



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

www.oneaircorpsbranch.com

Issue 01/13
January
2013

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50th Anniversary of the 26th Air Corps Apprentice Class 31st May 2012

From the Chairman....

Branch members were very active during the weeks leading up to our Annual Mass in Baldonnel on October the 14th 2012. A lot of time was put into the preparation, planning and rehearsals etc. However, on the day we had to make some last minute changes due to the inclement weather and carried out the wreath laying ceremony in the church. We had an exceptionally large attendance this year and it included Major general Ralph James DCS, Brigadier General Paul Fry GOC Air Corps, Mr Ollie O Connor, CEO ONET and members of the St. Conleth's and Fr. James Gilmore branches. This year we also had a group from the RAF Association partaking in the ceremonies for the first time.

I would like to thank Brig-Gen Paul Fry GOC Air Corps for making the museum available on the day for the many visitors, and A/M Michael Whelan the museum curator for his usual courtesy, and enlightening response to the many queries he got from visitors.

On the week following the Mass, we had a most enjoyable outing to the Curragh museum and mechanical workshops. We also viewed the recently restored 1920 Rolls Royce armoured car – the Slievenamon - that accompanied Michael Collins on his final trip to west Cork. We had a special interest in this vehicle as the son of Ben Downey, our former secretary, Cpl. Declan Downey, was involved in the recent restoration project of the vehicle.

During the workshop tour we were able to have a close-up view of the BAE Systems and Mowag range of modern combat and reconnaissance vehicles that are currently used by our defence forces on overseas duties. This was a very interesting tour and we had two excellent guides in Sgt. Charlie Walsh and Cpl. Michael Bookle

On company financial matters - members should be aware that at a recent ONET board meeting it was decided that all branches holding funds in excess of €500 on the 31/Dec/2011 will be levied 25% of their funds, made payable to Bru na Bhfian as soon as possible. This funding is required to balance an operating deficit of in excess of €108,000 incurred in the operation of our 3 hostels for the year ending 31/12/2011.

Finnbar Lyons

Secretary's Report

The members of the Branch were very active since the last issue of The Link.

During August a group of four members and friends travelled to Edinburgh to attend the Military Tattoo. They then went on to attend the World Championship Pipe Band competitions in Glasgow, it was a very enjoyable trip.

In October a visit to the Curragh Camp was arranged, nine members and two spouses enjoyed the day with a visit to the Museum, Michael Collins Sliabh na mBan, and the Transport Overhaul Workshops.

The Annual Branch Mass on 14th, Oct. was a great success with approx. two hundred and fifty in attendance. Due to the inclement weather it was decided to complete the Wreath Laying at the Altar in the Church.

Members of the R.A.F.A. in attendance also laid a Poppy Wreath.

The Annual Christmas Lunch will take place on 13th. December at 1PM in the West County Hotel Chapelizod.

The Annual General Meeting of the Branch will be held in the NCOs Mess Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel on Thursday 17th. January 2013 at 20:00hrs. All members are invited to attend.

Noel Murphy,



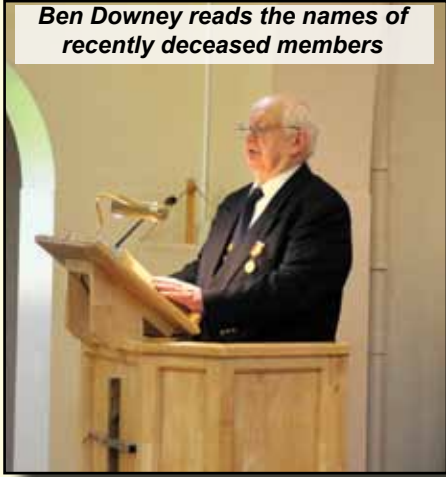
Members of the 1949 Apprentice Class;
Front: Fr. Denis Lynch, H. Donovan, P. Kennedy, P. Morrison, J. Ryan, V. McMahon, P. Reilly, Back: T. Mason, J. McKenna, E. O'Reilly, B. Beakey.

Edition sponsored by members of the 1958 Apprentice Class



BRANCH ANNUAL MASS OCTOBER 14TH 2012

Ben Downey reads the names of recently deceased members



Peter McGlynn and Noel Murphy lighting the memorial candles.

Fr. Jerry Carroll receiving the gifts



Paddy Goodman presents the Memorial Book with Eamonn Tierney and Tony McCormack.

