG, WILLIAM ARTHUR JOHN**, Sergeant  
**WHITTICK, THOMAS LEONARD JOHN**, Sergeant  
**SHARLAND, CLIFFORD CYRIL**, Flight Sergeant  
**BEACHAM, ERNEST CECIL**, Sergeant

*They were declared "Killed in Action" (KIA) and are buried in the Schoonselhof Military Cemetery (Antwerpen).*

**HUGHES DAVID**, Platoon Sergeant  
**DAVIES DESMOND ROY MORGAN**, Sergeant

*Their bodies were never found, so they were declared "Missing in Action" (MIA) and their names are on the Runnymede Memorial near London where they are honoured at commemorative ceremonies.*



*Beacham E; Sharland C; Davies D; David H; Wittick T; Hinde G. - William Young*

Photos of all of these young men - except for Sergeant William Young - had already been received by the RAF. Recently, his family sent his photo to the 550 Sqd North Killingholme Association.

Finally, a face is put to a hero's name.

**An Act of Remembrance for the crew is due to be held in Westerlo on May 21, 2022.**

## A NEW MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION: THE A.P.P.V.

On February 17, a new patriotic Association was created in Ath, Hainaut.  
It is called the «Amicale Patriotique du Pays Vert», A.P.V. for short.

One of the founders, Mr. Francis Populaire, President, explains the objectives: Our main function will be to promote our duty to remember and to specify the means to achieve it, such as establishing a link between the maintenance of memory across all generations within our country while our European Union is subjected to strong geopolitical turbulence. Today, it is essential to raise awareness among citizens and younger generations of their duty to remember and of the new conditions prevailing in today's global context."



An emblem and a flag were created for the occasion.

We wish our friends good luck in their courageous project!  
May they be assured of our support and friendship!

### **Contacts:**

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## MEMORY G14 BECOMES G15: F/O HELVARD ARNE HROAR WAS OF DANISH NATIONALITY

### Foreword



*F/O A. H. Helvard*

At the solemn Act of Remembrance held on September 29, 2021, 13 representatives of countries who had RAF nationals shot down on Belgian soil during the Second World War attended the commemoration. In my speech, I mentioned that we were, in a way, the G14 of Memorials - (Belgium being the 14th country).

Shortly afterwards, while doing research, I realized that a 15th nation should be added to the group: Denmark.

The "Belgians Remember Them" database recorded that, on June 22, 1943, a Stirling aircraft belonging to 218 Squadron, registration BK712-HA-D, was shot down on its return from a bombing mission over Krefeld. The 8-man aircraft crashed in Langdorp, Flemish Brabant. Among the crew members was Flying Officer (F/O) HELVARD, Arne Hroar, listed as British. However, the name did not seem to me to sound very English. After researching, I discovered that he was of Danish nationality.

From now on, we will talk about the G15 of Memorials. It is planned to bring together this illustrious group together in May 2024, during the commemoration scheduled to be held in Rebecq.

In the meantime, we will inform the Ambassador of Denmark of the fact that one of his compatriots is buried in Belgium, that he is a hero and that we are keeping alive his Memory.

Here is his story.

### His Origins

The son of Angla Eugenia Honoré and Jens Helvard, telegraph operator, Arne Hroar Helvard was born on 10 March 1915 in Fredericia, Denmark. The family moved to Hobro and then to Hadsund, where his father was postmaster.

## His Studies

Helvard completed his course in Gymnastics at Randers Statsskole in 1933 and began training as a civil engineer at the Copenhagen Polytechnic. However, he was bored there and in 1935 he dropped out of school and joined the Danish Naval Force and, in particular, the Royal Danish Navy Air Force.

Arne completed his course in Gymnastics at Randers Statsskole in 1933 and began training as a civil engineer at the Copenhagen Polytechnic. He was bored there and in 1935 dropped out of school and joined the Danish Naval Force and the Aviation Division of the Royal Danish Navy.

Helvard served there from 1935 to 1940. During these years of training, he rose to the rank of Pilot Officer and qualified as a Flying Officer. In October 1939, while on a reconnaissance mission off the island of Møn, he saw a wooden raft on which 4 sailors were trying to reach land. They were the survivors of the Vorpostenboot V701 Este VII, a German ship which collided with a floating mine and sank after exploding. Since the sea was very rough, these "inexperienced sailors" might well drown and never reach land. Realising the situation, Helvard succeeded in landing on the island and rescuing the unfortunate sailors who were saved thanks to the courage of the Danish pilot. This act of bravery is a good description of Arne Helvard.

