

THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE EUROPEAN AREA ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD ON FRIDAY 21 MAY
2010 IN THE SAVOY HOTEL, BLACKPOOL AT 1000 HOURS

Present:

RAFA/MM2/6 & RAFA/MM3/4

Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville
Air Marshal P Walker
Air Vice-Marshal N S Howlett
Dr B Pattison
Air Marshal C Harper
Mrs B Dennett Stannard
Mr M Mason
Mr R Gauci
Mr R Hunt
Squadron Leader D Gibson
Mr B Darke

President
Life Vice-President
Life Vice-President
Life Vice-President
Service Vice-President
Vice-President
Vice-President
Chairman
Vice-Chairman
RAFALO Representative
Central Council Representative

Miss E van Gilst
Mr J Coles
Mr D Falla
Group Captain R Whittingham
Mr W Dixon
Mr K Booth
Mrs D Brice
Mr A Brunger
Mr P Clarke
Mr C Eliot
Mr A Brittain
Mr J Peel
Mr B Flowers
Mr D Sterritt
Mr P Baldwin
Mrs F Maison
Mrs P Curtis
Mr A Dardelin

Amsterdam Delegate - 1077
Aphrodite Delegate - 1318
Apollo Delegate - 1354
Belgian Delegate - 0645
Benalmadena Delegate - 1357
Costa Blanca Delegate - 1359
Gibraltar Delegate - 1251
Guernsey Delegate - 0579
Jersey Delegate - 0487
Luxembourg Delegate - 1303
Lyon Delegate - 1279
Malta GC Delegate - 0293
North Costa Blanca Delegate - 1360
Republic of Ireland Delegate - 0823
Rheindahlen Delegate - 1285
St Germain & District - 1110
Sud-Ouest Delegate - 1108
Swiss Delegate - 1024

Mr S V Martin

Secretary

Branches not represented:

Athens, French Riviera, Norwegian, Paris, The Hague.

In attendance:

40 members, RAFALOs and visitors

- 1 At the request of the Chairman, Mr Robert Hunt, Vice-Chairman, read the official dedication of the Royal Air Forces Association. The Chairman reminded the Conference that we should also remember those of the nations of our members here today who had died in the service of their countries. Silent tribute was also paid to those members and friends who had passed away since the last Area Conference on 17 October 2009 in Bruggen, Germany. We especially remembered Mrs Lois Guidot of the St Germain & District Branch, Mr Paddy Leniston of the Paris Branch, Mr Gordon Newitt of the Amsterdam Branch and Mr Les Cook a good friend of the European Area and long-standing Central Councillor.

ITEM 1 - CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

- 2 The Chairman welcomed everybody to the European Area's Annual Conference and in particular Air Marshal Philip Sturley, National President. The Chairman also welcomed Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville, the Area's President, and Lady Coville, as well as Air Marshal Peter Walker, Air Vice-Marshal Neville Howlett and Doctor Bryan Pattison, the Area's wonderful Life Vice-Presidents. Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell, Chairman of Central Council and the Executive Board who would be updating us on important RAFA issues at agenda item 7, was made most welcome. Ms Ruth Martindale, acting Secretary General and Director Resources, was also welcomed. Mr Mike McCourt, our dedicated, loyal and hard working Area Welfare Officer was welcomed. The Chairman welcomed all his remaining fellow Councillors and especially on this occasion the Area's new RAFALO Representative, Squadron Leader Dean ('Gibbo') Gibson. Finally, the 18 delegates to the Area Conference were made most welcome as were serving RAF personnel and all the wonderful visitors. Unfortunately, 5 Branches had not been able to attend as listed on page 1.
- 3 The Chairman gave the following congratulations:
 - a Mrs Lois Guidot Who sadly died in May 2010, had been awarded a National Presidential Certificate to coincide with New Year's Honours List 2010.
 - b Sud-Ouest Branch For winning the Overseas Membership Trophy with an 23.8% increase in membership during 2009.

- c The Aphrodite Branch Winners of the Amodio Trophy for Overseas Branches with the recruitment of 37 new members during 2009. The Sud-Ouest Branch recruited 24 new members during 2009.
 - d UK Support Unit, SHAPE Winners of the 2009 Ken Jago Trophy for the highest net Wings Appeal collection per capita for an Overseas RAF Unit.
 - e North Costa Blanca Branch Winners of the Shakespeare Trophy for being judged the most efficient Overseas Branch in 2009.
 - f The Jersey Branch Winners the 2009 Trefusis Forbes Trophy which was awarded to the Overseas Branch with the highest net collection per capita. (£178 per member).
 - g The Guernsey Branch Winners of the 2009 Sir Ben Ball Trophy for the 2nd highest net Wings Appeal per capita for an Overseas Branch. (£174 per member).
- 4 The Chairman reminded Conference that there were 20 items on the agenda which would provide some opportunity for discussion on several important matters. Only Delegates could vote using the green cards provided, and RAFALOs were invited to participate in discussions.

ITEM 2 - APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

- 5 The Chairman had received the following apologies of absence:
- a Colonel Knut Fossum, Secretary of the Norwegian Branch.
 - b Mr Graham Scott, Secretary of the Paris Branch.
 - c Mr Mike Townsend, Chairman of the French Riviera Branch.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS CONFERENCE

- 6 The Minutes of the previous Conference in Bruggen, Germany on 17 October 2009 had been distributed in accordance with Standing Orders and were proposed by the Aphrodite Branch delegate and seconded by the Jersey Branch delegate. The Minutes were accepted unanimously as a true record of that Conference.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 7 There were two matters arising from the Minutes of the previous Conference:
- a Item 11, paragraph 51, page 19 This concerned the Summary Paper on 'A Study of Welfare Provision in the European Area'. This paper had been distributed to Branches soliciting comment as well as asking for up to 3 most-pressing Branch welfare concerns which might be suitable as topics at a European Area Welfare Seminar. The response had been very disappointing with only 5 Branches offering any comment. The Area Council had discussed the whole matter at its meeting last evening and the subject would be further mentioned under agenda item 5.
 - b Item 16, paragraph 61, page 21 The Secretary had corresponded with Branches concerning the subject of Branch Liability Insurance. A few Branches had provided helpful comments, but this was a difficult subject which was not easy to resolve. Matters had been taken to a head by the Costa Blanca Branch putting forward 2 insurance Resolutions to National Annual Conference tomorrow. It would be interesting to hear what Central Council had to say on this issue.
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ITEM 9 – REPORT BY RAFALO REPRESENTATIVE

- 8 The Chairman explained, with the delegates permission, that as Squadron Leader Dean Gibson had to attend the important Area RAFALOs Committee meeting at 1100 hours in the Winter Gardens, his report under agenda item 9 would be brought forward. Although

