



Cumann na nIar
Oifigeach Coimisiunta

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 14
SPRING 2008

*'Continuing the fellowship established during service
in the Permanent Defence Forces'*

13th Annual General Meeting

The 13th AGM was held on Saturday 6th October 2007 in the Auditorium of the 2nd Eastern Brigade HQ in Cathal Brugha Bks. Thirty-nine members were in attendance and forty-nine sent their apologies. The meeting was followed by lunch in the Officer's Mess, which as usual was of a high standard. We would like to express our appreciation to Comdt Michael Lynch DSM, who sponsored the wines.



Attendees at 13th Annual General Meeting. 6th October 2007, Cathal Brugha Barracks.

The President invited all present to stand and observe a minutes silence in memory of our deceased colleagues. The meeting then proceeded as per the Agenda notified in the Autumn 2007 Newsletter. The President presented his Report to the meeting. He referred to the objectives set at the 12th AGM and outlined progress made. Visits were made to all the Branches throughout the country with the scheduled visit to the 2nd Eastern Brigade on 18th October outstanding. He thanked the Brigades, Air Corps and Naval Service for their assistance and cooperation in holding these meetings with members. Meetings with RACO, ONET, the General Staff and the Secretary General DOD took place and it was agreed by the parties that they would be held on an annual basis. Pensions Section, DOD, Renmore, have agreed to deduct the annual subscription from members pension subject to individuals giving their approval. He briefed the meeting on the various Public and DF Ceremonial Events which were attended. The new ARCO Sword was presented to the best Air Corps cadet in February 2007. A new ARCO Golf Trophy was presented at the Eastern Command Golfing Society Captain's Competition in September 2007.

The Hon Secretary and Hon Membership Secretary presented their respective reports. The latter stated that as of October 2007 membership was 649. The Hon Treasurer presented the audited accounts for the year ended 31 July 2007 (1/3/06 to 31/7/07) which reflected the amended audit period as approved by the 12th AGM in October 2006. The audit showed a deficit of income over expenditure of Euro 3,387.72 and net assets of

Euro 31,112.92. The deficit was mainly due to presentations, grant to the DFBF (Officers) and payment for the ARCO Sword which was presented to the Air Corps. The President thanked the Hon Auditor, Comdt Pat Casey, for his continuing work in auditing the accounts for the Association.

The President thanked the outgoing Committee and, in particular, Col Donal O'Carroll, who was not going forward for re-election. The incoming Executive Committee, duly elected, are as follows;

President	Col Michael Lucey
Vic President	Col Richard Heaslip
Hon Secretary	Lt Col Ken Kelly
Hon Treasurer	Comdt Michael O'Byrne
Hon Membership Secretary	Comdt Brian McDonnell
Eastern Branch	Col Jim Mortell
	Lt Col Joe Ahern
Southern Branch	Lt Col Sean Scanlon
	Lt Col Ken Kelly
Western Branch	Brig Gen Gerard McNamara
	Col Senan Downes
Curragh Branch	Col Richard Heaslip
Air Corps	Col Kevin Hogan
	Lt Col Michael Hipwell
Naval Service	Capt (NS) Charles O'Donnell
	Lt Cdr Peter Dunne
Co-option	Col Dorcha Lee

Note: At the EXCOM Meeting held on the 11 January 2008 the vacancy in the Curragh was filled Col Brian O'Connor.

Policing Ireland's Offshore Green Fields

The decision to request proposals from industry for three new Naval Service ships with options for two additional vessels reflects the Government's commitment to a flexible flotilla capable of meeting the State's service requirements in the maritime domain. The fact that the industry has been asked to include proposals for extended patrol vessels 140 metres in length reflects an acknowledgment of the evolving and challenging environment in which these ships and their crews will work.