## The occupation of Denmark

A few months later, on April 9, 1940, German troops occupied Denmark after its surrender. On 30 April, Helvard was demobilized from his employment at the Copenhagen Naval Air Base.

After a period of unemployment, he found a temporary job at Aalborg airport. In October 1940, he was employed by the Danish airport authority at Kastrup airport (Copenhagen).

He quickly realized that he was able to monitor the movements of all the planes and of the occupying authorities using the airport. He passed this information on to his friend and former naval fellow graduate, Thomas C. Sneum, who had returned from England to Denmark and had been working as an intelligence agent for the Allies since the autumn of 1941.

Helvard and Sneum had met at the Copenhagen Polytechnic and shared a common interest in aviation. In 1934-35, they had trained on the German Stamer-Lippisch gliders. Later, Sneum had also joined the naval air base where Helvard was studying.

## His period of service with R.A.F.



Recruited by the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) in the middle of 1941, Sneum fled to Britain in a Hornet Moth. On September 10 of that year, he was parachuted into Denmark. In March 1942, the Germans suspected Sneum of spying and tried to arrest him. Aware of the danger, he fled once again. His final hiding place was Helvard's apartment. He had total confidence in Helvard, even to the point of telling him about his escape plan. He invited Helvard to join him in his escape to England. Helvard hesitated. His father had recently passed away and his mother was alone. Moreover, he was engaged and it was difficult for him to abandon his sweetheart. But, in the end, Arne Helvard accepted and the two companions left for the North, for Sweden, from where they planned to reach Great Britain via Scotland. They were arrested by Swedish border guards and interned for eight weeks. They were questioned about their intentions. As soon as they were freed, they resumed their journey.

Their destination was Leuchars, in Scotland. There, through bad luck, they were again arrested by the police and imprisoned in Brixton prison in London. Once again, they were interrogated by the British Secret Services. Sneum, who had previously been involved with English intelligence and was a member of MI6, was interrogated more "rigourously". Finally, the two Danes were released in mid-July 1942. Arne Helvard immediately enlisted in the Royal Air Force as a Reserve Volunteer (RAFVR) and was given the registration number 128521.

In the first instance he was assigned to the 1651 Conversion Unit (CU), Wrattling Common, Cambridgeshire. On 13 June 1943, he was posted to 218 Squadron (Gold Coast). At that time, this squadron was part of the 3rd Group and operated using the Short Stirling heavy bomber. The unit had been involved in the Battle of the Ruhr since March 1943 and Helvard became one of five Danish airmen to participate in this part of the strategic air war over Germany.

## His last mission

On 21 and 22 June 1943, Bomber Command sent a force of 705 aircraft to Krefeld, Germany. The Stirling BK712-HA-D took off from 218 Squadron base at Downham Market at 00:14. The aircraft was flown by FO William Golder Shillinglaw (412846, RAAF) and Helvard was the second pilot.

This was his third Shillinglaw operation since he joined the squadron in early June. The target could be clearly seen from above Krefeld that night. In addition, the target was picked out almost perfectly by the Pathfinder's navigation aids. More than 600 planes dropped their bombs on Krefeld and a large fire zone burned for several hours throughout the city.

With the drop over, the Stirling began a U-turn and regained height in order to return to England. Having reached the outskirts of Limburg and Flemish Brabant, the aircraft was attacked by a German night fighter. On board was Lieutenant Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer of Stab II. /NJG 1, based in Saint-Trond. The German fired bursts from his machine guns and the Stirling suffered direct hits, setting off a fire and causing an immediate loss of control. The RAF plane fell from the sky and crashed near the village of Langdorp. The eight crew members were killed by enemy fire.



They have since been buried in the Municipal parish graveyard.

The Memorial plaque at the entrance to the cemetery of Langdorp and below, the graves of the eight airmen.



## MIRACULOUS ESCAPE FROM HALIFAX JB913-EQ-F SHOT DOWN AT TESSENDERLO ON 4/07/1943



Late in the evening of July 3, at 23:00, RCAF's Halifax JB913-EQ-F bomber took off from the Leeming, North Yorkshire, base for a mission over Cologne. The crew was British and Canadian and was led by Sergeant Elmer B. DUNGEY, a Canadian. As usual, the aircraft was part of a squadron of several hundred aircraft.