Squadron Leader Gibson gave an abridged version of his report, his full report is recorded here, verbatim:

- 9 “ They say never start with an apology, but I was never one to abide by convention and I generally plough my own furrow. I feel I must, once again, apologise for my tawdry behaviour last October. Having faithfully promised Uschi and John Francis that Mrs Gibbo and I would be there to assist their every move, I ended up being detached to Kabul! I promise I will try harder this year and have already blocked off the October period in the office calendar. However, there is one large and very black cloud hanging over mine, and many other RAFALOs’ attendance – funding! Unlike in previous years, I will be funding much of this weekend from my own pocket; after a great struggle I eventually received some funding. However, many other RAFALOs received none at all, hence the reduction in the number of RAFALOs here at Conference. My deputy, WO Ian Harwood, who does an excellent job, along with the Standard Bearer, FS ‘Foz’ Foster, both from Ramstein, could not get funding, and send their apologies. Thankfully, I met up with Foz recently and I have brought the Standard with me.
- 10 In my 11 years as a RAFALO I can honestly say that funding has never been so tight. I have tried all ways to overcome the problem but keep getting the same answer ‘No!’. For me, a well paid sqn ldr, it is not too much of a problem. Over the years I have covered many things from my own pocket, as I know we all have and continue to do so, in the cause of charity. However, my main concern is for those RAFALOs who are more junior and less well paid than I am, as they cannot afford to keep dipping in to their own pockets. They give of their time freely, raise valuable funds for the Association and are excellent Ambassadors for the Service at all the RAFA functions they attend. Yes, I am aware that if they ask nicely RAFA would, I am sure, help them out. However, it is not within their nature. They want all the money they raise to go to the Association so it can provide the welfare and camaraderie the membership deserves.
- 11 To try to alleviate the problem, I sought a meeting with the Community Support Office at RAF Air Command, known as Strike Command to some of you and perhaps Bomber Command to others! Why the Community Support Office (Com Spt Office)? They are the ones responsible for all RAFALO issues; although over recent years much of their work has been devolved to RAFA CHQ. In defence of the Com Sup Office they have been through a tumultuous change

over the last couple of years – they have had to cope with the move from RAF Innsworth, the loss of the fountain of all knowledge, Marty – otherwise known as ‘Mother’ to many RAFALOs – and a large turnover and gapping of staff for various reasons. However, things are improving. The reason I cannot stay for the whole European Area Conference is for one of those improvements – the reformation of the Area RAFALOs Committee. I will let you all know later on how I get on.

- 12 Turning to events of the past few months, we have had a large turn round of RAFALOs, and keeping track of their comings and goings has not been easy. I keep in regular e-mail, and sometimes telephone, contact with all the RAFALOs, often spending a couple of hours a night e-mailing them with the excellent information the Area Director provides me with. To improve the flow of information, and to ensure Units are not being missed, I have started an audit process and will be contacting all Units on mainland Europe with a significant RAF population to check if they have a RAFALO. I am happy with the major Units but it is the smaller ones that appear to be below the radar at the moment and I want them to appear above the horizon – note the Fighter Control terminology! If a Unit does not have a RAFALO, I will write to the Unit asking them to look at establishing a RAFALO and explain that RAFA is willing and able to help today’s service men and women. If personnel see their Unit being helped by the Association, it brings it into focus and in this way, I firmly believe, we can recruit new members. Despite the issues of funding, the RAFALOs have been keeping themselves busy raising funds and liaising with their local Branches. The next couple of paragraphs contain some examples of the work the RAFALOs, supported by their comrades, have been doing.
- 13 CC-Air Ramstein, CRC Glons and JFC HQ Brunssum have lent their support to the Luxembourg Branch over the last couple of weeks when they attended the unveiling of a memorial to Fg Off Douglas Cameron, the first RAF airman to be killed over Luxembourg soil on 10 May 1940. Fg Off Cameron was flying a Fairey Battle, already obsolete at the start of the War and no match for the much faster and agile ME109. The memorial was attended by his Wing Man, Flt Lt Pat Barron, aged 95! With the increasing pressure of work, it is getting harder to find the time and personnel to support these noble events. However, RAFALOs do all they can to persuade fellow servicemen to attend.

- 14 On the lighter side, Sgt Freddy Fredriksen, RAFALO to the Apollo Branch, has raised a great deal of money for the Association by running the Paphos half marathon in April in his RAFA donated running vest. It was his first ever half marathon and found it a gruelling but rewarding experience. The final balance raised is yet to be confirmed but well done. With the assistance of Sgt Mark Thrussel, RAFALO Aphrodite Branch, Limassol, Sgt Fredriksen arranged for the Branch to visit RAF Akrotiri for the Red Arrows display, where a one-off show was given to all members of both the Aphrodite and Apollo Branches. After the display the Branch visited the Episkopi Sgts' Mess for lunch (a liquid one no doubt!).
- 15 In summary, this has been a difficult year and one I fear may be repeated in the next. In these testing economic times we all have to tighten our belts, but I firmly believe we need to have a little flexibility for the RAFALOs to continue their excellent work. If we cannot speculate we cannot hope to accumulate.” The Chairman thanked Squadron Leader Gibson for his report.
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ITEM 5 - REPORT BY CHAIRMAN

- 16 The Chairman gave his report as follows:
- 17 “ Mr President, Members of Council, fellow Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. Following a very successful Conference in Bruggen last October, I come before you here today to deliver the Chairman's report. As is my custom, before I completed my report, I e-mailed all 21 active Branches within our Area on 7 April 2010 inviting them to submit anything specific that they would like me to include in my report. Six Branches did reply whilst the remainder did not acknowledge my e-mail. The fact that 15 Branches did not have any specific point for inclusion in my report may be interpreted, I trust, that they are satisfied with the way the European Area is being run by your elected Council. North Costa Blanca pointed out the fact that their Branch took the initiative in proposing a Welfare Seminar with funding, to be held at the Autumn Conference, as a first step in implementing the Action Plan contained in the Paper on Welfare within the European Area. Our Overseas Director e-mailed all the Branches within the Area asking them if they had any important Welfare concerns as potential Welfare Seminar topics. Only 5 Branches replied. Is one therefore to deduce that the other Branches do not have any welfare concerns within the Area?

The Amsterdam Branch asked me to include in my report a mention of the European Partnership of Air Force Associations or the EPAA as it is commonly known. The members to date are the Air Force Associations of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. It will be very interesting to have your thoughts about RAFA linking up with this organisation. If any of you have any questions on the subject, I'm sure that our Vice-President, Malcolm Mason, will be more than happy to answer them during the weekend.

