



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

www.oneaircorpsbranch.com

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Minister for Defence Mr. Alan Shatter TD meets Branch Members Noel Murphy and Frank Donnelly during his visit to the Air Corps Museum. Also included A/M M. Whelan and Brig-Gen Paul Fry.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

2011 was a busy year for the Branch. The main event was the well-attended Annual Mass and wreath laying ceremony. Other significant events involving members of the Branch included participation in the Somme Memorial Services, attendance at the Military Tattoo in Edinburgh, tour of the Church and Graves at Arbour Hill, the ONET golf classic in the Curragh. Guards of Honour were provided at the funerals of our colleagues, Ken Loughheed, Wally Walsh and John Patterson. Members also visited the Croke Park Museum and attended the Defence Forces concert in the NCH. The Branch was represented at two events held by the Leixlip Town Council and the Museum party assisted with the restoration of a Gypsy Major engine for exhibition in the Curragh Military Museum.

A large number of members took part in the ONET La na bhFiann ceremonies at Arbour Hill and also at the Remembrance Ceremonies in Kilmainham.

Members who assist in the Air Corps Museum met the Minister for Defence during his visit to Casement Aerodrome. The involvement of the members in the above events provided significant publicity for the Branch and for ONET. Great credit due to the Social Committee for organising such a wide ranging programme of events.

As I will be stepping down as Branch Hon Secretary at the forthcoming AGM I would like to thank everyone for the support and help I received during my ten year tenure in the position which saw the membership of the Branch rise to the highest yet in the ONET system. I enjoyed being in touch with so many former colleagues who have served with the Air Corps.

I wish the new Hon-Secretary and indeed the Branch continued success in the years ahead.

Brendan Downey

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I wish to thank all the members for their great support during 2011. The Secretary's report outlines the Branch's achievements. The communications systems which include the Newsletter and excellent Website have now been joined by Facebook and a dedicated email service. Relationship with the Air Corps Senior staff and with all ranks is very strong which is assisted by the involvement of Branch Members in the Aviation Museum.

Our Hon Secretary Ben Downey has indicated his intention of standing down at the next AGM after ten years in office. Ben has been at the heart of the Branch and is highly regarded and respected by all the members and by the ONET personnel.

I appreciate the support and guidance he gave me during the past five years and he fully encouraged the implementation of the new communication systems and the introduction of the new head-dress. He deserves great credit for the expansion of the Branch during his tenure in office.

Ben's great knowledge of the rules and great experience will be missed as Branch Secretary but we look forward to him continuing as a valued Branch Member for many more years to come.

Paddy O'Meara



Edition sponsored by the
1956 Apprentice Class



Annual Memorial Mass

The Annual Memorial Mass is the most important event in the activities of the Roger Casement Branch. This year it was an honour to have the widow of the late John Patterson, Rev Adeline Patterson joining with Fr. Jerry Carroll in the Service.

The Newcastle Folk Group was positioned in the sanctuary which enabled the congregation to have a better view of the lighting of the memorial candles. Each candle had the name of the deceased member being remembered.

The large attendance included not only Branch members but also the families of the deceased members, and members from other ONET Branches.

The Guest of Honour was Brigadier General Paul Fry GOC. Air Corps. Also in attendance were Maj-Gen Ralph James, Deputy Chief of Staff-Operations and retired GOC, Brig-Gen Jerry O'Connor. The Lessons were read by Brig-Gen Fry and by the Branch Chairman Paddy O'Meara. The Gospel was read by the Rev. Patterson who also delivered the Homily.

The Folk Group enhanced the Service with their excellent singing. A Guard of Honour and salute was rendered during the Mass with appropriate music being provided by the Branch Piper.

Following the Mass members of the Branch formed a Guard of Honour at the Memorial where a wreath was jointly laid by the Branch Chairman and Brig-Gen Fry. Piper John Brennan played a lament and brought the ceremony to an end by playing Amhran na bhFiann.

The congregation then retired to the NCO's Mess where former colleagues enjoyed renewing acquaintances and exchanging stories from the past.



Peter and Kay McGlynn with Brig-Gen Paul Fry



LAC President, Isidore Fleming (Dan Fitzgerald Branch).



