



## November, a time to remember.

*Alain L. Dardelin*

On the morning of Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>, a good 70 people, wearing a red poppy, gathered at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Vevey to remember the fallen of all conflicts from the First World War onwards. The service, led by The Reverend Prebendary Stephen Stuckes, paused when the bell of St. Martin's tolled the "eleventh hour of the



Above: From left to right: Alain Dardelin (RAFA), Zachary Boaron (RBL) and Peter Fairgrieve our bugler.

Left: The 70 brave souls who braved the inhospitable weather to mark the occasion., true to the motto, "At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. Lest we forget."





eleventh day of the eleventh month". After the two minutes silence, 22 wreaths were laid by representatives of the UK and Commonwealth Embassies as well as a representative of the Swiss military, local associations/organisations, including RAFA, RBL, RNA, BRA and schools.

The Union Flag and the RBL Standard were carried by Alain Dardelin (standing in for John Hannon), and Zachary Boaron respectively.

After the ceremony, the British and Canadian Embassies cordially invited those attendings to light refreshments at the nearby Hotel Astra.

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## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Loss of Halifax W1018 over Montcony.

*Alan Baker*

Heavy early morning rain falling across the Jura Mountains – Hurricane Brian's "sting in the tail" – turned into autumnal sunshine and a few showers passing by the tiny French village of our annual visit, Montcony.

Nine Branch Members & guests, along with five from the Lyon Branch, met up with a growing number of French veterans, their families and friends outside the village school in preparation to welcome Ms Véronique Beuve, the Sous-Préfète of the region and other dignitaries. She arrived exactly on time, at 11.00, ready to join everyone to commemorate the event at the school itself, beside the crew graves and at the crash site memorial. RAFA wreaths were laid at the church cemetery by Chairman Bryan Pattison and UK-based Branch Member, Alastair Bowie. Bryan and Lyon Branch Chairman, Sean Brady, also laid wreaths at the memorial itself. A group representing Linton-on-Ouse, along with local French citizens who maintain close links with that area of Yorkshire, added a new dimension to the day by laying small wooden Poppy crosses on each grave.

Gallantly led by Alain Dardelin (Union Flag) and Pierre Biard of Lyon Branch (RAFA Standard), the substantial Louhans Town Band then led the crowd of spectators

The first of the four stops in our Montcony pilgrimage. They are always the same: school, churchyard, memorial, village war memorial. Alain Dardelin parades the Union Flag in honour of the Halifax's crew.



RAFA's wreath, one of the 22, was laid by Nick Meyer.





back to the French WW I memorial and leisurely onwards to the village hall for the traditional *vin d'honneur*.

The years pass quickly but the number of familiar faces we meet in Montcony never diminishes. Friendships are kindled or refreshed during the long lunch that annually follows the formalities. On behalf of both Branches, Bryan kindly thanks our hosts each year for their most friendly and generous welcome. Current European politics play no part in maintaining this local *Entente Cordiale*. Join us there in 2018. Set your GPS to 46.7 degrees North and 5.29 degrees East.



The church of St Bernard above the village. The crew are buried in the cemetery.



Above: The Standard Bearers formed up after the first wreath has been laid. Next stop the church of St Bernard—up the hill. That hill gets steeper and steeper, but we all still manage.

Left: The next to last stop on our Montcony pilgrimage—the site of the actual aircraft crash that night.



Above: The *stèle* commemorating the crash site of the aircraft. The Union Flag and the Lyon Standard are paraded left and right of the memorial. Our French comrades take their accustomed places as they do every year.

Right: The Chairmen of the Swiss and Lyon Branches, Bryan Pattison and Sean Brady at the salute following the wreath-laying at the crash site memorial.





## Parc Mon Repos – 12 November 2017

Alain L. Dardelin

On Sunday 12 November, the Republic and Canton of Geneva remembered the citizens and soldiers from Geneva who died in the service of their country. After a short briefing given by this year's army parade coordinator Major Fabrice Pervanger, the parade formed up casually in



front of the Grand Hotel Kempinski before taking up positions as instructed earlier. It was 10.50 when the parade led by a contingent of *Gendarmes* moved off to the beat of the drums of the *Cadets de Genève* and the music of the *Corps de Musique de Landwehr* towards the memorial in the Parc.