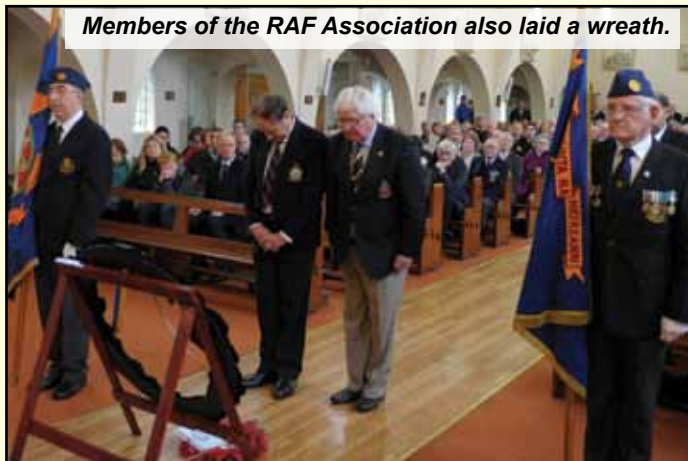
Guard of Honour salutes.



Branch Chairman Finnbar Lyons and GOC Air Corps Brig-Gen Paul Fry jointly lay the wreath of remembrance.



Members of the RAF Association also laid a wreath.



Brig-Gen Fry and Paddy O'Meara performed the readings.



ONET Guests: L/R Jim Nolan, Mick Carroll Directors ONET with Ollie O'Connor CEO and Branch Chairman Finnbar Lyons.



Rose and Podge Tormay, Brendan Barden, Anne McMahon, attended the Annual Mass



F/Sgt Ernie Berkenheier Remembered

By Paddy O'Meara

The monument in the attached picture is located in the Lakeside Park on the shores of Lough Derg in Mountshannon, Co.Clare. The inscription on the stone recognises the local Sheedy family who fostered Ernie Berkenheier from 1947 to 1955 as a very young German refugee. Adjoining the monument is an Oak tree which was planted at the time of the unveiling of the monument in 1992 which was performed jointly by the German Charge d'Affaires and by Ernie himself.

Ernie joined the Defence Forces in Oct 1956 and was assigned to the Air Signals Unit until transferring to the reserve in 1962. He re-enlisted in the Defence Forces in 1972 and finally retired in 1989 with the rank of Flt-Sgt in Air Signals, Baldonnel. During this period he completed UN assignments with UNFICYP and with UNIFIL (Two periods).

Ernie will be remembered by many as a member of the Air Chords Showband. The band was set up in 1959 when several serving Air Corps members and amateur musicians got together to play popular music after work in Baldonnel. This was at the beginning of the Showband craze in Ireland. As a fellow founder member I had the opportunity of getting to know him quite well when travelling the length and breadth of the country during my four years in the band. He was one of the band members who resigned from the Air Corps when the band turned professional in 1963.

As the Showband Era was drawing to a close, Ernie re-enlisted in the Defence Forces in 1972 and resumed his career in Air Signals until his retirement in 1989.

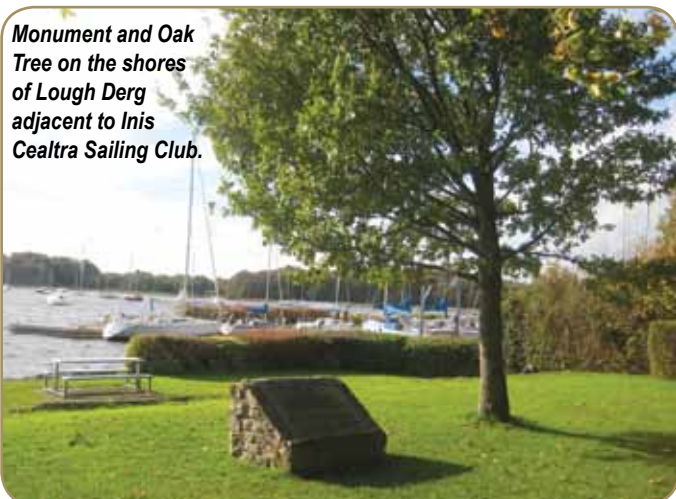
Ernie sadly passed-on unexpectedly in 2004. The Air Corps provided full Military Honours at his funeral in Rathfarnham Church. Following cremation of his remains his ashes were interred under the Oak Tree at the Lake Front and a portion was scattered on nearby historic Holy Island.



Ernie was a very talented technician and musician and is sadly missed by his Son Christopher and a very wide circle of comrades and friends. Should any former or serving Air Corps members find themselves in The East Clare area why not pay a visit the Tranquil Lake-Side Park at Mountshannon and visit the final resting place of a very popular and gentle comrade who served his adopted country well at home and overseas.

(Paddy O'Meara a former Chairman of the RCB served with Ernie in the Air Corps and was also a fellow member of the AirChords. Paddy is a committee member of Inis Cealtra Sailing Club.)

Monument and Oak Tree on the shores of Lough Derg adjacent to Inis Cealtra Sailing Club.



Ernie Berkenheier (on extreme left) and the Airchords Showband. The picture was taken in 1961 in the Mayfair Ballroom Clondalkin. Six of the seven band members in the picture were serving in the Air Corps.

CUIMHNIMIS ~ Let us remember those who have died. ~

TOM COLEMAN P.J. DELANEY CECIL MANNING BILL SMYTHE FRANK GAFFNEY

VISIT TO THE DH DOVE ACCIDENT SITE:

Members of the family of the late Lt. Donal Brady who lost his life in the DH Dove Accident which occurred in January 1961 visited the Accident site on 29 September 2012.

Included in the visit was Mrs Mairead Walsh a sister of the late Lt. Brady. Mairead and members of the family also attended the Annual Mass in October.



Members of the Brady family visit the Dove Accident site near Shannon Airport.

Air Corps News

Air Corps Block completes the Dublin City Marathon

The Dublin City Marathon was held on Monday, 29th October and amongst the participants was an unusual Air Corps formation. A Block of 35 Officers, from Cadets to Lt. Col's, ran the 26.2 miles in formation completing the course in 4:01:50.

The purpose of the Block was to raise money for two charities – The Coombe and the Irish Co-operative Oncology Research Group. Both charities have special significance for members of the group and had been of great assistance to them in recent years.

Fundraising through sponsorship, a table quiz and BBQ raised over €10,000 with each charity receiving an even split.

The training commitment for the Marathon was considerable with the program beginning in July. The group were required to meet up most evenings after work and run several laps of the Aerodrome. In addition the group participated in the Adidas Race series which involved competitive runs of 5 miles, 10km, 10 miles and a Half-Marathon at various intervals during the 4 month training program.

For several members of the group it was their first marathon and made the achievement all the more special. Special mention to the organisers, 4 Young Officers; Lt. Michael Barcoe, Lt. Gearoid O'Briain, Lt. Colin Gallagher and Lt. Odhran Murphy who gave freely of their time to organise the event. As a result of their organisation the Air Corps received very favourable coverage in the media and provided a significant financial boost to the two charities involved.

The group of Air Corps personnel who completed the Dublin City Marathon.



Air Corps air ambulance flights show an increase on 2011 figures

The two CASA CN235-MPA aircraft, known colloquially as 'Charlie 252' and 'Charlie 253', are principally used for maritime patrolling of Ireland's vast territorial waters. One aircraft is on patrol each day, usually departing Baldonnel in the morning and returning after a 6-8 hour flight.

The aircraft are now also increasingly used for air ambulance flights on behalf of the HSE. The Air Corps has a Service Level Agreement with the HSE to provide a fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft on a daily basis for the purpose of air ambulance operations within Ireland and the UK. These aircraft and crews are available around the clock should they be required. So far this year, the Air Corps has conducted 91 air ambulance missions. These missions range from neo-natal transfers between hospitals in Ireland to time-critical transfers of transplant patients to the UK.

The use of Night Vision Technology (NVG) by Air Corps helicopters allows them to land at poorly-lit locations – such as hospital heli-pads – throughout the night. This avoids the need to land at airports and means that patients

can be transferred from hospital to hospital throughout the 24 hour period. In addition to this air ambulance role, the Air Corps also has an Agusta AW139 helicopter based in Custume Barracks, Athlone during daylight hours. This service is known as the Emergency Aeromedical Service (EAS) and is tasked by the HSE to respond to time-critical emergencies in remote parts of the Midlands and Western regions. The helicopter carries an Advanced Paramedic on board who is capable of providing initial medical treatment to patients prior to their arrival at a hospital

The Agusta AW 139 Helicopter fitted with Night Vision Technology.