This commitment to an improved Naval Service fleet reflects an increased awareness of the importance of being able to exercise maritime authority if the State is to claim and uphold sovereignty. Observers of international politics have noticed the recent moves by Russia, Canada, the UK and others to reinforce their claims over the seabed and sub-seabed resources. Indeed, Ireland has not been found wanting in this area. On 27 April 2007 in response to a partial submission made on the proposed outer limit of its continental shelf (in the area abutting the Porcupine Abyssal Plain), Ireland, became one of the first countries in the world to extend its sovereign reach beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline. The area of jurisdiction where Ireland has exclusive sovereign rights and duties is increasing and before the end of this decade may encompass up to 1,000,000 square km giving Ireland the largest ocean to land ratio of any state in the EU. In this area Ireland has rights to explore and exploit natural resources as well as an obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment.

There is much debate regarding the legal regime associated with sovereignty. What is clear is a community that claims a right to property and hence sovereignty, but is unable to assert this right in practice does not have sovereignty and its rights in this effect are more imaginary than real.

We live in extraordinary times. Never in human history have we, as a species, faced forces of change as large, as complex and as potentially catastrophic as we do at the beginning of the 21st Century. We have quintupled our population in less than one hundred years, and estimates suggest it may again double in many developing world regions in the next few decades. We have introduced technologies that are thousands of times more powerful than any our grandparents had and we are changing the ecology of our planet in ways that for the great majority were unimaginable only a decade ago. The challenges and the opportunities that we face are particularly concentrated along the world's coastlines where 40% of the planet's human population is now concentrated on only



15% of the habitable land. Climate change is already having major impacts in the seas around our coasts.

As the primary seagoing agency of the state it falls on the Naval Service to further the government's policy objectives in the national and indeed international maritime domain. With this comes the responsibility to contribute to the mitigation of the risk in terms of State exposure when trying to further national interests. Whether it is to ensure the State can respond to an international crisis in the waters where the Irish State has responsibility, or to provide an agent for government policy to act in areas where Ireland has an interest. It is vital that the current fleet replacement programme future proofs our Defense Force's capability on foot of best scientific information. This best science tells us that statistically we have the most hostile waters in the world off our coasts and that the trends point towards an even greater deterioration in the conditions to be experienced by the men and women who will man our ships into the future. That science also tells us that the current ships are not optimised for conditions experienced in some of our area of jurisdiction for much of the year.

Nobody knows fully what the world will look like in twenty years time, but what we do know is that the Naval Ships we buy today will only be two thirds through their life cycle. We also know that size matters for current and potential Naval operations. Ultimately the government decision to request proposals for 130-140 metre naval ships is an acknowledgment of the evolving and challenging maritime environment. It also reflects a desire to ensure that the State has the capability to exercise its authority, wherever and whenever national interests prevail, in a very challenging and uncertain world. This is particularly important in the three dimensional space associated with Ireland's extended submerged land mass, but also in the areas beyond where the State may wish to pursue its interests on behalf of the citizens of Ireland.

Capt(NS) C. O'Donnell
Cdr M. Mellett

Welcome to ARCO's new members:

Lt Gen Jim Sreenan	Comdt David Brown
Col Maurice Collins	Comdt William Campbell
Col John Joe Curley	Comdt Stephen Cloonan
Col Bernard Goulding	Comdt Ultan Edge
Col Mark O'Brien	Comdt Liam Gavin
Col Brian O'Connor	Comdt Michael Lynch
Col Michael O'Dwyer	Comdt Graeme Martin
Col Harry Quirke	Comdt Liam Mulligan
Lt Col Matty Briody	Lt (NS) Ian Boylan
Cdr (NS) John Jordan	Capt William Brady
Lt Col Cormac Lawlor	Capt Graham Heaslip
Lt Col Michael O'Grady	Capt John Phelan
Lt Col Michael Tallon	Capt Sean Purcell
Lt Col John Whelan	Lt (NS) Michael Radley

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-Anamacha Deceased Officers

Our condolences to the families and friends of those who passed away since our last Newsletter went to print:

Lt Col Daniel Sheahan	08 Jul 2007
Comdt Eamonn Young	03 Aug 2007
Lt Col Gerry Keyes	03 Sep 2007
Capt Tom Carroll	18 Sep 2007
Rev Fr Paddy Bresnan	28 Sep 2007
Capt Terry Lynch	06 Oct 2007
Lt Cdr Niall Corbett	12 Oct 2007
Capt Michael Greene	17 Oct 2007
Brig Gen Jim Beary	27 Oct 2007
Col Austin O'Connor	11 Nov 2007
Capt John Meehan	04 Dec 2007
Col Eoghan O'Neill	07 Dec 2007
Lt Col Pat Molloy	20 Dec 2007
Capt Matt Farrell	26 Dec 2007
Col Steve Timmons	30 Dec 2007
Lt Col Tony Whelan	09 Jan 2008
Col Pearse Quinlan	18 Jan 2008
Col Michael Gill	21 Jan 2008
Col Ivor Noone	01 Feb 2008
Comdt Larry Corr	02 Feb 2008

Bereavement Document

You will find included with the Spring 2008 Newsletter a booklet on Bereavement. This is a very useful document and should be kept with your personal papers. I would like to thank Col Dick Heaslip for the effort and long hours he put in when compiling the booklet. Also I would like to thank those who gave him advice and helped him with his research.

ARCO Website

ARCO now has its own website. The website, which is managed by Col Dorchá Lee, contains useful information such as Retirement Presentations, Death Notices (Recently Fallen) and PDF Promotions. The website address is www.iarco.info



Medical Articles



Over the last number of years Col Joe Laffan has penned the medical articles for the Newsletter. These articles have been interesting and pertinent to the readership. Now that Joe is hanging up his stethoscope we would like to express our sincere thanks to him for his contributions.

Hail and Farewell . . .

The Executive Committee and Members of ARCO wish to congratulate Maj Gen Pat Nash on his promotion to Lt Gen and his new appointment as Operations Commander of the EU Force to Chad and the CAR. We wish him every success in this prestigious and demanding appointment. We would also like to congratulate Brig Gen Dave Ashe, GOC DFTC, on his promotion to Maj Gen and his appointment as DCOS (Support), and to Brig Gen Sean McCann his replacement as GOC. We wish them both every success in their new appointments.

ARCO Visit to NS Branch



L-r: Capt (NS) C. O'Donnell, Cdr J. Jordan, Lt (NS) M. O'Gallagher, Cdre L. Brett, Col M. Lucey on the bridge of "LE Eithne".

Editor's Note

I would like to thank all those who contributed articles to the newsletter since I took over the editorship. These contributions were most welcome and have been of great interest to our members.

The Newsletter is issued in Spring and Autumn. Articles or items of interest are always welcome. If you have something to contribute please send it to the Editor at melucey@hotmail.com or by post to Col M.E Lucey (Retd) 228 Grange Rd., Rathfarnham, D16.

Retirement Activities: Overseas Elections

Retired military personnel are often selected by various agencies to work on, or observe, overseas elections. This is mainly because of their organisational and administrative skills, and their experience of overseas missions.

Working on an overseas election, as distinct from observing an election, usually involves joining a UN mission as a UN volunteer for a period of 6-12 months. The UN mission, in country, may be running the election, or where Electoral Commissions (EC) are established, assisting the EC to run the election. Prior experience of election work is not usually required to serve as a UNV on an election.

However, to work on an election, without prior experience or training in elections, it is necessary to have some background in an area of administration, logistics or IT/Communications. UNVs are recruited by the UNV Programme HQ in Bonn, the initial contact being made usually through the national official aid agency, in our case, Irish Aid. Irish Aid nominates, and facilitates, personnel to work with organisations such as the UN, the EU, and OSCE etc.