18 Insurance – European Area Branches. The Republic of Ireland Branch at our Autumn Meeting last October spoke at length about the fact that unlike RAFA Branches in the UK, which are all included in a collective insurance cover by CHQ, we within the European Area are excluded and each branch has to take out its own insurance cover at a cost which most Branches can ill afford. It transpires the RBL operates on the same lines as RAFA, that is Overseas Branches are not covered by a collective insurance cover. I have received a letter from the Royal Naval Association which refers to Standard Insurance for each of the overseas Branches for an annual premium of £8. I have asked our Overseas Director to look into this. At this year's Annual Conference, the Costa Blanca Branch has tabled two Resolutions on the subject, namely nos 7 and 8. These resolutions state respectively and I quote: 'This Conference instructs Central Council to obtain an insurance policy that will provide European Area Branches with the same non-contributory benefits of cover that is provided for UK Branches', and 'This Conference resolves that European Area Branches should be reimbursed the cost of obtaining the same level of insurance cover as UK Branches through Central Headquarters funding'. If resolution 7 is carried, then resolution 8 falls. We await the outcome of these resolutions which if carried will I'm sure be most welcome by Branches within our Area.

19 KSF Investment. During Conference in Bruggen questions were asked regarding the position of RAFA's investment in the Icelandic Banks. The information available to me at that time was that RAFA had recovered 20 pence in the pound to a total of £870,000. The original sum deposited was £4,350,000. A further 10% dividend has now been received which gives a 30% total refund to the tune of £1.3 million. Following a report by the Administration, another dividend of at least 7 pence in the pound was to be paid to the Association by December 2009 and this would be followed by

another payment in March/April 2010. Despite letters to the treasury and the fact that other investors had received their money back, the Association had been told that they were wholesale investors and as such would not receive their money back via the Government. The Honorary Treasurer was of the opinion that the Association needed to work a little independently of the SOS Group to try to secure the return of the rest of the investment. It seems that it is very unlikely that RAFA will receive back over the 50% mark. The very latest information I have is that to date £1.52 million has been recovered.

- 20 Benalmedena Branch. The Benalmedena Branch was invited to attend a meeting, the subject being 'Spain Working in Partnership to Support the Elderly British Resident Community currently living in Spain'. The RAF Association has been working closely for some time with the 8 British Consulates, Age Concern Espana, the RAFBF, the RBL Welfare Field Worker and Spanish Social Services. The RBL commissioned a report to look into difficulties of the ex-Service community living in Spain with a view to establishing a Poppy Home in the South District. The estimated total population of expatriates who are long-term residents in North/South Spain and eligible for assistance from the RBL is 154,770. The meeting was Chaired by Dame Denise Holt, HM Ambassador for Spain, whilst Chris Bryant, Under Secretary of State Consular Minister was the guest of honour.
- 21 RAF Association Remembrance Garden. The RAF Association Remembrance Garden was formally opened by HRH The Princess Royal on 28 September 2009 and provides the ideal setting for family, friends and colleagues to celebrate the lives of either individuals or groups within the RAF family. A Remembrance Cross commemorating the life of a loved one can be placed in the Garden for as little as £25 for one year. For a suggested donation of £250, the name of a Branch, Squadron or other group can be commemorated in stainless steel lettering set into a 200mm x 200mm Remembrance Stone. Both Remembrance Crosses and Stones will be placed around the central feature and along the path leading to the Remembrance Garden. All donations will go towards our work, supporting the whole RAF Family, whenever there is a need. I am not aware if any of the Branches within our Area has participated in this scheme. In my opinion, it will be a fitting tribute to our Area if each Branch contributes the suggested donation of £250 to have its name commemorated in stainless steel. So let's all make the effort.

22 Membership.

Current Full Membership (as at 19 May 2010)	3004
Membership as at 31 Dec 09	3287
Number of lapsed Ordinary Members from 2009	144
Number of lapsed Associate Members from 2009	135
Number of Members deceased in 2010 so far	49
Number of new Ordinary Members in 2010 so far	34
Number of new Full Associates in 2010 so far	46

Recruiting new members is going reasonably well, but there is still a fairly large number of lapsed members (279). The Area Director has sent membership lists to those Branches with significant numbers of lapsed members. I am certain that we will all try our very best to recover these lapsed members. So my appeal to you is to try really hard to recover all these people if we can.

23 Fundraising. The European Area (including RAF Units) in 2008 raised a total of £99,397 for the Wings Appeal whilst the total for 2009 was £100,910. This represents a small increase of 1.5%, which is a great achievement considering these difficult financial times.

24 Honorary Welfare Officers Course – Level 1. Two of our Branches, namely Sud-Ouest and Malta participated at the Training Course for HWOs – Level 1. Both agreed that it was a very useful course and it is recommended for those who have not attended the course, that HWOs avail themselves of this opportunity to increase their knowledge on the service that they provide to our clients. No matter how experienced a Welfare Officer may be, this course includes very helpful advice on the following topics: RAF Association Welfare Services and Facilities; UK Pensions and Benefits that may apply to clients overseas and to those wishing to return to the UK; War Pensions; The RAF Benevolent Fund; RAF Association Welfare and Guidance on completing application forms and the need for accurate reporting. Whilst the other service charities have their own training methods, the RAF Association is the only service charity that has a fully recognised and accredited welfare training course for its HWOs with the Open College Network. Continuing on the subject of welfare, the RBL, RAFBF, Army Ben Fund and all

of the other service charities had noticed an increase in application for grant giving since the onset of the recession. It had been in principle that all of the service charities set the same eligibility criteria to ensure fairness of distribution of funds. Speaking from personal experience, both John Peel, the Malta delegate here today at Conference who also happens to be the HWO for the RBL (Malta) Branch and myself, Secretary of the RBL (Malta) Branch can categorically state that this is far from what is actually taking place when welfare cases are forwarded for consideration and approval by the various service charity organisations. The RBL have recently announced a review of their policies on Immediate Needs Grants (ING). This is in response to the current economic climate and increasing demands on their charity funds. This will impact both RAFA and the RAFBF who may see an increased demand on their own funds if clients fail to secure a grant from the RBL. At a Caseworker Steering Group meeting in December, both the RAFBF and the Army Ben Fund raised their concerns regarding this move by the RBL. A copy of the letter by the Director of Welfare of the RBL setting out the new policies, procedure and eligibility criteria has been sent out to Area staff for distribution across the Association. It is high time that a common policy be put in place by the service charities. The European Area Welfare Paper concluded with an Action Plan and I can now tell you on behalf of the Area Council that:

- HWOs should be encouraged to attend Area Conferences.
- Where practicable, Welfare seminars will be held at Area Autumn Conferences.
- Funds of £3000 have been authorised in the 2010 Overseas Budget to support a Welfare Seminar in Gibraltar this October. The Area Director will be contacting Branches to decide how best to use these funds with respect to some HWOs attending the Gibraltar Conference. The Seminar is to be co-hosted by Mike McCourt and the Secretary, and will cover the following topics: Disbursements of Funds from the RAFBF; Repatriation Procedures from European Area to the UK; Question and Answer sessions particularly covering the dozen or so queries raised so far by our branches.
- Funds of £600 have been authorised in the 2010 Overseas Budget to support HWOs' extraordinary travel expenses that cannot be met by Branches.