Behind the lead group were some twenty military and civilian associations in different coloured uniforms and carrying respective banners and flags flapping in the wind. The Swiss delegation unfortunately reduced to a minimum consisted of two members of RAFA, one RBL member and one ex-service man with the Canadian Army. Standard bearer Alain Dardelin carried the Union flag in place of John Hannon temporarily medically unfit, whilst Régis Pizot was taking snaps as we marched.

After a slight pause before entering the Parc's grounds, the drum beat became more marked, the "Aux Armes, Genève" march resounded. The parade filed in front the

saluting base and flag bearers took position on the platform in front of the memorial where wreaths have been placed. The President of the ceremony, Capt Guillaume Genoud announced the order of ceremony and then invited the audience to sing the first verse of the anthem of the Republic and Canton of Geneva "Cé qu'è l'ainô". Guest speaker Lt Gen Philippe Rebord, Chief of the Swiss Army, addressed the authorities and audience.

Following the keynote speech and a musical interlude, a soldier took the Oath of Allegiance on behalf of the Swiss Forces. The ceremony drawing to a close, flags were dipped and one minute silence observed followed by the audience singing the first verse of the Swiss national anthem. After this, the ceremony was declared closed and the guard of honour marched off, followed by all participants, to the nearby field canteen where welcome mulled wine and sandwiches were served.

Left: The proceedings were (loudly) opened and closed by a blank round from this field gun, which perhaps served to offset the miserable weather on the day.

Below: Alain Dardelin parading the Union Flag between the representatives of the *Légion étrangère* and the *Alpini* to the right of the monument, suitably attired against the elements.



## Joint BRA/RAFA/RBL Zurich Lunch. (28 October 2017)

Alan Baker

This year's Joint Lunch migrated to the charming Glockenhof Hotel in central Zurich. Over 40 Members of one or more Association tucked into a hearty meal whilst renewing friendships and meeting new faces attending from many parts of Switzerland and beyond.

Joanna Koch, Jonathan Pitt and the organising team had again arranged "something for everyone", extending from model aircraft, provided by our



John Gysin with models (l-r) of a Lancaster, Shackleton, Typhoon, Hampden and three Hurricanes.

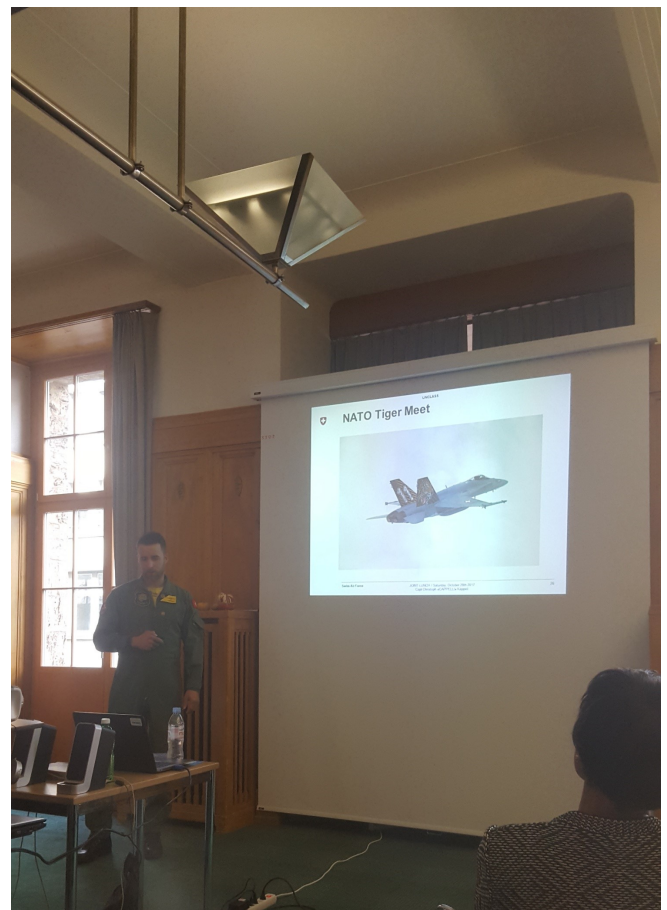
very own John Gysin, and ship displays to a pre-lunch presentation made on behalf of *Supporting Wounded Veterans – Rehabilitation to Employment* and focussing on "Skiing with Heroes in Switzerland".