About two hours later, while flying over the Limburg Campine, the plane was suddenly attacked by a German night fighter. Machine gun fire from Fighter Pilot Hauptmann Millius of the III. /NJG 3 from Saint-Trond hit the Canadian plane and it immediately caught fire.

Pilot Dungey tried to keep the aircraft flying as long as possible to allow the crew to escape by parachute. Each crew member successfully exited the burning cabin. Bomber Tom Lawry sustained a shoulder injury and lost consciousness, but quickly recovered and was able to jump out of the plane in time, followed immediately by Pilot Dungey .



As the last survivors reached the ground, the burning plane crashed in open country. The incendiary bombs on board exploded on impact, creating an almighty explosion and a huge fireball.

Each of the survivors tried to leave the crash site so as not to get caught by the Germans who would soon arrive. Dungey and Bowlby managed to find a farm whose occupants were members of the Resistance. From there the two young men then set out on a route that would lead them from farms to private houses, from the region of Tessenderlo, where the plane crashed, via Louvain, Brussels, Rumes, en Hainaut, Paris and the Pyrenees to Gibraltar and then to England. As soon as they were shot down in Belgium they were looked after by the «Comet» escape network, so they were under the protection of at least 40 different people who risked their lives to guarantee safe passage for the two airmen from the occupied zone to England.

Although the rest of the crew escaped from the plane safely, they did not have the same luck. The other five young airmen were captured by German soldiers, taken prisoner and taken to Germany where they were imprisoned in an Allied prisoner of war camp. They remained there until the end of the war in 1945, before being liberated by the Soviet army. They were P/O Brown T, N; Sgt Evans R; F/Lt Foster V W G; P/O Speller R H and F/O Lowry T.



*Fl/Sgt Arthur Bowlby and Sgt Elmer B Dungey*



To date, out of more than 750 crashes, we have found only five RAF plane crashes in which the crew has survived.

## THE PASSING OF A GREAT RESISTANCE WOMAN, HENRIETTE HANOTTE AGED 102

It was with sadness that we learned of the death of Henriette HANOTTE, aged 102, on February 19th, 2022. This war heroine had attended the solemn Act of Remembrance we had organized in Rebecq in May 2018.

Born in Rumes (a little village in Hainaut, near the French border), Henriette Hanotte and her family helped allied soldiers cross the Franco-Belgian border at the beginning of the war. She then made herself known to MI9, an organization offering aid, protection and repatriation to England to military and Resistance allies. She also joined the Comet network assuming, firstly, the name Marie, and then Monique. This network helped British soldiers return to the United Kingdom.

In 1944, Henriette Hanotte was interrogated by a collaborator in Rumes and sought by the Gestapo. She, in turn, took the Comet network escape route and found refuge in England, where she became second lieutenant ATS and trained as a parachutist.



*Henriette, in 2018, accompanied by Brigitte d'Oultremont and Erich Huster returns to her place after laying a wreath during the Act of Remembrance in Rebecq in 2018. Throughout the war, she helped hundreds of Allied airmen hide from the enemy and helped them to reach England safely. She was a great lady!*



**COMMEMORATION - SOLEMN TRIBUTE**

**REBECQ, BELGIUM - MAY 18TH, 2022 - AT 10 AM**

**MEMORIAL FO REBECQ**

**DEDICATED TO THE AIRMEN OF R.A.F. FALLEN IN BELGIUM DURING WW2  
AND TO THE RESISTANCE HAVING HELPED THE SURVIVORS TO ESCAPE FROM THE ENNEMY**

**IN THE PRESENCE OF THE REPRESENTING OF H.M. THE KING OF THE BELGIANS**



**WESTERLO, BELGIUM - MAY 21ST, 2022**

**WESTERLO, BELGIUM - MAY**

- 10.30 AM: MASS OF REMEMBRANCE TO THE CHURCH OF VOORTKAPEL CHURCH**
- 11.30 AM: SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION AND LAYING OF WREATHS TO THE MEMORIAL STONE**

**IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE AIRMEN OF LANCASTER DV 309-BQ-S  
FALLEN TO WESTERLO ON MAY 22ND, 1944**





**« Never in the field of human conflict was  
so much owed by so many to so few »**

**Winston Churchill**

*Many thanks to Brian Simpson from Antrim (NI) for translation*

### **The Belgians Remember Them - Memorials in Belgium**

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*We have partnership with the municipality of Rebecq, the «Souvenir Français»,  
550 Squadron RAF North Killingholme and the Province of Walloon Brabant*