- The action Plan also encourages liaison between HWOs and their counterparts in other welfare organisations. The plan also encourages recruitment and retention of HWOs and their Assistants. The Council will play its part in this and Branches should do likewise.

- Guidelines on how an individual should prepare for living abroad have been forwarded to Branches by the Secretary. The Area Welfare Officer will provide copies to those interested in moving abroad.

- Geographical areas of responsibility for the three Branches living in Spain have been defined and agreed.

- Welfare documentation has been reviewed by Mike McCourt and information on this matter was sent out recently by e-mail to Branches by the Secretary.

25 New Subscription Rates. One asks if it is prudent in this current economic climate to announce an increase in the annual subscriptions? In my opinion, this further increase will result in an even bigger lapsed membership. This subject was debated at length at the Central Council meeting held on 20 February 2010 to which I had the privilege of attending following an invitation from the Chairman of Central Council, Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell. Thank you Peter for your invitation to a most interesting and useful meeting. Doctor Pattison was of the opinion that subscriptions should be frozen at current levels for a period of two years. Another suggestion put forward was that subscriptions be frozen but that the Branch rebate be reduced. It seems that the fact that the majority of members are Old Age Pensioners who can ill afford further increases, made no difference to the arguments as subscriptions are to go up with effect from 1 January 2011. It was argued that the increases are aligned to the Retail Price Index average of 3.367% for the two years from December 2007 to December 2009 in compliance with Resolution 7 of 2006. I received from the Service Personnel & Veterans Agency, which is an Executive Agency of the MOD, a newsletter headed '2010 Armed Forces Pension Scheme' and is issued from Sutherland House, Crawley which stated and I quote:

‘ As the Retail Price Index was minus 1.4% as at September 2009, the Government has confirmed there will not be an increase in April 2010. However, there will be no decrease to reflect the negative Retail Price Index. All AFPS Pensions will therefore remain at their 2009 level.’

Is this not food for thought? No consideration was given to those of us living within the EU and within the Euro Zone and who receive their pensions in sterling. One has to reflect the hammering sterling has suffered vis-a-vis the Euro. In conclusion, we can only await the outcome of what effect this increase will have on retaining membership.

- 26 New Wings Appeal Merchandise. The Wings Administrator, Gina Percy, advised that a number of new items have been introduced to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain amongst which one finds a special-edition Wings Appeal pin badge, sticker, posters, leaflets and a ‘Name Me, Claim Me’ teddy bear dressed as a Battle of Britain pilot. As a member of the European Area living outside the UK, I enquired what had happened to the idea of producing concertina style car sun screen for Overseas Branches. The Director Membership & Areas had replied in an e-mail that when this was looked at last year, the prices were believed to be rather prohibitive to buy on mass. A cheaper option was being sought and then the idea would be to see (at the price given) if there was a suitable uptake of people wishing to purchase a sun screen. If we can get above a minimum order then there should not be problem. An updated price would be obtained. The Wings Appeal Administrator thanked us for all we do to support the whole RAF family whenever they are in need. So my appeal to her is – Please do not forget those of us who reside outside the UK and we can assure her of our continued support to Wings Appeal
- 27 European Area Presidential Certificates. Item 14 on today’s agenda reads: ‘Presentation of European Area Presidential Certificates’. Our Overseas Director informed the Area Council that no presentation will take place due to the fact that no nominations have been received. This situation is rather disappointing. Surely with so many Branches winning so many trophies was there not at least one individual from one of those Branches who deserved a nomination? The Area Council encourages Branches to put forward nominations and I trust that this appeal will not fall on deaf ears and at our Autumn Conference in Gibraltar I sincerely hope that this presentation will take place. The award to an individual will spur him or her to work even harder for the Association.

- 28 Revised Area Regulations. You will remember that Doctor Pattison together with our Overseas Director were tasked to revise our European Area Regulations to take account of the Area Conference decision to allow two elected members to sit on Area Council. Doctor Pattison has very kindly carried out the revision and the opportunity was taken to include other amendments to regularise our Area Regulations with those of the UK Areas. These revisions were approved by Central Council at their meeting on 17 April 2010. Doctor Pattison, on behalf of the European Area, our thanks and gratitude for a job well done.
- 29 Active Members. On 16 February 2010, Bob Hounslow, Director Membership & Areas, sent out an e-mail to our Overseas Director for communication to all Branch Chairmen asking for details of Active members within each particular Area. What Bob Hounslow is trying to achieve by identifying active members is not readily understood. Every member who pays his subscription is in one form or another an active member although it is fair to say that some members are more active than others and tend to get more involved. Is the Membership Director after individuals by name and does he need to know who attends at AGM and/or organised functions? Does naming names achieve anything? The emphasis in my opinion should be on how to persuade lapsed members to return to the fold or how to persuade ex-RAF individuals who are not members to become members. Again, in some European Branches the geographical location of where members reside may preclude them from taking an active role in organised functions. In Malta we do not have this problem for if we drive in a straight line for just over 21 miles we will end up in the sea!
- 30 City of London Salute to the Battle of Britain and RAF World War 2 Veterans. This event will take place on 7 September 2010 at St Paul's Cathedral. There will be a Service of Remembrance commencing at 11 am during which the recently retired Queen's Colour of the RAF that was superseded after the RAF's 90th Birthday in 2008 will be laid up. This will be followed by a parade through the City of London with a flypast (weather permitting) consisting of a Lancaster, a Dakota and a Spitfire. The salute will be taken by the Duke of Kent. Many organisations have been invited to this event and the RAF Association was allocated around 1000 tickets available on a first come first served basis. It was envisaged that demand for tickets would be very high. An outstanding response

was received and I can confirm that all places for the Service of Remembrance and receptions have been taken. Tickets and all relevant information will be sent out towards the end of July. There is currently a reserve list of 90. Our President and our Overseas Director will attend on behalf of the Area. The Secretary General sent me a personal invitation which, due to other commitments overseas, I was unable to accept.

