



GEN SHEET – NOVEMBER 2016

The President, Chairman and Committee thank you for your generosity and support through the year and wish you and yours a very happy Christmas!



It is now time for most members to renew their annual membership. Please see back page for details.

Grand Raffle Winners

A big thank you to all who sold and bought tickets! The raffle is a major fundraiser for the Branch and your support is very much appreciated.

1st prize, Julie Ferral; 2nd prize, David W Green; 3rd prize, Gerry Hanna.

Christmas Lunch 2016

Venue: Old Wesley Rugby Club in Donnybrook, Dublin
Date/Time: Saturday, 10 December 2016 starting at 12:30 p.m.
Cost per person: Euro 25 (advance payment is required along with your booking)
Reservations: Please write to the Branch Secretary
Mrs Pam Roche, 45 Cardy Rock Crescent, Balbriggan, Co Dublin
Tel No: 087 1817075.

**** Remember to enclose your cheque, made payable to the RAF Association ****

MENU

Starter;

Lemon and chilli organic salmon, shaved fennel and rocket salad, herb crème fraiche

Main Course;

- Chicken with creamy mushroom and tarragon sauce, **or**
- Slow-braised navarin of lamb, **or**
- Vegetarian option

Dessert;

Apple and blackberry crumble tart with brown bread ice cream

Welcome to the new British Ambassador to Ireland

We are delighted to welcome His Excellency Robin Barnet CMG and his partner Agnieszka to Ireland. Before coming to Dublin, he held the post of British Ambassador to Poland and his career has previously concentrated on Central and Eastern Europe and multi-lateral diplomacy. We hope their stay will be fruitful and enjoyable.

Battle of Britain Service 2016

The Branch held its annual Battle of Britain Service in St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin on Sunday, 18 September. The Reverend Canon Charles Mullen, Canon of the Cathedral conducted the service. The sermon was given by The Venerable G. L. Hastings BTh MA, the Prebendary of Kilmactalway. The service was attended by British Ambassador Robin Barnet and Colonel Max Walker, Defence Attaché. The first lesson was read by Colonel Walker and the second lesson was read by our much loved and respected Branch member Flt Lt Ted Jones (RAF ret'd), a World War 2 Catalina pilot. Our standard was carried by the Branch Standard Bearer, Frank Brien and escorted by our Vice-Chairman John Connolly and our Chairman Pete McWilliams. The Ambassador and our Vice-President Alan Harrisson BEM laid wreaths to remember and honour our fallen comrades. After the service, we adjourned to the Radisson Blu Hotel, Golden Lane, for some delicious scones and tea and coffee. We were especially delighted that the H.E. Robin Barnet CMG joined us. It was an excellent opportunity for our Branch to welcome him to Ireland.

Branch Annual Dinner

We all had a very enjoyable evening at our Annual Dinner on 20 September 2016. We were honoured and privileged to have Her Majesty's Ambassador Robin Barnet CMG, Brigadier General Paul Fry, GOC, Irish Air Corps and Mrs Fry and Colonel Max Walker, Defence Attaché and Mrs Walker as our distinguished guests. It was a great pleasure to have our friends from the ONE, the Royal British Legion, the RNA and other veterans' organisations with us. We were especially delighted to have some World War 2 veterans among our guests. Brigadier-General Fry was our guest speaker and he gave a superb speech which was greatly enjoyed by all. The dinner was an ideal way to welcome the Ambassador and for him to get to know some of our members. In the photo, the Ambassador is third from right at the back.



Branch Members' Visit to Belgium

Between 9 and 14 September, some members of our Branch visited Belgium to attend the Interallied Military Organisation Sphinx (IMOS) annual dinner. IMOS is an organisation of mostly Belgian, French and Dutch veterans but there are also members from other countries. For our esteemed member, Flt Lt Ted Jones (RAF ret'd) it was his second visit. For our Vice Chairman, John Connolly, it was his first visit. Ted was awarded the IMOS Distinguished Service Medal for his wartime service and John was awarded the IMOS Peace Cross for his active service in the Malay Peninsula. The hospitality and friendship of our Belgian and Dutch comrades was phenomenal and that is an understatement. Of course we had to sample as many as possible of the superb Belgian beers. It was especially pleasing to meet up with our Branch member and good friend Rob Vaneker and his wife Nelly.

Rob has represented our Branch at many ceremonies in Belgium and Holland and we are most grateful to him for his good work. It is a wonderful experience to have such good friends and comrades in other countries and we look forward to some of them visiting our Branch sometime in the future.

During our trip we visited Ypres, took tours to Tyne Cot Cemetery, Bayerische Wald (German trenches) and the Island of Ireland Peace Park at Messines near Ypres. The visit to the Island of Ireland Peace Park was very emotional for us and a reminder of all the brave Irishmen from our entire island who fought and died in WW1. While in Ypres, we were honoured and privileged to attend the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. Our Vice-Chairman, John Connolly, laid a wreath on behalf of our Branch. We also visited the museum in Ypres and the cathedral.

