



# Roger Casement Branch

## of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hEireann Teoranta (ONET)



# The Link

[www.oneaircorpsbranch.com](http://www.oneaircorpsbranch.com)

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picture: Damien Eagers  
Irish Independent

*Branch members, Tony Roe, Gerry McCann and Noel Murphy meet 'Joey' the Warhorse.*

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Honorary Branch President: **James Nolan**

## Secretary's Report for 2014

The Roger Casement Branch has been very busy for the past number of months.

**Members attended a variety of events which included:**

**Sunday 9th March** – RCB was invited by the Irish Naval Association to attend Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin for the official unveiling of the Naval Service Memorial Stone. The ceremony was attended by Senior personnel from the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps together with retired members of ONE and the Naval Association, and other invited guests.

**Sunday 16th March** – Months-Mind Mass for Mickey Prince R.I.P (Long serving member of RCB and ONE) at Arbour Hill Church, 6 members attended.

**Monday 17th March** – St. Patricks Day Parade at Saggart/Rathcoole, 16 members provided colour party for parade.

**Sunday 20th April** – Annual Easter Sunday 1916 Commemoration at GPO Dublin, some members attended.

**Monday 21st April** – Easter Monday, 6 members attended Commemoration Parade and Official Unveiling of Memorial at Maynooth Co. Kildare in memory of the 'Maynooth Fifteen' (fifteen local men who marched from Maynooth to the GPO in 1916).

**Tuesday 22nd April** – Mr. Pete McWilliams (RAFA – Irish Branch) invited RCB members to attend the Bord Gais Theatre to meet cast and members of the play 'Warhorse'. This event was organised by the British Embassy, and photographs with 'Joey' the Warhorse appeared in national papers.

**Friday 25th April** – ANZAC Day – members attended Annual Dawn Ceremony at Grangegorm Cemetery, and the Evening Ceremony at St. Ann's Church, Dawson St.

**Sunday 27th April** – Members attended St. Conleth's Branch Mass (Kildare).

**Wednesday 7th May** – Members attended 1916 Commemoration (for relatives) at Arbour Hill Church.

**Saturday 10th May** – Branch Flag Day collection at Mill Centre Clondalkin, 5 members manned collection points throughout the day.

**Tuesday 13th May** – Members invited by Associate Member Michael Whelan to attend Tallaght Library for his reading and discussion on events concerning the Congo and UN Missions. RCB was well represented.

**Sunday 25th May:** Seven Branch members took part in the International Veterans Day parade in Limerick organised by the Patrick Sarsfield Branch

*Noel Murphy Hon-Secretary*



Edition sponsored by "A member of the 1959 Apprentice Class"

## Branch History ...

In late 1979 it was decided to form a Branch of the O.N.E. which would have close links with the Air Corps and have Baldonnel as its base. In this way, the Branch through the ONE organisation would provide help and assistance where necessary to camp personnel at the time of their discharge.

With the kind permission of the GOC Air Corps, the Branch was named "The Roger Casement Branch" and was permitted to hold their meetings in Casement Aerodrome.

From that meagre beginning, the Branch has grown from strength to strength and is now held in high regard within the O.N.E. organisation.

The success of the Branch stems primarily from the support and activities of the members and with the help and co-operation from GOC Air Corps and the personnel in Casement Aerodrome.

Apart from keeping to the mission of maintaining contact with former colleagues, a number of significant events have been undertaken by the Roger Casement Branch including:

- The creation of the O.N.E. Memorial Garden in Casement Aerodrome with the unique Monument to the memory of deceased former Air Corps members.
- An Annual Mass of Commemoration which is held in October each year in the Garrison Church in Casement Aerodrome.
- A Memorial Book containing the inscribed names of the deceased personnel is located in a special cabinet in the church.
- The presentation of a unit flag designed by a member of the Branch to the Apprentice Training School.
- A presentation to the GOC Air Corps of a book of copies of the letters of Roger Casement.

The Roger Casement Branch was awarded the Best Branch Award in 2013.

Each year a number of trips to places of historical interest are arranged as well as events which provide an opportunity for former colleagues to meet and renew acquaintances, for example, the annual lunch at Christmas creates an opportunity for retired personnel who have previously served in the Air Corps to socialise and renew acquaintances with each other. This is a very popular event and has become a favourite reunion of former colleagues.