31 Twining Links with other Branches. Earlier this year as a result of a meeting at the ANZAC march in Sydney, the Sydney Metropolitan Branch has twinned with the Western Super Mare Branch in the UK. Other Overseas Branches may wish to consider this matter and if interested should contact our Overseas Director.

32 Autumn Conferences. Mr President, I have left to the end of my report the concerns expressed by the Costa Blanca Branch as to the viability of continuing to hold Autumn Conferences. This concern by the Costa Blanca Branch was raised soon after the holding of the Bruggen Autumn Conference and following a good presentation given to the Costa Blanca Branch Committee by their delegate to the Conference which presentation lasted a FULL FIVE MINIUTES. The main concern of this Branch was that the work achieved at these gatherings appears to be precious little for the quite considerable cost involved. Costa Blanca took the initiative and sent out e-mails to all the Branches within our Area. I kept in constant touch with our Overseas Director monitoring all replies. Eleven Branches responded (excluding Costa Blanca) with the following outcome:

FOR the Autumn Conference to continue – 7 Branches – Amsterdam, Jersey, Luxembourg, North Costa Blanca, Malta, Republic of Ireland and Swiss.

SOME CHANGE to Autumn Conference – 2 Branches – Benalmadena and Sud-Ouest.

AGAINST Autumn Conference continuing – 2 Branches – Gibraltar and Paris.

Mr President, we have a very long agenda, so I will not take up any more of Conference time. Please remember that the Area is administered by the Area Council elected by the Branch delegates at Annual Conference on your behalf. The Area belongs to the Branches and its members. Once again, many thanks to you all.”

ITEM 6 – REPORT BY SERVICE VICE-PRESIDENT

- 33 Air Marshal Christopher Harper, the Area's new Service Vice-President (SVP), felt privileged to have been invited to become the European Area's SVP, especially as he was a long-term fan of the RAF Association and all that it did, having been a Life member now for over 15 years. He was extremely impressed by the range, breadth and depth of RAFA activities occurring outside the UK. Air Marshal Harper was currently Deputy Commander, Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum.
- 34 Under the normal scheme of events the SVP would talk about today's RAF, its capabilities and the challenges. With a new government in the UK and an impending SDSR, it was never more important for us to be properly informed. It was fantastic, therefore, that the CAS, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton had agreed to address National Annual Conference tomorrow. The SVP, therefore, would talk about what JFC Brunssum did, the conflict in Afghanistan and air power.
- 35 The SVP explained the roles and responsibilities of JFC Brunssum and its relationship with HQ NATO. Whilst HQ NATO provided strategy and policy, JFC Brunssum provided specifically the out-of-theatre focus for Afghanistan - its top priority. In-theatre Afghanistan operations were headed by a 4-star US General. As there was a 6-12 month rotation of top people there was a need therefore for the stability of an HQ – JFC Brunssum.
- 36 Giving a personal view, the SVP commented that the papers only reported our casualties and not those of the Afghan forces or the Taliban, and it should be remembered that Afghanistan had near neighbours of Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan. If we could get it right for the Afghan people with adequate stability between Kabul and its outlying regions then we would be there or thereabouts. There must be a creditable government - the situation could not be solved by just NATO and us, there had to be Afghan support. Progress was being made.
- 37 At the tactical level – counter insurgency – the value of air power was often understated and unappreciated. Air power was not much reported in the newspapers, activities on the ground were mainly commented on. However, whilst ground operations were very

important as part of getting to meet the local people, this could only be done well if there was air support particularly with respect to intelligence. The SVP explained the deployment of Tornado GR4s, Raptor, Sentinel, Predator, helicopters and Air Transport. With respect to Close Air Support (CAS), only 16% of CAS responses resulted in kinetic activity which showed the extraordinary professionalism of our aircrew. Training of the Afghan Army Air Corp (ANAAC) was proceeding well with 3000 people this year to about 4500 next year with an eventual aim of 8000. The ANAAC currently had 35 MI-17, 9 MI-35, 1 AN-26, 5 AN-32 and 2 C-27. Airfields were being handed over to the Afghan Authorities and much training was continuing on Air Traffic Control, Airspace Control, Airways Structures and all the appropriate Rules and Regulations.

- 38 Finally, Air Marshal Harper gave the latest Air Overview. Currently there were about 250 RAF sorties per day (approximately 1800 per week). These included 65 intelligence missions (20 manned, 45 unmanned), 43 Air Transport flights, 40 Air-to-Air Refuelling missions (230 'receivers' per day taking on 3.1 million lbs of fuel per day), 100 CAS sorties with an average response time of 12 minutes. Kandahar, commanded by a UK RAF 1-star, had about 4500 movements per week using a single runway and was a garrison for 22000 people. Compare this movement rate with Manchester Airport – about 3300 flights a week and Gatwick with some 4800 but from 2 runways. The bottom line was that Air was very important to the Afghan mission as was the RAF and we had the people in the right place to ensure that influence was not lost. It was important that we got this message over to the public. You here today were our ambassadors in Europe to spread the word.

ITEM 7 – REPORT ON RAF ASSOCIATION MATTERS BY CHAIRMAN, CENTRAL COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

- 39 Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell, the Chairman of Central Council and the Executive Board was delighted to be here again with the European Area at their Annual Conference. He had a slight problem of what to say as he did not want to repeat what he would be saying at Annual Conference tomorrow. He therefore wished to share a personal perspective, looking back over the last 5 years, looking at the challenges ahead and what we needed to do to tackle these challenges.

- 40 An overview of 2009 showed that it had been a successful year. Legacy income had been the best ever at £2.8M. Although there had been concern about the Wings Appeal in these difficult financial times, the 2009 Appeal had been just under £2M and was 6% up on 2008. There had been a £1M surplus in 2009 and the Association now had free reserves of £9M. The pension deficit had risen from £1.3M to £2.6M but this was mainly as a result of assumption changes and there was nothing to worry about. Membership numbers continued to be an issue but the rate of decline was slowing and recruiting from the serving RAF was going extremely well with now some 30% of the serving RAF being members – the greatest proportion ever achieved. The Association had a new corporate look and our profile had been raised. These combined to not only support our veterans but also to make the Association more relevant to the serving RAF. Some were saying that we were concentrating too much on the serving RAF. Whilst much effort was being made in this direction it was not at the expense of our veterans. New serving members would expect us to help them and if we did not then they might leave to the long-term detriment of the Association. Overall, 2009 had been a very successful year.
- 41 Before giving his personal perspective as mentioned above, Air Vice-Marshal Liddell wished to make comment on a few points raised by the European Area Chairman in his earlier report. Mr Gauci had been right about the debate on membership fees. The use of the RPI figures was explained and why, 4 years ago at Annual Conference, the decision was taken to use the RPI. We could not use purely charitable money to support subsidised membership fees. But for those in real need, each case could be looked at on its own merits and some subsidy could be offered if appropriate. If membership fees were not increased, the Association would fall behind again and it was always difficult to catch up without a step change in fees. With respect to KSF, it was a problem but the Association had received 35% back from the £4.35M that had been on deposit. Air Vice-Marshal Liddell was very optimistic that the Association would get all the money back. Administrators currently expected to give us back at least 78% but as time went by there was a high probability of even more. Lessons had been learnt. The acting Secretary General, Ruth Martindale, informed Conference that the Minister for Veterans (who was local to Leicester) had been invited to CHQ for meaningful discussions.

