

Florennes, 7th May 2015

Dear Mayor,
Dear Colleagues,
Dear Guests,

- 1) First of all, on behalf of Viroinval and in my personal name, I'd like to thank Florennes for this **welcoming reception**. Let me thank you warmly, dear Pierre – Peter this evening, - your Aldermen and your fellow citizens for your kind welcome and for the organisation of this official reception. We are grateful for the very constructive partnership we have for this event.
- 2) Secondly, I want to particularly **thank and wish a warm welcome to all our guests**, coming from the United Kingdom and New Zealand, for these special days of commemoration.

It's a real honour for us, representatives of Florennes and Viroinval, to welcome you these days.

We are really honoured by your presence and touched by the fact you chose to come here and participate in the commemorative ceremonies.

We are truly moved by this.

Within the framework of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, **we wanted to pay tribute to the seven aviators** who died on our ground one night in April of 1943.

We wanted to get them out of anonymity.

We invited you and had no idea what the answers of the families would be.

We wondered:

- Will they come from the United Kingdom? It may not be that far away but ... it takes time, some effort, and after all, and those events happened so long ago ... And besides, there are elections.
- Will they come from New Zealand? From the antipode? In this case, yes, it's really quite a distance. It's the other side of the world!

Finally, you'll be about 30 among us coming from both of these countries.

I hope you'll enjoy the ceremonies all of the activities we prepared for you.

I sincerely hope you'll **enjoy your stay** in our region and in Belgium as well and you will always remember it.

3) Now, about the historical facts, I won't tell you more about them this evening.

My colleague, the Mayor of Florennes made a good summary in French but I won't translate what he said, because I'd like to save something for my own speech tomorrow ...

Just One point.

The reason we are here in Florennes is double.

First of all, the military airport that is here was initially, built by the Germans during World War II.

Secondely, as you already know, the seven aviators were burried here in a military cemetery of the Commonwealth where they rest in peace.

4) This being said, let me tell you **none of this would have taken place without the outstanding research work of one man.**

Our meeting today takes place thanks to **the huge, phenomenal, spectacular work of one man.**

This man does not want me to speak about him. But I must!

This man is the former Town Clerck from Viroinval.

You know him already. His name is **Guy LAPAILLE** .

His first name is “Guy” (French).

And in English, the French “Guy” is “Guy”.

He isn't a **“Guy Fawkes”**, not at all! He **is a good guy**, indeed ...

Let me tell you one thing about him.

Before he retired, Guy, worked hard – perhaps a little too hard ...

He gave 150%.

And now he is retired, due to this project of memory, to prepare the event these last months I fully believe he has given 200%!

So, dear “Guy” (F/E), **in the name of all of us, let me THANK you very very much** for all you have done and all you will ever do!

Ladies and gentlemen, may I suggest **a big round of applause** for our honorary Town clerck, Guy Lapaille!

- 5) I'd also like to thank, all our civil servants who worked hard to prepare **a full program of ceremonies and activities, including a publication and an exhibition.**

This is what we call **“the dream team”** that worked with and around Guy.

If I may, I'd also like to propose an big applause for our "dream team".

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

I conclude

6) The aim of this reception, of this first meeting is to get to know each other.

Tomorrow will be our D-Day, if I may say...

It's my pleasure to welcome all of you, the members of the families, and also the representatives of the 75th Squadron of the Royal (NZ) Air Force.

Enjoy this evening, enjoy you stay, and thank you for everything!

Jean-Marc DELIZEE

Mayor of Viroinval