The highlight of the year is the Annual Memorial Mass which is held in the Garrison Church in Casement Aerodrome on the second Sunday of October.

Deceased former Air Corps members are remembered at the Mass and a wreath is laid at the adjoining memorial monument. The church is normally filled to capacity with former Air Corps personnel and families of deceased members.

Personnel who have served in any part of the Defence Forces are very welcome to join the Roger Casement Branch and to attend the Branch Meeting which is held on the third Thursday of each month at 20.00 hours in the NCO's Mess, Casement Aerodrome.

picture: Damien Eagers  
Irish Independent

## News in Pictures

A representative group from the RCB joined members of the Royal Air Force Association (RAFA) at the invitation of the British Embassy to visit the cast and members of the 'Warhorse' production at the Bord Gais Theatre.



Mr Pete McWilliams Chairman of RAFA saying hello to 'Joey'.

Gerry McCann also enjoying 'Joey'.

## Naval Service Memorial

### Cathal Brugha Ceremony

Members of the RCB with Brig Gen Paul Fry at the unveiling of the Naval Service Memorial in Cathal Brugha Barracks on March 9, 2014



Members of the RCB led the 2014 St Patricks Day Parade in Saggart and Rathcoole.



## Limerick International Veterans Day Parade



Former Members of the Air Corps and Naval Service meet up at the Veterans Day Parade in Limerick.

L-R. Finnbar Lyons, Patrick Byrne, Gerry McCann, Paddy Goodman,

Domhnall Mc Carthaigh, Noel Murphy, Richard Murphy



Carolyn Grace demonstrates  
ML 407 (IAC 162)

## Spitfire 162 Celebrates its 70th Birthday

Spitfire Tr9,162 which was in service with the Irish Air Corps from July 1951 until its retirement in June 1960 recently celebrated its 70th Birthday.

The Aircraft which was originally built at Castle Bromwich in early 1944 as a single seat fighter, served in the front line of battle throughout the last twelve months of WW2. This aircraft, designated ML407 flew a total of 176 operational combat sorties and was accredited with shooting down the first enemy aircraft over the Normandy Beaches on June 6th, 1944, D Day.

Later the aircraft was operated by various operational units which included the Free French, Polish, Norwegian, Belgian and New Zealand Squadrons. It was then sent to the Vickers Armstrong facility in Eastleigh for conversion in 1950 to the two seat configuration for the Irish Air Corps to be used as an advanced trainer. The Aircraft flew a further 762 hours with the IAC. The aircraft was offered for sale in 1968 and was purchased by Sir William Roberts for his museum in Strathallen. It was purchased in 1979 by design engineer Nick Grace who spent five years meticulously restoring the Spitfire to flying condition.

The aircraft flew again in April 1985 in the hands of Nick Grace with his wife Carolyn in the rear cockpit and the aircraft became better known as "The Grace Spitfire"

The aircraft was very popular in the air-show circuit but tragedy struck in 1988 when Nick was tragically killed in a car accident. Carolyn took on the immense task of learning to fly the Spitfire and continues to display the aircraft to the present day.



Spitfire 162 in action  
with the Air Corps

She has been joined as a display pilot by her son Richard who was only 4 years old at the time of his Father's accident. The significant costs of maintaining the aircraft in flying condition is assisted by the Grace Spitfire Supporters Group and by generous sponsors.

The Supporters group celebrated the aircraft's 70th birthday at its base in Bentwaters in Suffolk on Saturday 26th April, 2014. Roger Casement Branch (RCB) member Brian Rowley as a member of the Grace Spitfire Supporters Group attended the celebration dinner and has a remarkably long association with the aircraft.

Brian who was attached to Fighter Squadron in his Air Corps days worked extensively on the Spitfires and had the opportunity to fly in the aircraft on many occasions.

He was a member of the 1956 Air Corps Direct Entrant Class and later trained as a Flight Engineer on Bristol Britannia aircraft before joining Cathay Pacific where he operated at various periods on B707, B747 and L1011 aircraft.

Brian later joined Caledonian Airways operating DC-10's before he retired in 2001 after completing 36 years flying on large transport aircraft.