Branch Members Attend ONE Mass at Baldonnel

Branch members attended the ONE Mass at Baldonnel for deceased Air Corps Members. Our Branch Vice-President Alan Harrisson laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch at the Air Corps Memorial. Many thanks to the Roger Casement Branch members and to the GOC and all the Air Corps personnel for the warm welcome we received and for the splendid fare in the NCO's Mess afterwards.

Branch Members Visit Crash Site of Hampden Bomber

On the night of 17/18 April 1941, a total of 118 Royal Air Force aircraft were detailed to bomb Berlin. While returning from the raid on 18 April 1941, a Hampden (AD730) of 50 Squadron from RAF Lindholme in Yorkshire crashed on the Black Hill near Blessington in County Wicklow, killing all crew members. The crew of Hampden AD730 were: P/O Jack Kenneth Hill, pilot; Sgt Lamb, navigator/bomb aimer; Sgt Fred Erdwin, lower rear gunner/wireless operator and Sgt Stanley Wright, upper rear gunner/wireless operator.

On the night of the raid, thick low cloud was reported over the North Sea on the outward and return flights. On the return flight, two aircraft reported problems in obtaining a radio fix and three aircraft reported excessive fuel consumption. The low cloud may have caused the radio problems and strong headwinds may have caused the excessive consumption of fuel. At 02:17 hours, AD730 got a fix and bearing which placed it five miles SW of RAF



Watton in Norfolk. However, despite this fix, the aircraft continued to fly westwards over the Welsh mountains and the Irish Sea. The Irish authorities reported it flying over the East coast at 04.05 hours between Dalkey and Bray in County Wicklow. The plane was heading West and inland towards County Kildare. At 04.24 hours, the Gardai at Hollywood, County Wicklow, reported an aircraft in the area to Air Defence. Subsequent investigations suggest that the plane crashed at 04:34 hours into Black Hill. In 1991, on the 50th anniversary of the crash, a group of local people got together and erected a memorial stone on the site. Our Branch is most grateful to those good people for their kindness and efforts and to Mr Philip Gallagher who advised us on the best route to the site. Photo shows Branch members Seamus Byrne (left) and Pete McWilliams (right) at the memorial stone at the crash site which is 474 metres (1600 feet) above sea level overlooking Blessington Lake.

Report on European Area Conference – Malta

Our Chairman, Pete McWilliams, attended as Branch delegate and elected member of the European Area Council. The following is a very brief summary of the issues and outcomes:

Communication

HQ in the UK was asked to improve general communications with branches. It was resolved that HQ would respond on receipt of specific details of problem areas.

Membership

It was agreed that Branch members continue to pay their annual subscriptions to the Branch and NOT to HQ.

Branches are allowed to continue to deduct the branch portion from the subscription charge and send the balance to HQ

From 1 January 2017, new members will renew on the anniversary of their joining. Existing members will continue to renew on 1 January as normal.

Any member can be a member of any number of branches but he/she must nominate a HOME branch.

As of 31 December 2015, EA has 2362 members.

Over 50% of serving RAF personnel are members of RAFA.

Transition Programme

This is mostly about Rules and Regulations (R&Rs). The difficulty is reconciling UK-oriented R&Rs with those of overseas branches. Work is continuing on this (see items below). One of the outcomes is that Area Council delegates will now serve three years instead of two years.

Quality of Certificates

The quality of current certificates such as Area Presidential Certificates was heavily criticised and it was agreed that in future better quality paper and print and frames would be used to reflect the efforts of the recipients and to enhance the award.

Branch Insurance

Many European Area branches still have concerns about the UK insurance cover and are looking to get cover that is valid in their host country. Our Branch is not affected because we have taken out our own cover.

RAF Families Federation (RAFFF)

RAFA now works closely with RAFFF by carrying out advice and support for serving members.

Review and Update of Rules and Regulations (R&Rs)

This is about ensuring that R&Rs of the Association have specific regard for the differences between that which applies to the UK as opposed to Overseas Area branches. Work is continuing on this.

Brexit

This arose because of the possible implications on non-UK resident veterans' pensions and, in some jurisdictions, healthcare provision. Because the Association must remain absolutely neutral on "in" or "out", it was felt that the best course of action would be to continue to make strong representations to HM Government on Brexit issues that adversely affect non-UK residents. There is not yet enough detail to be more specific on anything.