- 42 Looking back over the past 5 years, Air Vice-Marshal Liddell recorded that:
- Finances now stable.
 - Excellent Legacy Income (over £2M per year).
 - Slowing decline in membership numbers.
 - Doubled numbers of serving members – good RAF entrant recruitment.
 - Raised profile – NMA Garden of Remembrance, Brew for the Few, Carol Concerts etc.
 - Fresher, brighter Image.
 - Greatly increased national and local media coverage.
 - Provided additional Welfare Services – Trained Caseworkers, HWO training, Internet Cafes, Contact Houses, Storybook Wings.
 - Transfer of Sussexdown to Care South.
 - Creation of the Families Federation.
 - Improved Reputation.
- 43 The challenges ahead were seen as follows:
- To reduce reliance on Legacy Income.
 - Wings Appeal income reducing in real terms.
 - Income: cost ratio in Fundraising must be improved.
 - Membership numbers continued to fall.
 - Branches were closing – was rate likely to accelerate?
 - Implications:
 - Loss of membership income.
 - Reduced Wings collections.
 - Impact on HWO network and activities.
 - Impact on Legacy Income?
 - How to retain serving RAF members – in particular new recruits.
 - Need to raise more funds more effectively.
 - Sustainability of Welfare provision as membership numbers reduce.
 - HWO Network.
 - Occupancy of the Homes.
 - Were our Welfare services relevant for today's serving RAF?

- How would we:
 - Build a cohesive, dynamic, happy CHQ team?
 - Improve relations between Areas and the Centre?
 - Recruit and retain quality staff?
 - Improve communication across the Association?
- What is the Role of the Areas?
- Were there too many activities?

44 All the monies raised and all the work undertaken by everyone needed to be as focused as possible with no waste. The Association needed a strategy for what it really wanted to achieve and how best to do it. An overall review was required and would comprise 6 steps as follows:

- Step 1 – Corporate Objectives.
 - What were key things RAFA wanted or needed to achieve?
- Step 2 – Corporate Strategy.
 - What was the best way to achieve our Corporate Objectives?
- Step 3 – Organisation.
 - What was the best way to structure ourselves for corporate success?
 - Responsibilities, Authorities and Accountabilities?
- Step 4 – People and Skills.
 - What experience and skills would be needed?
 - Was there a skills' gap?
 - Recruitment, development and training.
- Step 5 – Development and Agreement of Divisional Strategies/Plans and Implementation.
 - When and how would the strategy be implemented?
 - Coordination of plans and timescales.
 - Agreement of calendaried budgets (capital and current) and milestones/targets.
 - Critical Success Factors.
 - Risk Register, Risk ownership and Risk management.
- Step 6 – Post Implementation.
 - Rigorous review and monitoring of progress.
 - Corrective action (s) initiated.
 - Feedback.

Business planning was an iterative process.

- 45 The overall review would not be a quick process and would take some time to complete. Area Chairmen would be involved specifically to look at Structures. The Review was not ready to be started yet but soon would be. And, although Air Vice-Marshal Liddell was handing over Chairmanship of Central Council and the Executive Board to Air Vice-Marshal Nigel Bairsto, the latter had asked the former to continue with the Review work on his behalf. Air Vice-Marshal Liddell had agreed to do this.
- 46 Air Vice-Marshal Liddell concluded by thanking the European Area for all it did for RAFA and for all the comradeship and friendship he had enjoyed with the European Area. The Area Chairman thanked Air Vice-Marshal Liddell very much for his report.

ITEM 8 – REPORT CENTRAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

- 47 Mr Brian Darke, the Area's Central Council Representative, began by informing Conference of 2 PR coups recently enjoyed within the Area. The first involved his own Branch, Luxembourg, where at a memorial service on 10 May 2010 members of the Queen's Colour Squadron had been present – Mr Drake asked that Air Marshal Sturley and Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville pass his many thanks on to the Chief of the Air Staff. The second coup involved Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees visiting Malta and attending a wreath laying ceremony at the Air Forces Memorial in Floriana organised on his behalf by the local RAFA Branch. Mr Darke continued his report as follows:
- 48 “ I have been asked about the new Membership Subscriptions and can only repeat what everyone has already been told. At the Annual Conference in 2006, the delegates voted in favour of resolution number 7, which approved that membership subscriptions would only increase in line with inflation. Central Council agreed that the membership should be informed of any revised subscriptions by letter. I will add to this that we are all only too aware that inflation has increased and therefore the subscription rates for 2011-2012 have had to be reviewed and that the formula, as used to calculate the 2009/10 subscriptions using the Retail Price Index, has again been applied. There were one or two suggestions that regardless of inflation there should be no subscription increase for 2011/12. To do such would require a new resolution from delegates at Annual Conference and the rescinding of Resolution 7 which they approved

in 2006. I would also respectfully suggest that at the same time delegates would possibly need to put in place some new method by which subscriptions could be calculated in order to keep up with the increases in inflation. I was also asked why the RPI and changes in inflation affect subscriptions. All membership organisations of a certain size need to be administered either by voluntary efforts at Branch level or by employing staff at National level. The latter requires things like offices, wages, pens and paper etc and therefore the Director Resources needs to know if these can be funded. That regular and known sum comes from subscriptions, and these need to be adjusted with the rise in inflation (costs) on items such as wages, stationery and telephones etc. But it is not only the Director Resources that has to keep finances balanced, it is also incumbent on the Trustees on Central Council to do the same or face the wrath of the Charities' Commission. All that said – if any member has a better method of keeping, or perhaps not keeping, subscriptions in line with inflation while still covering expenditure, I would ask they pass that knowledge on to the Director Resources or the Honorary Treasurer as soon as possible. Central Council unanimously voted for the increase in subscriptions with effect from 1 January 2011.