To work on an election, the first step, in the process of getting a UNV contract, is to fill out, on line, the candidate profile on the UNV website, and attach your CV. When an appropriate opportunity arises they will contact the candidate direct, and conduct a telephone interview. Also, from time to time, the UNV will send a recruiting team to Dublin to interview candidates. This is organised by Irish Aid. The work is on a volunteer basis, without salary, but allowances are generous.

Election observation is now being conducted by an increasing number of international organisations, agencies, institutions and even individual nations and political parties. Apart from the EU, the OSCE, others in the field include the AU, the OAS, the Carter Centre, the International Republican Institute, USAID, Japan, and the Australian Conservative Party etc. Certifying a country's democratic credentials is now a significant factor in receiving development aid.

To be selected as an election observer, you must have prior experience, or training, in elections. This may sound like a problem for officers whose first visit to a polling station didn't happen until they retired! However, Irish Aid organises and facilitates training in Dublin, from time to time, specifically to cater for this. Training takes three or four days.

Having completed the training,
candidates are in line for
selection as



Author observing a Polling Station in East Timor

Short Term Observers (STOs). STOs are deployed on average for periods of 10-14 days.

Irish Aid nominates candidates to the EU, OSCE, Carter Centre etc, but the formal selection is done by the host organisation. In the case of the EU, Irish Aid will advise candidates to register, also online, directly with the EU.

Candidates who have done two or more missions may be selected as Long Term Observers (LTOs). LTOs work for 5-8 weeks. They deploy to the provinces and organise hotels, restaurants, hire transport, establish contact with local Electoral Commission Offices, and set up communications, in advance of the arrival of the STOs.

About half of international election missions are conducted in languages other than English. As an STO, a basic knowledge of the mission language is usually, but not always, necessary. However, LTOs really need to have a good working knowledge of the mission language. The main languages involved are Spanish, Russian, French and Portuguese.

With Irish Aid there is no longer an upper age limit. Some host organisations may take age into account. The oldest observers I've met were 69. However, being in good health and fit to travel is essential, and, in this regard, Irish Aid require candidates to forward (fitness to travel) certificates from their GPs. Conditions in the field can be basic, but the work itself is easy and straightforward. There are a few long days, Election Day itself requires all hands on deck from when the polling stations open until the ballot boxes are sealed and stored for the night

For both STOs and LTOs it is necessary to be computer literate. The whole process of nomination, selection and processing of each candidate is done online. Candidates need also to have

access to a scanner to scan and forward key documents. Moreover, briefing documents, contract documents, joining instructions, tickets etc are forwarded on line. The need to react quickly is important, as often sanction to request nominations for electoral observation comes through at the last minute. In the field, LTOs, at least, and occasionally STOs, are required to forward regular reports online.

The first step for any interested ARCO member is to apply to Irish Aid and forward a copy of their CV. They will then be called for interview. After which, they will be put on the Roster and given a code number. Irish Aid is setting up a system at present to make the nomination process more transparent and to give possible candidates an idea of when their number might come up. At the beginning of the year a block of approximately 90 candidates will be slotted in provisionally against elections to be held in the year. While there are 400 on the Roster, many are not available, for one reason or another.

Col D. Lee

For further info look up the following websites:

www.irishaid.gov.ie

www.volunteeringoptions.ie

www.unv.org

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/electoral_calendar_2008

“Fair Deal” Nursing Home Plan Delayed

The introduction of the “Fair Deal” nursing home scheme, where older people going into care could defer payment until after their death, has been delayed.

In November 2007, a group of nine organisations working with older people, issued a joint statement expressing their concerns about the proposed “Fair Deal” legislation. They believed that apparent Government attempts to publish draft legislation and to pass it through the Oireachtas, so that the new system of charges could start in 2008 was ill advised and could result in defective law.

The Government did not, in fact, publish this legislation and on the 4th of December, An Taoiseach, announced that the legislation would not be published “for a while”, to allow for consultations with lobby groups and others.