Branch Website

We have recently put in a lot of work on re-designing and improving our website. We can update the content ourselves so that you have much more up-to-date information. This is especially the case with the Events page. It is now possible to download a membership form and to look at Gen Sheets online including previous Gen Sheets. Lastly but not least, when you click on the Facebook tab, it takes you directly to our Branch's Facebook page. Overall, the website now has a much simpler and fresher look. Apart from the appearance and content of the website, there are some important administration advantages and cost reductions; postage being just one example. Please look at the website and use it because it is a fantastic way of telling you what is going on. See: **www.rafaroi.org**

Flight Sergeant Cecil Ender Higgins - Headstone Dedication Ceremony Ipswich

On 23 August 1939, Flt Sgt Cecil E Higgins, a test pilot with the RAF based at the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment at Martlesham Heath was killed along with his crew when a Bristol Bombay L5805 he was flying crashed. The other members of the crew were Leading Aircraftman Reginald Machin and Aircraftman 1st Class Douglas Treadwell. Flt Sgt Higgins lay in an unmarked grave until this year when his great-nephew, Bruce Andrew, discovered Cecil's resting place and organised the erection of a headstone with the RAF crest engraved on it.

Our Chairman, Pete McWilliams and Mrs Lorraine McWilliams along with our Vice Chairman John Connolly and Mr Andrew travelled to Ipswich to honour Cecil. The Reverend (Sqdn Ldr) Adrian Dyer, Station Chaplain RAF Honington conducted the service. Three uniformed personnel from RAF Honington along with Standard Bearers from the Colchester and Woodbridge Branches and the RBL Bamford attended the ceremony. Standards were paraded and dipped as the Last Post was played and a two-minute silence was observed. We laid a wreath at Cecil's grave and on the grave of AC1 Treadwell who is buried nearby. It was a fitting tribute and especially poignant since the ceremony was on the 77th anniversary of Cecil's death.

European Area Conferences 2017 (Spain) and 2018 (Belgium)

The 2017 Conference will be in Spain hosted by the Costa del Sol Branch from Friday, 6 October 2017 to Sunday, 8 October 2017. The venue is the 4-Star Hotel Tamisa Golf, Mijas Costa, Málaga, Spain. The hotel is located inland not far from all the well-known holiday resorts of the Costa del Sol, adjacent to Mijas golf course.

The 2018 Conference will be held in Brussels on 3 November and 4 November 2018 at the Hotel Bedford in the rue du Midi which is not far from the Grand Place.

World War 2 RAF Veteran and Branch Member Awarded Legion d'Honneur



Albert Sutton one of our senior and highly-respected members received the Legion d'Honneur from the French Ambassador to Ireland at a special service in Glasnevin, Dublin. Albert went ashore in Normandy just after D-Day. His task was to proceed to Belgium and help to set up an airfield from which aircraft armed with anti-tank missiles could operate. Albert celebrated his 95th birthday recently. Happy birthday Albert! Certainly a birthday to remember!

Congratulations Albert, we are all very proud of you!

Remembrance Services 2016

This year, RAFA was hard-pressed to be represented at all the Remembrance Services around the Republic of Ireland. What a happy and welcome difference from even a few years ago, when such services were few and far between! As usual, the culmination was at St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

British Ambassador Robin Barnet, Defence Attaché Col Max Walker and representatives of all three services were present. As usual, Standard Bearer Frank Brien did us proud – even though Frank had already been at a remembrance service the same morning in St Mary's Church Blessington. On Sunday, 20 November, our Branch was represented at a Remembrance Service at the Woodenbridge World War 1 Memorial Park. It was at Woodenbridge on 20 September 1914 that John Redmond, the Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party encouraged members of the Irish Volunteers to join the British forces.



If you participated in any Remembrance events, please let us know via email info@rafaroi.org we would love to hear from you with the details.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Thank you for being a member of our Branch and for your support and generosity. Your membership is vital to the survival of the Branch and for us to continue our welfare work. We value your membership and we hope that you will renew your membership for 2017.

HQ in the UK has recently changed the rules whereby annual subscriptions for 2017 must be paid before 31 January 2017 to ensure continuation of your current membership.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM ALONG WITH YOUR CHEQUE as soon as possible to the address at the bottom of the form.

Please ensure you include a contact telephone number and email address where possible, because it allows your Committee to better communicate with you.

PERSONAL DETAILS (to be completed in black ink by all applicants)	
Title: Mr / Mrs / Miss / Other	
Forenames:	Surname:
Address:	
Tel No:	Email:
Type of Membership: ORDINARY or ASSOCIATE	
CONFIRMATION	
I wish to renew my membership of the <u>REPUBLIC OF IRELAND BRANCH</u> OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION. I enclose a cheque for Euro 30 to cover one year's membership with <i>Air Mail</i> magazine.	
I confirm that all the information I have given above is correct. I agree to abide by the Rules of the Association.	
I give permission, as required under the current applicable Data Protection Legislation, for the Royal Air Forces Association to process my personal data for RAFA business.	
Signed:	Date:



PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED FORM, WITH A CHEQUE FOR EURO 30 made payable to: *“RAF Association, Republic of Ireland Branch”*. Please do not send cash.
Send to: THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND BRANCH,
c/o 40 RIVENDELL GROVE, GREYSTONES, CO. WICKLOW A63 WT10, IRELAND