RAFA Committee Member and representative for Eastern Switzerland, Jonathan Pitt, himself an excellent Master of Ceremonies, introduced us to Captain Christoph "Cappelli" Kaeppli of the Swiss Air Force, as guest speaker. Having set himself at a young age the target to become a fast jet pilot, Christoph had made full use of Microsoft flight simulator models to achieve an understanding of flying and the rules of the air. His determination was more than adequate for him to be selected from amongst over 9,000 applicants to train as a military pilot. His dream reached its zenith when he was selected as one of only seven trainees on his course to fly the FA-18 *Hornet* fighter/interceptor.



Currently based in Meiringen, Christoph also finds time from his flying duties to train other pilots attending Payerne's sophisticated FA-18 flight simulator.

Wide-ranging questions were answered factually - avoiding technical terminology - and in impeccable English. When asked what he might do after the fast jet age ceiling will be reached, Christoph perceived staying in the Swiss Air Force and not



migrating to civil aviation. (*A-380s are less keen to break the sound barrier!*). The audience wished him every success in his future career.



### Toni Kupfer—In Memoriam

Toni Kupfer died aged 80 on 12 October 2017 after a short illness.

The ceremony for Toni took place on the afternoon of 17 November 2017 at the Catholic church in Bex. The church was packed. There was a fine speech from Mr. Robert Kipfer, one of Toni's friends and a former member of the Chablais club committee.

Toni became one of the founder members of the GVMC (*Groupeement de Vol à Moteur du Chablais*/Chablais powered flight group) in October 1973. He became the local manager in 1976 with responsibility for approximately 100 pilots, 70 of whom belonged to the GVMC. He did his utmost to arrange some nine air shows getting hold of the aircraft that appeared. These aircraft changed over the years, numbering a *Spitfire*, a *Harrier* VTOL aircraft and also included prestigious aerobatic teams such as the Red Arrows and the *Patrouille de France*. He also managed to attract WW2 aces such as Douglas Bader and Adolf Galland.

Toni enjoyed a particular moment of happiness on 2 September 2007 in front of several tens of thousands of spectators when he showed the geese that had accompanied Christian Moullec, who flew an ultra-light, the way to their cage with a large broom. This air show, which was probably the last of the great ones, drew to its close and everything had gone off smoothly. The look of happiness of Toni's face was truly rare.

The ceremony at the cemetery was also well attended. The weather was magnificent. The flypast in Toni's honour over the cemetery by two aircraft from the Bex GVMC elicited lots of emotion among the crowd at the cemetery.



### Royal Air Forces Association Swiss Branch

#### List of events 2018

3 March	11.00	Annual General Meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotel Geneva
25 March		74 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of the Plateau de Glières
18 April	14.30	RAF100 church service Holy Trinity Church, Geneva
21 April	10.45	61 Sqn Lancaster Commemoration, La Chapelle Thècle + Lunch
25 April		ANZAC Day, CWGC Cemetery, Vevey
8 May (TBC)		VE Day, French Consulate General, Geneva
11 May	10.00	European Area Conference, Yarnfield Park Training & Conference Centre, Yarnfield, Stone, Staffs
11-12 May		RAFA Annual Conference, Yarnfield Park Training & Conference Centre, Yarnfield, UK
13 May		RAF 100 Service, National Memorial Arboretum
2 June		RAFA -RBL Joint Summer Lunch, Yvoire
18 June		Plateau Glières
15 July	11.00	Le Bouveret Commemoration
19/20 Aug (TBC)		Plateau des Daines Commemoration
16 Sept	10.40	Battle of Britain 78 <sup>th</sup> Commemoration, CWGC Cemetery, Vevey
21 Oct	10.30	78 Sqn. Halifax Commemoration, Montcony + Lunch
11 Nov	10.40	Armistice Day, CWGC Cemetery, Vevey

NB: TBC means "to be confirmed"