Brian regularly attends RCB functions, travelling to Dublin from his home in the UK.



Airman Brian Rowley working on a  
Spitfire during his Air Corps days.

**OBITUARY Late Michael Prince**

Mickey Prince was one of the Air Corps legends whose name and achievements were known to every serving member during the second half of the twentieth Century.

He was born in 1931 in Dublin with Waterford connections and in his teens was trained in the shoemaking trade. Mick Joined the Army and was posted to Baldonnel in 1953 as a shoemaker. He was passionate about sport and with Gaelic Football in particular and in the Air Corps he was rubbing shoulders with players he had only watched in Croke Park. He was in his element.

He became manager of the teams that played during the golden years 1957/68 winning 5 successful All Army Championships and the Medical Services cup on 6 occasions. The team also had successes in the Dublin County Championships and leagues.

He had a great interest in photography and he managed to be posted for two six month tours of duty to Cyprus as the official photographer with the Irish UN troops. He became a close friend of Archbishop Makarios.

On his return to Baldonnel he was assigned to the welfare group in charge of Sports equipment. Later he also managed a junior team in the Na Fianna Club in Dublin.

In 1973 having completed 21 years he joined AnCo's Dublin Training Centre as a General Assistant with responsibility for the maintenance of the grounds. In recognition of his services there was a tree planted in his honour. He is also responsible for the landscaping of the Memorial Garden and grounds at the UN Veterans Post 1 at Arbour Hill.

Mick married Marie in 1970. Their two daughters Deirdre and Marie live nearby their house in Manor Place, His two adorable Grandchildren Jack and Lily are very frequent visitors. Mick has been in declining health during the past year and was fortunate in having the loving care and attention of Marie and the family. Mick passed away peacefully on February 7th 2014, at Beaumont Hospital. He is sadly missed by his family, former col-leagues and a wide circle of friends. Full military honours and a Guard of Honour were provided by the Air Corps at his funeral.

POM



*Air Corps News*

**Joint Exercises off the Waterford Coast**

On the 7th of May, the Air Corps took part in a major inter-agency training exercise off the coast of Waterford involving nine other State Emergency Services.

For the exercise, the L.E. Eithne simulated a ferry in distress 100 miles off the coast with 1,000 passengers on board. When they signalled an emergency call, the Air Corps, Navy, Army, Civil Defence, RNLI, Coast Guard, National Ambulance Service, An Garda Siochana and Waterford Fire Services sprang into action and responded to the nightmare scenario. First on the scene was the Casa Maritime Patrol aircraft which acted as co-ordinator for airborne traffic and called in the helicopter support from No 3 Operations Wing and the Coast Guard. An Agusta Westland helicopter station in Waterford airport answered the Casa's call for assistance and transferred the HSE's Marine Rescue team to the stricken vessel.

Over the following two hours, 'AW 279' winched casualties off to safety while 'Charlie 252' provided a communications platform for the exercise and kept the different agencies informed of the progress of the operation.



*An Air Corps AW 139 approaches the stern of the L.E. Eithne to carry out a winching exercise.*

**President Higgins visit to the U.K.**

The Air Corps was very proud to be an integral part in the historic State visit of President of Ireland Michael D Higgins to the UK.

The Commander in Chief of Óglaigh na hÉireann held a final press conference for the World's media in Casement Aerodrome on 7th April before stepping on-board the Air Corps' Gulfstream for the historic Irish Sea crossing.

In addition to the Air Corps flying tasking, in bringing the Heads of State to and from the UK, the Air Corps Pipe Band was one of the select few who performed in 'Ceilúiradh', a celebration of Irish music and culture in the Royal Albert Hall, London, in the presence of President Michael D. Higgins and the Duke and Duchess of Kent. Cpl Joe O'Donnell, along with fellow Defence Forces musicians, joined up with musicians from the Band of the Irish Guards for a special arrangement of 'The Minstrel Boy' as the centrepiece of this unique musical programme.



*President Higgins arrives in the UK on an IAC Gulfstream Aircraft*



*Air Corps piper Cpl Joe O'Donnell played at the Ceilúiradh concert in the Royal Albert Hall.*