- 49 Being unable to attend the last Central Council meeting on 17 April, I requested the item, I had wished to put forward, be tabled instead under Any Other Business. The Minutes of that meeting were published last Tuesday and I see no mention of the item, although I have been assured it was tabled. Therefore, I would like to give you the gist of what I wrote. We are all very aware of the outstanding work and efforts made by our RAFALOs. They are at the forefront of recruiting new members from within the Service. They are the focal point for many fundraising activities in aid of the Wings Appeal. They have their finger on the pulse in keeping us informed as to what is happening and needed amongst our serving men and women and their families. They are excellent participants in the exchange of ideas, thoughts and planning between the Association and the serving RAF. Indeed, they are the visual and active link between the present and past members of the RAF family.
- 50 That said, I wish to express my concern at the growing number of instances of RAFALOs not able to attend Conferences and other aspects of their secondary duty and role as 'funding had been withdrawn'. I am taking the opportunity to mention this and to ask all present to check within their spheres for any such instances. Also to ask, is there a change of policy to the funding of RAFALOs

by the Service which itself, one would hope, realises the enormous return on this investment over many years? We all fully understand that operational commitments and other duties will always have precedence on both time and money. However, it should also not be forgotten, be it the short and long-term, that the work, advice and information provided by the RAFALOs in this duty has helped provide finance and facilities to the RAF family that otherwise would have had to be found elsewhere or worse, not been available or provided. Indeed, the combined contact and effort between the RAFALOs and the RAF Association has produced huge profits, not just in increasing financial aid but also in the efforts required to fill gaps in the welfare and aid systems; also, by providing assistance and facilities on the Station or in the home, and by finding ways to help the families who must cope with separation and lastly by promoting a feeling of goodwill within the RAF family. I am sure you agree that all this is the role of the RAF Association and its RAFALOs as part of the RAF family”.

- 51 The Chairman thanked Mr Darke for his report. The President commented that the RAFALO situation with respect to funding was a complicated issue as often it was not just RAF budgets that were affected. A number of budgets, particularly overseas, now came under Army control. The RAF Association should not find itself in the position of paying for RAFALOs travel and subsistence – being a RAFALO was an RAF duty. The situation required a reaffirmation from CAS that being a RAFALO was a formal duty. The President informed Conference that he had e-mailed AMP and asked him to take the matter up with CAS. The 4 Air Marshals present had agreed that this topic would be addressed at the highest level.

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ITEM 9 - REPORT BY RAFALO REPRESENTATIVE

- 52 The Report by the RAFALO Representative had been given earlier between agenda items 4 and 5.

ITEM 10 - BRANCH REPORTS

- 53 Nine Branch reports were tabled at the Conference – Amsterdam, Benalmadena, Guernsey, Jersey, Lyon, Malta GC, North Costa Blanca, Sud-Ouest and Swiss. Copies of these reports would be attached to these Minutes at Enclosure 1.

ITEM 11 – ELECTIONS OF AREA COUNCILLORS

- 54 The delegates had to appoint 2 Elected Members to the European Area Council (EAC) for a period of one year. There were only 2 candidates for these positions, namely:

Mr Peter Clarke (Jersey). Proposed by Amsterdam. Seconded by Malta GC.

Mr Brian Flowers (North Costa Blanca). Proposed by North Costa Blanca. Seconded by Swiss.

- 55 Decision. The delegates agreed unanimously to elect, for one year, Mr Clarke and Mr Flowers to fill the 2 positions on the EAC for Elected Members.

ACTION: Mr Clarke, Mr Flowers, Secretary.

ITEM 12 – AUTUMN CONFERENCE 2010 – UPDATE BY GIBRALTAR BRANCH

- 56 Mrs Diane Brice of the Gibraltar Branch, gave an update on the details and programme surrounding the 2010 Autumn Conference to be held over the weekend of 29-31 October 2010 in the Elliott Hotel, Gibraltar. Full details had been given to all Branches and delegates at this Conference and a copy of the Conference weekend programme had been attached to these Minutes at Enclosure 2. The only significant change was that the actual Saturday morning Conference would now take place in the main Briefing Room at RAF Gibraltar. The Benalmadena Branch had kindly offered to help the Gibraltar Branch as they required but particularly with the transport arrangements of getting people from Malaga airport to Gibraltar. A transport plan would be formulated once everyone's travel arrangements were known. To this end, reservation forms were to be forwarded to Mrs Diane Brice by 31 May 2010.

ACTION: All.

ITEM 13 – VENUE OPTIONS FOR THE 2011 AUTUMN CONFERENCE

- 57 The Chairman reported that two bids had been received to host the 2011 Autumn Conference. These were from the Aphrodite/Apollo Branches and the Swiss Branch. The Chairman invited these Branches to present their bids.
- 58 Aphrodite/Apollo Branches' Bid Mr David Falla, Chairman of the Apollo Branch and Conference delegate, presented the joint bid. He highlighted the programme details which followed the usual Conference weekend format. These details had been forwarded to Branches as well as to delegates here present – a copy of which had been attached to these Minutes at Enclosure 3. He suggested that if coming for a week's visit, it would be best to come Wednesday to Wednesday. The package cost, which included 2 nights accommodation was 270 Euros per person payable in cash in Euros on arrival at the RAFA desk in the hotel. People arriving at Paphos airport would be met, but those arriving at Larnaca airport (some 90 minutes from Paphos) would have to make their own onward travel arrangements by bus.
- 59 Swiss Branch Bid. Mr Alain Dardelain, Swiss delegate, presented his Branch's bid. He highlighted the programme details which followed the usual Conference weekend format. These details had been forwarded to Branches as well as to delegates here present. The total cost per person (based on 2 sharing) for the package and 2 nights accommodation would be approximately 450 Euros and that for a single person approximately 521 Euros.
- 60 Decision Following a ballot, the delegates decided that the Aphrodite/Apollo Branches should host the 2011 Autumn Conference over the weekend of 14-16 October 2011. The ballot results were as follows: 12 for Aphrodite/Apollo; 5 for Swiss; 1 Abstention.

ACTION: Aphrodite and Apollo Branches. Secretary.

ITEM 14 - PRESENTATION OF EUROPEAN AREA PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATES

- 61 There had been no submissions for European Area Presidential Certificates.

ITEM 15 – PRESENTATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP TROPHY

- 62 The Individual Membership Trophy for 2009 was awarded to Mr Derrick Knapp of the Aphrodite Branch for recruiting 37 full members in 2009.
- 63 Decision and Action The Secretary was to forward a personalised plaque to Mr Derrick Knapp winner of the Individual Membership Trophy for 2009.