Moments Silence. Group includes Rev A. Patterson and Fr. Jerry Carroll CF.



Brig-Gen Paul Fry, Paddy O'Meara Branch Chairman, Maj-Gen Ralph James, Peter McGlynn PRO.



F.Donnelly, P.McGlynn, N.Murphy, T.Roe, E.Tierney.



Eamonn Tierney on Flag duty.



Wreath laying by GOC Air Corps and the Branch Chairman.





Blast From the Past

Photo 1. Air Corps
Football team 1961



Photo 2.
1950 Apprentice Class.



PROFILE: Brendan (Ben)Downey

Ben was a member of the famous 1945 Apprentice Class and hailed from Kilkenny. He served in the Air Corps for 9 years attaining the rank of Flight-Sergeant. Ben joined Aer Lingus in 1954 along with several other members of his class and was quickly promoted to the technical supervisory ranks. He was one of the first engineers to be sent to the Boeing Aircraft Co. in Seattle for training on the first commercial jet aircraft to join the Aer Lingus fleet – the Boeing 720. Aer Lingus operated its first transatlantic jet service in November 1960.

Ben retired from Aer Lingus as Manager of fleet Maintenance Programmes and Reliability in 1995 after 41 years of service. Many will be surprised to hear that Ben was an outstanding hurler when he joined the Air Corps – not unusual for a Kilkenny man. Like many more of the great hurling talent that was in the Air Corps during the 1950's, he was soon enticed to play hockey by the great hockey enthusiast – the late Syd Peacock. Indeed, Syd can claim the credit for introducing hockey to the Air Corps and this subsequently transferred over to Aer Lingus with the intake of technicians to the National Airline.

This was the time when the GAA had a ban on the playing of foreign games but like many more of the Air Corps hurlers, it was disregarded so it was hockey on Saturday and Hurling on Sunday, (The ban was removed in 1971).

Ben was an excellent hockey player and played for some of the great Air Corps and Aer Lingus teams.

One of Bens other talents is his ability to organise, and each year he organises a reunion of his 1945 Apprentice Class. This is a unique record and as far as we are aware it is the only class that holds a reunion on an annual basis.

Ben has recently decided to stand down as Hon-Secretary of the Roger Casement Branch a position he has held with great distinction for ten years. We wish him many more years as a member of the Branch where his vast experience and advice will be of great benefit to all.



BRANCH VISIT TO CROKE PARK.

L/R: E. Tierney, Ed Browne, B. Barden,
M. Curtis, J.Brennan, J.Power, F. Lyons,
Bill O'Neill (Rear) Tim Malone.
Front: Mick Prince, P.McLoughlin, Tony McCormack.
Ladies included Mary Brennan and Phil Power.



CUIMHNIMIS

Let us remember those who have died. ~ Noel O'Dwyer

Remembrance

*It's sad to see so many missing
As we gather here once more
To think of the days and have instant replays
Of the time we spent in the Corps
Things were much different in those days
When living was really quite rough
Nearly all of our foodstuff was rationed
So that made life really tough
Still, it's nice to have so many memories
Of those times so long, long ago
As we sit and look back at the fun and the craic
In those places where we used to go
Our numbers really have dwindled
It's so sad to see so many gone
So let's spare a thought and say a wee prayer
And the memories will always live on.
James Killian (1945 Apprentice Class)*

NOTICES

REMINDER: The Annual Membership Subscription of €25.00 is due on January 1, 2012. Payment by cheque payable to the Roger Casement Branch, ONET should be sent to the Hon-Treasurer Eamonn Tierney, 20 Ardcollum Ave. Artane, Dublin 5. The subscription may also be paid at the Annual Christmas Lunch.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. The AGM will take place in the NCO'S Mess Casement Aerodrome on Thursday January 19th, 2012 at 2000 hrs. A full attendance is expected. Please ensure that nominations for committee positions are sent to the Hon-Secretary in good Time.

VISIT TO FLANDERS AND THE SOMME 2012 It is intended that the annual trip will take place as usual in 2012. The group will be based in Ypres, Belgium and will travel to the Somme to take part in the July 1 Ceremonies at Guillemont for the fourth successive year.

The group will depart Dublin on Friday June 29 (Aer Lingus) for Brussels returning on Tuesday July 3rd.

The trip will include visits to the Menin Gate, Irish Peace Park, Tyne Cot Cemetery, in addition to the Somme Ceremonies.

Places will be limited so if interested please contact Paddy O'Meara or Tony Roe.

AN COSANTOIR Any members who are be interested in receiving an on-line copy of the Defence Forces Magazine, An Cosantoir, please contact the Hon- Secretary.

AIR CORPS NEWS ~ IRISH WINNER OF THE 'PAUL TISSANDIER DIPLOMA 2010:'

Airman Michael Whelan, nominated by the National Aero Club of Ireland and GOC AC, Brig-Gen Paul Fry to receive the PAUL TISSANDIER DIPLOMA 2010 by the 'Federation Aeronautique Internationale'.

"Airman Michael Whelan, No 4 Support Wing, Irish Air Corps through his curatorship of the Air Corps Military Aviation Museum, his contribution to the collation of Irish military history and his literary publications, has enhanced the standing of the Air Corps and the Defence Forces nationwide. The importance of his contribution to the preservation of aeronautical artifacts is deserving of great praise." Congratulations to Michael - Well deserved.



Casa 253 completed the Air Ambulance mission from Northolt.



AIR CORPS COMPLETES AIR AMBULANCE MISSION FROM UK TO DUBLIN

An Air Corps Casa aircraft completed the transfer of a patient from Kings Cross Hospital, London, to Our Lady Children's Hospital, Crumlin this afternoon (7/11/11). The Casa collected the patient at RAF Northolt from where they were transferred to Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell and then by road to Our Lady Children's Hospital, Crumlin. This was the 63rd Air Ambulance mission completed by the Air Corps so far this year

Air Ambulance missions may be carried out on the Casa Aircraft, Learjet or the AW139 Helicopters.



AW139 Helicopters are regularly used for Air Ambulance missions.

AIR CORPS MARCHING MUSIC

The following article appeared in the September 2007 edition of The Link and is re-published by request

During the course of recent discussions between some of our members, agreement could not be reached as to whether designated march music has ever been assigned to the Air Corps. Air Force marches exist for the US Air Force and for the Royal Air Force so why not for their Irish counterparts?

Many former members remember singing "We're a bunch of bad boys" from the back of a Bedford Truck on the way to the rifle range or to various sporting events.

We're a bunch of bad boys, bad boys are we
We are the Air Corps, the terrors of the Aeronautical Universe
We're a bunch of bad boys, bad boys are we
We'd rather live and fight for Liberty.

We're a grand old team to play for
We're a grand old team to know
When you hear our history, its enough to make you're heart grow sad.....
We don't care whether we win loose or draw for all the hell we care
For all we know there's going to be a match and the good old Air Corps will be there

With the assistance of Comdt. Mark Armstrong (now Lt-Col), the present

Director of the Army #1 Band, the melody to which the above anthem was sung was identified as being the trio part of the famous "Our Director March" by Frederick Bigelow. Indeed this march was played by the Army #1 Band on a visit to Baldonnell during the late 50's or early 60's.

Could this be the elusive "Air Corps March"?

Further investigation revealed that that the only other March of note composed by Bigelow was "The NC4 March" which was indeed written to commemorate the first ever transatlantic flight of any aircraft. In May 1919, three US Navy Curtiss-NC Flying Boats took off from New York bound for Lisbon via Newfoundland and The Azores. Only NC4 managed to complete the journey to Lisbon which took just under 3 weeks. This flight happened before the Alcock and Brown flight which ended up in Clifden and 8 years before the Lindbergh flight.

Any further information regarding the designation of an official Air Corps March for a Military Brass band would be welcomed. Nowadays the Air Corps has an outstanding Pipe Band and we look forward to hearing it play an appropriate Official Air Corps March in the near future. Perhaps "We're a Bunch of Bad Boys" could be adapted for the pipes?

Curtiss NC-4 Flying Boat