The proposed legislation, when the public eventually gets to see it, will apparently only deal with the new system of charges. Two other elements, announced in December 2006, have yet to be satisfactorily addressed, viz. negotiations with nursing homes on bed costs and a system of quality control over those homes permitted to partake in the new scheme.

The HSE has an information leaflet on this which is not satisfactory. While it provides information on simpler cases (low income, not a family home owner and few other assets), there are many unanswered questions on more complex cases.

The new scheme proposed is complex and ARCO members are advised to research the issues relevant to them. Discussion on legal, financial and practical issues with family members, would be wise. It would also be a good idea to make any decisions taken, known to their executors who will have to grapple with postmortem demands from the State.

It is also clear that, in view of the fact that most cases will be individually decided, depending on the circumstances of each individual, ARCO will not be in a position to offer individual advice to its members.

N.B: The National Federation of Pensioners Association (ARCO is affiliated) wrote to An Taoiseach on 15th January 2008 outlining their reservations concerning the proposed legislation and seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the issues

ARCO EXCOM Meeting with General Staff and Presentation of cheque for DFBF



l-r: Maj Gen P. O’ Sullivan, DCOS(SP), Comdt B. McDonnell, Lt Gen D. Earley, COS, Col M. Lucey, Brig Gen C. Moore, ACOS(SP), Col R. Heaslip

Darfur - a Peace Keeper's Perspective

Comdt B. Markey

In July 2004 Comdt. Bernard Markey commenced a year's peacekeeping Mission in Darfur Sudan where he served as an EU observer 'embedded' with the African Union.

Darfur

Darfur is the most Westerly Province of Sudan and is approximately the size of France. It has a population of five (5) million who are divided between ethnic Arabs and Africans most of whom survive by subsistence agriculture or primitive trading. The region is geographically part of the Sahel, that area of Africa that serves as a barrier between the Saharan sands and the Tropical Jungles of Africa. The name 'Darfur' means land of the 'Fur' who are the largest indigenous tribe in the region. The Fur are however only one part of a complicated social mosaic of over forty different Arab and African Tribes many of whom retain their own languages, although Arabic is the Lingua Franca and Islam the religion.

The Conflict.

For the last four (4) years there has been a civil war in Darfur that has cost the lives of 200 000 people and displaced some 2 million others. The United Nations has been attempting to deploy a joint UN- African Union Peace Keeping Mission in Darfur. This deployment has largely been stonewalled by the Sudanese Government who are hesitant to lose control of a conflict largely of their own making. The current African Union Force deployed in Darfur has neither the military capability nor the political resolve to have any meaningful effect on the situation.

The Sudanese Government have been consistent in their support for Arab Militias that have perpetrated a regime of terror against the ethnic African Population. The traditional tool of the beleaguered Sudanese Government has been the poorly equipped and ill trained Sudanese Military and the ruthless auxiliary militias more commonly known as 'Janjaweed.' Janjaweed has long been a name synonymous with banditry in Darfur and is now the generic name applied to the Arab Militias who have terrorised the African Population through a



Author in company of African Union Military Observers negotiating in a Camp for Displaced Persons.

methodology of rape, killings, scorched earth tactics and ethnic cleansing of traditional African Areas.

Pitted against the Military Arm of the Sudanese Government is a loose alliance of largely ethnic African Rebel Groups who have waged a military campaign since 2004. The aim of the rebel groups is to achieve greater political representation for themselves in the government of Sudan and to share in the potential wealth of the nation. Contrary to Sudanese Government propaganda they are not secessionist and are not strictly tribal, although different factions tend to recruit from familiar tribes.

Another African Conflict.

For many the conflict in Darfur represents a familiar African story of an impoverished region ruled by a ruthless Government and populated by a collage of different ethnic or tribal interests who have resorted to militancy to achieve their aims. Such a view militates against participation by Western Armed Forces in Africa's incessant wars. However this is myopic as Darfur represents something greater than another conflict because of its potential to destabilise an already delicate political environment in Sub Saharan Africa.

A Personal Perspective

From a Military Observers experience Darfur was the ultimate test. The area of each individual sector's operational responsibility was enormous, about the size of Leinster, and the resources limited. On patrol there was a constant

feeling of vulnerability with little possibility of reinforcement or medical support. Facilities were limited and the bases from which the observers operated always vulnerable to attack. There was a constant sense of frustration brought on by the seemingly senseless killings and the inability to make any effective intervention or sense of the situation. Most of all it was difficult to divorce oneself from the immediacy of the suffering and the absolute despair of the impoverished and dispossessed people who somehow survived against an inhospitable landscape.

The Future

The Conflict in Darfur has the potential to destabilise Sub Saharan Africa and pose a direct threat to European and Western Interests. With destabilisation comes a state of anomie where warlords are allowed to operate without restraint, where natural resources are plundered by expatriate corporate interests and where terrorism and drug cultivation flourishes. To this date Libya, Chad and the Central African Republic have borne the brunt of the fighting in Darfur placing Chad in

particular on the verge of collapse. However the knock on effect will not confine itself to the Sahel and the straining borders of Europe will be tested with an unprecedented wave of migrants driven by desperation.

Conclusion

After one year in the region this warning comes with a caveat from the author. Darfur is one of the more inaccessible areas of Africa. It is hot, isolated and is bare of infrastructure. During the annual rainy season from June to September movement is limited by constant flooding that washes away local tracks .Notwithstanding the manipulation by the Sudanese Government it is a region dominated by disparate interests of a tribal, ethnic, religious and political nature that have already caused two hundred thousand deaths and will cause many more. What is certain is that the problems of Darfur are bigger than the region and there is no room for disengaged bystanders. Europe cannot ignore the dangers inherent in complacency and cannot afford to allow this part of the great Continent of Africa to go unassisted.

**Widow’s/Widower’s
Contributory Pension**

The main benefit deriving from PRSI paid by officers who joined the PDF prior to 6 April 1995 is qualification for the above pension. The other benefits that may be paid are Guardians Payment and Bereavement Grant.

An officer who does not qualify under his/her own PRSI, could qualify under his spouses PRSI, were his spouse to predecease him. The spouse could also qualify in her own right if the Officer predeceases her. In each case the PRSI qualification is the same.

The requirements for qualification are:
A yearly average of 48 weeks PRSI from the date you first entered Social Insurance, up to the end of the tax year before reaching 66, or before your spouse’s death, if earlier.
Most officers entered social insurance for the first time as Cadets.

OR

You or your spouse must have paid at least 156 weeks PRSI before age 66 and

EITHER a yearly average of 39 weeks PRSI paid or credited over the 3 or 5 complete tax years (whichever is more beneficial) immediately before age 66 or before a spouse’s death if earlier.

THIS IS THE MAIN REASON AN OFFICER WHO RETIRES AND DOES NOT ENTER THE CIVILIAN WORK FORCE SHOULD REPORT TO HIS / HER LOCAL OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER RETIREMENT, AND SIGN FOR CREDITS OF PRSI UNTIL AGE 66.

The Booklet SW117 deals with this in full and is available free at your local Social and Family Affairs Office.

Naval Service Commissioning



*I-r: Capt (NS) C. O’Donnell and Ensign Aisling O’Flynn
Recipient of Fleet Review Telescope for Best Cadet*

**The Annual Commemoration for
Deceased Members of the DF**



*I-r: Lt Gen D. Earley, COS, Col M. Lucey, President ARCO, Mr O. O’Connor,
CEO ONET, IUNVA Representative, laying wreaths at newly dedicated
Memorial to Deceased Members of the Defence Forces*

Medical Matters . . .

Gout

What is gout?

- Gout is a type of arthritis that results from too much uric acid in the body. This is a waste product that naturally occurs in the body. It is normally flushed from the body by the kidneys through urine.
- With gout the body either makes too much uric acid or does not excrete enough. The uric acid forms into crystals that, because these have nowhere else to go, deposit in different parts of the body.
- Often the excess uric acid crystals deposit in the joints. This causes pain, swelling and tenderness in the area. This is called inflammation.
- Gout most often affects the big toe but can also affect the ankle, knee, foot, hand, wrist and elbow.

What are the warning signs of gout?

- Intense, ongoing pain in one joint, usually the big toe, that seems to have come on for no reason.
- Hot, red swollen skin and a feeling of pressure around the painful area. There may also be the feeling that the skin around the area is stretching or tearing.

What can you do about gout?

- If your doctor thinks you have gout, he or she may perform tests to measure the amount of uric acid in your body. These tests may include a urine test, or your doctor may insert a needle into the painful joint to take a sample of joint fluid.
- Although there is no cure for gout, there are a number of steps you can take to bring your gout under control.
- Medication is one of the main ways to treat both acute and chronic attacks of gout. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory

drugs (NSAIDs) usually form the first line of treatment in an acute attack. Where NSAIDs are not effective cortisone may be used in treatment of the condition. This is usually injected into the affected joint.

Diet

- Some foods and drinks may cause your body to produce too much uric acid. To keep levels of uric acid low reduce your amount of certain foods and drinks, such as coffee, tea, seafood, liver, gravy, peas and spinach.
- Alcohol (beer, wine, etc) also stops uric acid from leaving your body and can trigger gout.
- Sudden changes in your diet or dramatic weight gain/loss may also cause gout attacks.

Should you suffer from any of the above conditions you are advised to consult your G.P.



It's Springtime – It's DIY Time

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the acronym DIY and the word "die" are homophones – that is, they sound similar when pronounced. One suspects that this is because there are many ways in which the DIY person can meet, at worst their maker, and at best a visit to the A & E department of their local hospital. With Spring upon us and all those tasks awaiting attention why not avoid the above. So take the necessary precautions and be on guard against injuring yourself or worse!

ELECTRICITY: Doing your own electrical repairs and maintenance can have fatal consequences if you are not entirely sure of what you are doing. If in doubt, get an electrician.

POWER TOOLS: Power tools should only be used when your mental and physical faculties are at their best. Make sure to clear away potential obstacles from the

space where you are about to use them. If using an electric hedge trimmer make sure to keep the lead out of the way. Remember, a nail gun can be a lethal weapon and a power saw is very efficient at amputating fingers when used carelessly. So treat all power tools with the respect they deserve.

HAMMERS: The loose hammer-head when it flies off the handle can result in facial injuries. So make sure to check your hammers regularly.

SAWS: Treat a saw with respect, it can do you harm such as a painful injury to your finger or thumb. Also if cutting branches make sure you are on the right side of the saw!

LADDERS: Falling off a ladder is usually as a result of overreaching instead of moving it. Inappropriate footwear is another danger. Sandals can catch in the rungs when you are climbing. Work boots can be cumbersome. Therefore wear sensible footwear. A ladder should always be planted on a flat, even and solid surface and if possible secured to a fixed point with a rope. Never use an extension ladder on your own.



ASBESTOS: Up until the late 1980s carcinogenic asbestos was used in building houses and roofing sheds and garages. Beware when investigating or repairing old roofs which often contain this material. Inhalation of asbestos fibres can have fatal results over time.

PROTECTIVE GEAR: Make sure you wear suitable protective gear; eye goggles, dust mask, work gloves etc, appropriate for the job being undertaken.

FINAL WARNING: When undertaking that long postponed job don't rush into it. Stand back and plan out what you are going to do. Make sure you have the time and all the tools required to hand before embarking on the task.