ITEM 16 – PRESENTATION OF THE WALLY MARRIOTT FRIENDSHIP TROPHY

- 64 The Wally Marriott Friendship Trophy for 2009, awarded to the best all-rounder, Associate member, as judged by the European Area Council, was awarded to Mrs Evelyn Knapp of the Aphrodite Branch.
- 65 Decision and Action. The Secretary was to forward a personalised plaque to Mrs Evelyn Knapp winner of the Wally Marriott Friendship Trophy for 2009.

ITEM 17 – PRESENTATION OF EUROPEAN AREA 2009 WINGS APPEAL CERTIFICATES

- 66 In 2009, the European Area (18 Branches and 4 RAF Units) raised £100,910 for the Wings Appeal – this was a fantastic achievement and everyone involved was to be congratulated. Wings Appeal Certificates were presented to the following 7 Branches:

	<u>Raised</u>	<u>Type of Certificate</u>
Guernsey Branch	£23,517	£20,000
Jersey Branch	£20,000	£20,000
Republic of Ireland Branch	£11,789	£10,000
Aphrodite Branch	£ 8,652	£ 8,000
Apollo Branch	£ 7,955	£ 7,000
Gibraltar Branch	£ 5,250	£ 5,000
Costa Blanca Branch	£ 5,000	£ 5,000

Other fundraising achievements or donations in 2009 included both the Amsterdam and Swiss Branches treating the residents of Sussexdown respectively to Dutch Day and Swiss Day. In addition, the Swiss Branch dispensed £1,140 on their Holiday scheme as well as making donations of £800 to Sussexdown for 2 wheelchairs and £500 to the Storybook Wings project. The Chairman congratulated everyone.

- 67 As well as trying hard to increase our membership in 2010, the Chairman also encouraged everyone to try really hard, in these continuing difficult financial times, to do their best with fundraising.

ITEM 18 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 68 Mr Bill Dixon, Benalmadena delegate, raised the subject of relationships with British Consulates. He explained, that in essence, as the Branch did not have a formal Partnership with the Consulate they were not party to first-hand information and were not automatically invited to all appropriate meetings and events. Although the Branch had managed to obtain a link with the Consulate which allowed a certain amount of information flow and invitations, to enjoy all benefits, like the RBL, the RAFA Branch wished to gain a Partnership with the Consulate which would also afford some financial assistance for welfare. Over the past year, the Branch had had some 45 welfare case and had disbursed between the RAF Ben Fund and RAFA some 156,000 Euros. There was a procedure for acquiring a Partnership via application to the appropriate authorities in the UK. The Benalmadena Branch would complete the necessary application form and forward it to the Secretary for staffing.

ACTION: Benalmadena Branch. Secretary.

ITEM 19 - DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT CONFERENCE

- 69 Decision. The Gibraltar Branch, with assistance from the Secretary as required, was to make arrangements for the next Conference to be held in the main Briefing Room at RAF Gibraltar (and at the Elliott Hotel), on Saturday 29 October 2010 at 1000 hours. It was expected that the Area Council would meet the evening before on Friday 28 October 2010. However, this would be confirmed, or otherwise, by the Secretary, nearer the time.

ITEM 20 - PRESIDENT'S SUMMING UP

- 70 Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville, President of the European Area, recorded that it had been an excellent Conference and Air Marshal Sturley was right to describe the Area as the 'Jewel in the Crown'. However, our 'jewels' were widely dispersed and it was therefore very important that we saw each other twice year at our Conferences to share friendship and experiences and to ensure we spoke with one voice.
- 71 Sir Christopher was delighted and thanked Air Marshal Philip Sturley, National President, for joining us today. The Association had been through difficult times but Philip's strong leadership had ensured that the Association had come through it all in good shape.
- 72 The Area President was so pleased that despite the Travel & Subsistence situation, Air Marshal Christopher Harper and many RAFALOs had been able to attend today. Air Marshal Harper's presence was a vital reminder of the allegiance between the Service and RAFA. He was thanked for finding time in his busy schedule to be with us and was thanked for his fascinating brief on the important role of JFC Brunssum.
- 73 Sir Christopher continued that he did not intend to summarise the many subject discussed during the Conference but instead made the following few points:
- It was important that members let us know what they thought. The Area Council was no more than the members' representative. It was also important that Branches replied to queries from the Area Council – it was the only way to come to an informed consensus as an Area.
 - There had been no Area Presidential Certificates today. There were many excellent people in the European Area worthy of consideration – citation did not have to be lengthy, 100 words would be perfectly adequate and should be forwarded to Sir Christopher through the Area Director by e-mail or letter.
 - With respect to recruiting, the Area might be the 'Jewel in the Crown' but a few more oysters needed to be cracked open to find some new, young pearls to enhance the membership. Lapsed members needed to be contacted and recruiting new members

was vital to replace those departed and to provide the energy needed for the future. One of the largest Branches of the Association, Bournemouth with some 500 members, had had to close as no-one had stepped forward to replace outgoing Committee members. Branches were encouraged to renew their efforts with membership retention and recruitment.

- On the subject of anno domini taking its toll, the departure was noted with sadness of Air Vice-Marshal Peter Liddell, outgoing Chairman of Central Council and Executive Board. He had led with sensitivity and firmness when required and most importantly had acted in a spirit of friendship as characterised by our Association. Air Vice-Marshal Liddell was thanked for all he had done and the success he had achieved. He would be staying on as a Vice President of the Association.

- Air Marshal Harper had described the vital job our outstanding young men and women were doing in Afghanistan. That conflict was taking its toll not only on servicemen but also the families. The Association was responding admirably to the new challenges but this need was bound to grow. There was no sign of operations abating and hence the calls on the Association would continue to grow and it was therefore important that we sustained and renewed our efforts.

74 Finally, Sir Christopher thanked Mr Robert Gauci and the Area Council for their leadership of the European Area. The delegates, the foot soldiers of the Area, were also thanked. He hoped that all would agree that it had been a good Conference and that everyone would leave feeling refreshed, revitalised and better able to tackle the challenges ahead.

16 June 2010

S V MARTIN
Secretary

Enclosures:

- 1 Branch Reports
- 2 Details of the 2010 Autumn Conference to be hosted by the Gibraltar Branch.
- 3 Details of the 2011 Autumn Conference to be hosted jointly by the Aphrodite and Apollo Branches.

Distribution:

All Area Council Members; All Delegates; Branch Secretaries; Chairman Central Council and Executive Board; Air Vice-Marshal P Liddell; Secretary General; DMA, Overseas Area Welfare Officer, RAFA Conference Officer.

Approved:
Chairman:

Date:

Countersigned:
Secretary:

Date: