

## Appendix 1

### **Request from Oldpark/Cavehill RBL re USAF Commemorative Event on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019.**

#### Background

On June 1st 1944 only five days before D Day B-17 Flying Fortress no 42-97862 had flown from the US via Reykjavak and was preparing to land at Nutts Corner and was due to fly onward to Anglesey in Wales in preparation for deployment in the Allied war effort.

The plane never managed to reach its destination due to fog shrouding Cavehill, obscuring its course with such fatal and tragic consequences for the aircrew on board, their comrades and their families.

The memorial at Belfast Zoo was unveiled by the then Lord Mayor, Councillor Wallace Browne (now Lord Browne) on Thursday June 1st 2006. The service included a colour guard from US Military, a service conducted by Very Reverend Dr. Houston McKelvey, an address by US Consul General and by a assistant air attaché at the US Embassy in London, Taps and a flypast by a WW2 aircraft.

Since the unveiling and dedication our RBL branch have held regular services and wreath laying at the memorial on June 1st and the Friday preceding Remembrance Sunday of each year.

I recently met with Dawn and Alfie Montgomery, Alfie was the person who found the wedding ring that belonged to the pilot. The ring was eventually returned to the deceased pilot's family and this story was subsequently made famous by Richard Attenborough in the film 'Closing the Ring.'

From the outset I think it would be fair to say that the authorisation to access the memorial before the zoo opens on June 1st as detailed to Dawn and subsequently to myself is unrealistic from a number of points not least of all the fact this is five days before the 75th anniversary of the D Day landings. I would respectfully make the following points:

- 1) We have made a request for a civic dignitary to participate. I understand the complexity this may throw up taking into account the local government elections in may of this year. I have spoken to Alderman Tommy Sandford, the High Sheriff about the possibility of his participation as you are aware his post runs through until December 2019.
- 2) There are a number of relatives of the aircrew who have indicated there intention to travel to Belfast to participate in any commemoration
- 3) There will be a US Consular presence on the day
- 4) I have spoken informally with a colleague at the MOD Press Office at Thiepval who has indicated that there would be an interest in attending, possibly a representative(s) of the RAF
- 5) There is media interest in covering the event
- 6) There will be a number of representatives from other local RBL branches and from RBL NIDC
- 7) The logistics of transporting a significant number of people to and from the memorial

With reference to Dawn and Alfie I cannot overstate the commitment of both of them and their friends and colleagues in respect of keeping the memory of these 10 USAF crewmen. Alfie is

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currently in the final stages of completing a book which relates to his childhood experiences up to and beyond the finding of the ring which they are hoping to launch at Belfast Castle in the lead up to the commemorations. I should point out that they have provided a permanent display of artifacts and background information about the tragedy at Belfast Castle.

With the fact that the Lisnabreeny Memorial Garden (the site of the original USA cemetery, where the aircrew were buried prior to final repatriation to the US in the late 1940s is now in the ownership of BCC there is certainly an opportunity to highlight this unique event for the City.

Requests for support and further discussion:

Access to and from the grounds of the zoo

Transport

Erection of a 'temporary' flagstaff to facilitate the flying of a US Flag at the memorial

Possible reception either at the zoo or at Belfast Castle

Provision of US military vehicle from WW2 era

Provision of personnel in period uniform

Provision of bugler

Provision of flypast by 'Sally B'

Provision of appropriate security arrangements and discussions with appropriate agencies

At this stage I can confirm the cost of the flypast would be in the region of £15,000. There is a small window of opportunity for this as the aircraft will be required for other D Day events and flight plans need to be submitted as soon as possible.

I hope I have covered everything in this email but am happy to meet to discuss further.

Regards and best wishes

John MacVicar

Secretary

Oldpark/Cavehill RBL